***Was Abraham Lincoln Racist?***

1. **Task Overview:**

* Students will be able to determine if Abraham Lincoln was racist by analyzing primary and secondary sources.

1. **Performance Outcomes:**
   * Students will analyze primary and secondary sources.
   * Students will evaluate using multiple perspectives.
   * Students will collaborate and come to a concise on a controversial topic.
2. **Aligned Standards:** 
   * A.H.MI.1- Primary and secondary sources are used to examine events from multiple perspectives and to present and defend a position.
   * A.H.HI.3- Historians develop theses and use evidence to support or refute positions.
   * A.H.MI.11 Disputes over the nature of federalism, complicated by economic developments in the United States, resulted in sectional issues, including slavery, which led to the American Civil War.
   * A.H.MI. 12 The Reconstruction period resulted in changes to the U.S. Constitution, an affirmation of federal authority and lingering social and  
     political differences.
3. **Type and Purpose of Performance Assessment:**
   * *Was Abraham Lincoln racist?* is an On-Demand performance assessment.  The purpose of the assessment is to show that students are able to understand historical information, evaluate a multitude of sources, collaborate with classmates and produce a clear and concise thesis supported by evidence.
4. **Instructional Support:**
   * IEP/504 students will be supported and receive accommodations.
   * Students will have access to all SAC documents.
   * The teacher will facilitate and monitor during the assessment.
   * Visually disabled students may require teacher to create a textured model for them to use.
5. **Time/Schedule Requirements:** 
   * 70 minutes (1 block or 2 traditional class periods)
6. **Materials/Resources:** 
   * Copies of Lincoln Documents A-D
   * Copies of Lincoln Guiding Questions
   * Copies of SAC Graphic Organizer
   * Note: This activity works best if students have an opportunity to read the documents and answer the Guiding Questions before starting the SAC.
   * SCALE Argumentative Rubric (Grade 8 provided)
7. **Prior Knowledge:** 
   * Complexity of the slave issue in the United States
   * Abraham Lincoln’s role as preserver of the Union
   * The American Civil War
8. **Connection to Curriculum:** 
   * *Was Abraham Lincoln racist?* allows students to discuss a controversial topic with classmates ultimately choosing a side based on personal opinion and evidence from primary and secondary sources.
9. **Scoring:** 
   * Student work can be scored based on accuracy of answers in Document Based Questions and Organizing the Evidence sections. The SCALE Argumentative rubric will be used to grade the Coming to Consensus section.

**Daily Breakdown of Activities**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Overview** | **Teacher Notes** | **AH.HI** |
| **Day 1** | Students will read documents (primary sources) and answer accompanying questions in the Document Based Questions section.  Organizing the Evidence section. | * Discuss the purpose of a Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) * Multiple perspectives * Racist- how do we determine this? 2018 vs 1860 | A.H.MI.1  A.H.HI. 3  A.H.MI. 11  A.H.MI. 12 |
| **Day 2** | Coming to Consensus section.  Class reflection (written or discussion). | * All students must present information. * Take notes to help follow along * You may abandon your original position   \*all of these are in the directions | A.H.MI.1  A.H.HI. 3  A.H.MI. 11  A.H.MI. 12 |

**Structured Academic Controversy: *Was Abraham Lincoln racist?***

*Team A will argue: YES, Abraham Lincoln was racist.*

*Team B will argue: NO, Abraham Lincoln was not racist.*

Task: Today in class, your job is to determine whether you think Abraham Lincoln was racist. You will work in teams to discuss arguments convicting and defending Abraham Lincoln. Your goals for today should include looking at all the issues, seeing both sides, and finding common ground.

**Materials:**

• Copies of Lincoln Documents A-D

• Copies of Lincoln Guiding Questions

• Copies of SAC Graphic Organizer

*Note: This activity works best if students have an opportunity to read the documents and answer the Guiding Questions before starting the SAC.*

**Procedure:**

1.Divide students into groups of 4 then divide each group of 4 into Team A and Team B.

* Team A will argue Lincoln was a racist.
* Team B will argue Lincoln was not a racist.
* Teams use Graphic Organizer to collect data for their side.

2.Team A presents to Team B, and Team B repeats arguments back to Team A, until Team A is satisfied.

