

## **ABRAHAM LINCOLN – The Presidential Years (part 1)**

### **Abe Lincoln Emerges**

Though Abe had a national reputation, the Republican nomination for president in the election of 1860 seemed elusive. Powerful Republicans William Seward from New York, Salmon P. Chase from Ohio, and Edward Bates from Missouri seemed to be the frontrunners. On February 27, 1860, however, Abe was invited to speak before a crowd of powerful Republicans at Cooper Union (a university) in New York City. Abe's anti-slavery speech, in which he claimed the Founding Fathers and authors of the Declaration of Independence would have prohibited the extension of slavery into new territories, left a lasting impression on the members of the audience and propelled him to legitimacy among the Republican candidates running for presidency. The powerful publisher Horace Greeley called it "One of the most happiest and most convincing political arguments ever made in this City... No man ever made such an impression on his first appeal to a New York audience." After the speech, Abe decided that he would at least make an attempt for the Republican nomination to the presidency. He assembled a team of devoted campaigners who called Lincoln "The Rail Candidate."

### **The Republican National Convention**

On May 9-10 of 1860, Abe and his team traveled to the Republican National Convention in Decatur, Illinois, where his savvy team of supporters worked the convention for endorsements. Seward and Chase, though powerful and well-known politicians, had created enough enemies over the years to prove vulnerable and had alienated parts of the Republican Party. Though Abe believed slavery was evil, his moderate (rather than radical) stance appealed to many, as did his support for the nation's internal improvements and protective tariff. Furthermore, Abe was extremely popular in the western states, and because the convention was in his home state, thousands of his supporters descended upon Decatur. While Seward led on the first and second ballots (though he didn't get enough votes to win), Lincoln won the nomination on the third ballot when the chairman of the Ohio Republican Delegation was convinced to shift his votes to Lincoln. Seward, who thought his nomination was assured, was crushed, and Chase couldn't even manage to draw full support from his home state of Ohio. Now that Abe had secured the Republican nomination for president, he had a chance to win the presidential election.

### **Abe is Elected the 16th President**

In 1860, the future of the United States was much in doubt. The issue of slavery, which had bitterly divided the nation, had also begun to divide political parties, making the presidential election very complicated. The

Democratic Party had been divided into the Northern Democratic Party and Southern Democratic Party. The Northern Democratic Party nominated Stephen Douglas for the presidency, while the Southern Democratic Party nominated John C. Breckenridge. The Constitutional Union Party nominated the former Tennessee Governor John Bell.

On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 33 states. Of the eleven Southern states that would eventually secede, only Virginia allowed Abe's name to be on their ballots. In Virginia, Abe received slightly over one percent of the popular vote. In the four slave states that would become Border States, Abe finished third or fourth. In New England, however, Abe won the popular vote in every county. The 81.8 percent voter turnout for the election of 1860 is the second-highest turnout in presidential election history. Now that Abe had been elected president, he had to appoint the members of his cabinet.

### **Choosing Advisors**

In thinking about his advisors, Abe wanted the brightest and most influential politicians available. For the two most important posts in his cabinet, he chose the two candidates that ran against him for the Republican nomination for president. He appointed William Seward as his secretary of state and Salmon P. Chase as his secretary of treasury. Both men would prove indispensable to the president in his dealings with the Civil War.

1.) In the following sentence, what does "elusive" mean?

Though Abe had a national reputation, the Republican nominee for president in the election of 1860 seemed elusive.

- a.) hard to get
- b.) impossible
- c.) possible
- d.) likely

2.) How would you describe Horace Greeley's response to Lincoln's speech at Cooper Union?

- a.) He thought it was inappropriate.
- b.) He agreed with parts of it.
- c.) He disagreed with it.
- d.) He strongly agreed with it.

3.) Which of the following was probably NOT implied in Lincoln's speech at Cooper Union?

- a.) The new territories should decide for themselves whether or not to allow slavery.
- b.) People of all races and colors should have liberty.
- c.) Slavery should not be allowed in America's new territories.
- d.) The Founding Fathers would have frowned on slavery.

4.) Which of the following probably did NOT help Lincoln at the Republican National Convention?

- a.) Other candidates had made enemies in the Republican Party.
- b.) The Republican National Convention was in his home state of Illinois.
- c.) His moderate stance on slavery.
- d.) He was the "Rail Candidate".

5.) How did William Seward feel after the Republican National Convention?

- a.) He was devastated.
- b.) He felt betrayed.
- c.) He felt happy for Abraham Lincoln.
- d.) He thought "the best man won."

6.) What did winning the Republican nomination mean?

- a.) He would be governor of Illinois.
- b.) He was assured, at least, of becoming vice president.
- c.) He would be the Republican nominee for president.
- d.) He would be president.

7.) Which of the following is NOT true about the political parties in 1860?

- a.) The Democratic Party had become two different parties.
- b.) The issue of slavery had brought them closer together.
- c.) The issue of slavery had produced major divides in the parties.
- d.) The Constitutional Union party nominated John Bell.

8.) Which of the following statements best describes Abe's performance in the presidential election of 1860?

- a.) His support was strongest in the Border States.
- b.) His support was strongest in the New England states.
- c.) Northern states and Southern states showed support for him.
- d.) He finished third or fourth in the Southern states.

9.) Which of the following statements best describes the sentiments of voters in the election of 1860?

- a.) They cared more in the Southern states.
- b.) They didn't seem to care very much.
- c.) They cared very much in the North and the South.
- d.) They cared more in the Northern states.

10.) Why did Abe choose his opponents in the Republican National Convention as his cabinet advisors?

- a.) He was bragging about his victory.
- b.) He wanted the smartest people advising him.
- c.) He was forced to by Congress.
- d.) He feared they would run against him again in the election of 1864.