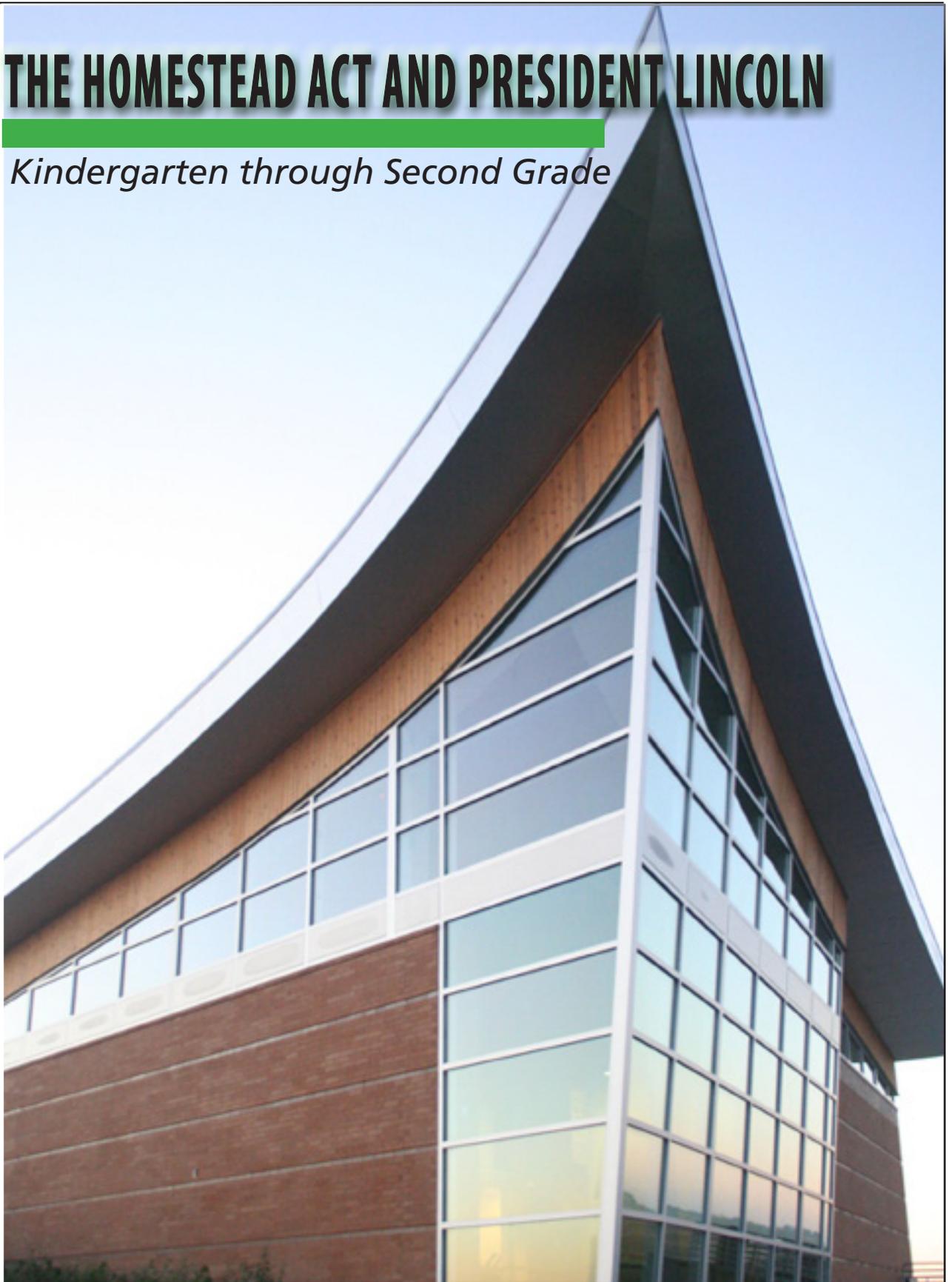


**Free Land was the Cry!**

# THE HOMESTEAD ACT AND PRESIDENT LINCOLN

*Kindergarten through Second Grade*



## Homestead

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Homestead National Monument  
of America, Nebraska



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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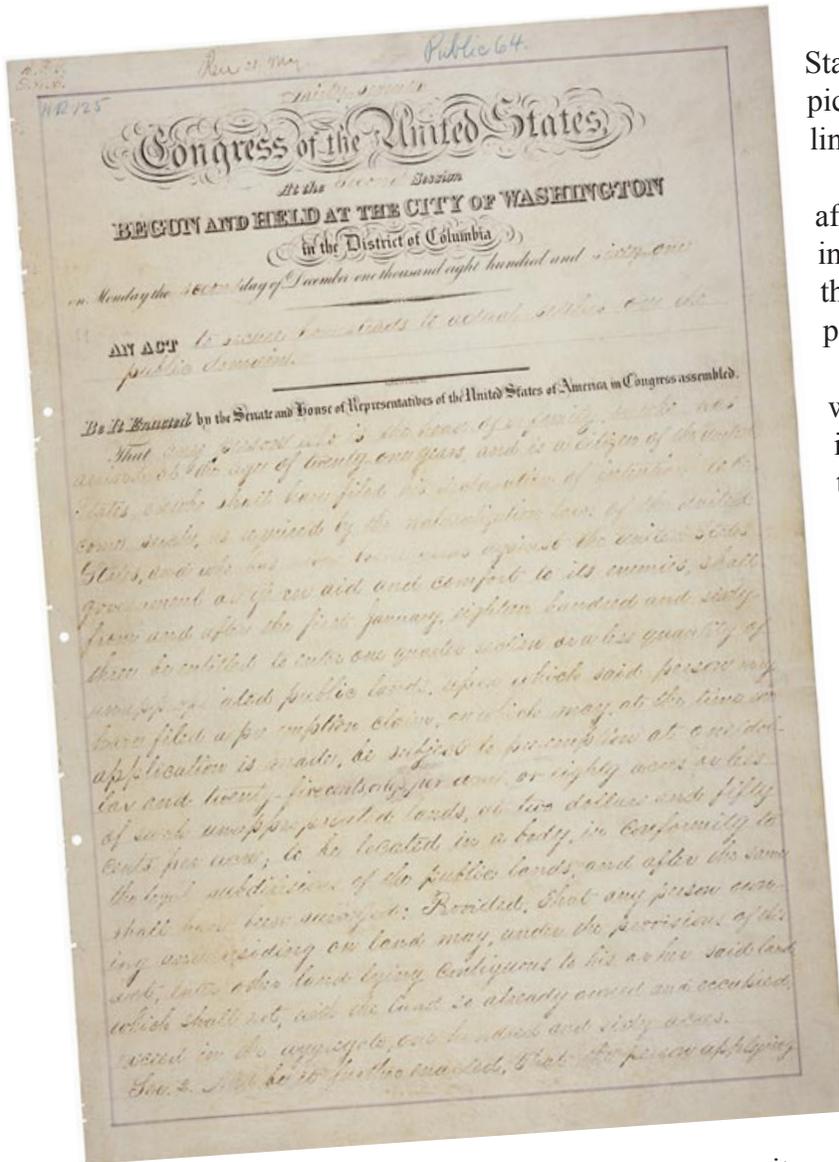
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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*Some of the ideas in this lesson may have been adapted from earlier, unacknowledged sources without our knowledge. If the reader believes this to be the case, please let us know, and appropriate corrections will be made. Thank you.*

