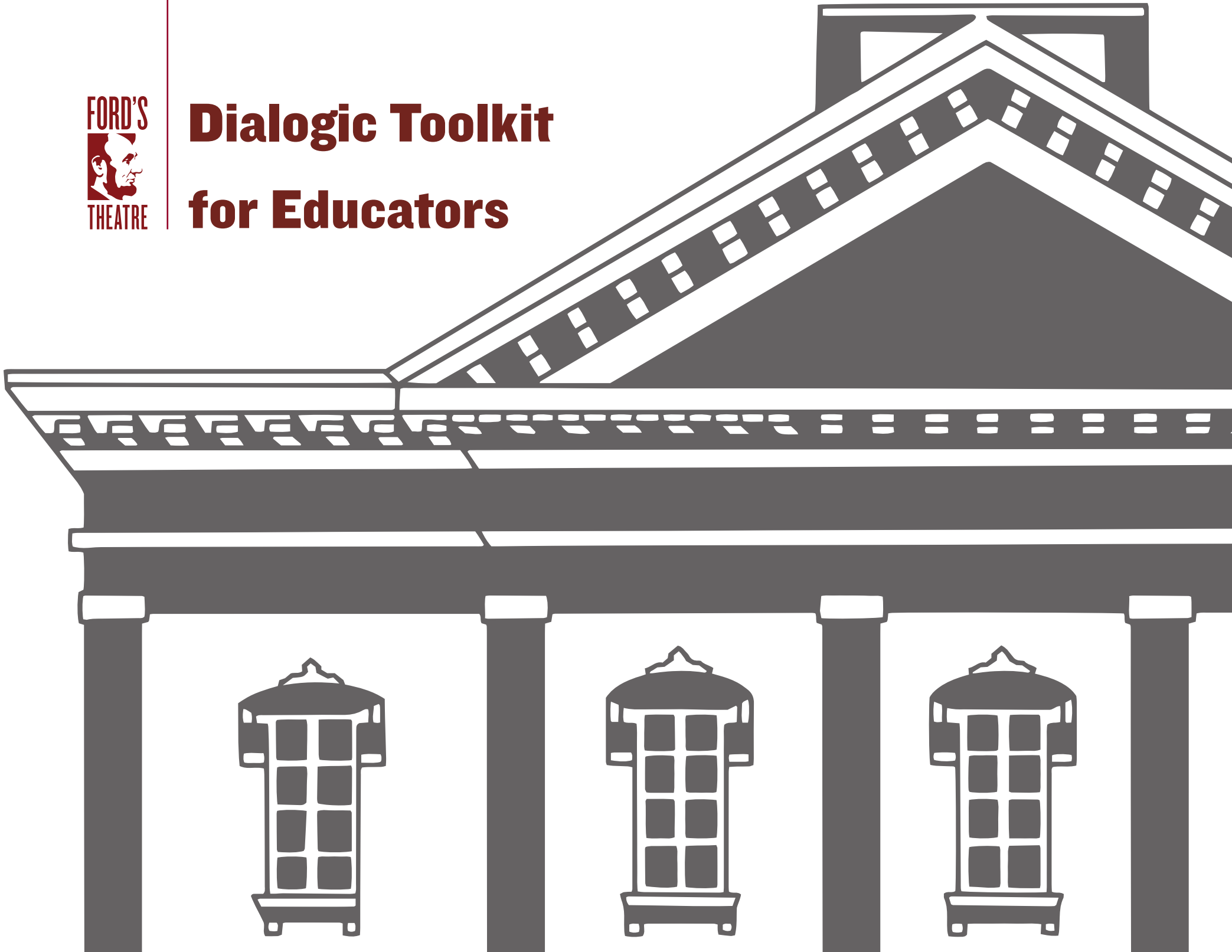




Dialogic Toolkit for Educators



Welcome to Ford's Theatre!

This toolkit is designed to help teachers and educators provide rich experiences for their students during visits to Ford's Theatre. Using the **Dialogic** techniques and information below, which Ford's Theatre developed in collaboration with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, teachers can facilitate students' personalized encounters with the life, death and legacy of Abraham Lincoln in the **Ford's Theatre Museum**.

What Is Dialogic Interpretation?

Dialogue is open-ended conversation with the goal of learning more about ourselves and those around us. As Lincoln told an audience in 1859, "The inclination to exchange thoughts with one another is probably an original impulse of our nature." Harnessing this idea, the dialogic interpretive framework is used in museums to break barriers between students and the subject of history by engaging them with its relevance to their own lives. Imagine the objects, events and stories associated with the presidency of Abraham Lincoln as a mirror. The dialogue you facilitate will challenge students to see themselves in new ways and connect objects and people from the past to their own experiences, challenges and future actions.

