Topic: U.S. Civil War

Lesson Title: Creating historical narratives: Investigating the death of Lincoln

Objectives:
1. Students will generate compelling and supporting questions about the assassination of Lincoln.
2. Students will corroborate and reconcile contradictory information in various primary sources.
3. Students will create a narrative describing the last hours of President Lincoln.

Mississippi Social Studies Framework Connections
8th grade competencies 3 and 4

NCSS Theme (2)
1. Time, Continuity, and Change

CCSS ELA or CCSS ELA SS
CCSS ELA Writing Standards Grade 6-8 1 a.b.c.d.e. 2a.b.c.d. e.f., 4, 5, 7,8,9
CCSS ELA Reading Standards Grade 6-8 1, 4, 7, 9

Assessment
Formative: Student ability to analyze primary sources; Student ability to generate compelling and supporting questions
Summative: Student narrative will be evaluated for accuracy, completeness, and ability to corroborate specific details from contradictory sources.

Procedures:

1. Before

Introduce the lesson: Preview, hook
Assessment opportunity- Pre-assessment of requisite skills or knowledge

TTW project a pre-war portrait of Abraham Lincoln on the overhead projector and ask students: “Who is this a picture of?” After entertaining a range of answers, the students will settle on the fact that it is Abraham Lincoln. We will then have discussion of our images of Lincoln as usually including a beard and hat.

TTW will provide the students with a copy of the letters exchanged between Grace Bedell and Lincoln. TSW read the letters (silently or as a group, the teacher can decide). The teacher will then ask: “What can we learn from these letters?” Students’ responses will include information about Lincoln’s family, that he didn’t have a beard in 1860, that women could not vote, that Lincoln was running for President, etc). TTW discuss with students how primary sources like letters can provide us more detail into history than is provided in history textbooks.

TTW ask, “What questions do you have after reading these letters?” Responses may include questions about how the letter made it from New York to Illinois, method of delivery, why couldn’t women vote, who was Hamlin, what is going on during the time period. The teacher will help students understand that primary sources can also be the source of rich questions that we can use to help develop inquiries into the past. The teacher can also provide a list of further questions to model as well as other information that can be learned from the letters (see Appendix 1).

TTW will then show them one more primary source related to the letters. It is a campaign posters that shows Lincoln and Hamlin. This will help students see that further investigation using additional primary sources can help answer our questions and extend our knowledge about a topic (i.e. who Hamlin is). If necessary (depending on students’ previous experience with primary sources, the teacher can walk students through the Observe-Reflect-Question process using Library of Congress primary source analysis worksheets- available online)

TTW explain that though our image of Lincoln includes the beard, that he didn’t wear a beard for most of his life. He only wore one for the last four years of his life.

Dimension 1: Developing questions and planning inquiries
Differentiation opportunity- questions complexity, student choice of inquiry topic
TT and TS will begin a K-W-L of the life of Lincoln (focusing on the K and W). Once complete the teacher will tell students that for this lesson they are going to focus on the end of Lincoln’s life. If the students haven’t listed anything about his assassination, in the K-W part of the K-W-L, the teacher will ask them to share what they know or would like to know about his death.

The teacher will share the definitions of compelling and supporting questions with the students (C3 Framework, p. 17). The teacher will then guide students in the development of questions about Lincoln’s assassination. After students have proposed about twenty questions, the teacher will help students determine which questions are compelling questions. Once they have identified the compelling questions, students and teachers will identify supporting questions (from the list or newly generated) to support the compelling questions. Finally, the teacher and students will agree on one compelling question to conduct an inquiry into. (If the teacher chooses, she can allow students to work in groups and conduct their inquiry on a compelling question that they select).

TTW explain to the students that they will be conducting an inquiry into the death of Abraham Lincoln using primary sources. They will have the opportunity to analyze and evaluate a set of primary sources related to his death and then make a claim about his death. Their claim will become the thesis for a short narrative description of his death.