# PROGRAM DESCRIPTION



The Homestead Act of 1862 gave 160 acres of land away to individuals who met certain requirements. In order to file a claim, an individual had to be at least 21 years of age and be the head of household. This law allowed women to file claims and own land. The act also required a person to be a citizen of the United States or declare intention to gain citizenship. This allowed many European immigrants, African-Americans and others to stake claims as well. Many railroads and western towns sent representatives to European countries to entice people to move to the United

States. These representatives showed pictures of beautiful towns with tree-lined streets and rich soil for farming.

The applicant of a claim had to file an affidavit with the local land office stating they met the conditions required by the law. At this time, the claimant would pay a fee of \$12 for filing the paperwork.

Once the filing was complete, there were additional requirements to meet in order to receive the patent and title to the land. A person had to build a home, live on the land, make the land his/her permanent residence, and work the land for a period of 5 years.

Many people who came to claim land paid for the services of a locator. This person would assist them in finding an unclaimed tract of land. Many locators showed individuals land near their own claim in order to “settle” the country and have neighbors nearby.

After living on the land, building a home, and farming the land for 5 years, it was time to “prove up.” This simply required the homesteader to find two individuals who would serve as witnesses. These

witnesses had to state they had known the homesteader for 5 years, knew the claimant had tilled the land and grown crops. With witnesses in tow, a claimant would proceed to the land office to “prove up,” paying another small filing fee of \$6 and having both witnesses sign the final documents. Afterwards, the claimant would receive a final certificate or patent to the land, having met all the conditions.

# CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

- Students will familiarize themselves with the events in Abraham Lincoln’s life.
- Students will familiarize themselves with the Homestead Act of 1862.

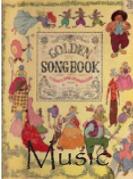
# NATIONAL STANDARDS

## NSS-USH.K-4.1 LIVING AND WORKING TOGETHER IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES, NOW AND LONG AGO

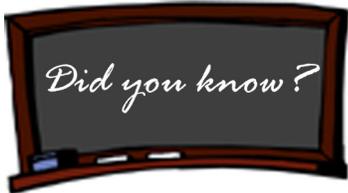
- Understands family life now and in the past, and family life in various places long ago.
- Understands the history of the local community and how communities in North America varied long ago.

## NSS-USH.K-4.2 THE HISTORY OF STUDENTS’ OWN STATE OR REGION

- Understands the people, events, problems, and ideas that were significant in creating the history of their state.

<b>SPECIAL ICONS</b>		<i>Enrichment Activities</i>				
	Homestead Handout		Math	Did you know?	MUSIC	Language Arts
	Indicates a reproducible handout is included	Indicates advanced lessons	Indicates an additional math lesson	Indicates a little known fact about the subject	Indicates an additional music or art activity	Indicates an additional language arts lesson

## Pre-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)



- Lincoln was the only President ever to obtain a patent. In 1849 he invented a complicated device for lifting ships over dangerous shoals by means of "buoyant air chambers." Much to Lincoln's disappointment, U.S. Patent No. 6,469 was never put into practical use.
- The clutter in Lincoln's law office was notorious, and a continual source of irritation to his partner, William Herndon. On his desk, Lincoln kept one envelope marked "When you can't find it anywhere else, look into this."

# GETTING TO KNOW ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## A Short Biography for Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th President of the United States of America. He was born on February 12, 1809 in a log cabin near Hodgeville, Kentucky. His parents' names were Thomas and Nancy Lincoln. The Lincolns lived on the farm where Abraham was born for two years.

Abraham helped his father build a log cabin in 1817, when he was 8 years old, after his family moved across the Ohio River into Indiana.

Abraham loved to read, but books were hard to find on the Indiana frontier, so he would walk several miles just to borrow one. Abraham would read whenever he could, even while he rested from plowing the fields.

Abraham's mother, Nancy, died in 1818. He was 9 years old. His father, Thomas, married Sarah Johnston Lincoln the next year. Abe loved Sarah very much.

In 1828 Abraham was 19 years old. He helped take a flatbed down the Ohio River to New Orleans. Abraham saw slaves being sold in the marketplace for the first time there and would work to end slavery for the rest of his life.

In 1836 Abraham became a lawyer and practiced law in Springfield, Illinois. To keep his important papers handy, Abraham would tuck them into his tall black hat.

In November of 1842 Abraham married a lively girl from Kentucky named Mary Todd. He was 33 years old. Abraham and his wife had four sons. Their names were Robert, Edward, William and Thomas. Edward died at age 4.

