

### Definition

- *The American Heritage Dictionary* defines “assassination” as “the murder of a prominent person by surprise attack, as for political reasons.”
- *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the same term as “the taking of the life of anyone by treacherous violence, especially by a hired emissary, or one who has taken upon himself to execute the deed”
- The distinctions between the two definitions lie in the object of the attack and motive of the attacker.
- In the case of Abraham Lincoln, the object of the attack was the death of the President as a symbol of the Union. The motive was political.
- Even though John Wilkes Booth fired his shot on one date and Lincoln died from his wounds on the next day, it is correct to say that Booth assassinated Lincoln on April 14, 1865.