

## Featured Artifact: Abraham Lincoln's Hat

<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu/resource/?key=3618>

Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)



**Look at the artifact presented to you. In a few sentences, respond to the following questions:**

**Describe:** Objectively describe the artifact. What do you think it is made of? What does it look like? Does it look old or new? Is it intact, or is it damaged in some way?

**Analyze:** When, where or how do you think this item was used? What kind of person may have created or used this item? What significance do you think the object held, either for the creator or the user? Do you see words or images on the artifact that connect it to others (besides the creator and user)?

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**Share your conclusions with a partner, then discuss the following:**

**Evaluate :** Justify why you came to those conclusions about the artifact. What further questions do you have about the object? Of those questions, which could you solve by observing the object in person and which would you need to solve with research?

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## Background Information

At six feet four inches tall, Lincoln towered over most of his contemporaries. He chose to stand out even more by wearing high top hats. He acquired this hat from J. Y. Davis, a Washington hat maker. Lincoln had the black silk mourning band added in remembrance of his son Willie. No one knows when he obtained the hat, or how often he wore it. The last time he put it on was to go to Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865.

**After reading and considering the background information, compose a response to the following:**

**Analyze:** Address the following object-specific questions:

- Why do you think this hat is such an iconic piece of Americana?
- Why might an already tall man choose to add to his height even more with the top hat? Why do you think Lincoln made this his trademark?

**Synthesize:** What does this object tell us about the era in which it was created, or the American experience as a whole? How would you describe the social, economic, or political climate of America during this time? What connections can you make between this object and other things that you have seen, read, or experienced?

**Analyze:** Address the following era-specific questions:

- How would you describe the course and character of the Civil War, and what were its effects on the American people?