## Other Activities

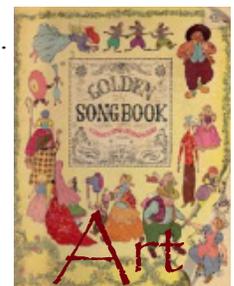
### Make a Log Cabin

Students will use pretzels and icing to create log cabins. Directions can be found here:

<http://crafts.kaboose.com/pretzel-log-cabin.html>

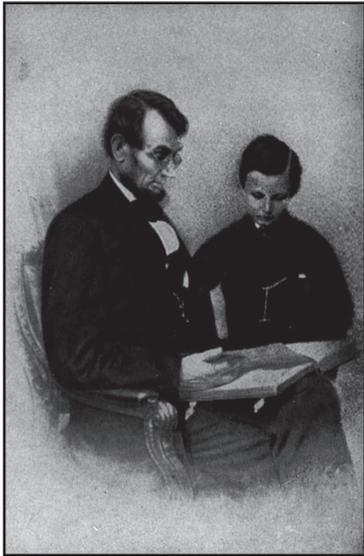
#### Materials needed

small empty milk carton	pretzel sticks
icing or peanut butter	1 square cracker
hot glue or tape	scissors
1 Rolo or other tubular shaped candy tape	



# GETTING TO KNOW ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## Pre-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)



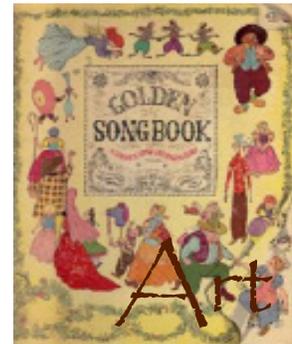
Lincoln believed that the United States stood for freedom for all and wanted to become a United States Senator. In 1858 he debated Stephen Douglas, who was also a candidate for the Senate from Illinois. The two men made speeches in seven cities, debating the issue of slavery.

Many people in the country owned slaves at that time. There were also many Americans who thought slavery was wrong. Lincoln worked hard to end slavery and made powerful speeches to spread his ideas. Lincoln lost his bid to become a United States Senator to Douglas.

Lincoln then ran for President in 1860, against Douglas and two other people. Lincoln took the oath of office to become President of the United States on March 4, 1861. It was a difficult time to be president because many southern states who did not agree with Lincoln about slavery, seceded, which meant they declared that they were not a part of the United States.

The Civil War began in April, 1861. The Union army fought the Southern Confederate armies. Many soldiers were hurt and killed in the battles. One such battle was in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Lincoln made his famous speech, The Gettysburg Address, at the dedication of a cemetery on the Gettysburg battlefield.

On April 14, 1865, Lincoln attended a play at Ford's Theatre. A shot rang through the crowded theater. John Wilkes Booth had shot the President! President Lincoln died on the morning of April 15th.



Have students illustrate one of these quotes by Abraham Lincoln

A friend is one who has the same enemies as you have.

A house divided against itself cannot stand.

All I am, or can be, I owe to my angel mother.

All my life I have tried to pluck a thistle and plant a flower wherever the flower would grow in thought and mind.

Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other.

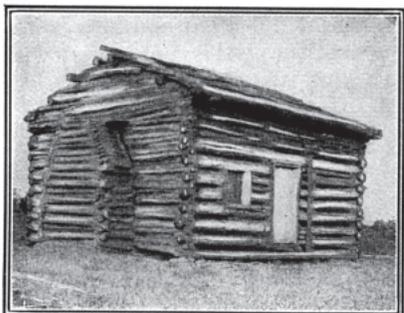
Each national park site has its own special story to tell. Homestead National Monument of America's story is about homesteading, but there are other sites to visit which will increase your understanding of Presidents. Mount Rushmore National Memorial is host to almost three million visitors a year from across the country and around the world. They come to marvel at the majestic beauty of the Black Hills of South Dakota and to learn about the birth, growth, development and the preservation of our country. Over the decades, Mount Rushmore has grown in fame as a symbol of America—a symbol of freedom and of hope for people from all cultures and backgrounds. Visit [www.nps.gov/moru](http://www.nps.gov/moru) for more information.



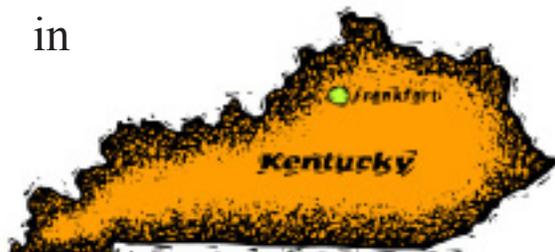
**Pre-Visit  
Activity #2  
(suggested)**

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN TIMELINE

From Log Cabin...



in



...to Indiana



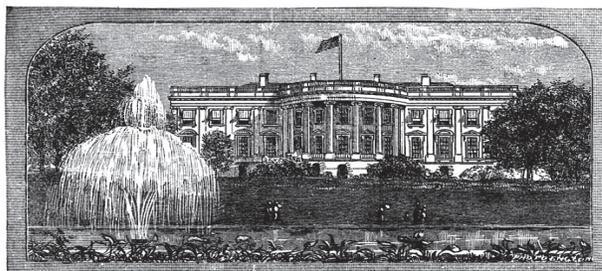
...to Illinois  
at New Salem, and Springfield



...to Pennsylvania  
at Gettysburg



...to the White House



# ABRAHAM LINCOLN TIMELINE

## Pre-Visit Activity #2 (suggested)

Have the students create a timeline of the important events in Abraham Lincoln's life. This can be done as a class using the full page handouts in the Additional Resources or by using the Timeline Template, also in the Additional Resources.

1809

Born in Hardin County (now LaRue County) Kentucky.

1816

Moved to Perry County (now Spencer County) Indiana.

1830

Moved to Macon County Illinois.

1831

Moved to New Salem, Illinois.

1837

Moved to Springfield, Illinois, the new capital of Illinois.

1861

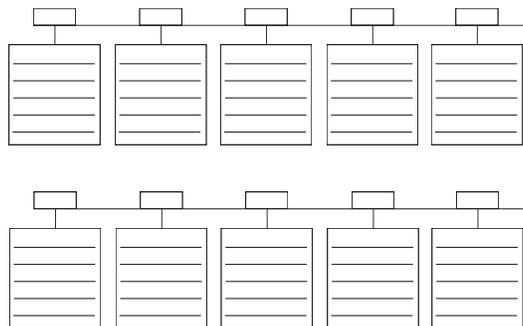
Moved to Washington, D.C. to be inaugurated as the 16th President of the United States.

