Core Knowledge VOICES IN HISTORY™

Abraham Lincoln

Defender of a Nation

by Kathryn Erskine

We are pleased that our materials in the Core Knowledge Curriculum Series™, Core Classics® Series, Voices in History™ Series, Collection of Tales™ Series, and Adventures in History™ Series available on our **website**, are made available through a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Through the license, the user is free:

- To share: to copy, distribute, and transmit the work
- To remix: to adapt the work

Under the following conditions:

- You must attribute the work in the following manner:

  This work is based on an original work of the Core Knowledge® Foundation made available through licensing under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial- ShareAlike 4.0 International License. This does not in any way imply that the Core Knoweldge Foundation endorses this work.

- You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

- If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license to this one.

With the understanding that for reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work. The best way to do that is with a link to this web page:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

Abraham Lincoln

Defender of a Nation

by

Kathryn Erskine

Voices in History: Biography Series™

ISBN 978-1-68380-895-4

PRINTED IN CANADA

Editorial Director:
Rosie McCormick

CORE KNOWLEDGE FOUNDATION
801 EAST HIGH STREET
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA 22902

www.coreknowledge.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1

Family and Friends

Abe Lincoln wasn't an educated kid. Nor was he particularly handsome, and he certainly wasn't rich. In fact, his family was poor. He was born in a one-room log cabin. Along with his older sister, Sarah, Abe was helping with planting and farm chores before he was six. By the time he was eight, he was cutting down trees and splitting them to make fences. He even helped build his family's log cabin. Abe was tall and strong and a hard worker, but farming wasn't really what he wanted to do.

Abe wanted to go to school. He was passionate about reading and learning. His dad, Thomas, kept him too busy on the farm to attend school for more than a few weeks here and there. Maybe because Thomas could barely read or write, he didn't believe Abe needed more than basic reading, writing, and math. So how did a kid like that become president of the United States?

Abe Lincoln's Childhood Homes

February 12, 1809: Born in Hardin (now LaRue) County, Kentucky, near Hodgenville

1811: Moved to Knob Creek, Kentucky

1816: Moved to Little Pigeon Creek, Indiana

1830: Moved to Macon County, Illinois, near Decatur

Abe had qualities other than the best grades, good looks, or money. He listened to people. He knew how to get along. He tried to step into other people's shoes and understand their points of view. He was good-natured, too. Rather than get angry or upset, he'd use humor to put himself and others at ease. For example, if people teased him about how long his legs were, he'd explain they were simply long enough to reach the ground.

He developed compassion for others at an early age. He knew what it was like to suffer loss. His little brother died when Abe was three. His mom passed away when he was nine. On top of that, Abe and his dad didn't get along very well. His older sister, Sarah, was his best friend. But when Abe was still a teenager, she passed away, too.

When Abe was ten, his dad married Sarah Bush Johnston, who had two daughters and a son. She treated all the kids equally. Abe and his stepmother became very

close. His stepmother brought not only love, care, and nourishment but also supplies that the Lincolns hadn't had before, like nice furniture and dishes—and, most important to Abe, books.

Abe Lincoln's Favorite Snacks

Abe loved fruit best of all. He also enjoyed corn bread and corn cakes, which may have been because his family grew a lot of corn on their farm. He particularly liked gingerbread cookies—made with sorghum flour and ginger—that were sturdy enough to survive stuffing some in his pocket.

Abe loved stories. He loved hearing them, reading them, and telling them. Even with the books his stepmother brought—*The Thousand and One Nights, The Pilgrim's Progress, Robinson Crusoe*, and a few others—his family didn't have many, so he borrowed whatever he could. However, that meant walking several miles because none of his neighbors lived nearby.

Borrowing books also meant he was responsible for them. Once, he borrowed a biography of George Washington from his neighbor Josiah Crawford. The book was ruined in a rainstorm. Abe returned it and, not having any money, asked how he could pay for it. He spent three full days working in Mr. Crawford's field.

Abe's stepmother encouraged his passion for learning and convinced his dad to let him go to school on occasion. He happily walked the four miles to school. He enjoyed being around other kids and amused them with his stories. Even though he was shy, he liked getting to know people, so he forced himself to talk. Once he started a story, he didn't feel nervous. His trademark line as he grew up was, "That reminds me of a story. . . ."

Abe was friendly as well as funny. He once helped a girl in a spelling bee when she got stuck on the word *defied*. Unsure what came after the *f*, she hesitated. Abe pointed at his eye to indicate *i*, and she spelled the world correctly.

Abe Lincoln: Animal Lover

Abe had compassion for animals as well as people. When he was almost eight, he shot a wild turkey. He knew hunting was necessary, but he hated shooting an animal and never did so again. He also stopped other boys from smashing turtles against trees or putting hot coals on their backs because it was just plain cruel. He even had empathy for ants, saying that life was precious to them just as it is to people.

Although he was a serious student, Abe enjoyed being a kidder, judging from the rhymes he wrote in his notebooks:

trademark: something associated with a person
defied: refused to obey

Abraham Lincoln

his hand and pen

he will be good but

God knows When

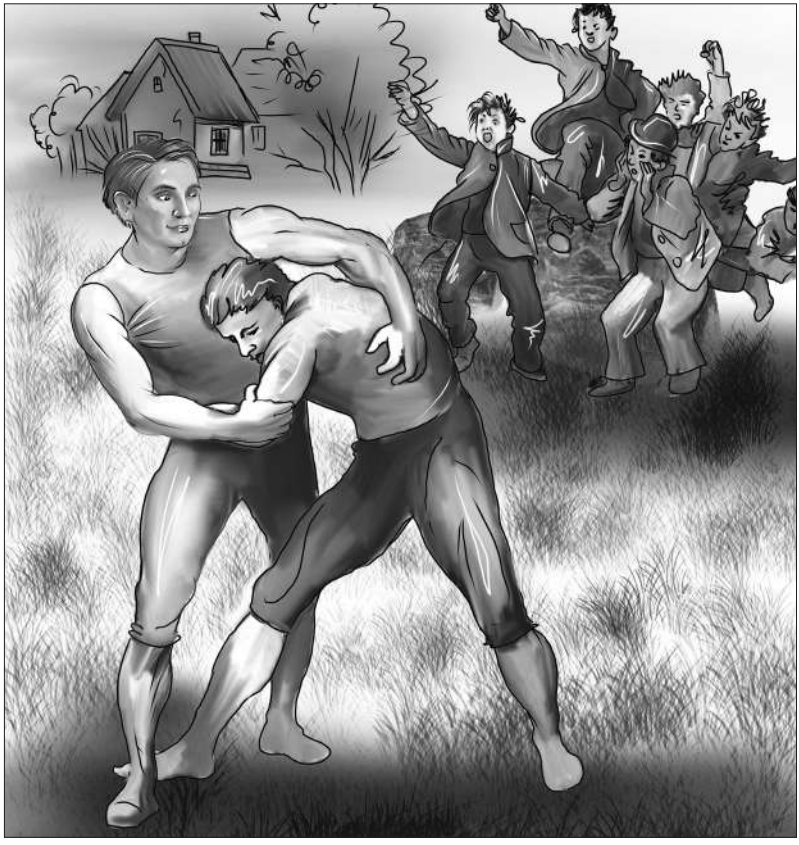
Abraham Lincoln is my nam[e]

And with my pen I wrote the same

I wrote in both hast[e] and speed

and left it here for fools to read

At school, he didn't like bickering or fighting, but he didn't mind a fair wrestling match. Wrestling simply involved seeing who could get someone on the ground first, not punching or kicking. Abe always won because he tended to be the tallest and the strongest. It's said he won three hundred matches before being defeated. Whether that's true or not, he was by all accounts an excellent wrestler and is one of the presidents in the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.



Because his family didn't have money for schoolbooks, Abe put pieces of paper together to make his own "books." He wrote basic math facts and lists of weights and measures so he could study them. He liked to write poetry. Neighbors who couldn't write at all dictated their letters to him. Mostly, Abe loved reading. When he was about twelve, he said, "My best friend is the man who'll get me a book I ain't read."

dictated: spoke words to be written down

Abe Lincoln's Reading Hints

Abe read books over and over. Some thought this was because he was slow, but he was making sure he understood what he read and sometimes even memorizing it. His other trick was to read aloud. When asked why, he explained, "When I read aloud, two senses catch the idea: first, I see what I read; second, I hear it, and therefore I can remember it better."

