

Lincoln-Douglas Debates



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In 1858, Stephen Douglas, Democrat, was running for re-election to the Illinois Senate. Abraham Lincoln of the Republican Party, was running against Douglas. They had opposing views on the issue of slavery. Douglas believed in popular sovereignty, which would allow each territory in the West to choose whether they wanted to join the union as a free state or slave state. Lincoln defended the antislavery views of his party. Lincoln challenged Douglas to a face-to-face debate, which was arranged as a series of seven debates.

Within a debate, Lincoln said, *“There is no reason in the world why the blacks are not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence – the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I hold that he is as much entitled to these as the white man.”* Even though Lincoln seemed to have won the debates, he did not capture the victory.

Why are the debates a good part of the election process?

What did these debates tell the people about the candidates beliefs and values?

Why do you think Lincoln lost the election to the Illinois Senate?

What beliefs and values do you think Lincoln’s underlined statement says about him?