Your Most Common Tool: Dialogic Questions

The heart of dialogue is supporting people to better understand themselves while hearing similarities and differences with those around them. Dialogic questions do this by asking people **open-ended questions they can answer from lived experience**. You are encouraged to use the sample questions provided in this toolkit to get the dialogue going, but like all good conversations, listening and improvisation are key!

Land Acknowledgment

Ford's Theatre sits on some of the original homelands of the Piscataway and Nacotchtank peoples, who long lived, farmed and worked on this land. Ford's Theatre Society honors the continued traditions of both peoples, many of whom continue to live in a homeland together.



How To Use This Toolkit

This toolkit organizes the Ford's Theatre Museum by “stops” which correspond with themed exhibits. Although the stops are numbered, feel free to visit them out of order, or to skip some entirely as you see fit.

Each stop in this toolkit contains a paragraph of background information you may consider using to introduce exhibit material, tips to help you facilitate dialogue with students, as well as example questions for your use.

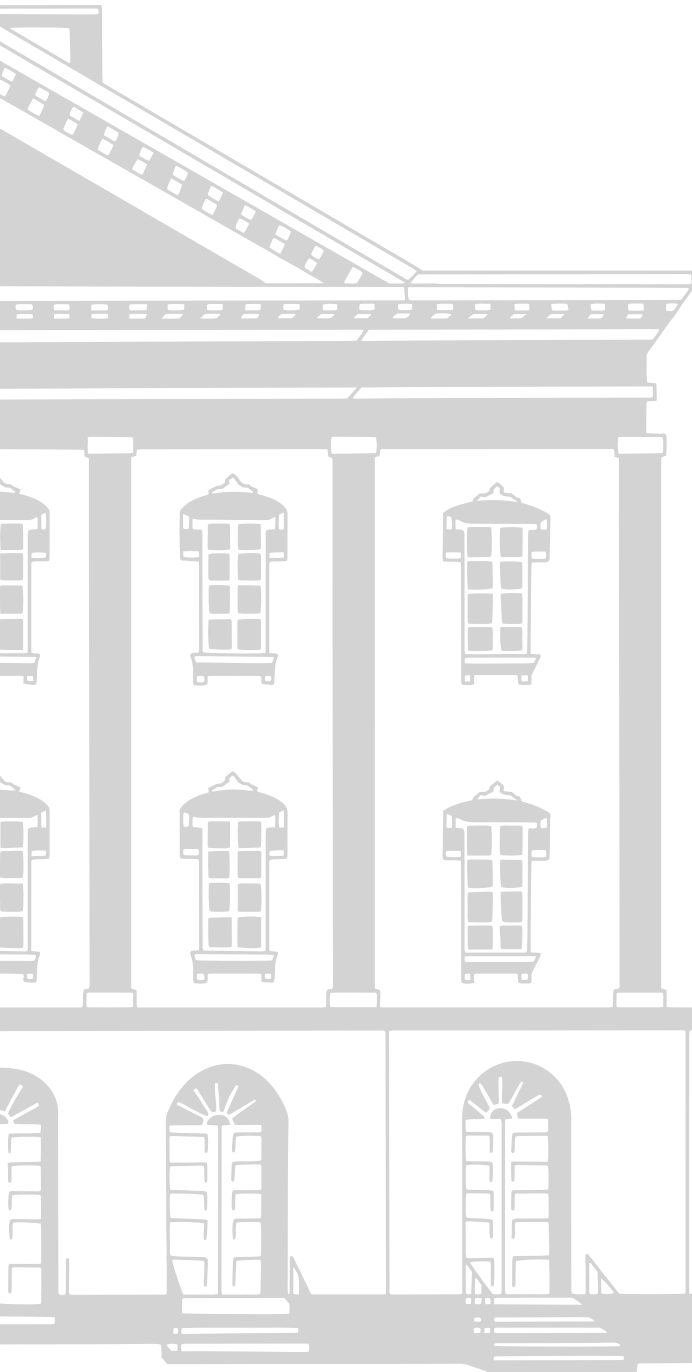
Timing

Since your time in the museum will be limited, we suggest spending no more than five minutes per stop, if you plan on seeing every stop. Otherwise, you might select certain stops and highlight them for longer. Follow your students' lead and interests and be aware of the time and other groups around you.

