Lincoln Film Questions

Opening Titles
1. What is the purpose of the scene consisting of Lincoln speaking with the black and white soldiers?
   • Answers will vary. Students may realize that the scene demonstrates how Lincoln was able and willing to listen to the common soldiers, both black and white. The scene also raises the issue of equality for blacks who are willing to fight for the North. Also shows that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address was a source of inspiration for the North.

Lincoln's Dream (6:11)
2. Symbolically, what does Lincoln's dream represent to both Lincoln himself and to his wife?
   • Answers will vary, especially since this is early in the film. But students may see this as Lincoln’s awareness that he is being carried forward to a place he is unsure of (in the context of the film, the consequences of the 13th Amendment). Mary Lincoln feels it is his anxiety before a big battle.

A New Amendment (13:57)
3. Who is Seward, the man Lincoln is speaking with in his carriage and in his office? What role does he seem to play?
   • Seward is Lincoln's Secretary of State. He seems to be an advisor to Lincoln.

4. What are some of the obstacles that Lincoln faced in passing the 13th Amendment?
   • First you need 2/3 support in the House of Representatives, and Lincoln's Republican Party had a slim majority in the House, and not all of them were abolitionists. Secondly, the Amendment had already failed 10 months prior. Third, he would need some Democrats to support the Amendment, which was highly unlikely. Finally, while some popular support existed if passing it would end the war, if the war ended before the amendment was passed, Seward feels that the public's support would evaporate.

War Powers (23:15)
5. Why does Lincoln want so badly to pass the 13th Amendment?
   • The Emancipation Proclamation might be deemed illegal one day and the freed slaves would be returned to bondage. If the amendment is in place, the slaves would be forever legally free.

6. Why do the Radicals distrust Lincoln?
   • They think he doesn't really want to pass the amendment, and that he is just using the threat of it to end the war quickly. If the war ends too fast, then the newly rejoined southern states would never pass the amendment. The Radicals want to wait until after the next election to pass it easily, and then end the war.

The House Debate (35:10)
7. Which party was trying to make the case that Lincoln was a dictator and was opposed to the 13th Amendment?
   • The Democratic Party

Getting Out The Vote (40:30)
8. What does Secretary Seward and his hired lobbyists seek to do?
   • Find House Representatives who might be swayed to support the 13th Amendment. Specifically they need Democrats to join the Republicans in support.

Seeds Of Time (45:55)
9. What is Mary grieving over?
   • The death of their son, Willie, three years earlier.

Grand Reception (52:55)
10. What does Lincoln want Mr. Stevens and the Radicals to do in the debate? Why?
    • Tone down their demands for full black equality, which might scare off the conservative side of the Republican Party.

The Fallen At Wilmington (59:45)
11. Who is Stanton and what does he want to happen right away?
    • He is the Secretary of Defense. He wants Fort Fisher overcome and Wilmington captured.

12. What strategy do the Democrats adopt in regards to Stevens?
    • They want to get him to lose his temper in front of everyone and reveal his full plans for black equality, which would increase opposition to the 13th Amendment.
13. What fears does the Representative from Kentucky raise about the 13th Amendment?
   • Fears of what 4 million freed blacks might do, and would the Amendment lead to them getting the right to vote? If that happens, might then women get the right to vote?

14. What is causing difficulty for Seward's men in holding onto votes for the Amendment?
   • Rumors that a delegation from the South is seeking an end to the war. If the war ends soon, they don't see the need for the amendment.

No Sixteen-Year-Olds Left (1:08)
15. What does General Grant want Lincoln to do in regards to the Southern offer?
   • Meet with the delegation and end the war.

16. What is Lincoln up in the middle of the night doing?
   • Pardoning soldiers that were to be hung for cowardice or desertion, including a sixteen-year-old.

17. What does Lincoln's knowledge of Euclid convey?
   • That the concept of equality is 2000 years old at least. That it is fairness and justice.

Equality Under The Law (1:18)
18. What does Stevens do in his speech? Why?
   • He tries to hold his temper and he maintains that he is seeking legal equality only (not racial equality). He desperately wants the amendment to pass, no matter what.

Robert's Ambition (1:24)
19. What compromise does Lincoln try to make with his wife over Robert's enlistment in the Army?
   • He will make sure that Robert serves away from the front lines so that he won't get hurt.

20. What still remains as a point of conflict between Lincoln and Mary?
   • The death of their son, Tad. She can't get past it years later, and she's continually afraid she'll lose another son.

Bipartisan Support (1:35)
21. What does “bipartisan” mean? Coffroth offers to switch to the Republican Party and vote for the amendment, but Stevens will not let him. Why?
   • Two opposing political parties finding common ground and working together. Coffroth must vote for the amendment as a Democrat because Stevens wants to show that the amendment has bipartisan support.

Fairness And Freedom (1:39)
22. Why is Yeaman reluctant to change his vote and support the amendment? How many more votes does Lincoln need?
   • He hates slavery, but is worried what could happen if blacks are ever given the right to vote. He needs two votes.

The Morning Of The Vote (1:46)
23. What does Pendleton from Ohio say in his remarks before the vote to try and get a postponement?
   • That there is an offer to end the war from the South.

24. What must Lincoln tell the House? What is the response he gives?
   • He must tell the House whether or not there is a delegation from the South in Washington. He denies knowing that there are peace commissioners in the city or that there are likely to be any.

25. After all of the votes, what is the final result?
   • 56 against and 119 votes for. It passes by two votes.

Celebration (2:02)
26. What does Stevens do with the bill?
   • He takes it and shows it to his black servant, who is also his lover. He asks her to read it to him in bed.

27. When Lincoln sees the delegation, what do they insist upon?
   • Being readmitted to the Union in time to vote against the amendment's ratification.
28. What does Lincoln insist?
• That the amendment will still be ratified and that the sacrifices made have been worthwhile.

_Petersburg Battlefield (2:09)_
29. After Lee surrenders, what does Lincoln tell Grant to do?
• Let the Confederate soldiers go home. No punishment.

30. How can the toil the war is taking on Lincoln be seen?
• On his face. He looks much older and more tired.

_Now He Belongs To The Ages (2:09)_
31. What foreshadowing is evident as Lincoln walks away down the hall?
• His image grows darker as he goes and the servant looks concerned or even worried.

32. Where was Lincoln assassinated?
• At Ford's theater.

33. Which speech is Lincoln giving at the end of the film?
• His second inaugural address.