Unfortunately, if Abe's dad caught him reading when he was supposed to be doing chores, he would punish him, sometimes harshly. Abe resented it. All he was doing was trying to learn.

Abe and his dad had different personalities, beliefs, and desires. Abe's dad preferred spending time with his new stepson, John. He'd leave Abe to do the heavy work on the farm while he and John went off hunting together. That only made Abe want to leave the farm more than ever. He vowed that he'd learn as much as he could and do something special with his life. And that's exactly what he did.

2

Exploring the World

Abe liked to spend his evenings chatting with neighbors at James Gentry's corner store. It was a welcome break from chores and an opportunity to tell his stories. He also listened to adults discussing politics and became curious about what was happening in the wider world. Someday, he wanted to explore beyond Little Pigeon Creek.

When he was a teenager, he got his chance. Abe was hired to run James Taylor's ferry, rowing people back and forth across the Anderson and Ohio Rivers. He met a variety of people and enjoyed swapping stories. In his free time, he built his own rowboat. One day, two men spotted his boat and paid him a dollar to row them to a steamboat in the middle of the river. A dollar then was worth about thirty dollars in today's money—more than Abe had ever seen in his life. "The world seemed wider and fairer before me," he later said.

---

politics: actions of government

Abe decided to use his rowboat to start his own service carrying people to mid-river steamships. Unfortunately, two other ferry services took him to court for interfering with their business of taking people across the river. The judge said Abe hadn't ferried people all the way across, just to a steamboat in the middle. Abe won. It was Abe's first experience with the legal process and may have spurred his interest in learning law.

His next venture took him much farther away from home. James Gentry hired Abe to pilot a flatboat loaded with farm produce 1,200 miles down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. It took three months. Abe was excited to see more of the country. Not everything about the experience was positive, though. In New Orleans, he saw people in ragged clothes and chains—enslaved people. He watched in horror as they were auctioned off as property. He had rarely, if ever, seen Black or enslaved people before, but he knew that "if slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong."

At twenty-one, Abe was more than ready to leave home. First, though, he helped his family move from Indiana to Illinois. On the way, they crossed a partly frozen river, and Abe's favorite dog fell through the ice. Abe jumped in the frigid water and saved him. If Abe hadn't been there, the dog probably wouldn't have survived.

venture: undertaking with some risk
auctioned: sold to the person willing to pay the most

After helping clear the land and start the new farm, Abe struck out on his own. He was hired by Denton Offutt to make another trip down the Mississippi. On the way, the flatboat got stuck and filled with water. Abe tried using brute strength at first, but he quickly saw that careful thinking was needed. He moved the cargo around and drilled holes in the boat to let the water out. It worked!

Presidential Patent

Abe is the only person elected president to have earned a patent. A patent is the legal right to an idea that you came up with. Having a patent means other people can't make and sell your invention and make money from your idea. Abe's patent was for a system of airbags that could be inflated to lift a boat off an obstacle. He designed it to solve the problem he'd had when his boat got stuck.

Denton Offutt was so impressed by Abe's problem -solving that he asked him to run his general store in New Salem, Illinois. Now Abe had his own place to tell stories, meet new people, and learn about the outside world. To Abe, New Salem's community of a hundred people, all in one place, was huge.

At Offutt's store, he earned the nickname "Honest Abe." He treated customers kindly and fairly. Once, Abe realized he'd overcharged a woman six cents—about two dollars in today's money. He walked three miles to her house so he could pay her back. Another time, he saw that there was a weight on the scale that measured loose tea, which meant a customer had received less than they should have. He closed the store and delivered the rest of the tea.

Abe was respected for his ability to handle all kinds of problems. Knowing Abe's wrestling record, Denton Offutt challenged Jack Armstrong of the Clary's Grove boys, a local group of bullies, to fight his new employee. Abe was reluctant but didn't feel he could let his boss down. There are conflicting stories about whether Jack or Abe won, but afterward, the Clary's Grove boys threatened to all fight Abe at once. Abe said he'd only take them on one at a time and quickly used humor and storytelling to calm everyone down. Jack and the other Clary's Grove boys ended up laughing, and they decided

they liked Abe. In fact, they would soon serve in a war together. Abe and Jack became friends for life.

Because of his friendliness and his storytelling ability, Abe was invited to join the New Salem Debating Society. Although he was confident about storytelling, he knew his grammar was poor. Would people laugh at the way he spoke? Would they take him seriously?

As always, Abe looked to books for answers. He walked six miles to a neighbor's farm to borrow a grammar book. He also found a popular public speaking book, *The Columbian Orator*. He learned the importance of pronunciation, speaking clearly, and pausing at the right moment. His work paid off. Robert Rutledge, son of club president James Rutledge, later wrote that after Abe's first debate, the club members were "amazed," and James said to his wife that "there was more to Abe's head than wit and fun."

At the same time Abe was reading *The Columbian Orator*, a twelve-year old boy in Baltimore, Maryland, then known as Frederick Bailey, was also reading it. Frederick was enslaved, so by law, he was not even allowed to read. He knew, though, that preventing enslaved people from reading kept them exactly that—enslaved. He was determined to escape slavery.

While running errands, Frederick made friends with white boys coming home from school. They showed him *The Columbian Orator*. He secretly made money shining shoes so he could buy his own copy. He hid the book and read it whenever he could. As both Frederick and Abe were reading the book, neither knew about the other. Later, they would become friends and make American history.

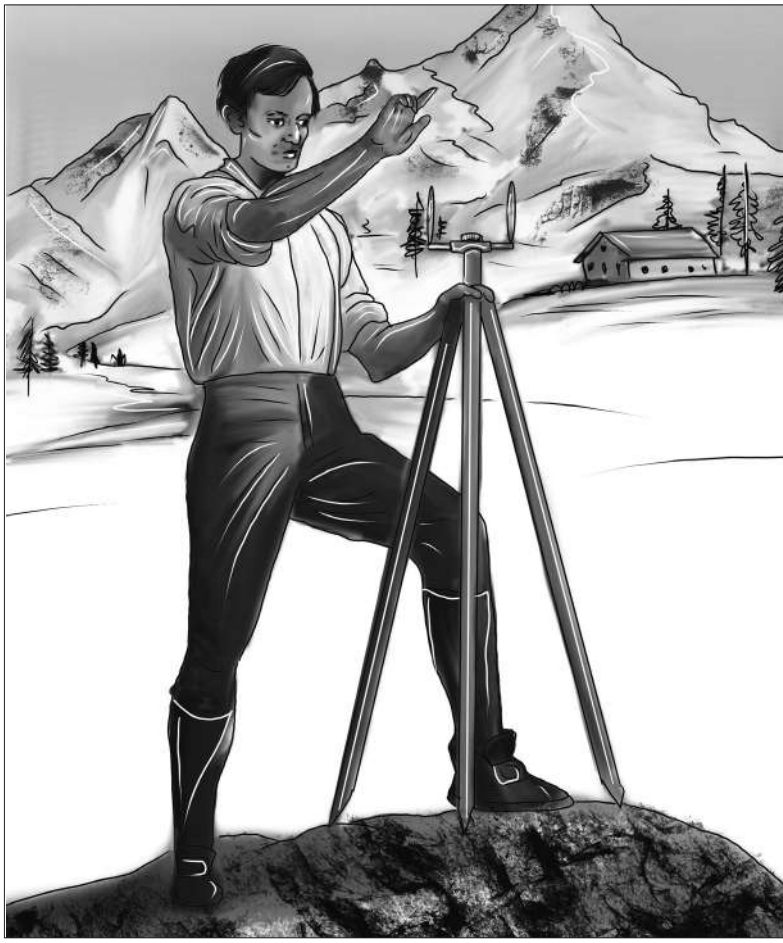
3

Self-Made Man

With no money and only a little formal education, Abe juggled many jobs to make ends meet. He enlisted and briefly served in the Black Hawk War—a conflict between a group of Native Americans who were trying to reclaim their land and the settlers who occupied it, the latter backed by state militias and the U.S. Army. Abe's friends joined too, including the Clary's Grove boys he'd befriended at Offutt's store. They elected him captain of their militia. Later, Abe said it was his most meaningful election because it was by people who really knew him.