1865

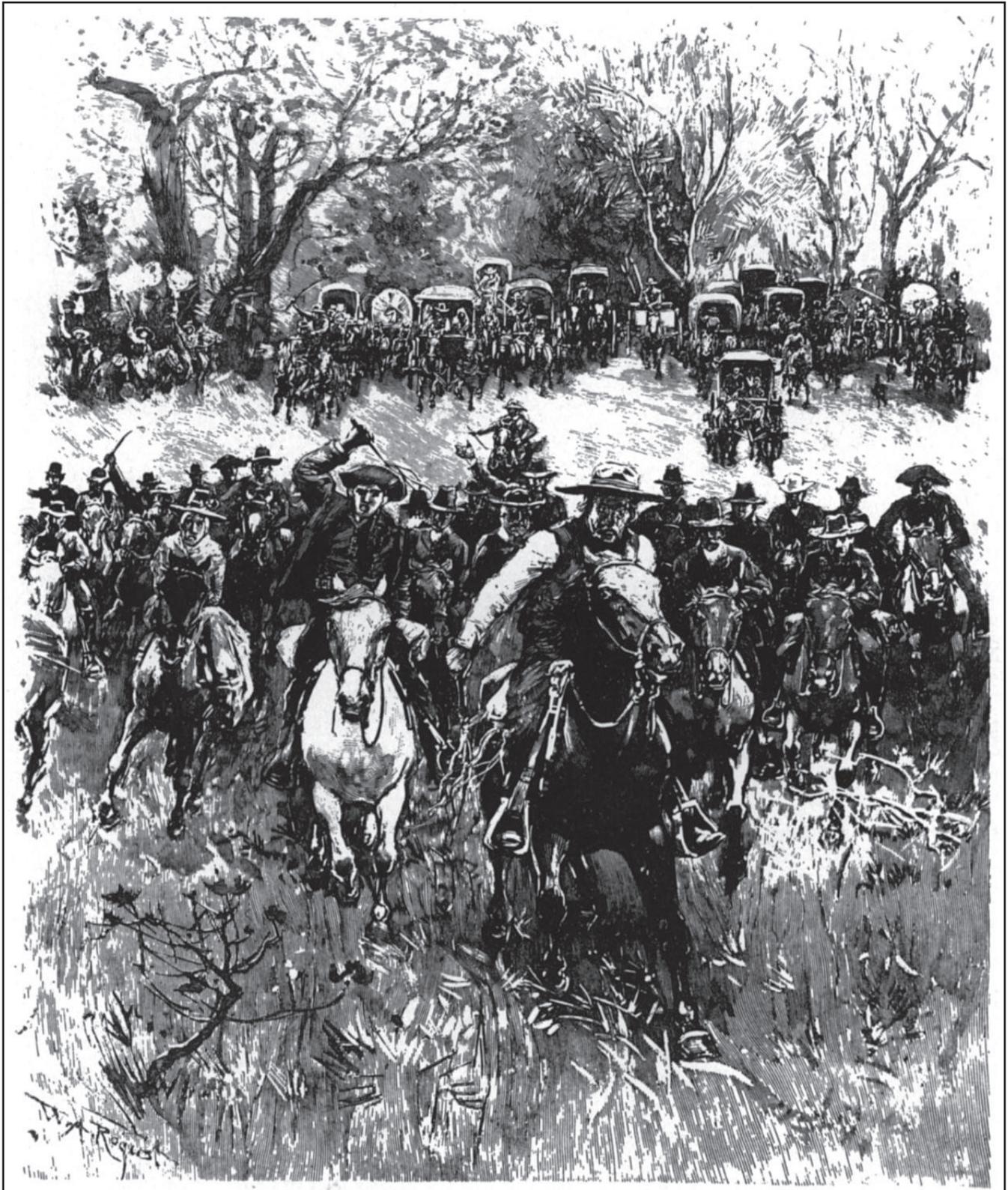
After being assassinated at Ford's Theater, Lincoln's body is laid to rest in Springfield, Illinois.



The Life of Abraham Lincoln



# RANGER-LED EXPERIENCE



# RANGER-LED EXPERIENCE

## Staking Your Homestead Claim

Staking a claim and living on that claim was often challenging for homesteaders. Students will experience staking a claim by hearing about the different types of claims, locating a claim, and explaining why they chose that claim.

Gather students together and explain that they will be

locating a homestead claim on the prairie. Each flag they see represents a homestead claim. Split students into pairs. Explain that students must decide with their partner which flag on the prairie they are going to choose for their homestead claim. Remind them that each colored flag represents something different. However, because most homesteaders paid for the services of a locator, they did not really know what they were getting on their land prior to claiming it. So to simulate that, they won't find out what the colors represent until after everyone has staked their claim.

Next have the students run to stake their claim and gather together again with their partners.

Explain to students the meaning of the different colors on their flags. Each flag has two colors.

The first set of colors represents water and timber on their land.

Blue flags have water and timber.

Yellow flags have water and no timber.

Red flags have no water and no timber.

The second set of colors represent whether or not the land is hilly or flat.

Green flags mean the land is hilly.

White flags mean the land is flat.

Have students decide with their partner what type of shelter (house) they would build on their land and what they would have to do in order to receive title to the land.

Have students explain to the entire group why they chose their particular shelter (house).

Discuss proving up on a homestead and what the Homestead Act required the claimant to do in order to receive title to a homestead claim.

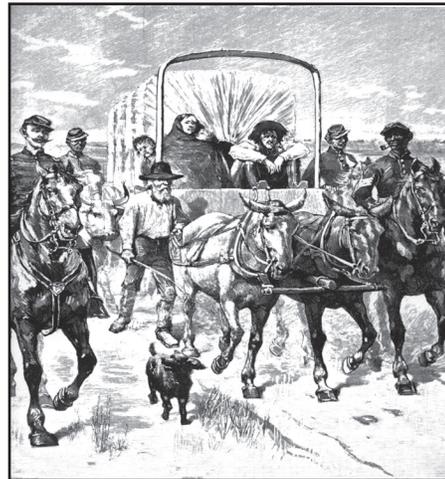
Homesteaders had to have 2 witnesses that knew the claimant for 5 years and could say the claimant had built a home, planted crops or improved the land, and lived on the land for 5 years.

Ask students why these rules existed for homesteaders to prove up on their homestead?

