



Teacher Guide: Investigating the Assassination on Fords.org

Prepared by Kevin Murphy

Webpage: <https://www.fords.org/lincolns-assassination/investigating-the-assassination/>

Overview of webpage

This page uses short descriptions, first-person accounts and artifacts to discuss the investigation into the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

Structure of page

- The menu just below the main image navigates to [Lincoln's Death](#), two subpages on the investigation including [Manhunt for John Wilkes Booth](#) and [Trial of the Conspirators](#), and to [Impact on a Nation](#).
- A short summary / overview is provided along with several key questions.
- The page includes a number of [first hand accounts](#) provided during the investigation. These are broken into 5 sections. These do NOT open in new pages but pop up on clicking the person. Images of the people are provided if available. Each contains a short excerpt from an individual testimony. A link to the full testimony is provided (links to primary sources housed in different online repositories, primarily Internet Archive).
- The guiding questions for reading the testimony include:
 - How does this evidence match—or not—with other evidence?
 - Who gave the testimony? What might the person's reasons be for saying what they did?
 - When did this person give the testimony? Was it soon after the event? Much later? How might that affect what they said?
- The page continues to [another section COLLECTING EVIDENCE: CRIME SCENE](#) which has the following three subpages. Many of these artifacts are in the museum at Ford's Theatre. See guides for each of the following pages.
 - [Material Evidence: John Wilkes Booth](#)
 - [Material Evidence: Dr. Mudd](#)
 - [Material Evidence: Powell & Atzerodt](#)

Questions and Listing of Primary Source Accounts

- *What Did Witnesses See at the Theatre?*
 - A.M.S. Crawford – attendee
 - Harry Hawk – actor on stage
 - James C. Ferguson - attendee
 - Henry B. Philips – actor in dressing rooms whom Booth passed
 - William T. Kent - attendee
- *Who Else did the Plot Involve?*
 - Mary Ann Turner – witness in back alley behind theatre before assassination
 - John Fletcher – witness at stable identifying Herold
 - P.F.W. Walker – witness with false lead
 - William Bell – witness / servant at Seward house
 - Major Henry Reed Rathbone – guest of the Lincolns sitting in box during assassination
 - Leonard J. Farwell – witness at Vice President Johnson’s hotel
- *What was the Motive? What was the Goal?*
 - James W. Purdom – witness quoting Atzerodt
 - Thomas T. Eckert – witness who had conversations with Powell in jail
 - Ellerslie Wallace – witness providing secondhand account regarding Booth
 - Harry Clay Ford – manager of Ford’s Theatre, quoting Booth’s white supremacy
- *How Deep did the Conspiracy Go?*
 - Anna Surratt – daughter of Mary and brother of John Surratt
 - Edman Spangler – stagehand at Ford’s Theatre whom Booth asked to hold horse in alley; Spangler too busy and called Peanut John to hold horse
 - John T. Ford – owner of Ford’s Theatre providing details on Booth and the theatre
 - Dr. Samuel Mudd – convicted as accomplice who set Booth’s broken ankle
 - H. Walsh – possible tip from Michigan
 - Frank Washington – formerly enslaved person working for Dr. Mudd recounting Booth’s visit
- *How was the Evidence Found?*
 - William T. Kent – found derringer in box
 - John Lee – investigator who searched Atzerodt’s room (no link to full testimony)
 - Henry L. Burnett – Special Judge Advocate investigator (no link to full testimony)

Suggested Activities

1. Write a newspaper article

Use this page to gather source material for writing a newspaper account of the assassination. Include primary source accounts in your article describing what happened. Are your sources credible? Why or why not. Start with a headline and develop the angle of your story.

2. Hold a mock trial

Select a student to play the role of a conspirator. Assign students to be prosecuting attorneys and defense attorneys. Since the conspirators were tried by a military tribunal, not civil court, there was no jury of their peers. Their fate was decided by military officers called judge advocates. Have the remainder of the class serve as judge advocates who will vote on guilt or innocence. Take turns having the prosecutors and defense attorneys question each defendant and witnesses. Then put the vote to the class.

3. Create an exhibit

It's your turn to be the curator. Create an exhibit on the story of the Lincoln assassination. Use primary source accounts from witnesses, photographs, images of artifacts and anything else that will help you tell a story with your exhibit. Your exhibit can be a series of drawings, a poster board, a series of Instagram posts, a power point, a play, a song – whatever you'd like to use to tell your story.