Abe took jobs as a carpenter and a blacksmith, though he didn't like the work very much. He became a postmaster, which he enjoyed, and even delivered people's mail to them if they didn't pick it up. When there were no customers, he had time to read. He was offered a job as a surveyor, which he knew nothing about. So what did he do? He got books on geometry and trigonometry and surveying, and he learned how to do the job.

enlisted: joined the armed forces
militia: group of citizens with military training who only serve in the armed forces when needed
surveyor: someone who measures the shape, size, and position of an area of land
geometry: area of mathematics that includes the study of lines, angles, and surfaces
trigonometry: area of mathematics that involves the study of triangles



Abe was also interested in the law. He read law books and regularly attended local court, where he started making comments and even telling jokes during court cases. John Bowling Green, New Salem's justice of the peace, thought he was hilarious and encouraged him to continue. Abe was not only having fun but also learning

justice of the peace: local official with some judicial powers

a lot about the law. Eventually, with the help of a book of templates, Abe began drafting legal documents for his friends and neighbors.

Abe's friends suggested he enter politics. He was only twenty-three when he decided to run for the Illinois state legislature. "Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition," Abe wrote in his first political announcement. "Whether it be true or not, I . . . have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed of my fellow men, by rendering myself worthy of their esteem." He wanted to do something with his life that would make people admire him.

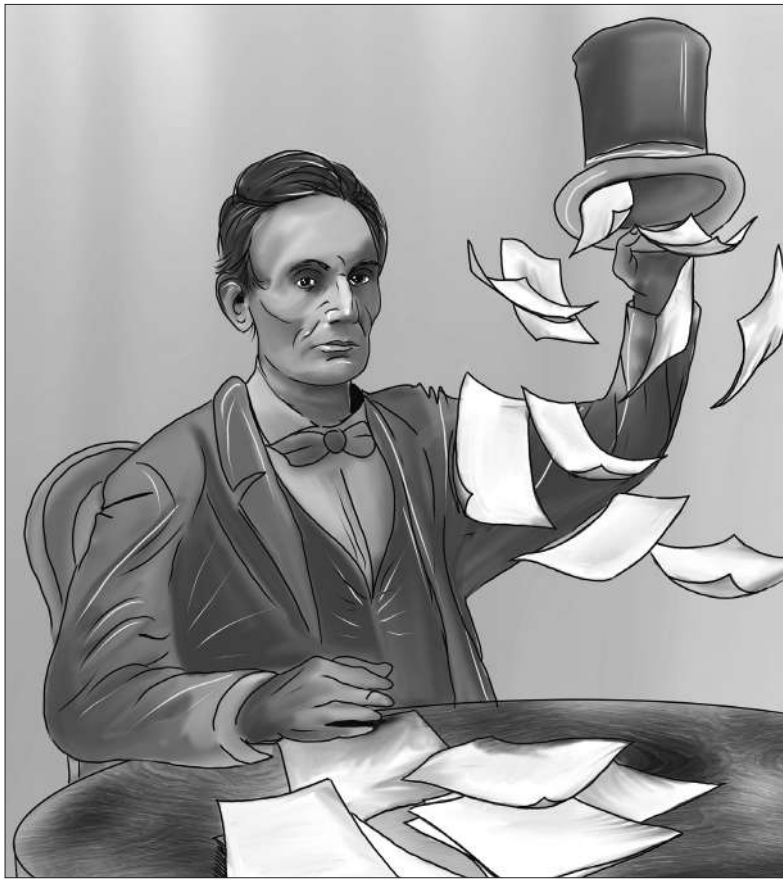
Abe campaigned around the county where he'd been surveying. He gave speeches and sometimes even held wrestling matches. One group of men, mostly Democrats, said they'd vote for Abe if he threw a cannonball farther than they could. Abe said, "Well boys, if that's all I have to do, I'll get your votes," and easily threw it farther than anyone else. Both his speeches and his strength earned him respect. Although he lost the election, he said he'd have to lose five or six times before he'd give up. He tried again two years later. He campaigned hard, often helped by the Clary's Grove boys. This time, he won.

---

templates: patterns that can be changed or filled in
state legislature: group of lawmakers in a state
esteemed: respected
rendering: making

While he was a legislator, Abe started following another passion. He read and studied hard for three years to become a lawyer. He then moved to Springfield, Illinois, and joined a friend's law practice.

Abe's office was disorganized and messy. He'd stretch out his long legs on top of piles of papers on his desk. He had a stack of papers in the corner of his office with a note on top: "When you can't find it anywhere else, look in this."



One special place he found to store documents was inside his hat. Sometimes he'd carry papers around that way. On occasion, he used it for dramatic effect. He'd pull off his hat and throw down his papers to make a point.

With his growing political and legal knowledge, Abe became more confident as a state legislator. Only he and one other man objected to a bill that said slavery was guaranteed by the Constitution. The two men argued that "the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy." However, at that time, Abe still believed that slavery was a state issue. He just didn't want it to spread to any other states.

Slavery, Abolition, and the Missouri Compromise

In 1820, Congress passed the Missouri Compromise. It allowed Missouri to join the United States as a proslavery state only because Maine was admitted as a free state. The number of states with and without slavery had to be equal so there'd be an equal number of proslavery and antislavery senators in Congress. The compromise also abolished slavery in all states and territories north of Missouri. Abolitionists were people who wanted to abolish slavery throughout the United States. Abe was against slavery, but he was not an abolitionist. He didn't believe the Constitution gave Congress the power to abolish slavery in any state where it already existed. Only a Constitutional amendment could make that happen. He did believe, though, that Congress had the power to abolish slavery in federal territories because they weren't states.

Compromise: agreement in which both sides give up some demands
amendment: change

About the same time that Abe was speaking out in the Illinois legislature against slavery, Frederick Bailey was boarding a northbound train in Baltimore. He was disguised as a sailor to escape enslavement. Through the Underground Railroad, he was able to reach Massachusetts. There, he changed his name to Frederick Douglass and began to give speeches pointing out that Northern states were supporting slavery because they allowed it to continue. He argued that it was a national problem, not a state problem.

The Underground Railroad, 1800–65

The Underground Railroad was a secret organization that helped enslaved people escape the South. However, even enslaved people who reached the North were in constant danger. Under the Fugitive Slave Acts, they could be kidnapped from any state or territory and taken back to their enslaver. They had no right to a trial because they were not considered citizens.

Abe served four terms in the Illinois state legislature, ending in 1842. He then focused on his law career in Springfield and married Mary Todd. She liked Abe because he was kind as well as ambitious. She had high hopes for him and was already planning their future. He, on the other hand, seemed a little surprised that she would even marry him. In a letter to a friend, he wrote, "Nothing new here, except my marrying, which to me, is matter of profound wonder."

In addition to their common interest in politics, Abe and Mary shared household chores and parenting duties. Abe went grocery shopping and washed dishes in his blue apron. He played with their sons Robert, Eddie, Willie, and Tad. He took them on walks and even brought them to his office, where he let them crawl over him and run wild. According to Mary, he often said, "It is my pleasure that my children are free—happy and unrestrained by paternal tyranny."

tyranny: unreasonably strict power

War with Mexico, 1846–48, and Slavery

President James Polk believed in Manifest Destiny. That was the idea that the United States was destined to expand across the whole of North America. Mexico refused to sell land to the United States, so Polk put troops at the border to threaten the Mexicans. When Mexico fired at the troops, Polk said that the Mexicans had started it. He invaded. Many, including Abe Lincoln, thought this was cheating. The war ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Mexico lost over half of its territory. The new territory the United States gained became part of the slavery debate. Which areas would be free, and which would have slavery?

Mary had ambitions, too. She encouraged her husband to run for the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served one term. While there, Abe tried to chip away at slavery. He supported a bill to ban slavery in all the land taken from Mexico. He also wrote a bill to abolish slavery in Washington D.C. because it was a federal city, not a state. The bill would only give freedom to those born after 1850. It would even pay enslavers. Still, it didn't pass. The country, apparently, was not ready.

Abe settled down to family life and his law career for several years. In his free time, he read everything from law books to literature. His favorite way to read was stretched out on the floor. Mary was sometimes frustrated by Abe's

Manifest Destiny: something that will happen and cannot be avoided

habits. His clothes were rumpled, his hair uncombed, and he didn't have the proper manners she'd grown up with. Also, he could get lost in his thoughts when she felt he should be paying attention.

Abe did pay attention to what he thought was important. For example, in 1854, Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act. It stated that territories could decide for themselves by popular vote whether they wanted to allow slavery. The act overruled the Missouri Compromise, which said that no areas north of Missouri could allow slavery. In a speech later that year, Abe said the passage of the act had left him "thunderstruck and stunned." It spurred him to get back into politics. He ran for U.S. Senate but lost.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act led to fighting in Kansas between proslavery and antislavery citizens. There was property damage, guerrilla warfare, kidnapping, and murder. For four years, the area was known as "Bleeding Kansas" because dozens of people died.

