Unit 6

Title: The Mysterious Mr. Lincoln

Suggested Time: 5-7 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.6.1, RI.6.2, RI.6.3, RI.6.4, RI.6.6; W.6.2, W.6.4, W.6.9; SL.6.1; L.6.1, L.6.2

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings:

Perspectives cannot only differ, but can also change over time.

Synopsis

In this chapter from Russell Freedman’s photobiography, the author details Abraham Lincoln’s many facets. Lincoln’s gawky height, folksy humor, homespun speech, and superstitious beliefs are contrasted with his ambition, sadness, skill in argument, and eloquence as a speaker and writer during one of the most controversial and difficult times in American history.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire selection independently.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to read the full text or a passage aloud. For a particularly complex text, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| Describe Abraham Lincoln’s physical appearance. As a young man, how did Lincoln feel about his appearance? | On page 545, the author indicated that Lincoln was 6 feet 4 inches tall with most of his height in his legs. Most people thought he was homely and Lincoln agreed with this. Lincoln was self-conscience about his looks. In time, Lincoln learned to laugh at himself. |
| A rival tries to insult Lincoln by calling him “two-faced” meaning “double-dealing”. What was Lincoln’s response? What does this response reveal about Lincoln’s character and the author’s point of view regarding Lincoln? | Lincoln’s response was “I leave it to my audience. If I had another face, do you think I would wear this one?”  This revealed that Lincoln had a sense of humor, was a fast thinker, and was able to laugh at his own expense. The author’s point of view was that these characteristics assisted Lincoln in overcoming his opponent. |
| Contrast Lincoln at rest verses Lincoln when speaking. What does this contrast tell the reader about Lincoln? | The author described Lincoln in repose as sad and gloomy with dull and listless features. On the other hand, when speaking, Lincoln’s eyes sparkled. He began to smile. His whole face changed from angular and solemn to a handsome face. For example, Lincoln could be sad one minute and then “come alive” when giving a speech. This helps the reader to understand the many facets of Lincoln. |
| Why does Lincoln always seem stiff and formal in his pictures? According to the author, is this a true representation of Lincoln’s personality? Give textual evidence to support your answer. | The author described how back then, cameras required long exposures so people had to be still for a long period of time or the picture would be blurry.  According to the author, this did not give a true representation of Lincoln. The author stated that the camera missed something about the man. His changeable features, his tones, gestures, and expressions seemed to defy description. |
| What did William Herdon, Lincoln’s law partner, mean on page 546 when he said Lincoln was “the most secretive – reticent – shut-mouthed man that ever lived”? | Herdon meant that that even though Lincoln was a public figure, he remained very private. Also, the author indicated that Lincoln did not reveal much about himself. He was witty and talkative, but he rarely talked about his own feelings. |
| Describe Lincoln’s childhood. How did Lincoln’s childhood contribute to his character? | On page 547, the author revealed that Lincoln grew up in a log cabin. He was poor. He had little formal education. Lincoln’s childhood contributed to his hard-work ethic and determination that made him a successful adult. The author said that Lincoln struggled to rise above his log cabin origins. Before becoming president, Lincoln (a self-taught man) became a wealthy lawyer. |
| The author states that humor was Lincoln’s therapy. What was Lincoln’s purpose in using this therapy? How do you know it was helpful? | He used humor to relieve himself of depression. Freedman stated that Lincoln relied on his yarns to “whistle down sadness.” This shows the two faces of Lincoln, his sense of humor and his sadness. |
| What are two views of Lincoln’s thought processes? Why do you think that Freedman wrote about both of them? | Freedman stated that Lincoln “had a cool, logical mind, trained in the courtroom, and a practical, commonsense approach to problems” and that Lincoln was “deeply superstitious, a believer in dreams, omens, and visions.” These two thought processes contradict each other and show the reader that although he acted professionally and logically in his work, he was also superstitious. |
| During the Civil War, Lincoln was the most unpopular president the nation had seen, but still had some supporters. Contrast the opinions of Lincoln’s critics and supporters. | His critics saw him as a tyrant, a hick, and a stupid baboon who was unfit for his office; whereas his supporters called him a far-sighted statesman. His critics said he was a bungling amateur who meddled in military affairs he knew nothing about; however, his supporters saw him as a military mastermind who engineered the Union victory. |
| Why did Lincoln originally enter the Civil War? How did Lincoln’s attitude about the Civil War change? | Lincoln originally entered the war to save the Union. Lincoln stated, “My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or destroy slavery.”  Lincoln came to regard the war as a crusade to wipe out slavery. His attitude changed as the war continued. “Eventually he came to regard the conflict as a moral crusade to wipe out the sin of slavery.” |
| How did Frederick Douglas’s feelings toward Lincoln change over time? | At first, Douglas was critical of Lincoln. He thought Lincoln was only there to help the white man. Eventually, he changed his mind and admired Lincoln. Douglas said the following about Lincoln, “infinite wisdom has seldom sent any man into the world better fitted for his mission than Abraham Lincoln.” |
| Why does Freedman call Lincoln mysterious? | Freedman called Lincoln mysterious because Lincoln had contrasting characteristics. This can be seen on pages 545-546, “Lincoln’s face sometimes appeared as a “mask” making him seem dull and listless. When he spoke his eyes sparkled, and he smiled. This made him seem more personable.” Also, “Artists and writers tried to capture the ‘real’ Lincoln, but something about the man escaped them. His changeable features, his tones, gestures, and expressions, seemed to defy description.”  Freedman also referred to Lincoln as mysterious because he was secretive about his private life. This idea is supported “he rarely betrayed his inner feelings. William Herndon called him ‘the most secretive – reticent – shut-mouthed man that ever lived.’” Also, it stated that “Lincoln was never fully understood even by his closest friends.” Freedman thought Lincoln was mysterious because when he began researching he found Lincoln to be so different from what most people thought about him. Freedman commented, “Lincoln’s legend is based on truth but it is only partly true; it hides the man behind it like a disguise.” |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **These words require less time to learn**  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/  process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | **These words require more time to learn**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part  of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| **Meaning can be learned from context** | homely  rival  repose  solemn  reveal  folksy  homespun  investments  yarns  meddled | reticent  eloquent  moral crusade  preeminently  welfare  dismemberment  magnitude |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | Listless  countenance  angular  witty  humble  patronized  melancholy  superstitious  tyrant  statesman  abolitionist | wreathed  animation  exposure  bawdy  cabinet  vast  spellbound  omens  farsighted  emancipator  paramount |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt

