

Comparing davis and lincoln's innagural address essay sample



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The bloodiest war in American history, led by Abraham Lincoln for the north, and Jefferson Davis for the south, both presidents, but two different sides. Both garner for peace, yet one is willing to start a war, while the other is willing to accept it. This essay will compare and contrast the political, economical, and social outlooks on Lincoln's and Davis' Inaugural addresses throughout the civil war between the North and South. Slavery, laws, and state rights drove the South to start a war, and Lincoln received the war with open arms. Both sides wanted peace, but their means of achieving it and their leaders' choices and beliefs differed greatly while still holding similarities.

Abraham Lincoln had many neutral political views, which contrasted against Jefferson Davis' bias beliefs. Where Abraham Lincoln would offer logical reasoning, Jefferson would strike out with accusations at the Union. Lincoln in his first inaugural address opens quickly by listing off many ways in which he will hold his bias and use a neutral outlook on the state's being. Lincoln said he would hold no bias towards any individual state and that he had taken his presidential oath with no purpose to construe the constitution.

" I take the official oath to-day with no mental reservations and with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws by any hypercritical rules; and wile I do not choose now to specify particular acts of Congress as proper to be enforced, I do sugges that it will be much safer for all, both in official and private stations, to conform to and abide by all those acts which stand unrepealed than to violate any of them trusting to find impunity in having them held to be unconstitutional." (Lincoln, 10) In the above paragraph, Lincoln expresses a fine neutrality to the current situation and instead of <https://assignbuster.com/comparing-davis-and-lincolns-innagural-address-essay-sample/>

openly attacking southern citizens by accusing them of being unlawful, he appeals by saying all citizens need to be abiding these laws. By stating that he will not “ construe the Constitution...” he is giving an open approach to seeing the both sides and not letting bias control choices to try and change the Constitution to benefit his side more then the other. Unlike Lincoln, Davis in his second address shows agonizing bias as he throws accusation around.

“ Whatever of hope some may have entertained that a returning sense of justice would remove the danger with which our rights were threatened, and render it possible to preserve the Union of the Constitution, must have been dispelled by the malignity and barbarity of the Northern States in the prosecution of the existing war. The confidence of the most hopeful among us must have been destroyed by the disregard they have recently exhibited for the all time-honored bulwarks of civil and religious liberty.” Jefferson continues on into the address as he states that Bastiles are full of prisoners who had been arrested without civil process; that elections were under threats of military power; and that citizens were being incarcerated for their opinions. Interestingly enough, both men stated that they were striving for peace, even though their people were calling for blood. Abraham Lincoln makes many good points throughout his first address as to the subject of the Southern states' succession's legitimacy. Lincoln compares the situation to a contract. He states that for the “ contract” to be nullified, all of the states must be consenting to the separation.

Lincoln explains in his first address that no right in the constitutional law has been broken. Therefore the South's succession from the Union can not be justified till they can reveal the right that has been taken. Lincoln wisely
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states that as president, he cannot fix the separation of the states but administer the government as it came into his hands, and that this civil war is not in his hands but the people's hands. Jefferson Davis doesn't seem to share Lincoln's wider outlook as he talks mostly about how the Union is taking their constitutional rights and that they do not want to recede from Union but that it is a necessity that they do.

When you put the two paragraphs together you can see that where Lincoln took a step back and planned his approach to not only the oncoming war but the presidency itself, Davis decided to bull on through and strive to please his own people while slandering those on the other side of the wall.

In terms of the economy, Lincoln had less to say than Davis. Slavery was largely the main economical problem at the time. Fighting over the abolishment of slavery was slowly escalating. Lincoln in contrast of what many who have not had history lessons would think, did not come into office saying he would abolish slavery. "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists."

(Lincoln, 3) Lincoln had no belief that it was his right to throw out something so important to the economy of the southern states. Davis surprisingly makes no major mention of slavery in either of his inaugural addresses. All that Davis talks about that could slightly relate to slavery is that the Southerners are an agricultural people. Davis' main point about economical subjects, is his strike at the Union's naval blockade of the Southern states. Davis says that the Union's blockade may be blocking the South's trade with foreign countries, but it is only making them a stronger self-supporting and

independent people. Lincoln's only other real point about the economy is his statement that the mail service will continue throughout the Union.

Social aspects of the president's inaugural speeches is where they differ a lot more than in the previous aspects. Davis in the beginning of his first address states " Called to the difficult and responsible station of Chief Executive of the Provisional Government which you have instituted, I approach the discharge of the duties assigned to me with an humble distrust of my abilities, but with a sustaining confidence in the wisdom of those who are to guide and to aid me in the administration of public affairs, and an abiding faith in the virtue and patriotism of the people.". Davis also in his second address again makes fun of his own abilities as president. This differs greatly from Lincoln's statement in the beginning of his first inaugural address. An interesting note for both president's speeches, Lincoln and Davis both spoke of God and how he had his hand in that current situation. Lincoln in his first speech says that God will have been on the side that wins the war. Later, towards the end of the war, in Lincoln's second address he states that God must have been on the side to abolish slavery since the war was coming to an end and God had decided that slavery needed to be abolished. On the other hand, Davis starts out saying that God is on his side and that because of it, the Confederates will be victorious. Yet in his second address, even though they are beginning to lose the war, he says that God is still on their side.

Davis in his first address continually speaks of striving for peace without a war, yet he says

" For purposes of defense, the Confederate States may, under ordinary
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circumstances, rely mainly upon their militia, but it is deemed advisable, in the present condition of affairs, that there should be a well-instructed and disciplined army, more numerous than would usually be required on a peace establishment. I also suggest that for the protection of our harbors and commerce on the high seas a navy adapted to those objects will be required. These necessities have doubtless engaged the attention of Congress." As much as Davis tries and relay a vibe for peace, he still wants to appease those who want the Union's blood by suggesting the formation of an actual army.

As you can see from the previous paragraphs, Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis' inaugural addresses were similar but in the long run were completely different. Between the political, economical, and social categories that each of their statements can be put under, they are just two different people and of course have complete different views and upbringings. Where Lincoln is the big picture man, Davis is the strong headed and passionate type of man. Each bears their own weaknesses and strengths, but they both will always go down as the two presidents trying to patch a nation that is in the midst of the bloodiest war we had ever seen.