Keeping The Conversation Going

Effective dialogue is all about keeping participants engaged in the subject and with each other. Drawing on previous experiences with your students will be a powerful facilitation tool. Another way to encourage deeper student participation is to consider follow up questions that challenge student views or invite others to agree or disagree.

Another strategy is to create an arc to your dialogue by being thoughtful with the timing of questions and prompts. For example, ease students into dialogue with the history by first asking “observation” or “imagination” questions, transitioning to deeper “enduring,” “personal,” or “reflection” questions. In this way, your facilitation will ebb and flow in a way that draws students into communion with themselves and each other in relation to the history in front of them.



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Ford's Theatre Museum Map



Key

- 1 Pre-Program (in-line, on the bus)
- 2 1861 Inaugural/U.S. Capitol
- 3 Office Seekers
- 4 Life in the White House
- 5 Freedom Road
- 6 Gettysburg Address
- 7 1865 Inaugural
- 8 Conspirators
-  Men's Restroom
-  Women's Restroom
-  Elevator

Stop #1: Pre-Program (in-line, on the bus)

Around 10:15 p.m. on April 14, 1865, John Wilkes Booth shot President Abraham Lincoln at **Ford's Theatre**, changing the course of American history in unimaginable ways. Theatre attendees carried the unconscious president across the street to the **Petersen House**, where he died the next morning at 7:22 a.m. Today, Ford's Theatre is a site of memory and reflection on the life and legacy of the 16th president. The brickwork on the outside is original to the 1860s with one exception: the windows and brickwork around them dates to later construction. Almost everything *inside* the theatre is a 1960s-era reconstruction of what the interior looked like that fateful night.

Observation

What stands out to you about the Petersen House and Ford's Theatre?

Why is Ford's Theatre still a place worth visiting?

Imagination

Picture what this street looked like in 1865. What would you imagine would be the same, what would be different?

The Civil War was almost over in April 1865. Describe how you might have felt at the time.

Personal

What do you know about Ford's Theatre?

What do you know about Abraham Lincoln?

Have you visited a site of political violence before? If so, what made those acts similar and different from Lincoln's murder at Ford's Theatre?

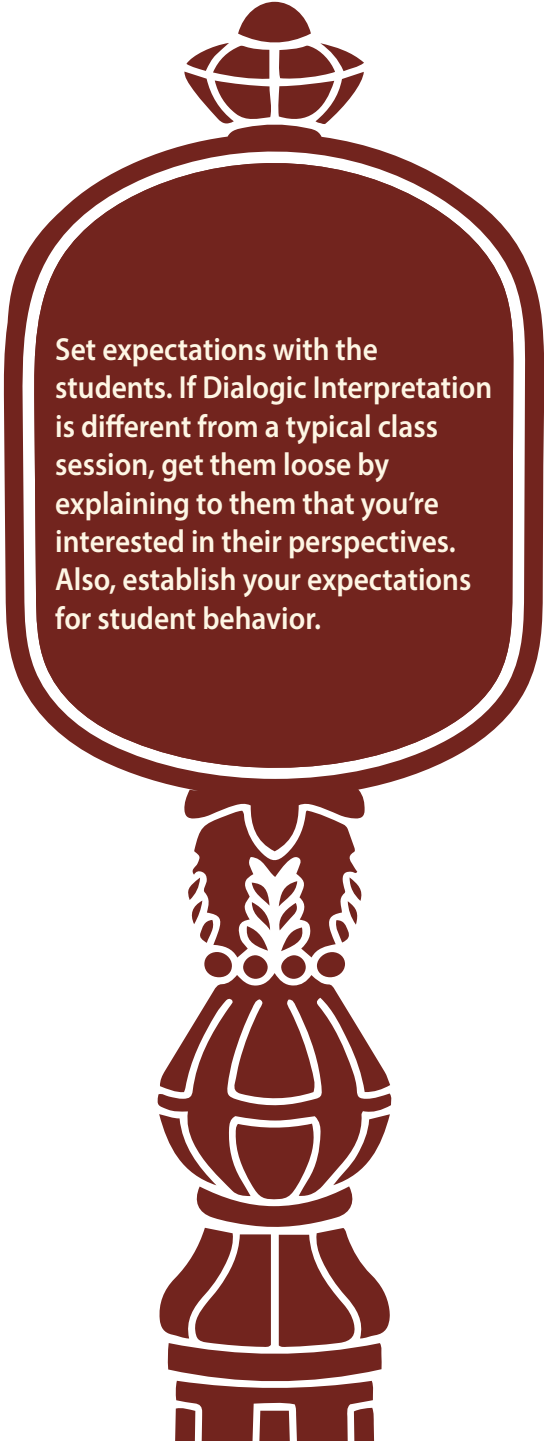
Enduring

What makes a place worth preserving?