(They were required under the Homestead Act).

Why did a homesteader have to have two witnesses?

(This was the verification aspect of the act. People had to prove they had met the requirements).

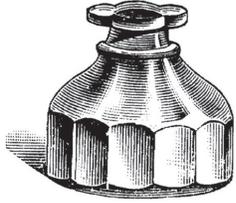


**Homestead National Monument of America is proud to be a pioneer in distance learning technology.**

**Contact the Education Coordinator at (402) 223-3514 to schedule your virtual field trip on the Homestead Act and President Lincoln.**

## Post-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)

### Enrichment Activities



Did you ever wonder what happened to “Lincoln’s Little Correspondent?” Grace Bedell was eleven when she wrote Abraham Lincoln, suggesting he grow a beard in order to improve his looks. The ladies would surely encourage their husbands to vote for him and he could become President. At the age of fourteen, she wrote President Lincoln to inquire about a job in his treasury department. Though her letters thrust this precocious young girl into the limelight, Grace’s life was actually just beginning. At the tender age of seventeen, Grace married former teacher, and Union Civil War veteran, George Newton Billings. The couple moved to Delphos, Kansas and raised one son, Harlow. Find out more information about Grace Bedell at: [www.gracebedellfoundation.org](http://www.gracebedellfoundation.org)

# WRITING TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Eleven year old Grace Bedell, from Westfield, New York, wrote a letter to Abraham Lincoln suggesting that he grow a beard to improve his looks and better his chances in running for President.

Read the letters that were sent between Grace and Abraham Lincoln.

Discuss Grace Bedell’s letter to Abraham Lincoln.

## Grace Bedell's Letter to Lincoln

N Y  
Westfield Chatauque Co  
Oct 15. 1860  
Hon A B Lincoln  
Dear Sir

My father has just home from the fair and brought home your picture and Mr. Hamlin's. I am a little girl only eleven years old, but want you should be President of the United States very much so I hope you wont think me very bold to write to such a great man as you are. Have you any little girls about as large as I am if so give them my love and tell her to write to me if you cannot answer this letter. I have got 4 brother's and part of them will vote for you any way and if you let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest of them to vote for you you would look a great deal better for your face is so thin. All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husband's to vote for you and then you would be President. My father is a going to vote for you and if I was a man I would vote for you to but I will try get every one to vote for you that I can I think that rail fence around your picture makes it look very pretty I have got a little baby sister she is nine weeks old and is just as cunning as can be. When you direct your letter direct to Grace Bedell Westfield Chatauque County New York.

I must not write any more answer this letter right off  
Good bye  
Grace Bedell

# WRITING TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## Post-Visit Activity #1 (suggested)

As you read this letter, it's easy to imagine a smile on Abraham Lincoln's face as he wrote it. Lincoln didn't make any promises, but he wore a full beard as President-elect when he stopped in Westfield on February 16, 1861, and met his young correspondent, Grace Bedell.

### Letter to Grace Bedell

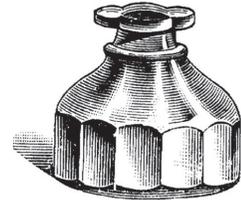
October 19, 1860  
Springfield, Illinois

Miss Grace Bedell  
My dear little Miss

Your very agreeable letter of the 15th is received - I regret the necessity of saying I have no daughters - I have three sons - one seventeen, one nine, and one seven years of age - They, with their mother, constitute my whole family - As to the whiskers, having never worn any, do you not think people would call it a piece of silly affection if I were to begin it now?

Your very sincere well wisher.  
A. Lincoln

### Enrichment Activities



### A Letter to Lincoln



An Original Readers' Theater Play  
From Weekly Reader

Have students do the Reader's Theater Play "A Letter to Lincoln." It includes the story of 11-year-old Grace Bedell writing to President Abraham Lincoln, his response and her eventual meeting with the President.

Each national park site has its own special story to tell. Homestead National Monument of America's story is about homesteading, but there are other sites to visit which will increase your understanding of Abraham Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln and his family moved to Indiana in 1816 and stayed until 1830 when they moved to Illinois. During this period, Lincoln grew physically and intellectually into a man. The people he knew here and the things he experienced had a profound influence on his life. His sense of honesty, his belief in the importance of education and learning, his respect for hard work, his compassion for his fellow man, and his moral convictions about right and wrong were all born of this place and this time. The time he spent here helped shape the man that went on to lead the country. Visit [www.nps.gov/libo](http://www.nps.gov/libo) for more information.



**Post-Visit  
Activity #2  
(suggested)**

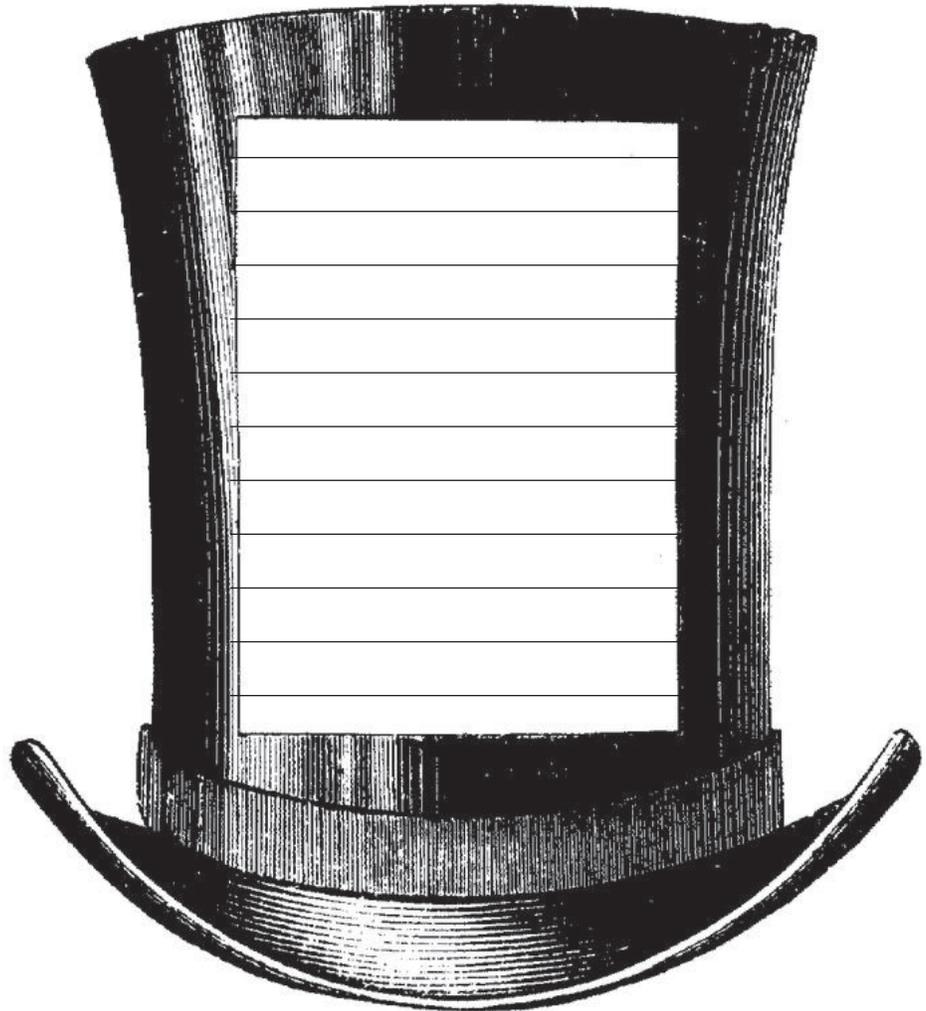
# ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S TOP HAT



