Decades Project 1860’s Speech

Student: So Ms. Castillo, you’re really into all this history stuff, aren’t you?

Castillo: You could say that, I feel it is important to know where we have come from as a country and a society; why do you ask?

Student: I was watching this TV show and in it they were talking about different periods in history. It got me thinking.

Castillo: Thinking about what?

Student: Thinking, that if I could live in any time period, what would I select?

Castillo: Oh yea, what was your conclusion?

Student: That’s the problem, I don’t really know and I wanted to ask you? Where would you go?

Castillo: hmm, ***IF***, it were me, I would live in the 1860’s.

Student: The 1860’s? I was thinking more like the 70’s, disco and free love, and TV.

Castillo: Don’t you remember, the 1860’s had so many important people and events. It would be fascinating to live in that time period.

Student: Important? Like what?

Castillo: First, Abraham Lincoln was the President of the United States, a man many historians see as the greatest president in American history. Wouldn’t you want to meet the man who freed the slaves and led us out the Civil War?

Student: That would be cool, but I still don’t understand, why it is better than disco?

Castillo: Well, they still had dancing in the 1960’s; in fact it was one of their most popular forms of entertainment. But it wasn’t like it is today, men were much more chivalrous. The boy, who wanted to take you dancing, would come by your house, with a gift for you and another gift for your family. Then someone from your family would tag along, to make certain that boy didn’t try anything funny. Not like today, where you will probably drive yourself and pay for your dinner and movie.

Student: I don’t know, I think it might be kinda weird to have my family go to the dance with me. Prom is this weekend and I certainly don’t want them there.

Castillo: Okay, I see you’re still not convinced. Does your mom ever make a cherry or blueberry pie?

Student: Pie? My mom doesn't make pies, but she does buy them at the store and brings them home for us.

Castillo: Great. The art of pie making was really perfected in the 1860’s because this is when society learned to preserve fruits by canning them. One of their favorite things to preserve was fruit for making pies. That way they could make their favorite pie all year round. Who doesn’t love a warm piece of pie with ice cream? Yummy!

Student: Okay, that kinda made me hungry. But I don’t know if pie and dancing will make be give up TV. What else did they have?

Castillo: Hmm, have you ever struggled with deciding what to wear?

Student: Of course, Castillo, what kid doesn’t? … duh.

Castillo: The 1860’s make the choice simple and much less a problem because, young ladies were expected to wear a dress every day, then the only thing to worry about is what color to wear.

Student: Castillo, that doesn’t make your argument any stronger.

Castillo: Fair enough. Let’s move on to travel. In the 1860’s you could have traveled to New York City and seen the building of the Brooklyn Bridge. Before 1861, the technology did not exist to build a suspension bridge that long to support the weight of heavy traffic. But thanks to upgraded designs in suspension bridges one of the most iconic American landmarks was built. Or if you were adventurous, you could board a ship to India and seen the construction of the Taj Mahal, one of the eight wonders of the modern world.

Student: The Taj Mahal sounds cool, but I am still not certain.

Castillo: Well, if food and the wonders of the world haven’t convinced you, perhaps an opportunity to make a stand in history would change your mind.

Student: What do you mean?

Castillo: If you lived in the 1860’s you would have had a choice to either accept slavery or stand up against it. Few decades in history have provided people the opportunity to stand against an institution that is so obviously wrong and cruel.

Student: hmm, I have something to think about.

Castillo: I hope I helped you gain some insight to your question and the 1860’s.

Student: Yes, you have, thanks Castillo.