2. During

**Dimension 2: Applying disciplinary concepts and tools**
- Introduce primary sources into lesson
- Review or teach disciplinary skills needed for the lesson
- Teacher support to inquiry
- Differentiation opportunity- reading ability or complexity of sources
- Assessment opportunity- evaluate student ability to complete disciplinary skill through a guided learning opportunity

TTW will instruct the students to go to the Pinterest site that includes the Lincoln primary source set. Students will be directed to read and observe the primary sources in the set. After about 15 minutes the students will be directed to make a tentative claim about the death of Lincoln. The teacher will ask each group to share and will guide them to a claim that fits within the compelling question developed earlier. A good claim would be one related to the assassination being part of a larger conspiracy. Teachers may want to guide students to a focus on the conspiracy. Once the students have developed and have an approved claim they will move on to Dimension 3.

**Dimension 3: Evaluating sources and using evidence**
- Teacher support to inquiry
- Students analyze sources or use other disciplinary skill
- Students evaluate sources
- Students draw conclusions or make decisions based on sources
- Students use sources to create a product or demonstrate knowledge/skills
- Teacher feedback to student efforts and student reaction to feedback
- Differentiation opportunity- student choice in selecting sources to use or product to create
- Assessment opportunity- teacher check on student progress/ planned questioning

The teacher will instruct the students to analyze and evaluate the sources in the primary source set. This will take about 15 minutes. The students can divide the sources among the members of the group and complete an analysis sheet on each source.

TTW instruct students to write a narrative (individually) that describes the events surrounding the death of Lincoln, but focused on the claim they made earlier and that will help answer the compelling question. The students will be reminded to use information from the sources that answer the supporting questions. Some students may need to select three or four supporting questions that they will answer using their sources, others may not need to complete this step. Though the students did their research of the sources as a group, they will write their narratives individually. The teacher will monitor student progress to insure that they are basing their narrative on the supporting questions, writing to support the claim, and are using sources to support their narrative. This is an opportunity to share with students the concept of citations.
3. After

**Dimension 4:** Communicating conclusions and taking informed action

- Students share what they have learned with other students in the class
- Students share conclusions with an audience wider than the classroom in an authentic format

Once students have completed their narratives, each of the groups will have an opportunity to read their narratives. Once all narratives have been read, the teacher will ask if the students noticed any discrepancies. One discrepancy will be that Secretary of State William Seward died when in fact he was injured in an assassination attempt. This is an opportunity to teach the historical thinking heuristic corroboration (Wineburg, 1991). There are sources in the set that indicate that he died and others written later in the day after the assassination attempt that correct the erroneous report. There will be other items of interest that students may want to talk about. Some will notice that one of the conspirators was a woman. After this initial discussion, the teacher will ask students to read the account of Lincoln’s assassination in their textbook. The teacher will ask students what additional they learned about his assassination by studying primary sources and writing their own accounts. This is an opportunity to focus on the fact that students have the ability to create their own historical accounts just like historians do.

Finally, students will be told to identify and correct any mistakes in their narrative. The teacher will monitor this process. Students will turn in their corrected narratives for a summative assessment.

**Conclude the lesson:**

- Teacher Review/ summarize key concepts and main points
- Review
- Acknowledge unanswered questions
- Generate new questions based on results of inquiry
- Assessment opportunity- Summative assessment of objectives
- Differentiation opportunity- Student choice in product, consideration of student ability during assignment of assessment task

The teacher will ask students to share what they have learned and fill in the L part of the K-W-L.

The teacher will review the key points of the lesson: 1. Primary sources can extend and add to our understanding of a historical event, 2. Primary sources are what historians use to write history, 3. Historians make claims and support their claims with information found in both primary and secondary sources, 4. Historians must corroborate information in primary sources (i.e. don’t put too much faith in one source, you need multiple sources to make a claim), 5. Review the key facts about Lincoln’s assassination.

The teacher will ask students if they have any questions that were not answer or if they have any new questions that might be the source of another inquiry. Students will generate questions and these will be placed on the question wall for future reference and action.

4. **Assessment**

   a. Rubrics
   b. Checklists

Students will be evaluated on their ability to analyze a primary source using the Observe-Reflect-Question.

Students will be evaluated on their narrative using the following criteria:

   a. Student made a claim that fit within the compelling question
   b. Student supported claim with information from multiple sources
   c. Student created an accurate narrative (after they had a chance to edit it)
   d. Student created a narrative that was free of grammar and spelling errors.