Abraham Lincoln in his top hat.

Make a stove pipe hat out of black construction paper using the template in the Homestead Handouts.

Have students write facts about Abraham Lincoln and paste them on the hat.



Each national park site has its own special story to tell. Homestead National Monument of America's story is about homesteading, but there are other sites to visit which will increase your understanding of the Homestead Act. "In this temple, as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the Union, the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever." Beneath these words, the 16th President of the United States—the Great Emancipator and preserver of the nation during the Civil War—sits immortalized in marble. As an enduring symbol of freedom, the Lincoln Memorial attracts anyone who seeks inspiration and hope. Visit [www.nps.gov/linc](http://www.nps.gov/linc) for more information.

# CHARACTER EDUCATION

---

## TRUSTWORTHINESS

Students who are trustworthy do what they have said they will do. They are honest and reliable. They only make promises if they know they can keep them and they really plan to keep them. They live using the rules they know about right and wrong.

### 5 Minute Focus

Abraham Lincoln was a trustworthy person. When he was seven years old he traveled on horseback to a grist mill seven miles from his home. He carried a bag of corn to be ground into flour to make bread. Then he traveled the seven miles home again. His family knew that he was reliable and could be trusted. When he grew up he became the 16th president of the United States.

Color the picture of Abraham Lincoln as president.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

