Chapter 11 Lincoln and Kennedy: Similar Destinies

John F. Kennedy and Abraham Lincoln lived in different times and had very different family and educational backgrounds. Kennedy lived in the 20th century; Lincoln lived in the 19th century. Kennedy was born in 1917, whereas Lincoln was born more than a hundred years earlier, in 1809. As for their family backgrounds, Kennedy came from a rich family, but Lincoln’s family was not wealthy. Because Kennedy came from a wealthy family, he was able to attend expensive private schools. He graduated from Harvard University. Lincoln, on the other hand, had only one year of formal schooling. In spite of his lack of formal schooling, he became a well-known lawyer. He taught himself law by reading law books. Lincoln was, in other words, a self-educated man.

In spite of these differences in Kennedy and Lincoln’s backgrounds, some interesting similarities between the 2 men are evident. In fact, books have been written about the strange coincidences in the lives of these 2 men. For example, take their political careers. Lincoln began his political career as a congressman. Similarly, Kennedy also began his political career as a congressman. Lincoln was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1847, and Kennedy was elected to the House in 1947. They went to Congress just 100 years apart. Another interesting coincidence is that each man was elected president of the United States in a year ending with the number 60. Lincoln was elected president in 1860, and Kennedy was elected in 1960; furthermore, both men were president during years of civil unrest in the country. Lincoln was president during the American Civil War. During Kennedy’s term of office, civil unrest took the form of civil rights demonstrations.

Another striking similarity between the 2 men was that, as you probably know, neither president lived to complete his tern in office. Lincoln and Kennedy were both assassinated while in office. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, after only 1,000 days in office. Lincoln was assassinated in 1865 a few days after the end of the American Civil War. It’s rather curious to note that both presidents were shot while they were sitting next to their wives.

These are only a few examples of the uncanny, or unusual similarities in the destinies of these 2 Americans – men who had a tremendous impact on the social and political life in the United States and the imagination of the American people.

Chapter 12 The Titanic and the Andrea Doria: Tragedies at Sea

On the morning of April 10, 1912, the luxury liner the Titanic left England on a voyage to New York. Four days later, she lay at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean. On Wednesday, July 18, 1956, the ocean liner the Andrea Doria left Italy. The Andrea Doria was also traveling to New York. Eight days later this great ship also lay at the bottom of the Atlantic.

The sinking of these two huge ships, these two very, very large ships shocked the world. Reports of these two tragedies filled the newspapers for days. When the Andrea Doria went down, people compared her sinking with the sinking of the Titanic. There were similarities between the two events; however there were also important differences.

What were some of these similarities? First of all, both ships were transatlantic ocean liners. In addition, they were also both luxury liners. They carried many of the world’s rich and famous people. In fact, ten American millionaires lost their lives when the Titanic went down. Today millions of dollars worth of gold, silver and cash may still remain locked inside these two sunken ships.

Another similarity was that, as each ship was sinking, there were acts of heroism and acts of villainy. Some people acted very bravely, even heroically. Some people even gave up their lives so that others could live. There were also some people who acted like cowards. For example, one man on the Titanic dressed up as a woman so that he could get into a lifeboat and save his own life. One last similarity was that both of these ships were considered “unsinkable.” People believed that they would never sink.

I’d like to shift my attention now to the differences between these great ship disasters. To begin with, the Titanic was on her maiden voyage; that is, she was on her very first voyage across the Atlantic. The Andrea Doria on the other hand, was on her 101st transatlantic crossing. Another difference was that the ships sank for different reasons. The Titanic struck an iceberg whereas the Andrea Doria collided with another ship. Another contrast was that the Andre Doria had radar to warn of the approach of another ship, but the Titanic was not equipped with radar. The Titanic only had a lookout. The lookout was able to see the iceberg only moments before the ship struck it. But, of course, the greatest difference between these two terrible accidents was the number of lives lost. When the Titanic sank, more than 1,500 people died. They drowned or froze to death in the icy north Atlantic water. Over 700 people survived the sinking of the Titanic. In the Andrea Doria accident 60 people lost their lives, and about 1, 650 lives were saved. One of the reasons that so many people died on the Titanic was that the ship was considered to be unsinkable, and so there were about half the number of life boats needed to rescue all the people aboard the ship. The Andrea Doria had more than enough lifeboats to rescue every person on the ship; however, they were able to use only about half of the lifeboats they had because of a mechanical problem. The passengers and crew of the Andrea Doria were very lucky that another ship was able to rescue most of them. The passengers on the Titanic were not so fortunate. It is interesting that the wreck of the Titanic was only found in September of 1985.