*In “The Mysterious Mr. Lincoln”, Russell Freedom reveals the two faces of Lincoln through a variety of perspectives. Write an expository essay contrasting these two faces. Also, choose one example of a change in perspective that takes place in the piece and explain this change. Support your writing with relevant and sufficient evidence from the text, including direct quotes and page numbers.*

* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should guide students in gathering and using any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions earlier. Some students will need a good deal of help gathering this evidence, especially when this process is new and/or the text is challenging!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “In repose, he often seemed sad and gloomy. But when he began to speak, his expression changed.” | Lincoln seemed to have two very different personalities. One very solemn. The other much more expressive. |
| According to a Chicago newspaperman, “The dull, listless features dropped like a mask. The eyes began to sparkle, the mouth to smile; the whole countenance was wreathed in animation, so that a stranger would have said, ‘Why, this man, so angular and solemn a moment ago, is really handsome.’” | When Lincoln was speaking, he had a whole different personality and look that came about, from expressionless to an attractive expressiveness. |
| Lincoln is never seen laughing or joking in his pictures. | Lincoln had a very serious, uptight side. |
| Lincoln told humorous, but crude jokes during cabinet meetings. | Lincoln was a man with a sense of humor, which could sometimes be inappropriate. |
| “His changeable features, his tones, gestures, and expressions, seemed to defy description.” | Lincoln came across as different depending on the situation. |
| Lincoln never revealed much about himself, especially his inner feelings. According to William Herndon, his law partner, Lincoln was “the most secretive—reticent—shut-mouthed man that ever lived.” | Lincoln was a private man, even though he was a public figure. He was even extremely private with his own law partner. |
| When Lincoln was around people, he became funny and talkative. | The witty, talkative Lincoln contrasts with the more private, solemn Lincoln. |
| “In his own time, Lincoln was never fully understood even by his closest friends.” | Lincoln was a very complex person. His many different sides made it difficult for anyone to truly know him as a person. |
| Lincoln went from living in a log cabin with his poor, uneducated family to becoming a wealthy, self-educated lawyer to living in the White House. | Lincoln’s life changed drastically from childhood to adulthood. |
| Even in the White House, Lincoln exhibited his folksy manner and used his homespun speech. | Even though Lincoln’s life changed drastically, he kept to his roots. |
| “Lincoln seemed like a common man, but he wasn’t.” | Lincoln was mysterious. |
| Many described Lincoln as a sloppy dresser, but he bought two suits each year from the best tailor in Springfield, Illinois. The irony in this is that most men only had one suit their entire lives. | Lincoln cared about his appearance. |
| Lincoln was a humorous man that told funny stories, but was also moody with bouts of depressions. | Lincoln had two sides, funny and sad. |
| Lincoln was both practical and superstitious. | Lincoln’s two sides seemed to contradict each other. Most practical people are not superstitious and vice versa. |
| During the Civil War, Lincoln’s critics saw him as “a tyrant, hick, stupid baboon unfit for office, and a bungling amateur as a commander in chief.” His supporters “praised him as a farsighted statesman, a military mastermind who engineered the Union victory. | The perceptions of Lincoln were as contrasting as Lincoln’s characteristics. |
| Lincoln entered the Civil War to keep the nation together, but by the end was trying to abolish slavery. | Lincoln’s own perspective changed. |
| Frederick Douglas said about Lincoln that he was “preeminently the white man’s president, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men.” After the war, Douglas changed his mind about Lincoln saying he was perfect for the job as president. | People changed their minds about the kind of man Lincoln was. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
3. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Answer

Abraham Lincoln was known by many, but understood by few. His contrasting characteristics created differing perspectives of the kind of man Lincoln was with perspectives even changing about him over time.

