



## Activity #1 – “Good” and “Bad” Leaders:

- Target grade level: secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: leadership, responsibility
1. Divide the class into small groups to discuss what they see in a leader.
  2. Have one group or two suggest examples of “good leaders” (can be well-known or personal to them), and list attributes that make them good leaders. Have another group or two do the same with a list of “bad leaders” and associated traits.
  3. Then have the good leaders group(s) write on one end of a chalkboard those characteristics, and on the other end the bad leaders group(s) write their listed characteristics.
  4. When completed with the lists side-by-side, make observations and conclusions.
  5. An extension question would be to probe these questions: Could one leader perhaps be on both lists? Are those traits developed or learned?

## Activity #2 – The Leadership Table

- Target grade level: secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: leadership
1. Draw on a piece of paper a large oval conference-type table with eight to ten chairs around it. Copy and distribute one to each student.
  2. Ask students to imagine if they could assemble together all the examples of those that impacted and influenced them into who they are today. Who would those individuals be? Have them draw a name card on the table in front of each chair with the first name of the person, and one word which describes what quality about that person impacted the participant.
  3. When finished have the participants share if willing.
  4. An extension question would be to ask these questions: Which character qualities do you think you have adopted? What does that say about what you value in your life? Also ask, if someone in your life did the same thing, might you possibly be at that person’s table, and for what reasons?

## Activity #3 – Lincoln As Emerging Leader

- Target grade level: secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: leadership, humility
1. Make copies and administer to each student Abraham Lincoln’s first campaign speech from March 9, 1832. Have students underline or highlight the phrases which strike them as to how Lincoln is an emerging leader.

2. Distribute large post-it notes and have them write in a marker a key word or phrase describing their reactions to the speech, especially in regards to what a leader is or should be. Have them post their post-its on the board for all to see. (Hopefully they will pull out phrases like humility and integrity)
3. Ask the class why those were important to Lincoln and how they are vital traits for leadership today.
4. Have students write down what emerging leadership qualities they see in themselves, and qualities what they have yet to work on, and how they might use the qualities now and in the future.

## **Activity #4 – Lincoln’s Credo and Yours**

- Target grade level: secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: vision, leadership
1. Have students read up on Lincoln’s actions and speeches from 1854-1860 in the time of Lincoln’s “reawakening” to politics.
  2. Using those speeches and words, have students determine on their own or in a small group what Lincoln’s credo (or core principles or values) were. Have the students write up a list of the values.
  3. Compile on the board the lists students come up with. These are the values which determined Lincoln’s credo. Have students observe similar results among the lists.
  4. Then have the students develop their own credo. This allows the opportunity of analysis of historical leadership and values through Lincoln to their personal lives and to the examination of their own personal values.

## **Activity #5 – Storytelling As a Leadership Skill**

- Target grade level: elementary/secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: leadership, communication
1. Read accounts of Lincoln’s storytelling to the class, and relay how oration and storytelling was integral to Lincoln’s personal and political success.
  2. Then have the students write up an event in their life that they are willing to share, writing it as if they are making a speech telling an entertaining story. It can be just a minute or so in length.
  3. Have students deliver the stories to the class.
  4. Emphasize to students the importance of storytelling (and even how delivering speeches is really storytelling), and how this develops the skills of public speaking.

## **Activity #6 – Lincoln and Constitutional Leadership**

- Target grade level: secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: leadership
1. Examine the nature of Lincoln’s constitutional leadership by examining the criticisms that he may have violated the Constitution through the suppression of habeas corpus. To do so, have students read Lincoln’s message on habeas corpus. Then have them read the opinion of Chief Justice Roger Taney on Lincoln and habeas corpus
  2. Divide the class into two groups: one side defending Lincoln’s use of habeas corpus; the other side taking side of Justice Taney. They should talk for a few minutes in their small groups to determine the points from the reading that defend their side.

3. Have them debate the merits of habeas corpus and whether Lincoln suspension of habeas corpus was a correct or an incorrect use of presidential leadership.

## **Activity #7 – Living Out the Gettysburg Address**

- Target grade level: elementary/secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: responsibility, leadership
1. Have the students listen to a recorded online version of the Gettysburg Address being recited (Jeff Daniels version is a good one). Listening sometimes allows a renewed appreciation from simply reading it. Before listening have the students imagine if Lincoln were giving the speech today.
  2. Divide the class into small groups and distribute a half sheet of paper and a marker to each group. Have the students in groups write down what Lincoln is suggesting that citizens do (complete the great unfinished tasks before us, devotion to that cause which they gave their last measure of devotion).
  3. Then underneath that have students propose what specific things, if Lincoln were living today, he might believe that we should be doing to live that out. Have students tape the lists on the wall anywhere in the rooms, and take turns having them share.

