



With Malice toward None: Lincoln's Assassination

LESSON 4

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Lincoln's Assassination and the Manhunt for Booth

On April 11, 1865, Abraham Lincoln delivered a speech from the White House about the challenges of reconstructing the nation after the Civil War. In his speech, he publicly endorsed black voting rights for the first time and sent a clear message that the way forward had to be peaceful. Yet, there were some people who thought otherwise. Among those in attendance was John Wilkes Booth, a well-known actor, Confederate sympathizer, and white supremacist. Booth found Lincoln's ideas radical and unacceptable, and upon hearing Lincoln endorse voting rights for blacks, he declared, "I'll put him through." While Booth had previously conspired with others to kidnap the president, after hearing Lincoln's speech, he changed the plans to murder.

On April 14, 1865, President and Mrs. Lincoln attended a play, *Our American Cousin*, at Ford's Theatre. Around 10:00 p.m., Booth entered the private box where the Lincolns were sitting and fired a pistol at the back of the president's head. Booth then leapt to the stage, cried out "Sic semper tyrannis!" ("Thus, always to tyrants!"), and fled into the night. Lincoln died early the next morning.

After the shooting, officials immediately launched a manhunt for Booth and his conspirators. Booth eluded federal authorities

The background information continues on page 2.

FEATURED RESOURCES

- *\$100,000 reward!* broadside, 1865
- *Booth—The Murderer*, photograph, 1865
- Analysis worksheet
- Excerpts of Lincoln's last public address, April 11, 1865 (Educator note: This handout is for use with the extension activity.)

Copies of these materials are provided at the end of the lesson. All primary sources are from the Chicago History Museum collection.

ILLINOIS STATE LEARNING STANDARDS

English Language Arts

Goal 3: Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information.

Social Science

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION (continued)

for twelve days, but he was finally caught on April 26, in a Virginia tobacco barn hiding out with David Herold. (Interestingly, on the *\$100,000 reward!* broadside, David C. Herold is listed as "Daniel C. Harrold." The error probably occurred because the posters were printed very quickly and Herold was not widely known. Later printings misspelled his name as David C. Harold.) Herold surrendered. Booth resisted and was shot and killed. In the end, authorities captured seven of Booth's co-conspirators. Herold, George Atzerodt, Lewis Powell (aka Lewis Paine), and Mary Surratt were arrested and then hung for the crime. Samuel Arnold, Michael O'Laughlin, and Edman (Edward) Spangler were sent to prison.

PRIMARY SOURCES: DESCRIPTIONS AND SUGGESTED ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

Educator note: Use the worksheet (provided at the end of the lesson) to introduce your students to the primary sources. The questions below are provided for a more in-depth analysis.

● *\$100,000 reward!* broadside, 1865

Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton directed the manhunt for Lincoln's assassin. When this broadside was issued, Booth and Herold were hiding out in rural Maryland while John Surratt, one of their original accomplices, had fled to Canada.

- What information does the broadside give readers?
- How does it persuade people to help in the search?

● *Booth—The Murderer*, photograph, 1865

During the manhunt, small photographs of Booth were widely circulated. This photograph was posted in the doorway of a Union army building at Point Lookout, Maryland, site of a Civil War hospital and Confederate prisoner-of-war camp.

- How would you describe this photograph?
- What part of the photograph is most significant? Why?

● Analysis questions for this collection

- Study the photograph of Booth and the reward poster. How does the description in the poster compare with what you see in the photograph?
- How is breaking news reported today?

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SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Choose the instructional strategy that works best for your classroom and feel free adapt the activity to meet the needs of your students. Please duplicate these materials to share with other educators.

Option 1: Breaking news

Distribute the reward poster to the class (or view it together) and hold a discussion about the words on it. Explain that Civil War–era authorities used newspapers, telegrams, letters, word of mouth, and broadsides, like this one, to spread news. Discuss how breaking news is reported today (for example, radio or television stations will interrupt their broadcasts to make a special announcement).

Group students into threes or fours and ask them to write a 100-word radio or television announcement about Abraham Lincoln's assassination or the national manhunt for John Wilkes Booth and his co-conspirators. Prompt the groups to start their broadcast with "We interrupt this program to bring you this breaking news. . . ." Instruct students to include information from the reward poster and their own persuasive language. Give groups time to develop their broadcast and then ask them to share their announcements with the rest of the class.

Option 2: Photo op

Using the analysis worksheet, ask the class to take a closer look at the photograph of John Wilkes Booth. List details in the picture that help identify Booth, and brainstorm ideas about why authorities chose to use this photograph.

JOURNAL PROMPTS

Option 1: The photograph of Booth is just an ordinary portrait, but it is historically valuable because of the story of how it was used. Do you have a family photograph that has an interesting story behind it? Describe the photograph and its story.