How can the past help us shape the future?

Reflection/Call to Action

What are you curious about before we go inside?



Set expectations with the students. If Dialogic Interpretation is different from a typical class session, get them loose by explaining to them that you're interested in their perspectives. Also, establish your expectations for student behavior.

Stop #2: 1861 Inaugural/U.S. Capitol

Abraham Lincoln took the **oath of office** in March 1861 in front of the unfinished Capitol building amid great national tension. Southern states had seceded from the United States over his election. The new Confederate States of America felt threatened. As free Black and white laborers worked on expanding the Capitol, an enslaved man, Philip Reid, worked on the statue that would one day stand on top of the Capitol dome. During his first inaugural speech, **Lincoln urged calm and compromise**, telling the Southern states that "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies." He also appealed to their common history dating back to the American Revolution.

Imagination

What did the Declaration of Independence's line "All men are created equal" mean when Lincoln took office in 1861?

Personal

When did you have to do something that was difficult? What made it difficult?

What does it mean to be calm?

Enduring

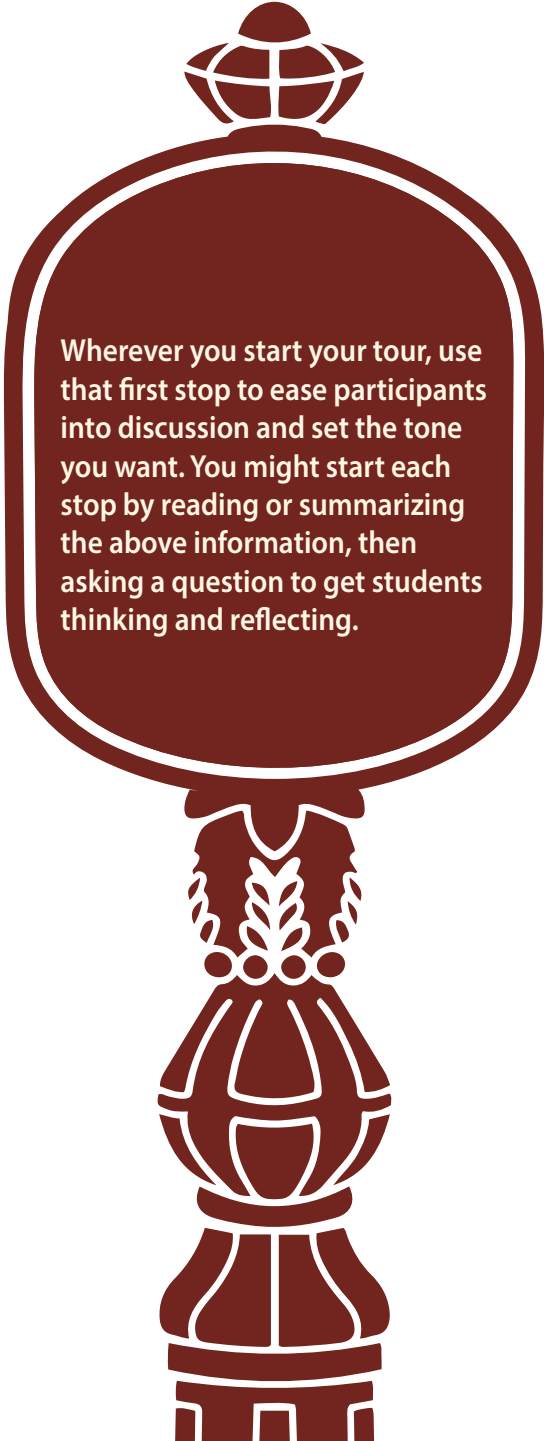
What do you think is still unfinished today?

What is the role of compromise when making decisions with others? When do you stand firm?

Reflection/Call to Action

How can you be a leader to your friends and/or family during a time of crisis?

How will you stay calm during a time of crisis?



Wherever you start your tour, use that first stop to ease participants into discussion and set the tone you want. You might start each stop by reading or summarizing the above information, then asking a question to get students thinking and reflecting.

Stop #3: Office Seekers

Lincoln believed an important part of his job as president was to **meet the public** who lined up daily to speak with him at the White House. Representations of these visitors are shown as statues at this exhibit. These visitors came from all walks of life and wanted to see Lincoln for many different reasons: government jobs, ideas about emancipation and the war, and sometimes simply to shake his hand. Lincoln signaled a massive change in custom by welcoming Black visitors to the White House, which validated their claims to equal citizenship. **Lincoln sought Black leaders' advice** on emancipation, Black enlistment in the U.S. army, and other issues of importance.

