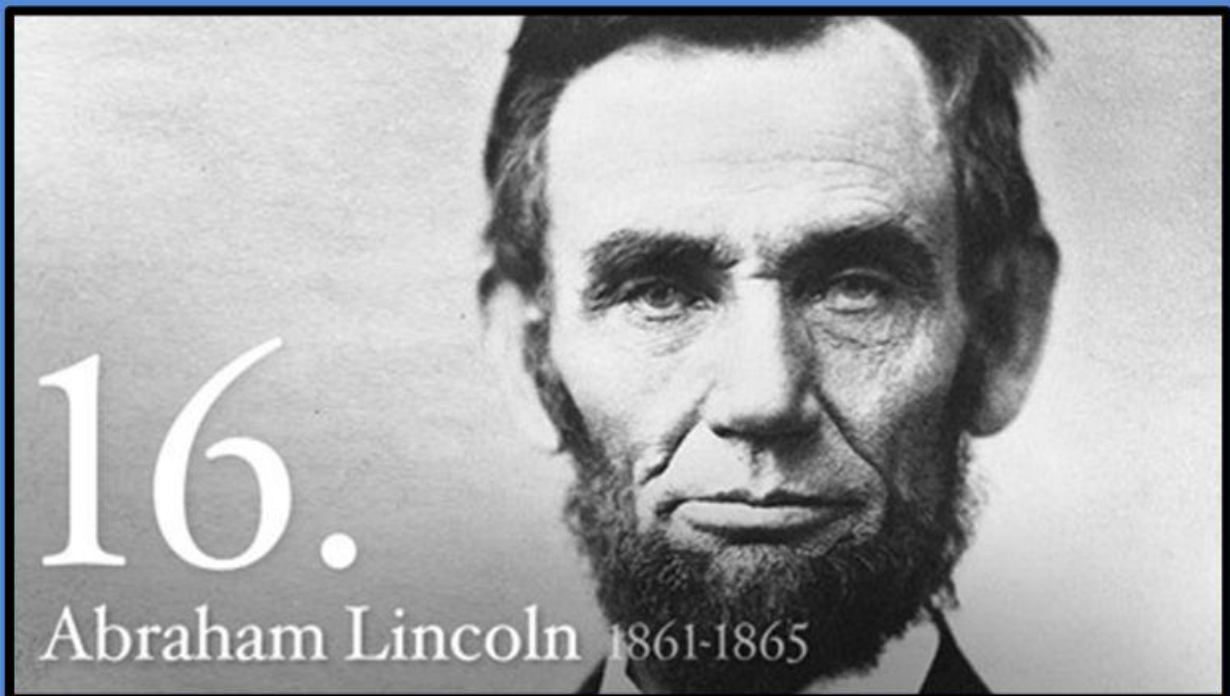


President Abraham Lincoln

~ In a Nutshell ~



Written & designed by
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President Abraham Lincoln In a Nutshell
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www.KnowledgeBoxCentral.com

ISBN

Ebook: 978-1-61625-710-1

Publisher: Knowledge Box Central
<http://www.knowledgeboxcentral.com>

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What is the "In a Nutshell" series?

This is a series of concise, easy to understand information on many popular topics. You will find that many of products in this series can also be found as part of larger publications and/or curriculum on the publisher's website. At the end of each book, you will find a list of questions that may be used to help you review the material.



President Abraham Lincoln Lapbook

Study Guide

by Christopher Lyon

Introduction

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States of America from 1861-1865 and is widely considered to be the greatest president in U.S. history. He is known as the central figure of the Civil War and the great emancipator that freed the slaves. He was assassinated when his country needed him the most after the Civil War. He will remain one of history's most memorable personalities for the great things he achieved during his life and his presidency. Of course, one of the other reasons people have remembered him is because he had such a unique appearance!