Option 2: What do you think Booth was trying to accomplish when he assassinated President Lincoln? What were the consequences of Lincoln's death?

LISTENING TO HISTORY

With Malice toward None history soundscape

Available at <http://www.chicagohistory.org/lincolnjuarezaudio>

This short audio file sets the scene of Lincoln's assassination. You may play the soundscape at the start of the lesson to set the mood or prior to journal writing to inspire students' entries.

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EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Lincoln's last speech

Distribute copies of the excerpts from Lincoln's last public address. Have students work in small groups to analyze Lincoln's comments. To save time and help students focus, you may break the excerpts into sections and have each group work with one portion of the text. Ask students to summarize Lincoln's main points, rewrite the excerpt(s) in their own words, and read their rewrites aloud to the class. Hold a discussion about the content of the speech: What was Lincoln celebrating? What were his ideas regarding reconstruction? Remind students that John Wilkes Booth attended this speech. What idea did Lincoln endorse that so angered Booth?

War Department, Washington, April 20, 1865.

\$100,000 REWARD!

THE MURDERER

Of our late beloved President, ABRAHAM LINCOLN,
IS STILL AT LARGE.

\$50,000 REWARD!

will be paid by this Department for his apprehension, in addition to any reward offered by Municipal Authorities or State Executives.

\$25,000 REWARD!

will be paid for the apprehension of JOHN H. SURRETT, one of Booth's accomplices.

\$25,000 REWARD!

will be paid for the apprehension of DANIEL C. HARROLD, another of Booth's accomplices.

LIBERAL REWARDS will be paid for any information that shall conduce to the arrest of either of the above-named criminals, or their accomplices.

All persons harboring or secreting the said persons, or either of them, or aiding or assisting their concealment or escape, will be treated as accomplices in the murder of the President and the attempted assassination of the Secretary of State, and shall be subject to trial before a Military Commission and the punishment of **DEATH**.

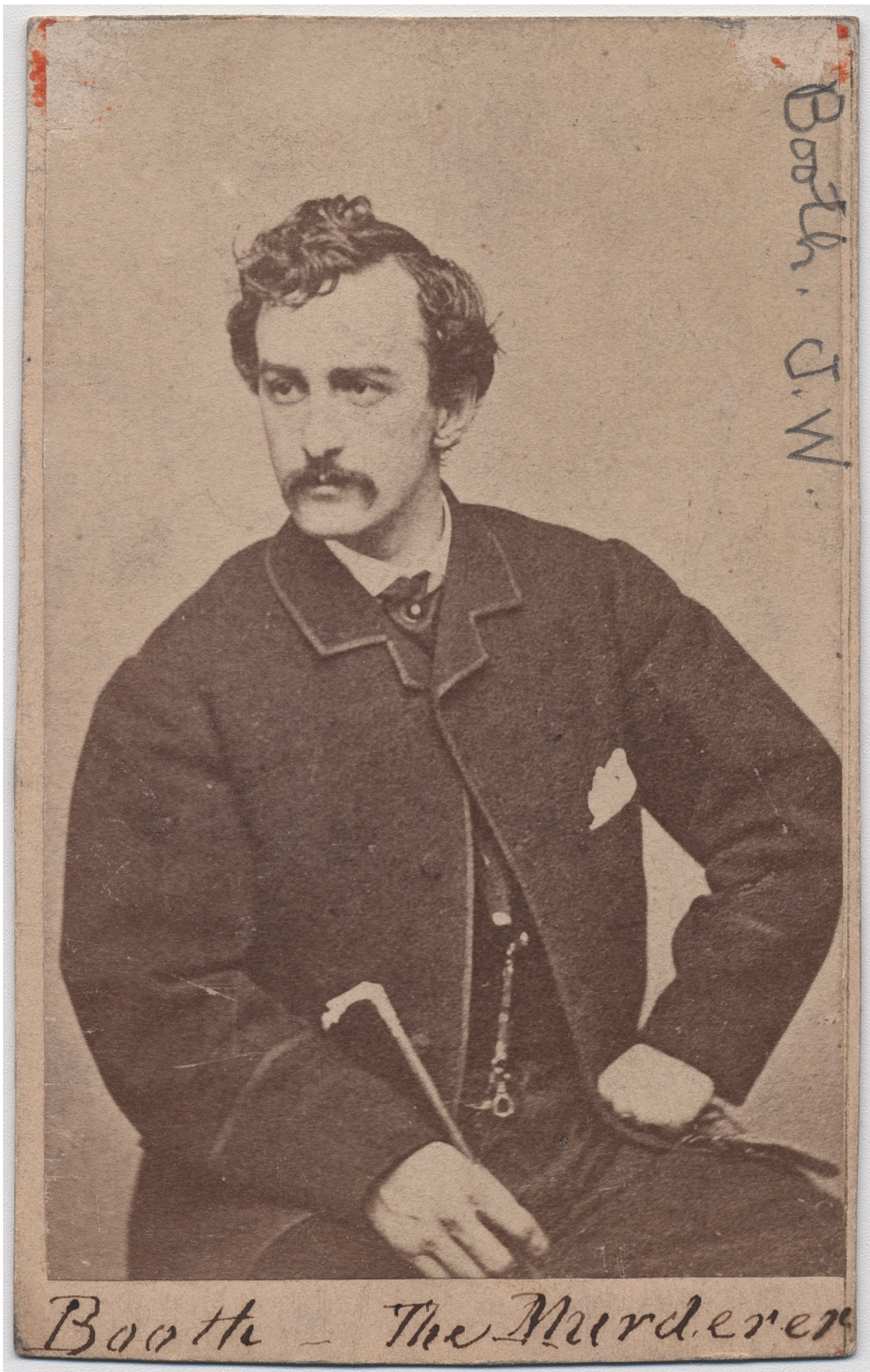
Let the stain of innocent blood be removed from the land by the arrest and punishment of the murderers.