The issue of slavery was coming to a head in Congress, in the courts, and throughout the country. Abe ran again for U.S. Senate in 1858. He had a series of debates with his opponent, Stephen Douglas, who was responsible for the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Neither was considered the winner. People generally agreed that Douglas did better

early on while Abe was stronger toward the end. He used his trademark humor when Douglas accused him of being "two-faced." Abe, who considered himself ugly, said, "If I were two-faced, would I be showing you this one?"

U.S. Supreme Court's Dred Scott Decision, 1857

Dred Scott was an enslaved man who traveled with his enslaver to the free state of Illinois and the free territory of Wisconsin. He married a free woman. When he returned with his enslaver to Missouri, which was not a free state, Scott sued for his freedom. The Supreme Court denied his request. It held that enslaved people were not citizens and were never meant to be. Further, the court said that Congress did not have the right to exclude slavery from any part of the United States or its territories. The decision is widely considered the worst in Supreme Court history.

Abe lost the Senate election again, but he made a name for himself through those debates and his speeches. At the Republican convention, he made his famous "House Divided" speech. The "house" was the United States. He said, "I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free." He didn't think the country could continue to exist with some states free and others not. He wasn't encouraging war. He was hoping for the end of slavery.

convention: meeting of representatives of a political party to choose their candidates for an election

Raid at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, 1859

Late at night, John Brown and a small group of men crept into Harpers Ferry. They kidnapped citizens and took over the federal armory. Brown planned to lead an "army of emancipation" and hoped others, especially those who had escaped slavery, would join his rebellion. Frederick Douglass told him it was foolish. Abe Lincoln later said that Brown's desire to end slavery "cannot excuse violence, bloodshed, and treason." Brown and his men were immediately captured. Nevertheless, the threat of a rebellion marked a turning point. Compromise over slavery was not an option. It would end in all-out war.

Abe believed that the drafters of the Constitution truly meant that "all men are created equal," and that included the enslaved. He thought the founders expected slavery to die a natural death, not become a fight. In fact, slavery did just that, ripping the Union apart.

armory: place where weapons are stored
emancipation: freedom from another's control
treason: attempts to overthrow your country's government

4

President Lincoln

When Abe heard he'd been voted president of the United States, he ran home to tell his wife. "Mary, Mary, we are elected!" He was now *President Lincoln*!

He and Mary had worked hard to make the dream come true. He wrote an autobiography, *Vote Lincoln!*, so people would get to know him better. He printed and distributed his debates with Stephen Douglas. He had his picture taken by Mathew Brady, a famous photographer. It made him look presidential. Some people, including Abe Lincoln, thought that Brady's 1860 photo helped him win the election.

Still, Lincoln hadn't expected to win the Republican nomination, never mind the election. The three other, more qualified candidates were equally shocked, even angry. Lincoln quickly gave them all cabinet positions. New York senator William Henry Seward became

cabinet: group of advisers

secretary of state. Ohio governor Salmon P. Chase became treasury secretary. Judge Edward Bates was made his attorney general. Lincoln wasn't just being nice. He wanted to keep an eye on his possible enemies. Also, he needed their opinions. They were all wise men. He wanted advisers who would disagree with him and make him think. Lincoln believed that a variety of viewpoints would lead him to the right decisions.

Lincoln's Beard

During the campaign, eleven-year-old Grace Bedell wrote to Lincoln, urging him to grow a beard. She told him that some of her brothers would vote for him anyway, but if he grew a beard, she'd try to get the rest of her brothers to vote for him. She argued that with his thin face, a beard would look better and that "all the ladies like whiskers." By January 1861, Lincoln had grown a beard. On his way to Washington, he stopped in Grace's town to show her that he'd followed her advice.

Lincoln would need all the help he could get. Even before his inauguration, South Carolina had seceded from the Union over the issue of slavery. Nothing like that had ever happened before.

secretary of state: the president's adviser on foreign affairs
treasury secretary: the president's adviser on the national economy and financial security
attorney general: chief law enforcement officer of the U.S. federal government
inauguration: ceremony in which someone formally takes office
seceded: withdrew

The South wanted to expand slavery into new territories. Lincoln made his opinion clear. He wouldn't stop slavery in the South, but he wouldn't allow it to spread anywhere else.

Assassination Plot!

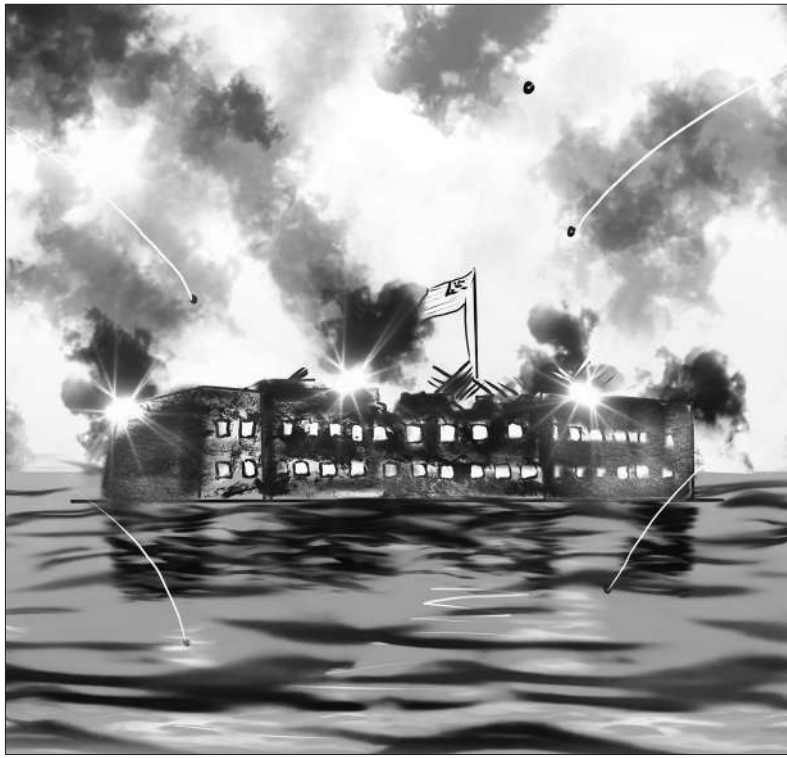
Most Southerners were upset that Lincoln had won. He received many death threats. Lincoln was due to stop in Baltimore on his way to Washington. Allan Pinkerton, a detective hired to protect him, caught wind of a planned assassination in Baltimore.

He urged Lincoln to bypass the city. Lincoln refused. He'd promised to stop in Baltimore, and he wanted to keep his word. Besides, what if it was just another threat? General Winfield Scott also heard of the plot, and he told William Seward, who sent his son with an urgent warning for Lincoln. Reluctantly, Lincoln agreed to bypass Baltimore. He switched hats, boarded a train in the middle of the night, and arrived safely at the White House.

In his inaugural address, Lincoln said, "No State, upon its own mere motion, can lawfully get out of the Union." But by then, six more states had seceded. Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas had joined South Carolina. Jefferson Davis had already been sworn in as president of the Confederacy.

Lincoln also pledged to "hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government." He wouldn't invade the South, but if rebels attacked, the Union would fight back. His goal was to save the Union.

On April 12, 1861, just one month after Lincoln became president, five hundred South Carolina soldiers attacked Fort Sumter. The Union defended the fort but had only eighty men. After thirty-six hours of fighting, they surrendered. The American flag was taken down. The nation was officially at war.



Immediately, Lincoln requested seventy-five thousand troops, some from every state, to put down the insurrection. It would be a ninety-day military assignment. At that point, almost everyone thought the rebellion would be over quickly and easily. The Confederate states were angry that he requested troops to fight against the South. Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Tennessee seceded, for a total of eleven states. The sides were defined.

Lincoln asked Robert E. Lee to lead the Union forces, but he declined. He was from Virginia and decided to fight for the Confederacy. General Winfield Scott, commander of the U.S. Army, told Lee, "You have made the greatest mistake of your life."

Lincoln didn't know how to fight a war, so he did what he always did. He read books. He studied about war. He asked for advice. He made it clear from the beginning that the war was not about slavery. It was about keeping the Union together. As he said in the summer of 1861, "We didn't go into the war to put down slavery, but to put the flag back."