Whenever there are large numbers of people traveling together on a boat, ship, or plane, the possibility of disaster is always present. Most people arrive safely at their destination, but accidents like shipwrecks and plane crashes do happen, and these accidents remind us that no matter how safe we feel, accidents can happen suddenly and unexpectedly.

**hapter 10 Asian and African Elephants: Similarities and Differences**

The African and the Asian elephants are the largest land animals in the world. They are really enormous animals. The African and the Asian elephants are alike, or similar, in many ways, but there are differences between the 2 types of elephants, too.

What are some of the similarities between the African and the Asian elephant? Well, for one thing, both animals have long noses, called trunks. An elephant sometimes uses its trunk like a third hand. Both kinds of elephants use their trunks to pick up very small objects and very large, heavy objects. They can even pick up trees with their trunks. For another thing, both the African and the Asian elephants have very large ears, although the African elephant’s ears are considerably larger.

In addition, both animals are intelligent. They can be trained to do heavy work. They can also be trained to do tricks to entertain people. In other words, they both work for people, and they entertain people also.

As I said before, the African and Asian elephants are alike in many ways, but they are also quite different, too. Let me explain what I mean. The African elephant is larger and heavier than the Asian elephant. The African male elephant weighs between 12,000 and 14,000 pounds. In contrast, the average Asian male elephant weighs between 7,000 and 12,000 pounds.

Another major difference between the 2 kinds of elephants is the size of the ears. Asian elephants have smaller ears than African elephants do. The teeth are different, too. The African elephant has 2 very large teeth. These teeth are called tusks. The Asian elephant sometimes does not have any tusks at all. The elephants differ in color, too. The African elephant is dark gray in color while the Asian elephant is light gray. Occasionally an Asian elephant is even white in color! The last big difference between the 2 elephants is their temperament. The Asian elephant is tamer than the African elephant. In other words, the African elephant is much wilder than the Asian elephant. As a result, it’s more difficult to train the African elephant to perform tricks to entertain people. That’s why the elephants you see in the circus are probably Asian elephants … not African elephants.

Yes, there certainly are differences between the African and the Asian elephants, but there is one big similarity between the 2 animals: they are both fascinating and enormous animals.

Chapter9 Power: The Kinds People Use and Abuse

John Mack, who is the author of a book about power, says that the need for a sense of personal power is one of the primary forces in human life. On the other hand, he also says that a feeling of powerlessness is one of the most disturbing of human emotions ―a feeling to be avoided at all costs. Just what is power?

Psychologists define power as the ability to determine or to change the actions or behavior of other people. Psychologists are trying to identify different kinds of power so that they can better understand how people use these different kinds of power to gain control over other people. They are trying to understand how people manipulate other people for good and evil purposes. Psychologists have identified five basic types of power, and I’d like to talk about each of these briefly in the next few minutes.

The first type of power is called information power. Some psychologist believe that information power is one of the most effective types of power and control. The person who has information that other people want and need, but do not have, is in a position of power. Why is this? Well, most people like to receive and have information. Having information increases a person’s own sense of power. People who provide information can manipulate those who do not have information. Often, when people receive information, they do not know that they are being manipulated by those who provided the information. The psychologist named Edwards says, for example, that newspapers provide a lot of information to their readers, and that these newspaper readers generally believe the information they read. Readers do not question the accuracy of the reports about world events they read in the newspapers.

A second type of power is called referent power. For example, a person may want to behave like the members of a particular group, such as a soccer team ( or a group of classmates), or a person may identify with and want to be like a certain teacher, a friend, or say , a rock star. If you identify with another person, that person has power over you, and that person can influence your actions and behavior. Many people imitate and are controlled by the people they identify with. Let me give you a sad example of the use of this type of power for evil purposes. In the 1970s in Jonestown, Guyana, more than 900 people committed suicide when their religious leader Jim Jones told them to kill themselves. They did what he told them to do because he had referent power over them. They identified with him; they believe him, and they did what he told them to do. More recently a man named David Koresh controlled the lives and destinies of a small community of men, women, and children in Waco, Texas. Most people in his community died in a fire, along with their leader, during a confrontation with U.S. government agents.

A third kind of power is classified as legitimate power. Government officials, according to Edwards, have a lot of legitimate power. When the government decides to raise taxes or make people go to war, most people will do what their government officials tell them to do. One psychologist reported on an experiment that showed an example of this type of power. In this experiment, a researcher asked people on the street to move away from a bus stop. When he was dressed as a civilian, few people moved away from the bus stop. When the researcher was dressed as a guard, most people moved away from the bus stop. The guard’s uniform seemed to give the researcher a look of legitimate power.