All good citizens are exhorted to aid public justice on this occasion. Every man should consider his own conscience charged with this solemn duty, and rest neither night nor day until it be accomplished.

EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

DESCRIPTIONS.—BOOTH is 5 feet 7 or 8 inches high, slender build, high forehead, black hair, black eyes, and wears a heavy black moustache. JOHN H. SURRETT is about 5 feet 9 inches. Hair rather thin and dark; eyes rather light; no beard. Would weigh 145 or 150 pounds. Complexion rather pale and clear, with color in his cheeks. Wore light clothes of fine quality. Shoulders square; cheek bones rather prominent; chin narrow; ears projecting at the top; forehead rather low and square, but broad. Parts his hair on the right side; neck rather long. His lips are firmly set. A slim man. DANIEL C. HARROLD is 23 years of age, 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, rather broad shouldered, otherwise light built; dark hair, little (if any) moustache; dark eyes; weighs about 140 pounds.

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Booth—The Murderer, photograph, 1865

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NAME:

SOURCE:

- 1. Describe the source you are analyzing. What is it? When and where was it produced and by whom?

- 2. Examine it closely. What do you discover? List its powerful qualities, including colors, objects, figures, or words.

- 3. What message(s) is this source promoting? How?

- 4. Who is the intended audience?

- 5. What does this source tell you about life in the United States?

- 6. On a scale of 1 to 10, rank the truth or accuracy of this source (1 is not reliable, 10 is very reliable).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
(not reliable)										(very reliable)	

Explain your rank.

Excerpts from Lincoln's last public address April 11, 1865



- We meet this evening, not in sorrow, but in gladness of heart. The evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond, and the surrender of the principal insurgent army, give hope of a righteous and speedy peace whose joyous expression can not be restrained. In the midst of this, however, He, from Whom all blessings flow, must not be forgotten. A call for a national thanksgiving is being prepared, and will be duly promulgated. Nor must those whose harder part gives us the cause of rejoicing, be overlooked. Their honors must not be parceled out with others. I myself, was near the front, and had the high pleasure of transmitting much of the good news to you; but no part of the honor, for plan or execution, is mine. To Gen. Grant, his skillful officers, and brave men, all belongs.
- By these recent successes the re-inauguration of the national authority—reconstruction—which has had a large share of thought from the first, is pressed much more closely upon our attention. It is fraught with great difficulty. Unlike the case of a war between independent nations, there is no authorized organ for us to treat with. No one man has authority to give up the rebellion for any other man. We simply must begin with, and mould from, disorganized and discordant elements. Nor is it a small additional embarrassment that we, the loyal people, differ among ourselves as to the mode, manner, and means of reconstruction.
- We all agree that the seceded States, so called, are out of their proper practical relation with the Union; and that the sole object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those States is to again get them into that proper practical relation. It is also unsatisfactory to some that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man. I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers.
- Some twelve thousand voters in the heretofore slave-state of Louisiana have sworn allegiance to the Union . . . Their Legislature has already voted to ratify the constitutional amendment recently passed by Congress, abolishing slavery throughout the nation. These twelve thousand persons are thus fully committed to the Union, and to perpetual freedom in the state—committed to the very things, and nearly all the things the nation wants—and they ask the nations recognition, and its assistance to make good their committal . . . Again, if we reject Louisiana, we also reject one vote in favor of the proposed amendment to the national constitution. To meet this proposition, it has been argued that no more than three fourths of those States which have not attempted secession are necessary to validly ratify the amendment. I do not commit myself against this, further than to say that such a ratification would be questionable, and sure to be persistently questioned; while a ratification by three fourths of all the States would be unquestioned and unquestionable.
- In the present "*situation*" as the phrase goes, it may be my duty to make some new announcement to the people of the South. I am considering, and shall not fail to act, when satisfied that action will be proper.