3. Team B presents to Team A, and Team A repeats arguments back to Team B, until Team B is satisfied.

4. Teams try to reach consensus

5. Is it appropriate to use the word “racist” when discussing events in the1860s? Can we judge people in the past by our standards?

Task Breakdown:

1. 30 minutes: With your teammate, read the documents in the Lincoln document set. Find four pieces of evidence that support your side.
2. 15 minutes: Team A presents. Both partners must present. Team B writes down Team A’s arguments and then repeats them back to Team A.
3. 15 minutes: Team B presents. Both partners must present. Team A writes down Team B’s arguments and then repeats them back to Team B.
4. 15 minutes: Everyone CAN ABANDON their positions. Groups of 4 attempt to develop a consensus.

**Document A: Douglas’s Speech**

*In 1858, Abraham Lincoln ran against Stephen A. Douglas for a seat in the U.S. Senate. The two engaged in a series of seven public debates, which attracted national attention. Although Lincoln lost the election, he became widely known for his views on slavery. This is part of Douglas’s speech in their first debate at Ottawa, Illinois, August 21, 1858.*

*If you desire Negro citizenship, if you desire to allow them to come into the State and settle with the White man, if you desire them to vote on an equality with yourselves, and to make them eligible to office, to serve on juries, and to judge your rights, then support Mr. Lincoln and the Black Republican party, who are in favor of the citizenship of the Negro. For one, I am opposed to Negro citizenship in any and every form. I believe this government was made . . . by White men, for the benefit of White men and their posterity forever. . . .*

*Mr. Lincoln believes that the Negro was born his equal and yours, and that he was endowed with equality by the Almighty, and that no human law can deprive him of these rights.*

Source: First Debate: Ottawa, Illinois, Stephen A. Douglas, 1858

Vocabulary

posterity: future generations

**Document B: Lincoln’s Reply**

*I have no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which in my judgment will probably forever forbid their living together in perfect equality, and. . . I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong, having the superior position. I have never said anything to the contrary, but there is no reason in the world why the Negro is not entitled to all the natural rights in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the White man. I agree that the Negro is not my equal in many respects—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment. But in the right to eat the bread . . . which his own hand earns, he is my equal and the equal of every living man.*

Source: Abraham Lincoln’s reply to Stephen A. Douglas at Ottawa, Illinois, August 21, 1858.

Vocabulary:

entitled: to have a right

endowment: ability

**Document C: Lincoln’s Letter**

*Today, on board a boat, I saw a gentleman who had purchased twelve Negroes in different parts of Kentucky and was taking them to a farm in the South. They were chained six and six together. A small iron chain was around the left wrist of each so that the Negroes were strung together precisely like so many fish upon a trout-line. In this condition they were being separated forever from the scenes of their childhood, their friends, their fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, and many of them, from their wives and children, and going into perpetual slavery, . . . yet amid all these distressing circumstances . . . they were the most cheerful and apparently happy creatures on board. One, whose offense for which he had been sold was over-fondness for his wife, played the fiddle almost continually; and the others danced, sung, cracked jokes, and played various games with cards from day to day. How true it is that “God renders the worst of human conditions tolerable. . .”*

Source: Abraham Lincoln, letter to Mary Speed, a personal friend, September 27, 1841.

Vocabulary

renders: makes

**Document D: Pro-Slavery Book**

John Bell Robinson, a White pro-slavery spokesperson, wrote the book Pictures of Slavery and Anti-Slavery: Advantages of Negro Slavery and the Benefits of Negro Freedom Morally, Socially, and Politically Considered in Pennsylvania in 1863.

*God himself has made them for usefulness as slaves, and requires us to employ them as such, and if we betray our trust, and throw them off on their own resources, we reconvert them into barbarians.*

*Our Heavenly Father has made us to rule, and the Negroes to serve, and if we . . . set aside his holy arrangements . . . and tamper with his laws, we shall be overthrown and eternally degraded, and perhaps made subjects of some other civilized nation. . . . If they could all be colonized on the coast of Africa, they would fall back into heathenism and barbarism in less than fifty years.*

Source: Pictures of Slavery and Anti-Slavery: Advantages of Negro Slavery and the Benefits of Negro Freedom Morally, Socially, and Politically Considered by John Bell Robinson, 1863.