A fourth kind of power is called expert power. An expert is a person who is very skilled in some area, such as sports, or who knows a lot about something, such as computers. Most people are impressed by the skills or knowledge of an expert. Some of these “experts” use their skills at playing sports or knowing about computers to gain power and influence ―and to gain money or admiration, according to Edwards. In other words, they use their expertise to gain power.

Finally, reward or coercive power is used by people who have the power to reward or punish another person’s actions or behavior. Giving a reward will change people’s behavior because it offers people a chance for gain. Giving a punishment may or may not cause the people to do what the powerful person wants them to do, but the changes may not last for a long time. The person who uses coercive power may also have to carefully watch that the less powerful person does, in fact, change his or her actions or behavior.

To sum up, then, power may be gained in many ways. It may come from having information that other people want or need; it may come from being a referent for other people to identify with or to imitate; it may come from having an official, or legitimate, position of authority; it may come from having skills or expertise; or it may come from having the power to reward or punish people. We all exercise one or more of these various kinds of power over other people, and other people will try to exercise one or more of these kinds of power over us throughout our lives.

Chapter 14 The American Civil War: Why It Happened

The American Civil War was fought over 100 years ago. It began in 1861 and lasted until 1865. The battles of the American Civil War resulted in the death of 620,000 Americans. What caused this terrible civil war between the North and the South?

Well, historians believe that there were many causes of the war. One of the important causes of the war was the friction between the North and the South over the issues of slavery. The southern way of life and the southern economy were based on the use of slave labor. For almost 250 years before the Civil War, the economy of the South depended on the use of black slaves. The slaves were used to plant and pick cotton and tobacco. Cotton and tobacco were the main crops grown in the South. Most southerners did not think it was wrong to own, buy, or sell slaves like farm animals. Slavery was, in fact, the foundation of the entire economy and way of life in the South. This was not the situation in the North. The northern economy did not depend on the use of slave labor. Why not?

Well, in the South there were many large cotton plantations that used hundreds of slaves. In the North, however, there were smaller farms. The northern farmers planted many different kinds of crops, nor just cotton or tobacco. The Northerners did not need slaves, since their farms were smaller than most of the southern plantations. In fact, many Northerners were so opposed to slavery that thy wanted to end slavery completely. The northern attitude against slavery made the Southerners angry. So, for many years before the war, there was constant friction between the North and the South over this issue. This friction eventually led to war.

There was other friction, too, as I said before, between the North and the South. There were, in other words, other causes of conflict between the North and the South. One involved the growth of industry in the North. While the South remained an agricultural area, the North became more and more industrialized. As industry increased in the North, it brought more people and greater wealth to the northern states. As a result, many Southerners began to fear northern political and economic domination. Because of this fear, many Southerners believed that the South should leave the Union and that they should form their own country.

In 1860, the Southerners decided it was time to leave the Union when Abraham Lincoln became president of the United States. Lincoln, as you may know, was against slavery. The people of the South were afraid that their way of life and their economic system were in danger with Lincoln in the presidency. Consequently, the southern states decided to secede from the Union. In other words, they wanted to break away from the North and form a separate country. In 1861, South Carolina seceded, and by June of 1861 eleven states had seceded and established a new country. They called the new country the Confederate States of America. The war between the North and the South began when the southern states seceded from the Union.

The main reason that the North went to war against the South was to bring the southern states back into the Union. In other words, the North went to war to keep the United States one country.

After 4 years of terrible fighting, the North won the war against the South, and the US remained one country. The North won the war mainly because of its economic and industrial strength and power.

The Civil War had 2 important results for the US: (1) the Civil War preserved the US as one country; and (2) it ended slavery in the US.

Many Americans wonder what the US would be like today if the South had won the Civil War. The history of the US would have been very different if the South had won the war between the states.

Chapter 15 Endangered Species: What Are the Causes

Over the history of the earth, millions of animals and plant species have disappeared. Most of these species disappeared, or became extinct, because of natural causes such as climatic changes or a catastrophic event, like an asteroid hitting earth. What is different today is that most species that are in danger of becoming extinct are not endangered because of natural causes but because of human activity. Today, we will be looking at the reasons that many plants and animals are endangered and how these reasons, or causes, are related to human activity.

The single most important cause of endangered species today is the destruction and/or degradation of habitat. Most animals and plants are adapted to live and reproduce in a specific environment, or habitat. They cannot survive if they lose the specific habitat that they are adapted to live and reproduce in.

