

Frederick Douglass's tribute to Abraham Lincoln, 1880

Introduction

Despite initial differences, Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln forged a relationship over the course of the Civil War based on a shared vision. Fifteen years after Lincoln's death, Douglass described him as "one of the noblest wisest and best men I ever knew." This stirring tribute to Lincoln was later published in Osborn H. Oldroyd's *The Lincoln Memorial: Album-Immortelles* (1883).

Questions for Discussion

Read the introduction and study the document. Then, based on the document and your knowledge of American history, answer the following questions:

1. According to Frederick Douglass, what qualities made Abraham Lincoln "a great man"? How did Lincoln exemplify these qualities?
2. What does it mean to "receive counsel" and "give counsel"? What is unique about Lincoln's ability to both receive and give counsel?
3. In your own words, rewrite Frederick Douglass's sentence: "The simple approached him with ease – and the learned approached him with deference."
4. Essay question: Review other statements about Abraham Lincoln made by Frederick Douglass. How and why did Douglass's views evolve?

Transcript

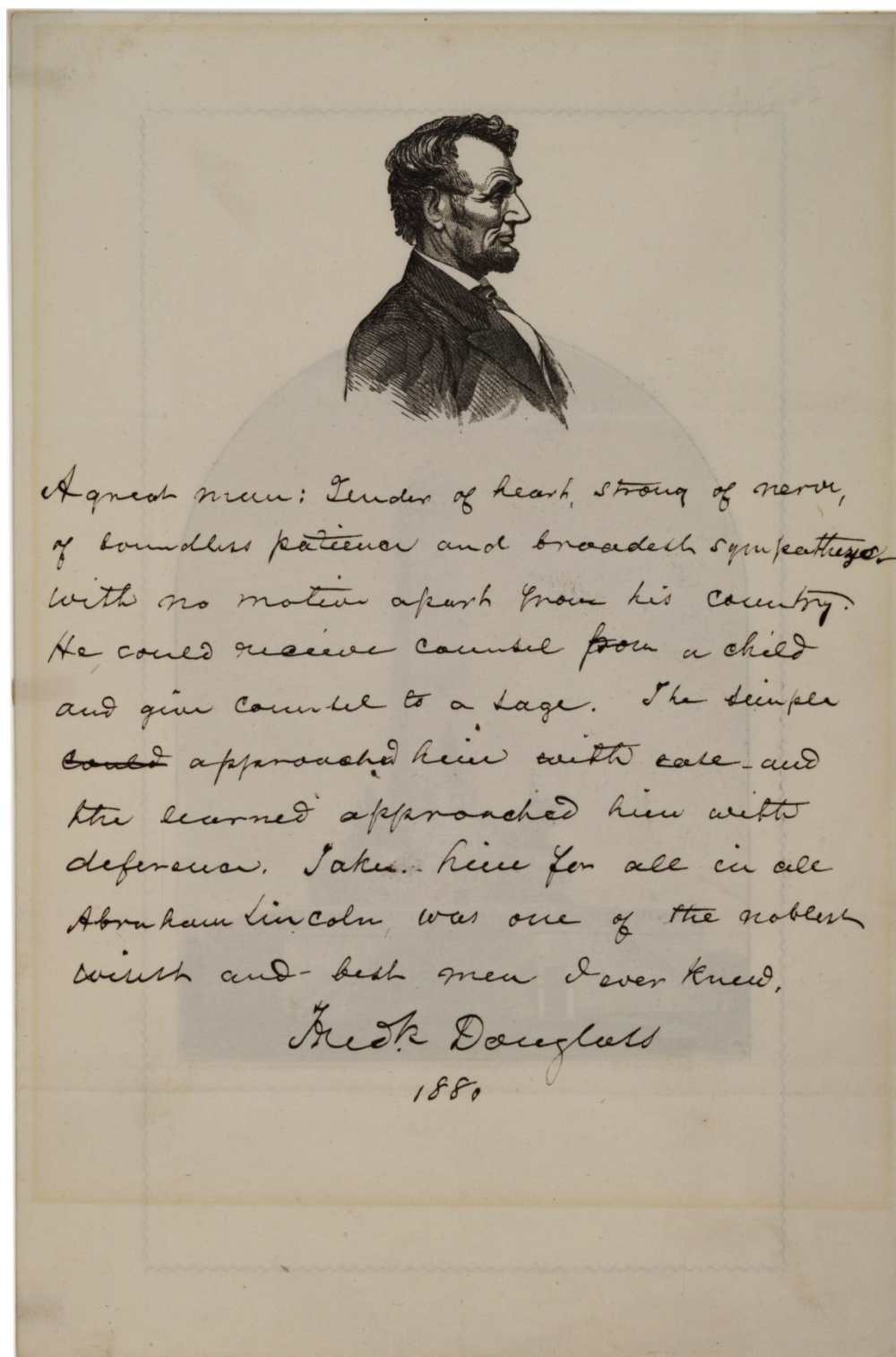
A great man: Tender of heart, strong of nerve, of boundless patience and broadest sympathies, with no motive apart from his country. He could receive counsel from a child and give counsel to a sage. The simple [struck: could] approached him with ease – and the learned approached him with deference. Take him for all in all Abraham Lincoln was one of the noblest wisest and best men I ever knew.

Fredk. Douglass

1880

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Image



Frederick Douglass's tribute to Abraham Lincoln, 1880 (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC09091)