Vocabulary  
tamper: interfere  
degraded: disrespected  
heathenism: not belonging to a widely held religion  
barbarism: not having culture or civilization

**Citations:**

**Document A**

Stephen A. Douglas, argument in the first Lincoln-Douglas debate at Ottawa, Illinois, August 21,

1858. Retrieved from http://www.nps.gov/liho/historyculture/debate1.htm.

**Document B**

Abraham Lincoln, reply to Stephen A. Douglas at Ottawa, Illinois, August 21, 1858. Retrieved

from http://www.nps.gov/liho/historyculture/debate1.htm.

**Document C**

Abraham Lincoln, letter to Mary Speed, September 27, 1841. Retrieved from

http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.617:1.lincoln

**Document D**

John Bell Robinson. (1863). Pictures of Slavery and Anti-Slavery: Advantages of Negro Slavery

and the Benefits of Negro Freedom Morally, Socially, and Politically Considered. Pennsylvania.

p. 42.

***Document Based Questions***

**Document A:**

1. (Close reading) What are two things that Douglas warns will happen if Lincoln is elected (2 points)?
2. (Close reading) Based on this document, what do you think Douglas’s views were on African  
   Americans (1 point)?

**Document B:**

1. (Contextualization) Try to picture an outdoor debate in 1858. These debates lasted 3 hours  
   (!) with each candidate speaking non-stop for at least an hour. Do you completely trust what  
   either candidate will say in this setting (1 point)? Why or why not (1 point)?
2. (Close reading) Carefully read Lincoln’s response to Douglas. On what points is Lincoln  
   willing to agree with Douglas (1 point)? On what points does he differ from Douglas (1 point)?

**Document C:**

1. (Sourcing) This document is a personal letter from Lincoln to a friend. Does that make you  
   trust the document (1 point)? Why or why not (1 point)?

2. (Close reading) What amazes Lincoln about the scene he sees on the boat (1 point)?

**Document D:**

1. (Corroboration) How do Lincoln’s views on slavery compare with John Bell Robinson’s (1 point)?

***Organizing Your Evidence***

Use this space to write your main points and the main points made by the other side.

**Abraham Lincoln was racist**: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

2) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

3) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

4) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

\*students will receive one point for identifying each document used and one point for each main point/evidence that supports their side

**Abraham Lincoln was not racist**: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

2) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

3) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

4) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

\*students will receive one point for identifying each document used and one point for each main point/evidence that supports their side