There are many ways that human activity destroys habitat. For example, forests, grasslands, and deserts, which provide habitat to many plants and animals, are cleared in order to develop residential areas for people to live in and industrial areas for people to work in. Land is also cleared to prepare it for farmers to grow crops on. Swamps and marshes, which provide habitat to many animal and plant species, are often drained and filled in, also to provide land for development or agriculture. In addition, rivers are sometimes dammed in order to provide people with electrical power. All of these human activities, such as clearing forests, grasslands, and deserts, draining swamps and marshes, and damming rivers result in the destruction of habitats that many plants and animals need to live and reproduce in.

Closely related to the destruction of habitat is the degradation of habitat, which also endangered many species. Some examples of manmade causes that degrade habitat are oil spills, water pollution, and acid rain. You probably have seen pictures in newspapers or on TV of dead or dying marine animals and birds covered with oil after an oil tanker accident. Human beings also cause water pollution, which endangers the survival of many fish and marine animals. Acid rain, which results from people burning fossil fuels, also harms many species of fish and many species of trees. To sum up, some of the things related to human activity that result in the degradation of the environment are oil spills, water pollution, and acid rain.

Illegal wildlife trade is the next major cause of endangered species. Although many governments have passed laws protecting endangered species, many animals are still illegally hunted. Sometimes people hunt these animals for food, but more often they hunt them only for specific parts of their bodies. For example, some species of animals such as tigers are illegally hunted for their furs. Elephants, which are the biggest land animals in the world and an endangered species, are often killed for their hides and tusks. These elephant hides and tusks are used to make souvenirs and works of art to sell to tourists and art collectors. Other animals such as chimpanzees are trapped to the sold to zoos for people to look at or for medical experiments. Some beautiful birds, such as some species of parrots, are in danger of extinction because so many are captured to be sold as pets to people all over the world.

The third major cause that many species are endangered is over exploitation. People have always exploited, or used, plants and animals, and will, no doubt, continue to do so. It is only when people exploit animals and plants in an excessive manner that they become endangered. Some animals have already been hunted to extinction for food and sometimes for sport. Let me give you one well-known example---the passenger pigeon in the United States. Passenger pigeons were once so plentiful that people said they darkened the sky for hours, even days, when they flew over the land. Many people thought that the passenger pigeons could never disappear, but, in reality, they became extinct at the beginning of the 20th century. They became extinct as a result of over hunting, partly for food but mostly for sport. Today, some fish, like the cod, which is an important source of food for people in many parts of the world, have been over fished. As a result, cod are in danger of becoming extinct. At one time cod, like passenger pigeons, were very plentiful, and it seemed they could never be gone. And it’s not just animal species like the codfish that are in danger of becoming extinct. According to a recent article in the New Scientist, the Brazil nut tree, a very important source of nuts for both animals and people, is endangered due to over harvesting of the nuts.

The fourth and final reason that some species today are endangered has to do with competition that is directly related to human activity. As you know, most animal and plant species have to compete with other species in their habitat for food, water, and any other resources they both need. This is usually natural, that is, not related to human activity. However, some animal and plant species today also face competition that is directly related to human activity. There are two kinds of competition that animal and plant species can face that is related to human activity. One has to do with domestic animals and the other has to do with what is called “introduced” species. Let’s discuss competition with domestic animals first.

I’m sure you are all familiar with most domestic animals such as cattle, horses, sheep, goats, and so forth. But did you know that these domestic animals can be a threat to wild, that is, non-domestic animals? The first reason is because these domestic animals compete for habitat with wild animals. And, in addition, the people who own these domestic animals often hunt, trap, and poison wild animals in order to protect their livestock. The wolf is an example of an animal that is widely hunted to near extinction to protect domestic animals.

Another serious threat to some species is competition with introduced species, that is, plants or animals that are introduced, or brought, by humans into a new habitat, either on purpose or by accident. Take, for example, the introduction of a species of rabbit into Australia. In the 19th century, Europeans purposely introduced a species of European rabbit into Australia so they could hunt them for sport. Unfortunately, this animal has caused great damage to the habitat of many native animals and plants of Australia. Another introduced species, the brown tree snake, was accidentally introduced into the island Guam in the late 1940s. These snakes accidentally rode along on military cargo planes that landed there. Since that time, the brown tree snake has destroyed a large part of the bird population of Guam.

Before I close, let me repeat the four major causes of endangered species today: 1) the destruction and/or degradation of habitat, 2) the illegal wildlife trade, 3) over exploitation, and 4) competition with domestic and “introduced” species.

Let me conclude by saying that the relationship of all living plants and animals is complex and interdependent. The destruction of one animal or plant species can threaten the survival of other species of animals and plants. Human beings are part of the natural world and they might also, one day, become an endangered species themselves. Because the four major causes of endangered species today are largely the result of human activity, only human beings can change the situation. Time is running out for many endangered plant and animal species.