Lincoln Memorial Script

One of the most well-known monuments in the United States, the Lincoln Memorial honors one of America’s most prominent presidents. The memorial is located in Washington DC along the National Mall and a part of the National Register of Historic Places. The Greek Neoclassical temple houses the giant carved statue of Mr. Lincoln sitting prominently, looking out over the mall of the country he fought to preserve. The creator of the memorial thought it would be best to create a memorial of a man who defended democracy in style from the birth-place of democracy.¹

The first memorial to Lincoln was erected in front of the District of Columbia City Hall in 1868, 3 years after Lincoln’s assassination. Congress passed several bills in 1867 to erect a more fitting memorial for the president. After an expensive memorial was proposed, the topic was shelved for a few years until, after some congressional bureaucracy, a bill was finally accepted to construct a memorial in 1910. The memorial was completed and dedicated on May 30, 1922.²

Abraham Lincoln is well known in American mythology for his role in the emancipation of slavery. When the southern states seceded and formed the Confederate States of America, Mr. Lincoln successfully led the north to victory, reuniting the union. With this win, the thirteenth

amendment was ratified shortly after Lincoln’s assassination on April 15, 1865, officially abolishing slavery.³ A grand memorial is only just for a president who brought freedom to enslaved peoples and therefore represents freedom, liberty, morality, justice, law, unity, fraternity, and charity.

The Lincoln Memorial was constructed with many subtle design features in mind. The massive structure measures 190 by 119 feet and almost 100 feet tall. The memorial is surrounded by 16 fluted Doric columns, which represent the 36 states in the union during Lincoln’s presidency. Above the colonnade, each of the 36 states in the union at the time of Lincoln’s death are carved into the frieze with their year of jointure dated below. Above those states, the 48 states in the union during the memorial’s dedication are carved into the attic frieze along with their respective dates. Around each engraved state are double wreaths, garlands connected by palm trees, supported by Eagle’s wings, and a cornice projecting Lion’s heads with palmetto crests.⁴ Steps lead up from the reflecting pool with buttresses on each side. There 58 steps leading to the memorial which represent the 56 years of age when he was assassinated plus the two terms he served as president. In total, the 87 steps from the reflecting pool equal the “fourscore and seven years” from the Gettysburg Address.⁵

The interior of the memorial houses Mr. Lincoln. There are two chambers on either side where the Gettysburg Address and his second inaugural address are carved into the marble. Above each are murals representing Lincoln’s principles. On the north wall, unity, charity, fraternity, and on the south wall, freedom, morality, liberty, justice, and law. The ceiling has bronze girders with marble panels in between, soaked in paraffin to increase transparency. Mr.

Lincoln sits in a chair, contemplating. Attitudes are reflected in both his hands and feet. One hand remains clenched and one foot is stern. This represents his determination. The other hand and foot are relaxed, a notion to his fun, charming side. This masterpiece weighs a staggering 159 metric tonnes! Lincoln’s arms rest on top of Roman fasces, a note to the themes of the mall and building. Above him the quote, “In this temple, as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the Union, the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever” is engraved in marble, honoring those who served in the civil war.

The Lincoln Memorial represents a lot more than simply honoring Abraham Lincoln and his values. In fact, the memorial acts more like a monument because it has been the site of numerous movements in history. For example, Marian Anderson, a famous black singer, was granted permission by Elenor Roosevelt to perform at the Lincoln Memorial after she was denied to sing at Constitution Hall in 1939. Most famously, however, the monument was the site of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, where Martin Luther King delivered his famous “I Have A Dream” speech. This event on August 28, 1963 marked the 100 year anniversary of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. The spot where Martin Luther King delivered his speech is marked in the stone to this day. In addition, the monument has been featured on more than 60 movies and tv shows and The Lincoln Memorial is both on the back of the US penny and 5 dollar bill.

This monument had become so much more than just a space to honor Mr. Lincoln. It has become a monument for the values of all the civil rights movements. It represents all those who

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fought for American unity, it represents black rights, and it represents people’s ongoing struggle for liberty and justice. The monument brings together all the states, slave-holding or free, and it brings together all of Lincoln's fight for his country. He sits, staring at the country he loved, while his legacy lives on. Although he is no longer alive, the Lincoln monument will always be a symbol of freedom, liberty, morality, justice, law, unity, fraternity, and charity.

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