

Viewpoints

Democrat Stephen Douglas and Republican Abraham Lincoln ran against each other in two elections. In 1858, the two men competed for one of the Illinois seats in the U.S. Senate. During the campaign, they gave a series of speeches reflecting their own, as well as their parties', views on slavery. Lincoln lost the 1858 election, but he later defeated Douglas in the 1860 presidential election. ♦ *Read the excerpts below. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

Douglas and Lincoln

I will vote for the admission of just such a State as by the form of their Constitution the people show they want; if they want slavery, they shall have it; if they prohibit slavery it shall be prohibited. They can form their institutions to please themselves, subject only to the Constitution; and I, for one, stand ready not want to cheat any man out of his vote. No man is deceived in regard to my principles if I have the power to express myself in terms explicit enough to convey my ideas.

—Stephen Douglas,
August 27, 1858

So I say in relation to the principle that all men are created equal, let it be as nearly reached as we can. If we cannot give freedom to every creature, let us do nothing that will impose slavery upon any other creature. Let us then turn this Government back into the channel in which the framers of the Constitution originally placed it. . . . let us discard all this quibbling about . . . this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position. . . . Let us . . . unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal.

—Abraham Lincoln,
July 10, 1858

Questions to Think About

1. By what method does Douglas believe that states should decide the question of slavery?
2. Why does Lincoln think that the government should stop the spread of slavery?
3. **Identify Central Issues** How do Douglas and Lincoln differ in their views of the Constitution?