Lincoln was a very complex, mysterious person. According to Freedman, “In his own time, Lincoln was never fully understood even by his closest friends”. Lincoln’s mysterious nature presented itself through his secretiveness. Lincoln never revealed much about himself, especially his inner feelings. According to William Herndon, his law partner, Lincoln was “the most secretive - reticent - shut-mouthed man that ever lived”. His complexity stemmed from two very differing personalities. One was very solemn; the other was much more expressive. Freedman said, “In repose, he often seemed sad and gloomy. But when he began to speak, his expression changed”. According to a Chicago newspaperman, “The dull, listless features dropped like a mask. The eyes began to sparkle, the mouth to smile; the whole countenance was wreathed in animation, so that a stranger would have said, ’Why, this man, so angular and solemn a moment ago, is really handsome’”. Another contradiction in Lincoln’s personality was that he was both practical and superstitious. Most practical people are not superstitious and vice versa. Also, Lincoln was a humorous man that told funny stories, but was also moody with bouts of depressions. Lincoln’s two sides seemed to contradict each other drastically.

During Lincoln’s lifetime, people had contrasting opinions about him. During the Civil War, Lincoln’s critics saw him as “a tyrant, hick, stupid baboon unfit for office, and a bungling amateur as a commander in chief”. His supporters “praised him as a farsighted statesman, a military mastermind who engineered the Union victory”. The perceptions of Lincoln were as contrasting as Lincoln’s characteristics.

Over time some people changed their minds about the kind of man Lincoln was. Frederick Douglas, abolitionist writer and editor, was one of these people. Early on in the Civil War, he said about Lincoln “preeminently the white man’s president, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men”. After the war, Douglas changed his mind about Lincoln saying “infinite wisdom has seldom sent any man into the world better fitted for his mission than Abraham Lincoln”. This change of perspective could have come about due to Lincoln’s changed attitude about the war. Lincoln entered the Civil War to keep the nation together, but by the end was trying to abolish slavery. Lincoln’s own changes could have created the changes in perspective about him.

Abraham Lincoln was a man of completely contrasting characteristics. Many people had varying perspectives of Lincoln due to these contrasts in his behavior. Not only did people have different opinions of Lincoln, but their opinions changed about him over time.

Additional Tasks

* *Freedman uses many idioms in “The Mysterious Lincoln”. Identify one idiom from the biography. Draw or explain both the literal and figurative meanings. What is the impact of the author’s use of these idioms?* 
  + Answer: Any idiom from the biography and either an explanation or picture of both the literal and figurative meanings is acceptable. Answers will vary. Example: “ring in our ears” is an idiom used by the author. Students would draw or describe the literal meaning which would be having a ring in one’s ear. Then students would draw or describe the figurative meaning which would be that people still remember what was said long after it was said. The impact of using these idioms is to add a depth of imagery to the writing which makes it more interesting to the reader.
* *Abraham Lincoln had folksy manners and homespun speech. Determine the correct word for each of the following homespun words: eddication, larned, thar, git, and kin. Then, think of some examples of homespun speech that you have used or that you have heard in your region. If time allows, create a homespun greeting that is purely imaginary.* 
  + Answer: eddication=education, larned=learned, thar=there, git=get, and kin=can; in our region we hear, dat=that, til=until, cause=because… Answers will vary.

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**“The Mysterious Mr. Lincoln”**

1. Describe Abraham Lincoln’s physical appearance. As a young man, how did Lincoln feel about his appearance?
2. A rival tries to insult Lincoln by calling him “two-faced” meaning “double-dealing”. What was Lincoln’s response? What does this response reveal about Lincoln’s character and the author’s point of view regarding Lincoln?
3. Contrast Lincoln at rest verses Lincoln when speaking. What does this contrast tell the reader about Lincoln?
4. Why does Lincoln always seem stiff and formal in his pictures? According to the author, is this a true representation of Lincoln’s personality? Give textual evidence to support your answer.
5. What did William Herdon, Lincoln’s law partner, mean when he said Lincoln was “the most secretive – reticent – shut-mouthed man that ever lived”?
6. Describe Lincoln’s childhood. How did Lincoln’s childhood contribute to his character?
7. The author states that humor was Lincoln’s therapy. What was Lincoln’s purpose in using this therapy? How do you know it was helpful?
8. What are two views of Lincoln’s thought processes? Why do you think that Freedman wrote about both of them?
9. During the Civil War, Lincoln was the most unpopular president the nation had seen, but still had some supporters. Contrast the opinions of Lincoln’s critics and supporters.
10. Why did Lincoln originally enter the Civil War? How did Lincoln’s attitude about the Civil War change?
11. How did Frederick Douglas’s feelings toward Lincoln change over time?
12. Why does Freedman call Lincoln mysterious?