Observation

What kinds of people do you see?

Who is not represented?

Imagination

If you could talk to President Lincoln, what issue would you like to discuss with him?

If you were a leader, how do you decide who gets your help?

Personal

What makes it easier or harder to listen to somebody?

Which statue do you empathize with? Why?

Enduring

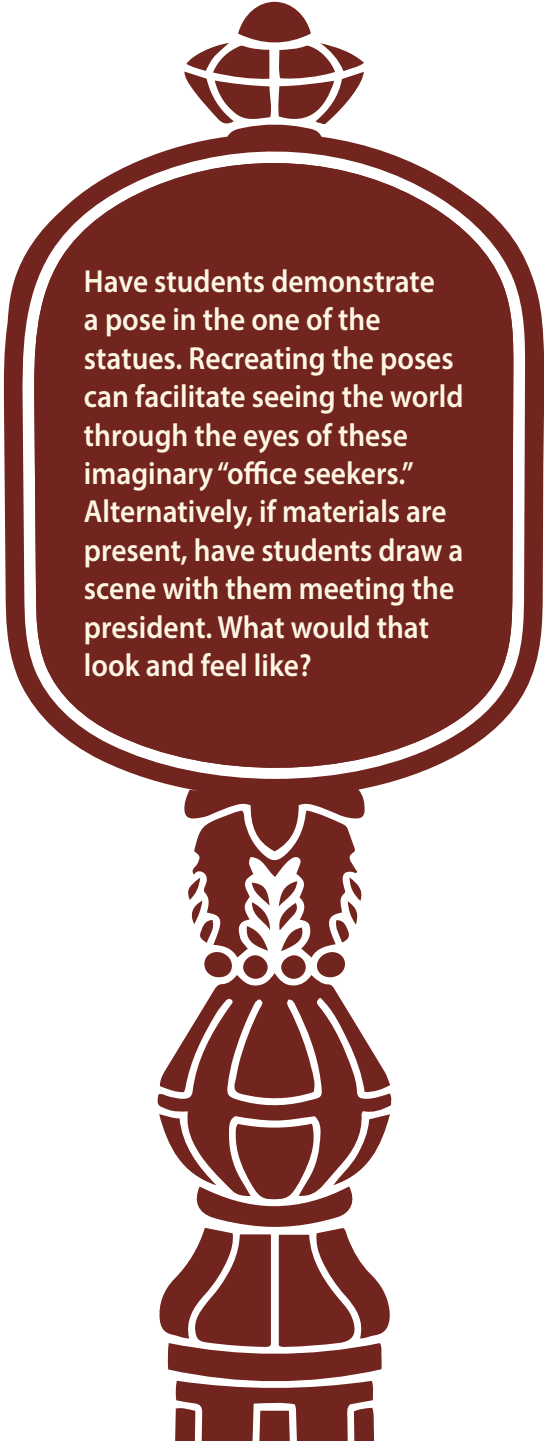
What does it mean to be responsible for others?

Is asking for help a strength or weakness? Why or why not?

Reflection/Call to Action

Who would you advocate for in the present?

Who or what is there to help you when you're feeling down?



Have students demonstrate a pose in the one of the statues. Recreating the poses can facilitate seeing the world through the eyes of these imaginary "office seekers." Alternatively, if materials are present, have students draw a scene with them meeting the president. What would that look and feel like?

Stop #4: Life in the White House

We remember Abraham Lincoln today as the 16th president of the United States. For Mary and Tad Lincoln, as well as scores of White House servants, **Abraham was first a husband, father, and employer.** Together, they all navigated the stresses of daily life in the wartime at the White House. The Lincoln family suffered a tragedy in early 1862 with the **death of Willie Lincoln** from an illness called typhoid fever. Stress and loss made life difficult at the White House for the Lincolns, but life was not all misery. The family hosted parties, President Lincoln could be heard laughing from his office with visitors and colleagues, and Tad Lincoln playing soldier – his toy sword is on display – was a common sight.

Observation

Find an object that represents joy.

Find an object that represents sorrow.

Imagination

Photography in Lincoln's time was difficult and time consuming. Imagine camera technology was still limited and you could only take three pictures per year. Who or what would you photograph?

Personal

How do you handle stress?

What are ways in which your community celebrates together? Mourns together?

Enduring

How do we choose joy when sorrow is so prevalent in the world?