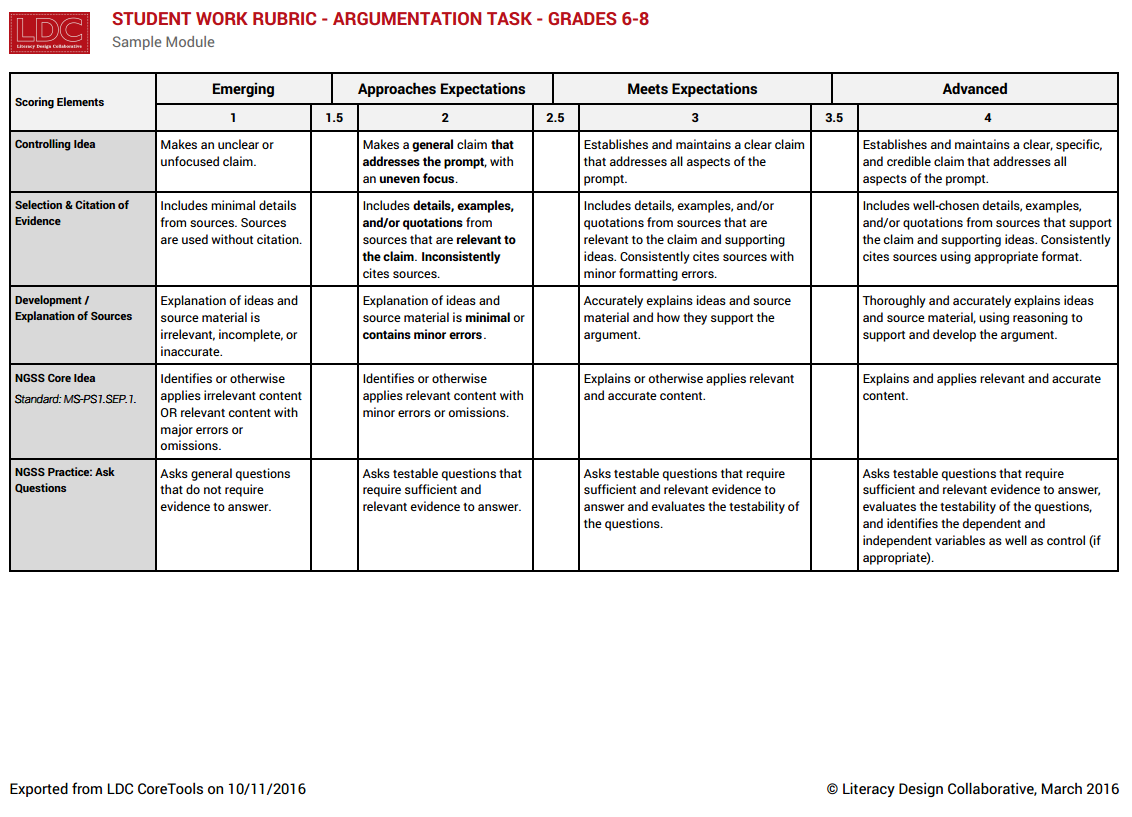
***Coming to Consensus***

Starting now, you may abandon your assigned position and argue for either side.

Use the space below to outline your group’s agreement. Your agreement should address evidence and arguments from both sides.

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| --- |
|  |

Rubric:



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(screen shot image)

Samples of Student Work:

**Student A**

***Document Based Questions***

**Document A:**  
1. (Close reading) What are two things that Douglas warns will happen if Lincoln is elected (2 points)?

Douglas warns the people that if Lincoln is elected, African Americans will vote equally, serve on juries, and judge the rights of white men.

2. (Close reading) Based on this document, what do you think Douglas’s views were on African  
Americans (1 point)?

Douglas thought African Americans were not equal to white men and should not have the rights that white men have because white men established this country and are superior to african americans.

**Document B:**  
1. (Contextualization) Try to picture an outdoor debate in 1858. These debates lasted 3 hours  
(!) with each candidate speaking non-stop for at least an hour. Do you completely trust what  
either candidate will say in this setting (1 point)? Why or why not (1 point)?

No, I do not because you cannot trust that whatever these candidates are saying is true and if their promises will be carried out because at this point, in front of the people that he/she wants votes from, they will say whatever will gain the people’s favor and not their true views.

2. (Close reading) Carefully read Lincoln’s response to Douglas. On what points is Lincoln  
willing to agree with Douglas (1 point)? On what points does he differ from Douglas (1 point)?

Lincoln is willing to agree with Douglas on white men and African Americans never being equal because of color and moral and intellectual endowment.  He says that he feels white men are superior because he is in favor of his own race.  Lincoln differs from Douglas because he views that even though white men and African Americans might not be equal in many respects, that African Americans should have natural rights and be equal in those respects and that they should be able to eat what they earn giving to them by their natural rights.

**Document C:**  
1. (Sourcing) This document is a personal letter from Lincoln to a friend. Does that make you  
trust the document (1 point)? Why or why not (1 point)?

Yes because this is a private letter Lincoln wrote.

2. (Close reading) What amazes Lincoln about the scene he sees on the boat (1 point)?

It amazes him that the slaves being sold and taken from their home and families could be so cheerful and happy while being sent to torture.

**Document D:**  
1. (Corroboration) How do Lincoln’s views on slavery compare with John Bell Robinson’s (1 point)?

Lincoln has similar views to John Bell Robinson in that African Americans are workers, but Lincoln thought that they should be able to eat what they work for because they have natural rights like white men.

***Organizing Your Evidence*** Name: Student A

Use this space to write your main points and the main points made by the other side.

**Abraham Lincoln was racist**: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document \_\_B\_\_:

*“There is a physical difference between the two, which in my judgment will probably forever forbid their living together in perfect equality”*

Lincoln doesn’t think there will ever be perfect equality between races because there will always be a physical difference that he feels is significant.  If he wasn’t racist color wouldn’t matter in his views.