Lincoln's Appearance

Lincoln was the tallest president in history, standing 6 feet and 4 inches tall, and as if that wasn't tall enough, he often wore a stovepipe hat which made him appear to be nearly 7 feet tall! The hat was so tall that he often used it to store letters, bills, and other documents. He is also remembered for his unique beard; he was actually the first president to have one. His facial hair went from ear to ear and down around his chin but with no moustache. This popular style of beard during his lifetime was referred to as "the chin curtain," but today many people actually refer to it as "the Lincoln."

Lincoln's beard was inspired by the letter of an 11-year-old girl named Grace Greenwood Bedell Billings. She wrote him a letter in October 1860 after seeing a campaign photo of a clean-shaven Abraham. In her letter she wrote, "I have got 4 brothers and part of them will vote for you anyway 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 husbands to vote for you and then you would be President."

After reading the letter, Lincoln stopped shaving and allowed his beard to grow. A few weeks later he was elected president. After being elected, on his way to Washington, D.C., by train from his home in Illinois, the president-elect stopped in Grace's hometown of Westfield, New York, and asked to meet her. As Grace recalled, Lincoln "sat down with me on the edge of the station platform" and said, "Gracie, look at my whiskers. I have been growing them for you." Whether or not Lincoln's beard earned him the presidency by increasing his popularity among voters is left to speculation.

Early Life

Lincoln was born February 12, 1809, in a one-room log cabin in Sinking Spring Farm, Kentucky, a town which is known today as Hodgenville. This made him the first U.S. president born west of the

Appalachian range. His American heritage dates back to his ancestor Samuel Lincoln, who migrated from Norwich, England, in 1638 to Hingham, Massachusetts.

He was named after his grandfather, Captain Abraham Lincoln, who was a militia captain during the American Revolutionary War and a pioneer settler of Kentucky. The story of Captain Lincoln's death was strongly imprinted on Abraham's mind, having heard it from a first-hand witness, his own father Thomas Lincoln. While working in the field with his three sons Mordecai, Thomas, and Josiah, Captain Lincoln was shot and killed by a Native American who ambushed them from the nearby forest. Surprised and in shock by the sudden death of his father, Thomas Lincoln stood motionless and mortified. While his brother Josiah ran to get help, the other brother Mordecai ran to the cabin where a loaded gun was kept. He returned with the gun just as his brother Thomas was either about to be killed or kidnapped by the intruder. After taking careful aim, Mordecai shot the Native American in the chest and killed him.

Born in Kentucky, Abraham Lincoln and his family moved to Perry County, Indiana, in 1817 after a land dispute. They lived on public land in a crude log cabin for shelter, hunting and farming a small plot to survive the wilderness, living in the forest amongst bears and other wild animals. Living in a log cabin at that time did not signify poverty as many other Americans then had done the same. The activities and routine of daily life in those days required lots of physical labor, discipline, patience, and much perseverance in order to survive.

When Lincoln was just 9 years old, his mother died of tremetol poisoning (milk sickness) at the age of 34. The death of his mother appeared to affect him deeply, and he became increasingly alienated from the rest of his family. He resented the hard work placed on him as a result of her absence. To make matters worse his father would often verbally abuse him and beat him violently. When his father remarried a year later, young Lincoln's many months of loneliness came to an end as he bonded strongly with his new stepmother.

Though it is likely that both his mother and father were completely illiterate, Lincoln was encouraged to read and was taught writing by his cousin. Books and paper were scarce commodities at that time and so he would often walk many miles to borrow new books. His formal education lasted for 18 months as he studied with various itinerant teachers. He was primarily self-educated and loved to read. His love of reading made him neglect more physically laborious tasks and exercise. His friends and neighbors thought him emaciated and weak, though he was quite skilled with an ax and a good wrestler, probably owing to his height.

Another tragedy in his life which affected him profoundly was the death of his sister at age 20 during childbirth when Abraham was 18. Lincoln and his sister had a very close relationship. As an older sister, she had been like a mother to him and he mourned her death deeply.