What do sorrow and joy look like?

Reflection/Call to Action

How will you choose joy today?

How do you cope when things get tough?



Stop #5: Freedom Road

From the beginning of the Civil War, Americans understood that **slavery caused the war**. Congress, the president, and the public debated how to solve interlinked problems: keeping the Union together, abolishing slavery, and assisting the transition of four million formerly enslaved people into society. Privately, Lincoln wanted to strike against slavery, but publicly, he was afraid rash action would cause more states to secede, making abolition's future almost impossible. Abolitionist leaders like Frederick Douglass and many other individuals and organizations met with Lincoln on the subject. Sometimes, they strongly disagreed with Lincoln's tactics and ideas about abolition. Through dialogue and experience, **Lincoln's private opinions became his public policy**. Ultimately, Lincoln issued the **Emancipation Proclamation** – which allowed Black soldiers to enlist in the army – and publicly supported the **13th Amendment**, abolishing slavery forever.

Observation

What do you think these men are feeling in this moment? What clues do you see that lead you to that conclusion?

Imagination

What factors would have influenced people's support for and reactions to issues such as emancipation and the expansion of equal political rights?

Why are guarantees of equal political rights important in society?

Personal

When have you achieved something that seemed unattainable?

When have you stood up for others?

Enduring

When is it important to listen to people with different views than your own? When is it important to persist despite them?

When did you learn something that contradicted what you already thought you knew?



Have students pick one person portrayed in the USCT photo. Challenge them to look closely for 30 seconds and have them describe facial expressions and what they might mean.

Stop #6: Gettysburg Address

A few months after the decisive Battle of Gettysburg, President Lincoln was invited to help dedicate a new memorial cemetery to honor the fallen soldiers. The short speech he recited in November 1863 has since become one of the most revered speeches in U.S. history. In his **Gettysburg Address**, Lincoln eloquently spoke about the Civil War as a test of whether a government that claimed "All men are created equal" could exist in the face of opposition by an enemy who thought holding people as slaves was their right. This history-defining idea was why the sacrifice of the soldiers was considered a holy act that **challenged the living** to carry on the work of defining freedom for future generations.

Observation

What does Lincoln say makes a place "sacred ground?"

Imagination

What was Lincoln feeling as he wrote this speech?

This exhibit features a video showing former presidents reading the Gettysburg Address. What might these former presidents have to say about Lincoln's legacy?

Personal

Are there places that you consider "sacred ground" in national or your personal history?

What work do we have to do to ensure freedom for everyone?

Enduring

What makes a place "sacred?"

How should we respect sacred places?

Reflection/Call to Action

How can we use sacred spaces to find common ground?

How can we dedicate spaces to unify people?



Oratory is a powerful tool that empowers students. Have students "remix" the Gettysburg Address in their own words. Invite students to give their own "Gettysburg Address!" Students may also have already visited Gettysburg or will visit there one day. Use students' existing knowledge throughout the tour to help them explore ideas.

Stop #7: 1865 Inaugural

By the time Lincoln took the **oath of office** again in March 1865, the war was almost over. The rebel armies barely had enough men or supplies to keep the fight going. An anxious nation now wondered: what would happen next? How would the rebellious states and their citizens be brought back into the Union? What would citizenship even mean now that slavery was abolished? Lincoln did not answer these questions with his 2nd inaugural address, but he did set a tone that **signaled how he would move forward**. He stressed forgiveness, while also challenging the nation to understand the war as a divine struggle for justice.

Observation

What are "the wounds" he refers to in this speech?

Who has "carried the battle?"

Imagination

What might different people feel hearing these words?

If you were leading at this time, how would you bring the nation together?

Personal

What do you do to repair a relationship?

When do you forgive and let go? When is it important to people hold people accountable?

Enduring

When is justice about punishment?

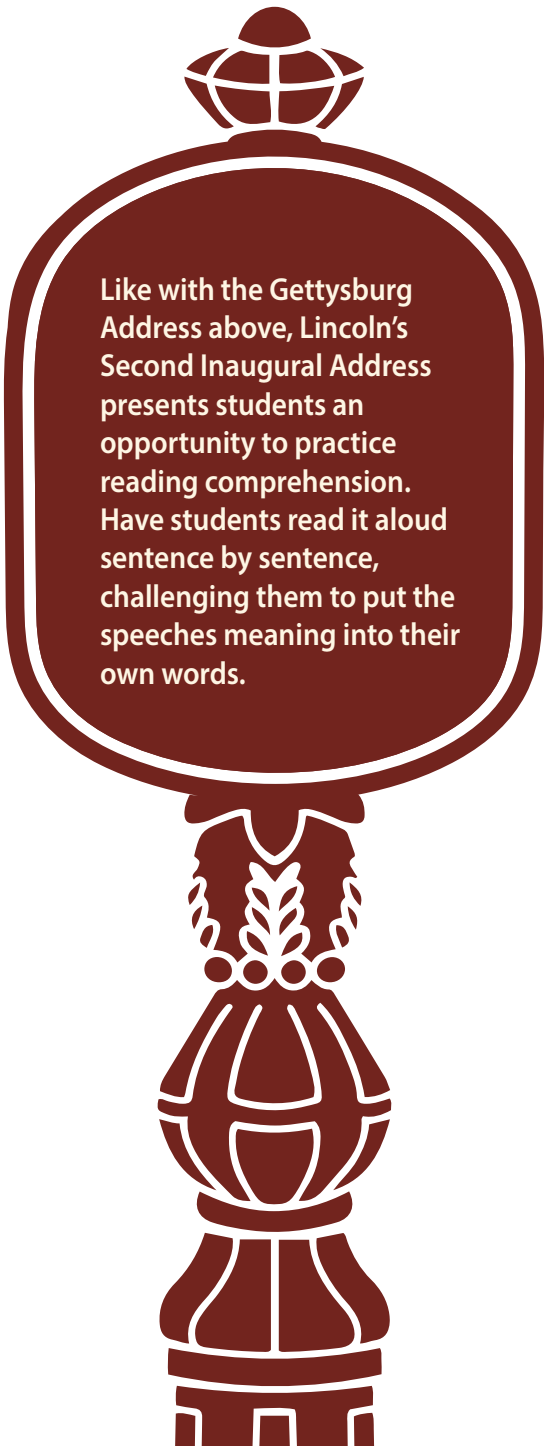
When is justice about forgiveness?

Reflection/Call to Action

How could "With malice towards none, and charity for all" be applied today?

What is a piece of unfinished work in society you want to continue?

How could you contribute?



Like with the Gettysburg Address above, Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address presents students an opportunity to practice reading comprehension. Have students read it aloud sentence by sentence, challenging them to put the speeches meaning into their own words.

Stop #8: Conspirators

As Lincoln and others worked towards solving the many problems posed by the Civil War, famous actor **John Wilkes Booth** grew hateful towards the president and the United States. Why? Foremost in Booth's mind was that America was "a white man's country," and **Lincoln's and the U.S. government's evolving stance** towards abolition and equal rights meant ending the entrenched racial hierarchy Booth coveted. As early as late 1864, Booth began working with **conspirators** to kidnap Lincoln. By March 1865, Booth, desperate over the inevitable Southern loss, turned his plot from kidnapping to murder.

Observation

Find something familiar to you in your life.

Find something unusual.

What do these objects say about the conspirators?

Imagination

Is each conspirator equally guilty?

Personal

How do you check your emotions to prevent yourself from making bad choices?

A friend comes to you for help when they have done something wrong. Do you help them?

Enduring

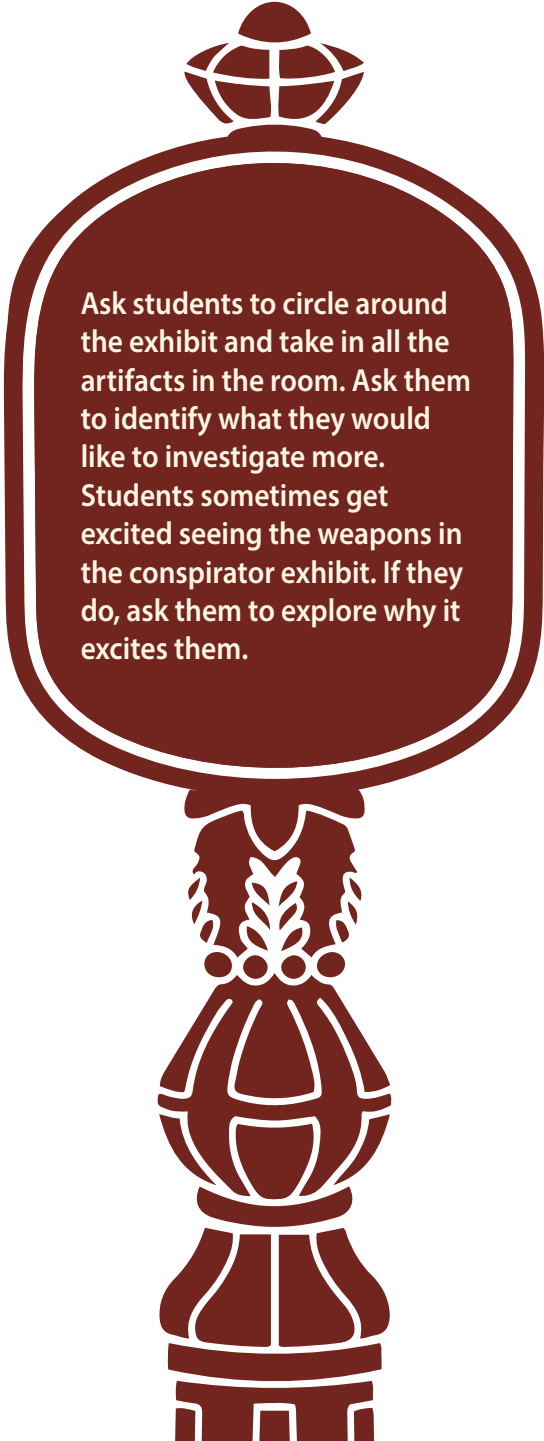
What is the best way to reach out to somebody who is having a hard time?