2) From Document \_\_B\_\_:

*“I am in favor of the race to which I belong, having the superior position.”*

*“I agree that the Negro is not my equal in many respects—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment”*

Lincoln admits he feels superior to African Americans because he is a white man, but if he wasn’t racist he wouldn’t feel superior to anybody because of their race.  His views are similar to the pro-slavery white men of this time.

3) From Document \_\_D\_\_:

His opinions and ideologies are similar to the views of John Bell Robinson in that African Americans are barbarians and meant to be workers.

4) From Document \_\_B\_\_:

*“I have no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races.”*

Lincoln did not want to do anything about slavery when he was running for office; he didn’t want to deal with it and was not trying to stop it in any way.

**\*students will receive one point for identifying each document used and one point for each main point/evidence that supports their side**

**Abraham Lincoln was not racist**: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

2) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

3) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

4) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

Student A

***Coming to Consensus***

Starting now, you may abandon your assigned position and argue for either side.

Use the space below to outline your group’s agreement. Your agreement should address evidence and arguments from both sides.

**Is it appropriate to use the word “racist” when discussing events in the1860s? Can we judge people in the past by our standards?**

|  |
| --- |
| Abraham Lincoln was not racist because he grew up during a time where the people around him were very pro-slavery and even though his views were not completely anti-slavery, they were different from most white men of the time.  He felt that African Americans were entitled to the same natural rights as white men even though they aren’t equal in some respects like skin color.  Stated in Document A, Douglas stated the following about Lincoln. “Mr. Lincoln believes that the Negro was born his equal and yours, and that he was endowed with equality by the Almighty, and that no human law can deprive him of these rights.  Another piece of evidence to back Lincoln’s claim was in Document B where he states “there is no reason in the world why the Negro is not entitled to all the natural rights in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. He may have said things that seemed racist in the 1800’s but we can’t judge people as out of the ordinary because it was the norm during the time. |

Student B

***Document Based Questions***

**Document A:**  
1. (Close reading) What are two things that Douglas warns will happen if Lincoln is elected (2 points total)?

The negro citizenship will come into the state

Black people will be allowed to vote

2. (Close reading) Based on this document, what do you think Douglas’s views were on African  
Americans (1 point)?

That black people are created differently

**Document B:**  
1. (Contextualization) Try to picture an outdoor debate in 1858. These debates lasted 3 hours  
(!) with each candidate speaking non-stop for at least an hour. Do you completely trust what  
either candidate will say in this setting (1 point)? Why or why not (1 point)?

No because they will say whatever gets them the most votes.

2. (Close reading) Carefully read Lincoln’s response to Douglas. On what points is Lincoln  
willing to agree with Douglas (1 point)? On what points does he differ from Douglas (1 point)?

About not getting rid of slavery

When he says all people are created equally

**Document C:**  
1. (Sourcing) This document is a personal letter from Lincoln to a friend. Does that make you  
trust the document (1 point)? Why or why not (1 point)?

2. (Close reading) What amazes Lincoln about the scene he sees on the boat (1 point)?

**Document D:**  
1. (Corroboration) How do Lincoln’s views on slavery compare with John Bell Robinson’s (1 point)?

***Organizing Your Evidence*** Name: Student B

Use this space to write your main points and the main points made by the other side.

**Abraham Lincoln was racist**: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document \_\_B\_\_\_: “I have no purpose directly or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists.”

2) From Document \_\_C\_\_\_: “A small iron chain was around the left wrist of each so that the Negroes were strung together precisely like so many fish upon a trot-line.*”*

3) From Document \_\_B\_\_\_: “I am in favor of the race to which I belong, having the superior position.”

4) From Document \_B\_\_\_\_: *“*Iagree that the Negro is not my equal in many respects*”*

**\*students will receive one point for identifying each document used and one point for each main point/evidence that supports their side**

**Abraham Lincoln was not racist**: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

2) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

3) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

4) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

**Student B**

***Coming to Consensus***

Starting now, you may abandon your assigned position and argue for either side.

Use the space below to outline your group’s agreement. Your agreement should address evidence and arguments from both sides.

