

Assessing with Primary Sources

Grade Level: Grade 6

Standard(s) or Objectives: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.5 - Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

Library of Congress Resources:



[Lincoln's
Literary
Experiments,
April 1894](#)

Abraham Lincoln. *Lincoln's Literary Experiments* [pp. 823-832]

<http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=cent;cc=cent;rgn=full%20text;idno=cent0047-6;didno=cent0047-6;view=image;seq=841;node=cent0047-6%3A1;page=root;size=100>

Topic Background:

Since his tragic assassination, literacy critics, pundits, and the like have been fascinated in all aspects of Abraham Lincoln, including what may have influenced his character and personality. In this article, the author tries to identify Lincoln's preferences in literature that reflect his melancholy disposition.

Source(s) Used:

This source is an excerpt from *The Century*; a popular quarterly Volume 0047 Issue 6 (Apr 1894) Titled **Abraham Lincoln. *Lincoln's Literary Experiments*. Page 831.**

Answer Key:

The student is expected to explain how the music in minor key equals Lincoln poetical temperament of sadness.

Directions: Read the following passage and answer the question below.

Excerpt from “Lincoln’s Literary Experiments” [article] 1894

Lincoln’s poetical temperament is sufficiently evidences in his fine appreciation of Shakespeare, Burns, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and probably many other poets whom tradition has not brought to general knowledge. The music of Lincoln’s thought was always in the minor key. His favorite poems such as “Oh Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud?” and Holmes’ s “Last Leaf.” Specially emphasized this mood; they are distinctively poems of sadness. So also among the Shakespeare’s’ plays he found his chief fascination in “Macbeth,” full of the same undercurrent of the great problems of life and destiny with which his own slight attempts at versification are in harmony.

In the excerpt above John Nicolay states, “The music of Lincoln’s thought was always in the minor key.” What does this sentence say about Lincoln’s personality? Explain what clues from the text support your response. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.5)