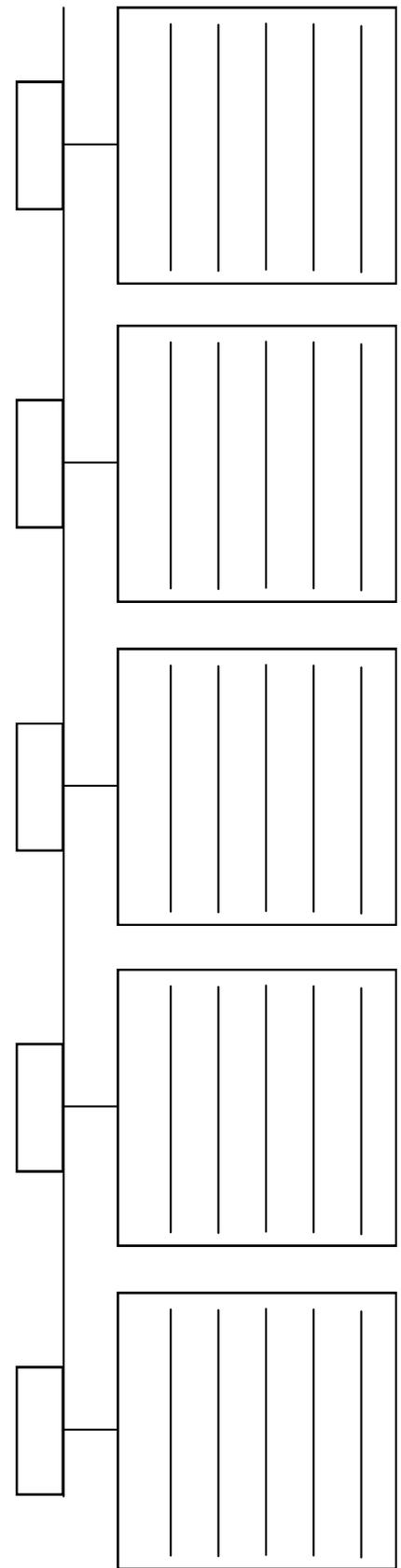
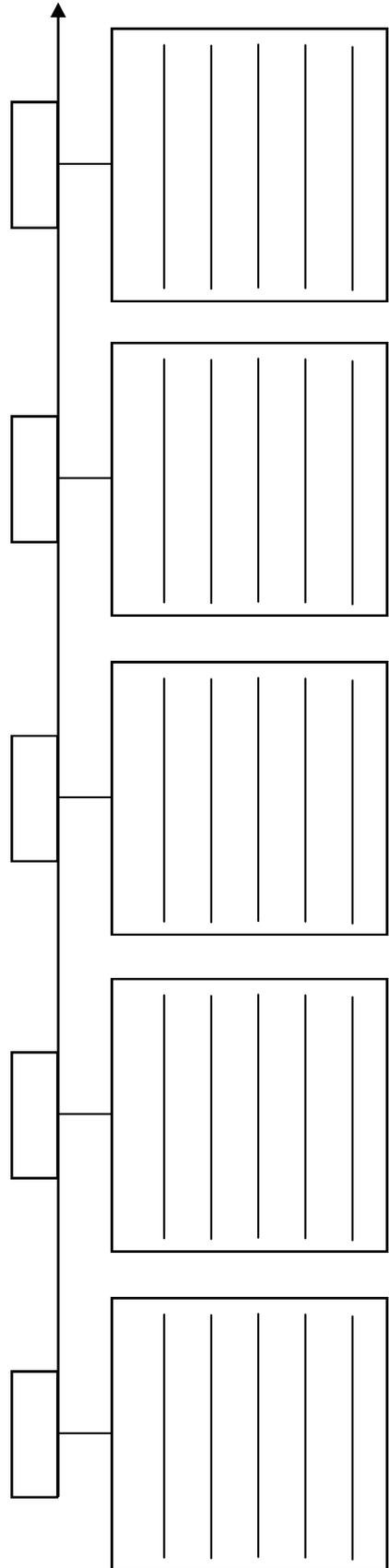
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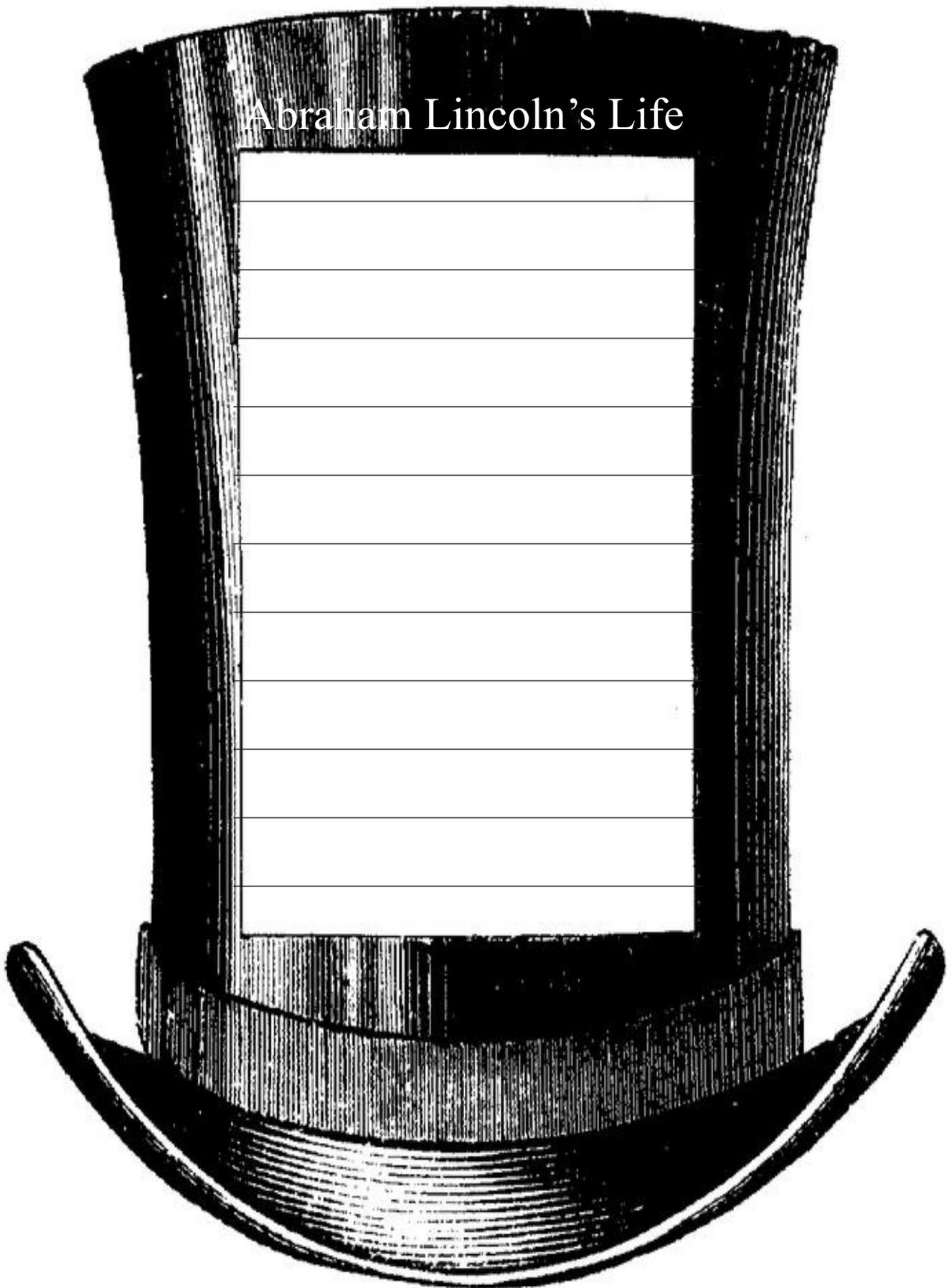


## Lincoln Memorial Coloring Page

# The Life of Abraham Lincoln



# Abraham Lincoln's Life



# A Letter to Lincoln



Special  
Reproducible  
Supplement

## An Original Readers' Theater Play From Weekly Reader

Edition 2 Supplement, February 2008

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Name \_\_\_\_\_



# A Letter to Lincoln

**Characters: (in order of appearance)**

House Narrator 1  
House Narrator 2  
Grace

Mother  
Father  
Levant

Jennie  
Post Office Narrator  
Mr. Mann

Abraham Lincoln  
Lincoln Narrator

---

**House Narrator 1:** A long time ago in the United State of America, life was very different. People used to own slaves! Women weren't allowed to vote, and railroad travel was the fastest way of getting around.

**House Narrator 2:** Our story takes place in the fall of 1860. A man named Abraham Lincoln was running for president. Grace Bedell and her brother Levant wait with their mother for their father to return from a nearby fair. They are at their home in Westfield, New York.

**Grace** Mother, mother! When will Father be home from the fair?

**Mother** He'll be home soon, Grace. He is rallying to support Abraham Lincoln! That is important work.

**Grace:** I know, but Father said he would bring me a surprise!

**Mother:** Grace! Can't you think of anything other than presents? If Lincoln is elected president, our country might be split in two.

**Grace:** Why would that happen? I think Lincoln is a good man.

**Mother** Lincoln wants to stop slavery. Some people agree with him, but others want to keep their slaves.

**Grace** It can't be right for one person to own another person.

**Mother:** No, it isn't. That's why your father is voting for Lincoln.

**Father:** I'm back!! Is anyone home?

**Grace:** Father!

**Father:** Where is Levant? I've brought presents for everyone!

**Mother:** He's washing up for dinner. Come sit and we'll eat.

**Father:** All right, but first: here, this is for Mother, and for you, Grace, I brought Lincoln's campaign poster!

**Grace:** Oh, Father, thank you! I love it!

**House Narrator 1:** The family was excited to hear Father's stories about the fair. They sat down for dinner and talked about it.