At the same time, Frederick Douglass argued that the war was all about slavery. He spoke out about the value of enlisting Black Americans in the Union army.

insurrection: revolt against the government

Enslaved Black Americans escaping the South would not only hurt the Southern economy but also help the Union cause. But Lincoln wondered what the border states would say. They allowed slavery, so would they turn against the Union if he tried to abolish it? And what about public opinion? Not everyone in the North wanted emancipation. It would be quite a while before Lincoln heeded Douglass's advice.

Lincoln had to make some war decisions quickly. In his first hundred days, he ordered weapons, steamships for battle, and a blockade so the South couldn't get supplies. He allowed possible traitors to be held without trial. He started the idea of a president having special war powers. As he put it, he needed to "take any measure which may best subdue the enemy."

He also had other business to take care of. Long lines of people wanting jobs or favors stretched from his office to the front door of the White House. Often, he could help people by sending them to the right government department. If they wanted to complain, he'd listen patiently. Sometimes he couldn't give people what they wanted. Because he didn't like disappointing them, he'd tell a story that got his point across without having to say no. When his aides said he should turn people away,

blockade: use of soldiers or ships to prevent movement of people or supplies

Lincoln refused. He felt it was his duty to listen. He said that they "don't want much and don't get but little, and I must see them."

Meanwhile, the Lincolns were settling into life at the White House. Mary entertained and influenced political leaders. She went to congressional hearings and noticed how congresspeople voted. She also told her husband who should get which jobs. Instead of First Lady, she called herself Mrs. President.

Ten-year-old Willie and eight-year-old Tad were having a blast. They immediately made friends with two neighbor boys, Bud and Holly Taft, whose father was the head of the U.S. Patent Office. Julia Taft, their older sister, spent time with Mary as she kept an eye on her brothers. Mary treated Julia like a daughter while the Taft boys mirrored Willie and Tad. Bud was older and more serious, like Willie, and Holly was as rambunctious as Tad.

The boys made a fort on the roof of the White House and named it the "Ship of State." They even had a spyglass so they could watch out for enemy troops. They played with soldiers who were on the grounds of the White House and camped in the East Room. They often put on plays in the attic and invited the president to watch.

---

congressional hearings: meetings by groups in Congress to gather more information or oversee policy
rambunctious: not easy to manage

As always, Willie and Tad's parents wanted them to have fun. They let the boys run wild around the White House, which most people didn't appreciate. Willie and Tad interrupted cabinet meetings. They ran through evening receptions. Tad even hitched one of the pet goats to a chair and rode through the White House. Their antics gave Lincoln joy. He didn't often have the chance to laugh, but the boys did that for him.

Animals at the White House

The Lincolns had to leave their dog, Fido, in Illinois, but there were plenty of pets to fill the White House. Jip became their new dog and was often Lincoln's lunch buddy. Secretary of State Seward gave the family two cats, Tabby and Dixie. Lincoln was particularly fond of cats and sometimes fed them at the table, much to Mary's annoyance. Willie was given a pony. The boys also had rabbits and two goats, Nanny and Nanko. Lincoln once told Tad that when he and his mom were on a trip, one of the goats slept in Tad's bed!

Because Lincoln was unfamiliar with war, he allowed his generals to make a lot of the decisions. For many months, they gathered and trained troops. War moved much more slowly then, but Lincoln felt it should move a little faster. He wanted to get the conflict over with as quickly as possible.

General George McClellan, who took over Winfield Scott's role as U.S. Army commander in November

1861, did not respect Lincoln and wouldn't even tell him what was going on. McClellan avoided going into battle because he always thought the Confederates had more men. Frustrated, Lincoln sent him a telegram at one point saying, "Dear General, if you do not want to use the army, I would like to borrow it for a day or two."

Lincoln had more control over his troops when war secretary Edwin Stanton moved the telegraph office next door to the White House—away from General McClellan. Lincoln was fascinated by the speed of telegraphs. Back then, there were no phones or computers, and people had to rely on letters. Lincoln quickly realized he could send a telegram to the battlefield and get an answer within minutes. He called them "lightning messages" because they were so fast. He sent almost a thousand telegrams during the war. He was so eager to get the replies that he sometimes spent the night in the telegraph office, waiting for messages.

Telegram to Tad

Lincoln used "lightning messages" to reach Mary when she was out of town. Once, when Tad was with her, Tad wanted to know how the goats were doing. Lincoln replied, "Tell Tad that the goats and father are very well—especially the goats."

telegram: message sent via telegraph, an electric system that transmits signals along wires

The war dragged on. Battle after battle. Thousands dying. Tens of thousands. Lincoln and his wife visited injured soldiers in hospitals, bringing them gifts of fruit and other food. He sometimes wrote pardons for soldiers accused of deserting. Mary wrote letters of condolence to the parents of soldiers who'd died. They both grieved over the lives lost.

Lincoln often traveled to battlefields to meet with his generals. He also talked to the soldiers. He wanted them to know how much he appreciated their fighting. It depressed him that so many young men were dying. They paid the ultimate sacrifice for trying to preserve the Union. He thought about their families. He knew the sadness of losing a son. His own son, Eddie, had died as a young child. It broke his heart.

Willie's Poem

During the war, the Lincolns lost several relatives as well as a great friend. Senator Edward Baker joined the Union army and died in battle. Lincoln's son Eddie had been named for him. Baker was like an uncle to the Lincoln boys. Ten-year-old Willie wrote a poem to honor him. It was published in the newspaper.

On the Death of Colonel Edward Baker

There was no patriot like Baker,

So noble and so true:

He fell as a soldier on the field,

His face to the sky of blue.

Lincoln's son Robert was away at school and would soon join the Union army, against Mary's wishes. Lincoln felt lucky that he had Willie and Tad at home. They made him laugh, especially Tad. Willie was a little more serious. He and his dad were very close. Willie complained about how busy his dad was. People said Willie was smart, thoughtful, kind, and fair, like his dad, whereas Tad was rather wild and spoiled.

When Tad threw a ball in the White House, breaking a mirror, he said their dad wouldn't mind. Willie pointed out that it wasn't their dad's mirror. It belonged to the United States government. When some boys called Tad

names and he wanted to fight them, Willie pulled him back. He knew that it wouldn't look good for his dad if the president's boys got into a fight.

In February 1862, both boys caught typhoid fever. Tad recovered. Willie did not. He was eleven years old. Lincoln was distraught, saying, "My poor boy. . . . It is hard, hard to have him die!"

Hard as it was, Lincoln had no time to mourn. He immediately took command of the Union forces. He had to finish this war before more sons were lost.

5

Commander in Chief

Lincoln always woke early. He had a cup of coffee, toast, and an egg. While it was quiet, he walked around the White House. It was his time to think, before the day got started. Mostly, he thought about the war. Tens of thousands of soldiers were dead. Many of his generals were losing their battles. Men weren't as eager to volunteer for the army. What was he going to do? He needed a plan.

On May 13, 1862, Robert Smalls had a daring plan. He was an enslaved sailor on a Confederate ship in South Carolina. He waited for the captain and white crew to go ashore. When night fell, he put on the captain's hat and walked around deck, imitating the captain's gait. Then he steered the ship to Union troops and handed it over. Smalls had freed his family and the enslaved crew—and brought the Union a valuable ship loaded with supplies.

Smalls's heroic act made Lincoln think more about what Frederick Douglass had said. People escaping slavery were brave and determined. They could help the Union win the war.

gait: manner of walking

Spies!

Women and Black men were not allowed to enlist in the army. Many helped during the war as service workers, such as cooks or laborers. Some were spies for either the Union or Confederacy. In Washington, Rose O'Neal Greenhow, known as "Rebel Rose," spied for the South. She knew the Taft family and also knew that their boys played at the White House with Willie and Tad. She often asked Bud and Holly what the president said. Elizabeth Van Lew and Mary Jane Richards (later Denman) of Richmond, Virginia, were part of a Union spy network. They smuggled information to the North. Richards, who had been born into slavery but educated in the North, was able to pose, relatively unnoticed, as an enslaved woman, and overhear important information.

Lincoln's views on slavery were progressing slowly. He still thought it was a state issue. In April 1862, he signed an act abolishing slavery in Washington. The act also paid enslavers for their loss and offered to send any freed people who volunteered to a colony somewhere outside of the United States.