**Is it appropriate to use the word “racist” when discussing events in the1860s? Can we judge people in the past by our standards?**

|  |
| --- |
| Lincoln was racist because he said that his race was superior and that there was a difference between black and white. But he did say that black people should have the same basic rights as white people. An example of his racism is this quote from Document C: A Letter to Mary Speed. “*Yet amid all these distressing circumstances . . . they were the most cheerful and apparently happy creatures on board”.* Calling humans creatures is wrong!! That does not matter if it was 1860 and 2018. We should judge figures from the past by the same rules we judge them today. He may be a great president, but he was racist. |

Student C

***Document Based Questions***

**Document A:**  
1. (Close reading) What are two things that Douglas warns will happen if Lincoln is elected (2 points total)?

1. Black men will be able to vote
2. Black men will serve on juries and judge rights

2. (Close reading) Based on this document, what do you think Douglas’s views were on African  
Americans (1 point)?

I think that Douglas was against equality for African Americans

**Document B:**  
1. (Contextualization) Try to picture an outdoor debate in 1858. These debates lasted 3 hours  
(!) with each candidate speaking non-stop for at least an hour. Do you completely trust what  
either candidate will say in this setting (1 point)? Why or why not (1 point)?

I do not, because they will feel pressured to continue talking without hesitation and might say things that they don’t completely mean just for the sake of talking for an hour

2. (Close reading) Carefully read Lincoln’s response to Douglas. On what points is Lincoln  
willing to agree with Douglas (1 point)? On what points does he differ from Douglas (1 point)?

He agrees that they are the superior race, but he disagrees in terms of black people not deserving equal rights

**Document C:**  
1. (Sourcing) This document is a personal letter from Lincoln to a friend. Does that make you  
trust the document (1 point)? Why or why not (1 point)?

This makes me trust the document, because a letter to a friend is usually more personal and honest than a persuasive letter to somebody you don’t know or trust

2. (Close reading) What amazes Lincoln about the scene he sees on the boat (1 point)?

The cheerful and happy state of the chained men amazes him

**Document D:**  
1. (Corroboration) How do Lincoln’s views on slavery compare with John Bell Robinson’s (1 point)?

Lincoln believed that slavery is not necessary if it interferes with the peace whereas John Bell Robinson believes that slavery is what the world was destined to have.

***Organizing Your Evidence*** Name: Student C

Use this space to write your main points and the main points made by the other side.

**Abraham Lincoln was racist**: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

2) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

3) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

4) From Document \_\_\_\_\_:

**Abraham Lincoln was not racist**: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document \_\_A\_\_: In 1858, Stephen A. Douglas claimed that “*Mr. Lincoln believes that the Negro was born his equal and yours*”.

2) From Document \_\_A\_\_: Stephen A. Douglas states that “*Mr. Lincoln and the Black Republican party. . . are in favor of the citizenship of the Negro”*.

3) From Document \_\_B\_\_: Lincoln says, “*Negro is not my equal in many respects—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment. But in the right to eat the bread . . . which his own hand earns, he is my equal and the equal of every living man*”

4) From Document \_\_B\_\_: Lincoln says, “*there is no reason in the world why the Negro is not entitled to all the natural rights in the Declaration of Independence, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”*

Lincoln only says what he was pressured to say in the debate

Lincoln’s views are clearly very different compared to that of the average white citizen

**\*students will receive one point for identifying each document used and one point for each main point/evidence that supports their side**

Student C

***Coming to Consensus***

Starting now, you may abandon your assigned position and argue for either side.

Use the space below to outline your group’s agreement. Your agreement should address evidence and arguments from both sides.

**Is it appropriate to use the word “racist” when discussing events in the1860s? Can we judge people in the past by our standards?**

|  |
| --- |
| Abraham Lincoln was racist, although it is not effective to judge people in the past by our modern standards. He announced, “*I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong, having the superior position*” in 1858, strongly implying that he was racist, however in comparison to John Bell Robinson’s perspective, he is barely racist at all. When discussing a slaves on a ship, he described blacks as *“cheerful and apparently happy creatures”.* That is racist. While I can the see the other side, if you were forced to take a stance, racist or not racist, the evidence is overwhelming towards racist. |