**Levant:** What did you see at the fair, Father?

**Father:** There were many politicians giving speeches, and people shouting about who they wanted to become president.

**Grace:** How many people are trying to be president?

**Mother:** There are four candidates: Abraham Lincoln, John Bell, Stephen Douglas, and John Breckinridge.

**Levant:** Yes, funny-looking old Abraham Lincoln! He doesn't look like a president to me.

**Grace:** I think he's very handsome! He's just thin.

**Levant:** Well, you're a girl! It's not like you can actually vote!

**Grace:** Levant is so mean! Lincoln isn't funny looking, but his face is so thin! Maybe if he grows a beard. Wait, that's it. He should grow a beard! Then he'd be even more handsome! I'll write a letter to tell him.

**House Narrator 2:** Grace walked to school the next morning. She was excited. She wanted to tell her friend Jennie about the poster and the letter she would write.

**Jennie:** Hi, Grace! What's that you have in your hand?

**Grace:** This is Mr. Lincoln's campaign poster.

**Jennie:** My father says he's voting for Mr. Lincoln.

**Grace:** So does mine. I wish I could vote!

**Jennie:** Mr. Lincoln's trying to end slavery so everyone will have equal rights. Maybe someday women will be able to vote.

**Grace:** I hope so. Jennie, I had an idea last night! My brother was teasing me and saying that Lincoln was funny looking.

**Jennie:** Well, he is awfully skinny.

**Grace:** I know. I think he'd look much better if he had a beard!

**Jennie:** Hmm... You're right! His face wouldn't look so thin.

**Grace:** I'm going to write to him and tell him!

**Jennie:** What? You can't do that! He's too important. He doesn't have time to read letters from children like us.

**Grace:** I think that he'll read it! I'm going to write it today after school. I think he might even write back.

**Post Office Narrator:** After school, Grace sat down and wrote the letter, Then she and Levant ran to the post office. Mr. Mann, the postmaster, would mail it for her. She hoped Lincoln would reply quickly.

**Mr. Mann:** Well, Hello, Miss Grace.

**Grace:** Hello, Mr. Mann. Will you mail this letter, please?

**Mr. Mann:** “Mr. Abraham Lincoln?”

**Grace:** Yes, I’ve written a letter to Mr. Lincoln.

**Levant:** He’s too busy. He’ll never get it. Don’t bother him with silly things.

**Grace:** It’s not silly!

**Mr. Mann:** I suppose I could mail it for you.

**Grace:** Thank you, Mr. Mann!

**Post Office Narrator:** The next day, Grace went back to the post office.

**Grace:** Hello, Mr. Mann. Is there any mail for me?

**Mr. Mann:** Not yet, Grace.

**Post Office Narrator:** Grace visited the post office every day to see if Mr. Lincoln had replied to her letter. Meanwhile, at Lincoln’s house, the mail has just arrived.

**Abraham Lincoln:** Hmm, what’s this? A letter from a Miss Grace Bedell?

**Lincoln Narrator:** “Honorable A. B. Lincoln, Dear Sir, My father has just come home from the fair, and brought home your picture. I am a little girl only eleven years old. If you will let your whiskers grow, I will try and get everyone to vote for you. I must not write any more. Answer this letter right off. Good bye, Grace Bedell.”

**Lincoln:** Why, how kind. I will reply to it right away.

**Post Office Narrator:** Back in Westfield, Grace returned to the post office every day for a week, but there was no reply. Until...

**Mr. Mann:** Grace! He wrote back! Lincoln replied!

**Grace:** Oh, how wonderful!!

**Levant:** What did he say, Grace? Read it to us!

**Grace:** I must take it home!

**House Narrator 1:** Grace took the letter and ran home. It was snowing. Big snowflakes fell on the paper, but she just brushed them right off. She ran into the house to show her mother the letter.

**Grace:** Mother, look! Mr. Lincoln wrote to me!

**Mother:** You wrote a letter to Abraham Lincoln?

**Grace:** Yes, I told him that he should grow a beard and that he would look more handsome and more people would vote for him! He wrote back! Listen to this: "My dear little Miss. Your very agreeable letter is received.. As to the whiskers, having never worn any, do you not think people would call it a piece of silly affection if I were to begin it now? Your very sincere well-wisher, A. Lincoln."

**Mother:** It was very kind of him to write back to you.

**Grace:** Isn't it amazing?

**House Narrator 2** Grace brought the letter to school the next day and showed it to all her classmates. Everyone was talking about how Grace had received a letter from Mr. Lincoln! Months went by and the excitement died down. Grace kept the letter on her desk. She waited eagerly to hear news of the election.

**Father:** Mr. Lincoln is winning the election!

**Grace:** Hurray! Lincoln will be our next president!

**House Narrator 1:** Abraham Lincoln won the presidential election. One month later, he began his trip to Washington, D.C. The family heard that Lincoln's train was going to pass through Westfield. Grace was very excited.

**Grace:** Mother, please! I want to go to the train station to see Mr. Lincoln!

**Mother:** Well, you did write to him. I suppose it's all right.

**Lincoln Narrator:** At the train station, a huge crowd of people watched the train steam towards them. They were cheering and waving. Grace stood as tall as she was able, but she still couldn't see over all the people.

**Grace:** I can't see anything! Is he speaking?

**Abraham Lincoln:** A few months ago, I received a letter from a lovely young lady by the name of Grace Bedell. I believe she lives in this town. Is she here today?

**Lincoln Narrator:** Grace's father cleared a path to the platform for her.

**Abraham Lincoln:** Hello, Grace. As you can see, I took your advice about my appearance. How does my beard look?

**Grace:** It looks great! I'm so glad you are the president, Mr. Lincoln!

**Lincoln Narrator:** Lincoln left Westfield later that day. Grace would always remember the day that she met President Abraham Lincoln.

## The End



# Abraham Lincoln Coloring Page

