

Historical Perspective Paragraphs: Was Abraham Lincoln a hero or a tyrant?

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States, and one of history's most significant leaders. However, there are differing perspectives on what kind of leader Lincoln was, and how well he managed running a country during a time of political, economic and overall change.

Abraham Lincoln was president during the Civil War, which spanned from 1861-65. The two prime combatants in the Civil War were the North and the South, and the dispute was largely over the controversy of slavery in the USA. During the Civil War, the South seceded from the Constitution of the US and declared themselves the Confederate States, completely separate from the union and self-governing. This was primarily because the southern states did not have any intention to give up their slaves, whether this be in consideration of the benefit for the economy that relied on the system or just simply because many people viewed black persons as lesser than whites persons. Despite an official ordinance that declared the Confederate States' secession, Abraham Lincoln did not view the south as divided from the USA as a whole. Though during his candidacy and initial service Lincoln maintained neutrality on the terms of slavery, he eventually sided with the abolitionists in hopes of ending the war. Many quotes can now be found of Lincoln's moral opposition to slavery. "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel." The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 stated that all persons held as slaves were freed, and as Lincoln ignored the secession of the southern states, his proclamation declared all slaves not part of the union freed.

This was an issue, as the Confederate States that no longer saw themselves part of the Constitution of the US also saw no need to abide by a proclamation issued to them by a country they were no longer a part of.

Overall, though the emancipation did not end the war, it definitely made great progress in freeing all slaves in America, and is mainly why Lincoln is seen as one of America's greatest presidents.

However, there are two sides of the story. Not all Americans see Lincoln as a beacon of greatness; as in issuing the proclamation and his interference with slavery, he violated the idea that a state has full control over its own actions and self-governance.

Lincoln's choice to involve the federal government in the state issues was a violation of the constitution's tenth amendment, which states that "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." Many feel that Lincoln's action taken in the South was unnecessary and intrusive to state's rights, and that slavery was already dying out, from a mixture of industrialization and evolving morals. After all, the federal government can only understand so much of each state's government situation. If slavery was dying out anyways, who gave Lincoln the right to violate the tenth amendment and mess with the southern state's laws?

Lincoln is also seen as one of the most influential, important presidents in history. His primarily progressive political aspirations inspired a nation free of slavery. He is revered not only for the abolition of slavery but for being a person of humble origins, and someone who was down-to-earth and cared about the needs of the people. He was a strong leader during the Civil War, which is regarded as one of history's most trying wars, and he spoke with eloquence that captured the country and its people (the Gettysburg Address, etc).

This can relate to many of the succession-based political parties in Canada today, such as the Bloc Québécois. The Bloc Québécois' goal is to separate Quebec from Canada to preserve its culture and free it from the binds of the federal government, as they are not too concerned with the preservation of the francophone culture in Quebec. This is similar to how the states succeeded in hopes of preserving their slavery laws.

Whatever people think of him, Lincoln was definitely one of the most significant presidents of the US. Even the debate on whether or not he was a strong and admirable president or a tyrant can't undermine this.