Why is violence a harmful way to effect long-lasting change?

Reflection/Call to Action

How will you think and act carefully in the future?

What will make it easier for you to self-reflect?



Ask students to circle around the exhibit and take in all the artifacts in the room. Ask them to identify what they would like to investigate more. Students sometimes get excited seeing the weapons in the conspirator exhibit. If they do, ask them to explore why it excites them.

More To See at Ford's Theatre

After visiting the Ford's Theatre Museum, you and your students will have the opportunity to experience firsthand the space in which history changed forever on April 14, 1865. If available, students may experience a Ranger Talk by an interpretive professional with the National Park Service or a performance of *One Destiny*, an original one-act play based on the experiences of two eyewitnesses to Lincoln's assassination that fateful night. You can visit www.fords.org to learn more about other educational experiences at Ford's Theatre.

The Ford's Theatre campus on 10th Street NW also includes two spaces where visitors can learn more about Abraham Lincoln's death, its impact, and Lincoln's legacy. At the Petersen House, across the street from Ford's Theatre, students can experience the shooting's immediate, chaotic aftermath and Lincoln's final hours before his death.

Leaving from the Petersen House, students can visit the Aftermath Exhibits. Here, students will experience the profound international mourning of the slain president and the tense 12-day manhunt for his killer and co-conspirators. Lincoln's lasting impact on American culture and politics is also explored here.

The Petersen House and Aftermath Exhibits are optional experiences. If time permits, teachers are encouraged to bring students here to engage in further dialogue.

Post Visit

After your time at Ford's Theatre, you may want students to reflect on their experience. This can be immediately after exiting Ford's Theatre, on the bus ride home, or in the classroom. This is an opportunity for participants to reflect on what they learned about Lincoln, themselves, or each other, how their experience at Ford's Theatre challenged what they previously knew, or how what they learned relates to other experiences they had while in Washington, D.C.. You may also want to explore further educational resources at www.fords.org to create lesson plans, assignments, or further explore Abraham Lincoln, his assassination, and his legacy.

Observation

What did you learn that surprised you?

What is Lincoln's legacy?

Personal

What do you want to know more about?

What part of Abraham Lincoln's legacy do you want to carry on in your life?

Enduring

How do you want to build a more perfect union?

What does Abraham Lincoln's death mean for Americans in the 21st century?

Reflection/Call to Action

Consider the legacies which surround students in their hometown. Who or what is their school named for?

What is a piece of local history you want more people to know about?



If students took pictures while at Ford's Theatre, or in Washington, D.C., have them look through the photos they took or appeared in. Have them share their favorite memory of their trip and why they will remember it.

What Next?

The goal of dialogic interpretation is that participants use group conversations with content to grow as citizens and individuals. The best dialogues are those in which this learning happens not only for participants, but for the teacher as well! Now that you have engaged your students in dialogic interpretation, take time to reflect on your experience as a facilitator. Below are some questions to help shape future dialogic exercises.

Facilitator Follow-Up

- The next time you engage in this style of teaching, what would you do differently?
- How did your groups' dynamics influence the dialogue?
- What did you learn about your students as a group or as individuals?
- How might you build on this experience in future lesson planning?

As you continue to influence the next generation of citizens, we hope you incorporate this type of engagement with students so that they may continue the unfinished work of forming a more perfect union for themselves and succeeding generations.

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