NOTE: Many sources state that Lincoln had another sibling, Tommy, who died at only 3 years old. Not much is written or known about this sibling or how he may have died. Here is a website that does give some information that may be helpful: <http://rogerjnorton.com/Lincoln93.html>

Lincoln's Independence

The same year his sister died (1828), another event occurred which impacted the course of Lincoln's life leading him to pursue the practice of law. As a ferryman carrying passengers from the Indiana shore of the Ohio River to large steamboats in the middle of the river, Lincoln was taken to court under allegations that he was illegally competing with another ferry outfit on the Kentucky side of the river. It would have been unlawful for Lincoln to carry passengers from shore to shore, but because he was only carrying passengers to the middle of the river, it was decided by the Kentucky judge that no law was being broken.

This experience motivated Lincoln to become interested in the practice of law and in the court system. He would often visit the local courthouses and witness legal proceedings as was common for many during those days. Later in life Lincoln was known as a great orator, and we can assume he must have learned much about good speaking from his time spent in the courts as a spectator.

In 1830, the Lincoln family moved to Coles County, Illinois, and it was at that time that 22-year-old Abraham left his family to become independent. Being a good ax man, he made a living for a short time chopping wood. However, he wanted more out of life than making a living by physical labor, so he moved to New Salem, where he could instead use his intellect and be among a more educated group of people. This allowed him to continue his self-education.

He began working as a shopkeeper in a local store where he developed greater social skills by conversing with the townspeople. He made a reputation for himself as being an excellent storyteller, which in those days was one of the highest forms of entertainment. Being a man of deep thought, Lincoln was prone to moods of melancholy. Among his peers, though, he had a self-deprecating sort of humor, meaning he would often tell stories and jokes at his own expense, winning over friends and making himself feel good in the process. In 1832, he bought a general store on credit with a partner. The business eventually struggled and he sold his share.

First Time in Politics

That March, Lincoln began his first foray into politics by campaigning for the Illinois General Assembly. He had become popular amongst the locals and could draw a crowd with his powerful speaking ability. Despite his rather backwoods-twanged accent, long lanky physical stature and bony appearance, he was able to win over his audience through his common sense, plain speaking style, and persuasive logic.

During the time of his campaigning, the Black Hawk War broke out along the Mississippi River. Lincoln answered the call to serve as a volunteer in the Illinois Militia to fight the Native Americans and was elected captain of his first company of militiamen. During the brief conflict, Lincoln saw the effects of war up close for the first time. Despite not being in combat, the experience had a lasting impression upon him. He helped to bury the dead in the aftermath of battles and gained experience leading a military company, which boosted his self-esteem.

After he returned from the war, the election concluded with Lincoln finishing eighth out of thirteen candidates, and only the top four were elected. Following the defeat, he served as postmaster and later worked as a county surveyor before making the decision to become a lawyer. Being a

Below, you will find 15 general discussion questions to help review what you have learned. Use the following page(s) for documenting your answers. Older students may choose to write a report on this president as well.

Review Questions:

1. Describe Abraham Lincoln's appearance.
2. Discuss Abraham Lincoln's early life, including his birth, namesake, 1817 move, mother's death, education, and sister's death.
3. Discuss the experiences that shaped Lincoln as he grew in his independence, including his ferryman experience, interest in law, move to Illinois, and job as a shopkeeper.
4. Discuss Lincoln's first time in politics, specifically with the Illinois General Assembly and the Illinois State Legislature.
5. How did Abraham Lincoln get the nickname of "Honest Abe"?
6. Discuss Abraham Lincoln's marriage and family, including Mary Todd, his children, and his fatherhood.
7. Discuss Lincoln's career as a U.S. Representative.
8. Discuss the patent that Lincoln held.
9. Discuss Lincoln and Douglas, their rivalry, and their debates.
10. Discuss Lincoln's run for the Presidency.
11. Discuss the Civil War, often known as "Lincoln's War."
12. Discuss the Emancipation Proclamation.
13. Discuss the Gettysburg Address.
14. Discuss Lincoln's re-election.
15. Discuss Lincoln's assassination.

Write your answers to the Review Questions below:

