

Lincoln's Spin Team Assignment Sheet

You have been hired as a member of Lincoln's Spin Team during the Civil War. In politics and public relations (PR), **Political spin** is the attempt to control or influence communication, media and public image in order to deliver one's preferred message, typically a positive one. For example, press conferences like the ones held by a president's press secretary, who briefs members of the media on various aspects of news about the President, are examples of political spin. The person doing the "spinning" is attempting to portray a person or event a certain way in order to influence public opinion. Political spin is therefore sometimes criticized, as political spinners will sometimes mislead reporters and the public. However, it is also a useful tool in gaining public support for policies or decisions.

During the Civil War, President Lincoln had to make numerous difficult decisions that were oftentimes criticized, even in the North. With hindsight it is easier to see his actions as justified or necessary in light of the challenges of war; however, at the time (and even now), many of these decisions were debated and criticized. Winning the war requires public and political support, so Lincoln is in desperate need of a spin team. This is where you come in.

You will be assigned one controversial event from Lincoln's presidency that you must spin in order to justify Lincoln's actions and gain public support. In doing so, you will need to include the background of the event (what happened, why it happened, who was involved, etc), the decision Lincoln faced and what action he took/what happened in the aftermath of the event, and the response to his actions. This is where the spin part comes in--based on the negative reactions to his actions, how can you spin the event in a positive way? Ultimately, how were Lincoln's actions justified or beneficial? **For your event, you must therefore consider Lincoln's motives and reasoning as he made his decision.**

See an example [here](#). This is just a sample; you do not have to make a powerpoint--use any format you'd like and be creative! If you want a funny but good example of a spin team, check out the Parks and Rec episode "The Debate." (season 4, episode 20)

List of Events/Decisions with Focus Questions from Lincoln's Viewpoint

Fort Sumter 1861 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you defend the fort or surrender?• Possible implications of your decision?	Vallandigham Case, General Order #38 & Copperheads <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who were the Copperheads and why was Lincoln facing opposition in the North?• How should you deal with dissent and opposition in the North?
War Powers 1861: Lincoln's Proclamation of April	Wartime Legislation: Revenue Act 1861, Pacific

Lincoln's Spin Team Assignment Sheet

<p>15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you raise troops and form a war plan? Do you have to wait for Congress to act? 	<p>Railway Acts, Homestead Act 1862</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can you use the war and the absence of southern states in Congress to your advantage?
<p>Securing the Border States & the writ of habeas corpus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you make sure the border states (particularly Maryland) stay loyal? What should be done about Confederate sympathizers? What will you do about dissent, especially near DC? 	<p>The Draft</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The US has never implemented a draft--do desperate times call for desperate measures? How do you maintain an army? Should you allow certain groups to be exempt from the draft?
<p>The Merryman Case</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will you obey an order from the Supreme Court that challenges your authority? 	<p>Draft Riots</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will you back down when your policies are unpopular? How will you deal with dissent during the war?
<p>Trent Affair (1861)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can you balance diplomacy and prevent foreign intervention while still taking steps to win the war? 	<p>Finding a General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Union had many clear advantages at the start of the war. Why is it taking so long to win a war some thought would only last 3 months? Many of the best US Army generals resigned their posts and are serving the Confederacy. How will you find a general in the Union who can get the job done and win the war?
<p>Contraband and Field Proclamations of Benjamin Butler and John Fremont. (1861)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do these proclamations say and what are your worries about them? Do you abandon your original war goals and approve their proclamations? Are these proclamations legal and necessary for the war effort? 	<p>13th Amendment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Emancipation Proclamation only freed slaves in rebellious states, and while you reasoned that it was constitutional, what will happen after the war? Will it still have legal force? You are up for reelection in 1864: should you support an amendment that will secure emancipation throughout the country, or is it too controversial? How might this issue affect your reelection?
<p>Emancipation Proclamation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this proclamation constitutional? How 	<p>Lincoln & the Press</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lincoln shut down over 300 newspapers

Lincoln's Spin Team Assignment Sheet

<p>will it change the goals/purpose of the war?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How far should you go with emancipation? What should be the actual provisions of the proclamation?	<p>during the Civil War--why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can you shut down newspapers and restrict free speech during a war?
<p>Black Troops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should escaped slaves and free blacks be allowed to serve in the Union Army? What would be some consequences (positive or negative) of allowing them to serve?	<p>Peace Talks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The war has been dragging on for years and people--citizens and soldiers--have grown weary of fighting. What should be your negotiating terms for peace and Reconstruction? What will you demand or where will you compromise (if at all) regarding emancipation and readmitting southern states to reunite the Union?