As the war raged on, Lincoln continued on his path of slowly working against slavery. In June 1862, he signed an act to prohibit slavery in any U.S. territories. In July, the Militia Act of 1862 overruled an old law that said only white men could be soldiers. Now, Black men could join the Union army, including those who escaped from the South or were captured as Confederate prisoners of war.

prohibit: forbid

Still, there was enough discrimination that many white officers didn't want Black soldiers in their units. The army was reluctant to enforce the law because of public prejudice. Some people felt that Black soldiers wouldn't know how to fire guns or that they'd use their guns to rebel against their enslavers rather than help the Union. The arguments were based on fear rather than facts.

Women in the War

Many women were nurses in wartime hospitals or on the battlefield. One was Clara Barton, who later started the American Red Cross. She supported the Union but took care of soldiers on both sides. At the Battle of Antietam, Clara Barton nursed a soldier who'd been shot in the chest. The "boy" turned out to be a woman. Hundreds of women dressed up as men and enlisted in the army because they wanted to fight. Usually, they were discovered only when wounded. Some women fought for months or years and were never discovered.

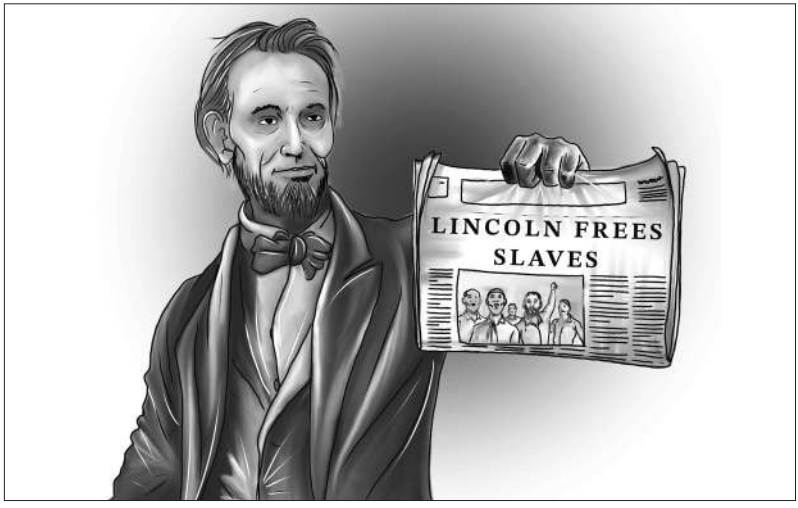
In August 1862, Lincoln invited prominent Black leaders to the White House. Some of them supported establishing a colony elsewhere, believing Black people would never be treated fairly in the United States. Others did not. Lincoln encouraged them to think about colonization because it would solve the "problem" of emancipation.

discrimination: unfair and immoral treatment of a group of people by another group

Frederick Douglass criticized Lincoln for this approach. White men had kidnapped them from Africa and enslaved them, and now it was Black people's "problem"? Why should they be the ones to leave? Black people had lived in the United States for generations. It was their home.

In September, Lincoln issued his draft Emancipation Proclamation. He'd thought a little more about Douglass's criticisms. He still supported colonization but only for those who agreed.

Lincoln considered the proclamation a war power. He was commander in chief. The draft proclamation was a warning to the South. If the rebel states did not return to the Union by January 1, 1863, all enslaved people in those states would be free. The proclamation did not apply to the border states that allowed slavery, however, because



those states were not in rebellion. Still, it was a bold move, and Lincoln's cabinet was a little shocked that he would do this. It marked a turning point for him. This war was no longer just about preserving the Union. This war was about stopping the enslavement of human beings.

To Frederick Douglass, Lincoln's preliminary proclamation of September 1862 may not have contained the exact wording he wanted, especially because Douglass was against colonization. However, he believed an emancipation proclamation in any form would eventually lead to the end of slavery. He was grateful that Lincoln was finally accepting the fact that slavery was a national issue—"in his own peculiar, cautious, forbearing and hesitating way."

The Biggest Civil War Killer

The Battle of Antietam, which lasted for only one day, was the single bloodiest day of the war. Thousands were wounded, and 3,650 were killed. At Gettysburg, more than 7,000 soldiers died during three days of fighting. Still, the greatest killer of the war was disease. Two-thirds of all Civil War deaths came from malaria, typhoid, dysentery, pneumonia, and other illnesses. Why? Most diseases at that time didn't have cures, and war conditions were unsanitary. Holes dug as toilets were too close to drinking sources. There was no good way to get rid of trash. Soldiers were already weak from poor diet and injuries. That made them even more susceptible to disease and death.

susceptible: having less or little resistance

For every decision he made, Lincoln had to balance what he thought was right with what the country was ready for and the opinions of others—his cabinet, Black leaders, the military, the public, his wife. In the end, he would have to make the final decision and live with the consequences. It was his responsibility, no matter what the cabinet said. One time, his cabinet voted no on an issue, and he was the only one to vote yes. Lincoln said, "Seven nays, one aye; the ayes have it." He made the decision that the answer was yes.

In a speech to Congress about his Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln pointed out that the decision to either preserve or abolish slavery was critical to the nation. The whole world was watching. Future generations would judge how they decided. A vote to end slavery would save the country. Continuing slavery would destroy it. Lincoln declared, "We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth."

To Lincoln, "the last best hope" was American democracy. Other democracies had failed. Lincoln realized that slavery was preventing the country from being a real democracy. How could the United States call itself the land of freedom and equality when so many people were enslaved?

6

Uniting the Country

The Confederate states did not return to the Union.

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln was due to sign the final Emancipation Proclamation. First, he had to spend hours at New Year's receptions, shaking people's hands. When he finally sat at his desk and picked up his pen to sign the document, his hand was sore and stiff. He worried that his signature would come out weak or wobbly. "If my name ever goes into history it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it," he told Secretary of State Seward. "If my hand trembles when I sign the Proclamation, all who examine the document hereafter will say, 'He hesitated.'" He put his pen down.

After his hand recovered, Lincoln picked up his pen again and signed the proclamation boldly. As one observer recalled, "He then looked up, smiled, and said: 'That will do.'"

This final Emancipation Proclamation said nothing about colonization or compensating enslavers. It simply said that all enslaved people in rebel states were now

compensating: making payment for something

free—and they could join the Union army as soldiers, not just cooks or drivers or stable hands or laborers. They could fight for the Union cause, which was also their cause because it meant freedom. Many lined up to enlist. Black leaders like Frederick Douglass encouraged younger men to become soldiers. Two of his own sons, Charles and Lewis, joined the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the first Black unit of the war.

Unfortunately, Black soldiers were treated poorly. They made only seven dollars a month instead of the white soldiers' thirteen. Technically, they were paid ten dollars, but three dollars were immediately taken out to cover supplies. Some soldiers didn't see a paycheck for months. Also, they couldn't become officers. Finally, if they were captured, they were not treated as prisoners of war. They were enslaved or, more likely, immediately killed.

Lincoln wanted the war to be over. He was frustrated with his generals. Even when they won battles, they sat back and didn't chase the enemy. Upon advice from Mary and members of his cabinet, he'd fired General McClellan, but others weren't very effective, either. Fortunately, General Ulysses S. Grant was winning some battles in the west. In Pennsylvania, after several days of horrible fighting, the Union finally won the Battle of Gettysburg

in the summer of 1863. Still, the deaths on both sides numbered in the thousands.

It was after Gettysburg that Lincoln made his famous two-minute Gettysburg Address. In very few words, he conveyed the sadness and loss of war. He rallied people to continue, telling them why it was important. The war was to save the democracy. He urged listeners "that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom."

War raged on. Lincoln suffered from stress and depression. He didn't sleep much and often had nightmares. That didn't keep him from his responsibilities. It only made him work harder. Mary insisted on carriage rides with her husband several afternoons a week so he had a chance to get fresh air and a break. They also went to the theater often. Mary loved it. Lincoln didn't care what the performance was. He used it as a time to rest.

"An Order of Reprieve" for Jack

Despite the war, Lincoln still found time to be a dad. The White House was given a live turkey to kill for Christmas dinner. Tad named him Jack and became attached to him. Tad even interrupted a cabinet meeting to beg his dad to pardon Jack. Perhaps Lincoln remembered how bad he'd felt after shooting a turkey when he was about Tad's age. While his cabinet waited, he took out a card and wrote "an order of reprieve." With that, Jack became another White House pet.

Lincoln relied on his sense of humor to keep up his own spirits and those of the people around him. He tried to relieve stress at cabinet meetings by telling stories. As always, he'd begin, "That reminds me of a story." Sometimes he would read aloud from his favorite humorist. He didn't understand why his cabinet wouldn't laugh. He knew he wouldn't be able to survive without laughing. His friend David Davis, a Supreme Court justice, observed that Lincoln used humor to "whistle off sadness."