## **Activity #8 – Take the Lead**

- Target grade level: elementary/secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: responsibility, leadership
1. Have students identify a need in the school or community and develop a plan to help. This might take the form of or another project that displays care for others. For younger students, it might be volunteer programs within the school, tutoring other students, volunteering in the library, holding a book and magazine drive for a retirement home, crocheting of hats and blankets for newborns, providing support to students who are recovering from an injury or dealing with a medical condition, or gathering work for students who miss school.
  2. For advanced students have them propose a project which they could undertake to help the community. It could perhaps be something as simple as a community trash pick-up campaign or a civility campaign or a project to help their city. They might even approach the city government for assistance. The opportunity to work as a team encourages collaboration and promotes character building.
  3. Students could visit the next year's class so that new students could be inspired to continue that project or start something new.

## **Activity # 9 – Solving Conflict Peacefully**

- Target grade level: elementary
  - Character quality emphasized: conflict resolution, leadership
1. Discuss conflict, and how often small conflicts lead to larger fights. Read each one to the group and allow them to discuss ways to solve the problem described. In each case, ask the students what they think would happen if the participants were to have a fight about the problem, or have the students role play the situation and role play a possible peaceful resolution.
    1. Phyllis and Greg are brother and sister. They both like to have a snack after school. One day there was one piece of chocolate cake in the cupboard. Both of them wanted the piece of cake. What could they do to solve the conflict?

2. Eric is in Ms. Gomez's second grade class. Reggie is in Ms. Smith's second grade class. One day during recess, both boys ran to the soccer field at the same time. Eric said, "Our class is going to play soccer this recess. We need the playing field." Reggie said, "But our class is going to play soccer. We need the field." What could they do to solve the conflict?
3. The school principal came to the classroom with a box of stuff from the Lost and Found. In the box was a really nice black jacket. Juanita and Chris both said it belonged to them. What could they do to solve this conflict?
4. Larson's class was studying animals. He told the students they would take a trip to see some animals. The class could choose whether to visit the community zoo or Mr. MacGregor's farm. Some of the children really wanted to go to the zoo. Some of them really wanted to go the farm. What could both sides do to show respect for each other?

## **Activity #10 – Lincoln and his Cabinet: Leadership through the Emancipation Proclamation**

- Target grade level: secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: courage, leadership
1. It is greatly underappreciated how much courage it took for Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation then not retract it. The risks involved in issuing the E.P. many, and many in Lincoln's own Cabinet felt issuing the Proclamation would be too risky. Too appreciate that, distribute or post online "My Whole Soul Is In It" which is a play based upon diaries and other accounts of the Cabinet meetings in 1862 over the E.P. (Contact the Abraham Lincoln Center for Character Development for a copy and request a copy).
  2. Students can act it out or do it as a dramatic reading before an audience. Perhaps parents and other students can watch it.
  3. Read to students what Abraham Lincoln wrote to James Conkling in 1863, after many tried to get Lincoln to retract the Proclamation. Lincoln writes: "If they (Negro people) stake their lives for us, they must be prompted by the strongest motive—even the promise of freedom. And the promise being made, must be kept." Ask the students how statement shows great courage and leadership.

## **Activity #11 – Interview with a Leader**

- Target grade level: elementary/secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: leadership
1. Have students interview a local leader (could be a community leader, business leader, political leader, school leader, etc). Students should question the person on what it takes to lead, and what character qualities are necessary for successful leadership. The interview can be recorded
  2. Have students share their interview or the findings of the interview with the class.

## **Activity #12 – Understanding Human Nature**

- Target grade level: secondary/college
  - Character quality emphasized: honesty, empathy, leadership, conflict resolution
1. Explain that newspaperman Charles Dana observed that Abraham Lincoln "understood human nature", meaning he knew how to respond to people, and really tried to

understand what makes each person “tick.” Failing to understand others, or not even trying to understand others, is the reason for disputes of all kinds.

2. Have students research either a historical event or a current situation which involves groups or individuals who think differently about a situation. It might be useful to make it a local issue which the students might find interesting. Have them write how the two (or more) sides are different, and have them propose a compromise to solve the situation.

Extrapolate lessons of understanding each other, and have students suppose how Lincoln was able to understand other points of view so well.