

Currier & Ives Lesson
Eyewitness Account – You were there!
Assassination of Lincoln

Background:

For nearly a quarter of a century, the Currier & Ives firm provided “Colored Engravings for the People.” They gave the American public a pictorial history on important events. Their prints served the same function as a front page photograph in the newspaper today.

Questions to ask: *Look at the expressions on each of the characters faces. What do you think each of these people in the lithograph were thinking the moment they heard the gun shot?*

Lesson Objectives:

- Motivate student engagement with the print
- Personalize the moment in history captured in the print
- Use student prior knowledge of point of view
- Improve speaking and oral presentation

Materials:

Template with thought bubble, small icon of the print, names of the characters
pencils, clipboards

Procedure:

Students look at the print. Teacher facilitates a brief introduction about the scene and the characters portrayed in the print. They are: (l-r) Major Henry Rathbone, Major Rathbone’s fiancée, Clara Harris, Mary Todd Lincoln, President Abraham Lincoln, and John Wilkes Booth. Students break down into small groups and are given a packet with six separate sheets and a character name (listed below) and a thought bubble listed on each.

The names listed are: Henry Rathbone
Clara Harris
Mary Todd Lincoln
John Wilkes Booth
Person in the audience
Actor on stage

Each group works together or, if they prefer individually within the groups, in completing the thought bubbles for all the characters. Upon completion, each group will present/perform the thoughts and words of each character in the first person voice.

Note: This activity was used in the Currier & Ives gallery at the Springfield Museum. Prints are available on line. Teachers using this activity in their classroom could project the image for the whole class or make copies and distribute to individual groups.