Meanwhile, there were other wars going on in the country. As American settlers moved west, they fought to take over tribal lands of the Comanche, Kickapoo, and Dakota peoples. After one series of battles, the U.S. Army sentenced 303 Dakota warriors to death. Even though the death sentences were for Dakota killings of white settlers, Lincoln was aghast. He reviewed the 303 cases and pardoned most of them, convicting only those who were directly involved in the killings. Neither the white settlers nor the Dakota were satisfied with his decision. Being a leader was a balancing act. No one would be completely satisfied with his actions.

Lincoln was also aware of unfair treaties with many tribes, some of which he'd signed. He wanted to make sure they were treated more fairly but was preoccupied with the Civil War. He said, "If we get through the war and I live, this Indian system will be reformed."

Beyond coordinating the war and visiting battlefields, Lincoln had to run the day-to-day business of the nation. Over the course of his presidency, he established the Department of Agriculture, authorized the building of a transcontinental railroad, gave states money to create and fund colleges, established a national bank, admitted West Virginia and Nevada to the Union, and created a state park at Yosemite as a place "for public use, resort, and recreation . . . for all time," paving the way for the national park system.

The Civil War was not going well for either side, despite the Union's victory at Gettysburg. Neither the Union nor the Confederate army was getting enough volunteers. Both sides had to resort to drafting men from eighteen to thirty-five or forty-five years old. The draft wasn't popular in either the North or the South. It favored the rich because they could buy their way out or send someone else in their place. The North needed Black soldiers more than ever.

"Freedom's Fortress"

Fort Monroe was a Union fort in the middle of Confederate territory. When enslaved people escaped to this fort in Hampton, Virginia, the fort's commander, Major General Benjamin Butler, decided they could stay. He would not hand them over to the Confederates. He said they were "contraband," or war property. Hundreds of men, women, and children escaped to freedom at Fort Monroe. Many of the adults helped the Union army. Meanwhile, Mary Smith Peake, a free Black woman, started a school nearby for those who had escaped to the fort. She taught her first classes under a huge oak tree. Later, the Emancipation Proclamation was read by the tree, earning it the name Emancipation Oak. Hampton University was founded five years later at the site of Mary Peake's school. Emancipation Oak still stands on Hampton University's campus.

In August 1863, Frederick Douglass went to the White House to have a talk with Lincoln. The two

men had not yet met, but they were well aware of each other. When Douglass entered his office, Lincoln stood, extended his hand, and said, "Mr. Douglass, I know you." Douglass felt immediately at ease and explained why some Black men weren't enlisting. They didn't get the same pay as white soldiers. They weren't allowed to be officers, no matter how they excelled. And if they were caught by the enemy, they would be killed.

The two men talked over many issues, agreeing on some, disagreeing on others. Though Douglass was frustrated with Lincoln's slow, deliberate ways, he respected his opinion and "tender heart." Lincoln promised to make sure Black soldiers would get equal pay and to approve any promotions for Black soldiers recommended by the secretary of war. He ultimately fulfilled these promises, appointing Black field officers and signing into law a measure that equalized Black soldiers' pay.

By the end of 1863, it looked like the North might win. Lincoln wrote plans for Reconstruction. Reconstruction meant finding a way for the rebel states to rejoin the Union. Lincoln did not want to punish the South. He felt that everyone had suffered enough and that the Confederate states should be welcomed back if they pledged loyalty

to the Union and followed laws against slavery. Congress did not accept his plan. They wanted revenge. They also thought there needed to be more safety provisions for the newly freed Black population.

Lincoln worried about those who were still enslaved and those who were recently freed, too. He'd issued the Emancipation Proclamation under the War Powers Act. Once the war was over, the Supreme Court might overrule it. Also, the proclamation only covered enslaved people in rebel areas, not those in the border states.

He urged Congress to pass the Thirteenth Amendment, banning slavery. The Senate passed it in April 1864. The House did not.

Attack on Washington!

In July 1864, Confederates arrived in Washington. They attacked Fort Stevens. The city wasn't prepared. Union troops were busy with other battles. Clerks from the War Department ran to Fort Stevens to defend it. Lincoln also went to the fort, standing on the parapet. In his tall hat, he was an easy target. Bullets came flying, making him the only president shot at in battle. A young soldier yelled at him, "Get down, you . . . fool, before you get shot!" He then realized it was the president. Lincoln followed his advice, though. After two days, the Confederates retreated, and Washington was safe.

provisions: preparations

By the summer of 1864, the North had still not won. The public was getting fed up. Democrats nominated McClellan—the general Lincoln had fired—for president. He would run on a platform of peace. The election was only a few months away.

Many advised Lincoln that he wouldn't be reelected if he insisted on abolishing slavery. Most people just wanted the war ended. Why not tell Confederates they could keep slavery if they just admitted defeat and rejoined the Union? Lincoln didn't want to, even if it meant he wouldn't get reelected. He wanted the Union to win the war *and* to get freedom for as many enslaved people as possible. Ideally, he wanted the Thirteenth Amendment passed. That would abolish slavery once and for all. If he was going to lose the election, that made it even more important to him to make sure the House passed the amendment while he still had some influence.

Lincoln asked Douglass to meet him at the White House. He told Douglass his concerns. If the war came to a peaceful end, slavery would continue. He wished more Black Americans had come from the South to enlist. If there were more Black soldiers, the public would see that they were a critical part of the Union army. Without them, the North would likely lose. Douglass explained that their enslavers may have kept news of the

Emancipation Proclamation from them. Lincoln asked if scouts could be sent around the South to inform them. Immediately, Douglass began working on a plan.

A couple of weeks later, Lincoln received good news. A telegram from General William Tecumseh Sherman told him, "Atlanta is ours." The tide was turning in the North's favor. Now Douglass didn't need to send scouts to the South to recruit people. Public opinion was more easily swayed to the idea of emancipation. Black soldiers would help put an end to this long, bloody war.

At that point, 130,000 Black soldiers and sailors were already fighting for the Union. Most were finally getting equal pay. By the end of the war, there would be 200,000 Black soldiers, making up 10 percent of the Union army. People realized that emancipation was a military necessity. Lincoln felt hopeful. Maybe the North would win the war and abolish slavery after all.

7

The Future

On November 8, 1864, Lincoln was reelected by a large margin.

Lincoln's key mission was to push the House of Representatives to pass the Thirteenth Amendment, which would outlaw slavery. It was urgent. Once the Southern states rejoined the Union, they would never vote to ban slavery. After much debate, the House voted for the amendment on January 31, 1865. It still needed to be ratified by three-quarters of the states, but a major hurdle had been cleared.

The Reconstruction Amendments

The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments—the Reconstruction Amendments—were passed to address the issues the country had gone to war over. In addition to the Thirteenth Amendment banning slavery, the Fourteenth

ratified: approved

Amendment guarantees that anyone born or naturalized in the United States is a citizen and has all the rights of citizenship. The Fifteenth Amendment states that the right of U.S. citizens to vote can't be denied on the basis of race or previous enslavement, officially granting that right to Black men—though it did not yet extend to women.

In his second inaugural address, in March 1865, Lincoln stated specifically that he didn't want to punish the South. By then, it was clear that the North would win. The next issue for the nation would be reintegrating the Southern states. Lincoln wanted it done "with malice toward none; with charity for all."

After the inauguration, there was a party at the White House. Frederick Douglass tried to enter but was kept out by two guards. He saw someone he knew and asked him to tell Lincoln he was trying to see him. Very quickly, Douglass was escorted to the president.

Lincoln called out, "Here comes my friend Douglass," and shook his hand, saying, "I am glad to see you." He wanted to know what Douglass thought of his speech. Others surrounded Lincoln, impatient for his attention. Douglass said he didn't want to hold him up. Lincoln said, "There is no man in the country whose opinion I

naturalized: having gone through the citizenship admission process
malice: intention to harm

value more than yours. I want to know what you think of it." Douglass told him the speech was "a sacred effort," and Lincoln was delighted.

Freedmen's Bureau

In March 1865, Congress created the Freedmen's Bureau. It was intended to help formerly enslaved people. It provided refugee camps, hospitals, schools, transportation, and a bank. It also helped Black soldiers and sailors get their salary and pensions. The Freedmen's Bureau only worked well for a few years. Congress closed it down in 1872.

