

# [Lincoln/Net: Abraham Lincoln Historical Digitization Project](http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/)



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## **Lincoln/Net: Abraham Lincoln Historical Digitization Project**

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With an emphasis on Abraham Lincoln's years in Illinois, 1830-1861, and a wealth of material outside that period, "Lincoln/Net" is a multi-media, multi-purpose Website. Created and maintained at Northern Illinois University, "Lincoln/Net" represents a collaborative effort by educational institutions, archives, and museums, including the Newberry Library, the Chicago Historical Society, the Illinois State Archives, and the University of Chicago. Designed to reach a general audience, which the site's creators believe "historians have largely abandoned in recent decades," this online archive guides visitors through the sources in a focused way by bringing the "findings and debates of American historians" to the Internet. The goal is to help users think

historically and to ask questions that make full use of the site's databases. Accordingly, the materials have been grouped into eight thematic sections: frontier settlement; Native American relations; economic development; women's experience and gender roles; African-Americans' experience and American racial attitudes; law and society; religion and culture; and political development. There is, of course, significant attention devoted to Lincoln's biography.

For each of the major themes, there is a guide to accompanying primary sources, with image galleries, maps, and audio and video clips. Slide shows offer good visuals and helpful narration, and they succeed in providing overall background context for major historical developments of the period. In the "Lincoln's Biography" section, there is a similar organization in place, with a summary, primary sources, and visual images. To help viewers through this material, the site provides video clips of historical commentary by prominent historians, including Eric Foner.

Educators especially may appreciate the contents and organization of the site. The "Teacher's Parlor" link takes visitors to well designed and engaging lesson plans. For example, in a lesson on alcohol and temperance in the nineteenth century, the lyrics and downloadable rendition of "King Alcohol" lend immediacy to the subject. The "lesson plans" section is divided into materials for teaching the antebellum era, the Civil War era, and the Gilded Age. With detailed objectives, clear instructions for background reading, links to primary sources, and exercises based on the site, the lessons are ready to use and linked to state standards.

Much of the site is easily adaptable to classroom purposes. Indeed, a laudable feature of "Lincoln/Net" is how user-friendly it is. Easily downloadable audio and video links can be readily integrated into the lessons on the site or used for creating new ones. Thirteen video clips comprise the "women and gender" video section. For the history of the Black Hawk Indian War of 1832, in which Lincoln served as a member of the Illinois militia, the site documents his activities but more importantly provides the larger historical context, with maps, first-person battlefield accounts, and government records. In the section on "Native American Relations," the selections break down a full video, "Lincoln and Black Hawk," into many discreet and briefer subsections. Other video clips include eminent scholars such as John Mack Faragher and Kathryn Kish Sklar presenting brief overviews of topics such as "Singing on the Illinois Frontier" and "Education, Culture, and the Patterns of Frontier Settlement."

In the interactive resources section, visitors will find informative maps that can be manipulated to highlight topics of interest, such as the distribution of churches of different sects in 1850 and 1860; this distribution can then be explored to break the numbers down according to sect, for example. Other maps detail voting patterns in presidential elections from 1840 through 1864. Clicking on two interesting maps showing U.S. population distribution in 1850 and 1860 allows users to view the figures by state and by numbers of free

blacks, slaves, and whites.

With links to other online archives, such as [Mr. Lincoln's Virtual Library](#) and [From Slavery to Freedom: The African-American Pamphlet Collection, 1822-1909](#), both at the Library of Congress, and to [The Valley of the Shadow project](#) on two communities in the Civil War, the site's creators steer visitors to some of the best sites on the Web for those interested in the histories of slavery, race, and the Civil War.

"Lincoln/Net" seeks to foster deep historical understanding while reaching multiple audiences, including history buffs and educators. With a site that locates its central figure, Abraham Lincoln, within the context of numerous complex historical developments, "Lincoln/Net" promises to go a long way toward succeeding in its goals.

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