After a very hard four years as president, Lincoln was exhausted. And the war was still not over. Before the war, he described himself as having a "dark complexion, with coarse black hair, and grey eyes." Now he had sunken cheeks, wrinkles, and graying hair. He'd worked hard, slept little, and even suffered a bout of smallpox.

Julia Grant, wife of General Ulysses S. Grant, was alarmed. She encouraged her husband to invite Lincoln to visit him at his headquarters in City Point, Virginia, to get out of Washington for a break. Grant did.

Lincoln brought Mary and Tad with him. Tad had fun hanging out with the soldiers, who enjoyed having a kid around. Lincoln talked about the war with Grant but also had a chance to relax. While they talked, he

smallpox: contagious, sometimes deadly disease caused by a virus

picked up some stray kittens and held them. He loved cats so much that Mary joked his hobby was cats. When Lincoln discovered the kittens were orphaned, he was so concerned that he asked the soldiers to make sure the kittens were taken care of.

Soon after Lincoln's trip, General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. On April 9, 1865, the Civil War was essentially over, almost four years to the date since it had begun. Though a few more battles were fought by Confederate troops, Lee's Army of Northern Virginia was the strongest force of the Confederacy. Once he surrendered, the others quickly fell.

People in Washington celebrated in the streets. Like a large part of the country, Lincoln was relieved. People said he looked happy, and they heard him laugh again.

On the morning of April 14, Lincoln had a special visitor. His oldest son, Robert, had been with Grant at the surrender, and he told his dad all about it. Lincoln couldn't talk for long because he had his usual line of visitors at his office. It was another typical day of presidential duties.

Despite his duties, Lincoln fit in a carriage ride with Mary that afternoon. He was happy. In fact, he told Mary that they should both try to be happier because "between

the war and the loss of our darling Willie—we have both been very miserable."

That night, he and Mary went to Ford's Theatre to see a comedy, *Our American Cousin*.

John Wilkes Booth, a proslavery Southerner who despised Lincoln, shot him in the back of the head while he was watching the play. Lincoln died the next morning.

His family and friends were devastated. Even those who didn't care for him at first had grown to admire and love him. As for the country, Lincoln had done what he had set out to do: preserve the Union. He also

accomplished a goal that he didn't have originally but that became an integral part of the first: abolishing slavery. He left the nation far closer to the way he believed the framers wanted it—with all men created equal and everyone having the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Vice President Andrew Johnson, who became president after Lincoln's death, had very different views. Lincoln once wrote, "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy." To him, democracy meant freedom and equality. In contrast, Johnson had been a "master" and saw nothing wrong with enslavement. With his blessing, "Black codes"—laws that specifically discriminated against Black Americans—flourished throughout the South. Plans to help former enslaved people gain an equal footing failed. The unfair treatment of Native American peoples, which Lincoln had wanted to reform, was not addressed. Instead, Johnson wanted Native Americans relocated to remote reservations. He opposed the Fourteenth Amendment granting all male citizens the right to vote. Johnson paved the way for discrimination and race-based policies for years to come.

integral: necessary for completeness

Lincoln had high hopes for the United States' future. Preserving the country's democracy would take work. A month before he died, in his second inaugural address, he said, "Let us . . . do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations." His challenge to Congress is a good challenge for everyone: "It is not 'Can any of us imagine better?' but 'Can we all do better?'"

A Tribute to President Lincoln

The Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., was built to look like the Parthenon in Athens, Greece. The architect, Henry Bacon, designed it that way for a reason. Greece was the birthplace of democracy, and Lincoln saved American democracy. The building is a fitting tribute to the sixteenth president. Inside the monument is a huge statue of Lincoln and inscriptions of many of his famous words, including the entire Gettysburg Address. That speech ends with Lincoln's goal—"that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Gettysburg Address

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Abraham Lincoln
November 19, 1863

Discussion Questions

1. If you had lived in Lincoln's time, do you think you would have been friends with him? Why or why not?
2. What are three examples of Lincoln's compassion? What do they tell us about him?
3. Why do you think it was important to Lincoln, when he worked at the general store, to immediately deliver money or goods his customers were owed, even though it meant walking to their homes on his own time?
4. Why do you think Lincoln was so indulgent with his sons at a time when most parents were strict?
5. What qualities do you think helped Lincoln become president?
6. Which of Lincoln's qualities do you think helped him the most as president?
7. Frederick Douglass said in a speech that Lincoln was hesitant and wishy-washy. Lincoln agreed that he was sometimes slow to make decisions but told Douglass, "I think it cannot be shown that when I have once taken a position, I have ever retreated from it." Why do you think it was important to Lincoln for people to know that once he made a decision, he stuck with it?

8. Why do you think Lincoln's views on slavery changed?
9. Some people want to be a leader, like a president, so they can have fame, money, or power. Why do you think Lincoln wanted to become president?
10. What do you think is the hardest part of being a leader? How did Lincoln deal with the difficulties of being president?
11. Do you think Lincoln fulfilled his wish to be remembered for having contributed something to society?
12. Think of a problem you're currently facing. If Lincoln were facing the same problem, how do you think he might handle it?
13. How do you think Lincoln might have addressed the way Native Americans were treated if he had lived long enough to do so?
14. Do you think the United States would be different today if Lincoln had been able to serve his second term as president? In what way?
15. What do you think would surprise Lincoln the most if he could see the United States today?

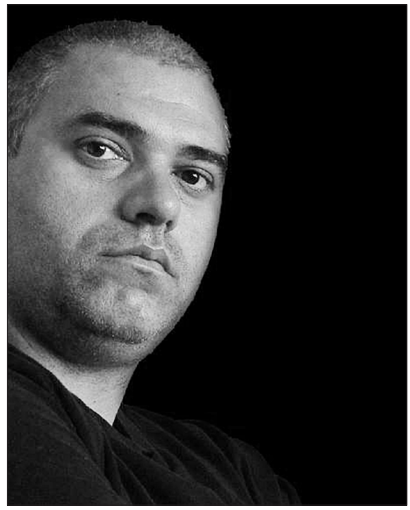
Meet the Author

Kathryn Erskine grew up in Europe, Africa, Canada, and the United States. She attended eight schools and four universities. She was a lawyer before becoming an author. Her experiences inspired much of her writing. She also takes inspiration from the world around her, especially from those who help nurture the earth and all of its people.

She loves to travel and talk with readers around the world. She has been lucky to visit schools in Scotland, Italy, Brazil, Panama, and Singapore, not to mention those she has visited via Zoom, and hopes to visit many more. She also loves research and even became a certified pharmacy technician while researching a new novel.

She has published seven novels, including the National Book Award winner *Mockingbird*, and two picture books. As always, she has several books in progress. Her books have won multiple awards, but what is most important to her is that readers like them. She hopes her readers have a chance to think, laugh, and realize that they have the power to achieve their goals. You can visit Kathryn Erskine online at kathrynerskine.com.

Meet the Illustrator



Ivan Pesic was born in Blace, Serbia, in 1975. In 2000, Ivan moved to Belgrade, Serbia, where he studied graphic design in college. Unhappy with the political and economic situation in Serbia, Ivan emigrated to Virginia, USA, in 2005. Ivan and his wife, Alisa, have two children, Tara and Luka. His work can be seen in many galleries in Virginia, Washington DC, North Carolina, and Georgia. Ivan has also donated his paintings to public schools and charity organizations. The primary medium Ivan uses is acrylic and oil paints, however, he also likes to experiment

with different mediums and techniques. Aside from painting, Ivan has done pencil drawings, wall murals, mixed media art, photography, graphic design, and more. In his work he reconstructs dreams, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, lullabies—the pieces of our lives and memories that are a part of us. Every piece of his artwork tells a story; stories with a hero, a villain; with action, movement, and other elements that give his work life and energy. Ivan's work can be viewed on his website: **www.ipartstudio.com**

Credits

Cover Illustration by
Ivan Pesic

Title Page Illustration by
Ivan Pesic

Text Illustrations by
In Courtesy of Ivan Pesic / 65
In Courtesy of Kathryn Erskine / 63
Ivan Pesic / 6, 10, 15, 17, 20, 28, 34, 40, 45, 52, 57

Voices in History is a Core Knowledge Biography Series that encourages young readers to learn about real superheroes in history. As a result of acts of extraordinary bravery, ingenuity, strength, and determination, these people made a difference and changed the world. Perhaps their remarkable stories will inspire young readers to become the superheroes of the future.

Core Knowledge Voices in History™

These books are suitable for readers aged 8 and up.

ISBN: 978-1-68380-895-4