

"THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN" PAINTING, LESSONS, & PROJECTS IDEAS

In a Press Release on December 19, 2007, Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Suellen Reed encouraged students and adults to read and learn about Abraham Lincoln, who spent his formative childhood years in Indiana, in preparation for the bicentennial celebration of his birth coming in February 2009. As part of that effort, Dr. Reed unveiled a portrait of Lincoln and his life titled "The Life of Abraham Lincoln" by artist Thomas Kennedy. This sample teaching guide, a companion piece to the portrait, will help teachers and students appreciate Lincoln's many accomplishments and greatness as depicted in the painting (See www.in.gov/lincoln - the Indiana Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission Web site.).

About the Painting

- "The life of Abraham Lincoln" by Indiana artist Thomas Kennedy depicts Lincoln's life through a composite of images surrounding a central portrait.
- The painting leads viewers through Lincoln's beginnings in Kentucky, his youth in Spencer County, Indiana, his move to Illinois as an adult, and his challenges as President.
- Exploration of the painting reveals representations of family influences and the progression of Lincoln's interests and work, revealing highlights and insights into the life story of our 16th President.

About the Artist

- Artist Tom Kennedy began his Lincoln project with the intention of creating a portrait of the President. Realizing that he "could only recall a handful of things about him," Kennedy began in depth research that quickly led him to become intrigued with Lincoln's life.
- Though Lincoln's eyes have typically been portrayed as dark brown, Kennedy discovered that they were much lighter – hazel.
- During his search to uncover that one fact, he learned "many other fascinating things," leading him to shift from portrait to a montage that would depict various highlights of Lincoln's life encircling a central portrait.
- Above all, Kennedy made historical accuracy his aim.
- The details in "The Life of Lincoln" reveal the artist's intense curiosity and dedication.

Investigating the Painting

The scenes surrounding the central portrait of Lincoln are resources for careful investigation and discussion. A process known as Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), created by Harvard-trained psychologist Abigail Housen and museum educator Philip Yenawine, would be very helpful to teachers and students in exploring the details of "The Life of Abraham Lincoln." This process

encourages student discussion facilitated by the teacher and incorporates inquiry and response by asking a set of questions.

- Opening question: "What's going on in this picture?"
- Follow-up to an interpretive comment: "What do you see that makes you say/think that?"
- Further encouragement: "What more can we find?"

The students' discoveries, insights, and speculations should lead to further reading, research, and activities. Exploration of the painting can be an effective springboard to deeper understandings about the life and times of Lincoln and relevance to contemporary issues and events.

Furthering the Mission

Study of "The Life of Abraham Lincoln" furthers the mission of the Indiana Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission:

"The mission of the Indiana Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission is to educate residents of Indiana and the nation about Indiana's important role in the life of Abraham Lincoln. By providing, promoting, and creating relevant opportunities the Commission will help individuals nationwide understand how his time spent in Indiana formulated his character, which in turn, led to his greatness."

Fast Facts Related to the Painting

- In office from 1861-1865, Abraham Lincoln is ranked by historians as among the top three US Presidents, often in first place.
- Born in Kentucky in a one-room cabin on February 12, 1809, Abraham was the second child of Nancy Hanks.
- Growing to maturity in Indiana after his father moved the family to Spencer County in Indiana "partly on account of slavery," Lincoln suffered the death of his mother when he was nine but loved his step-mother, Sarah Bush Johnston – a widow with three children.
- Moving to Illinois at 21, Lincoln held many jobs as a young man in New Salem and later Springfield: store clerk, rail splitter, carpenter, river pilot, postmaster, surveyor, and lawyer.
- In Springfield Lincoln met and in 1842 married another native Kentuckian, Mary Todd, with whom he four sons – Robert, Edward, William, and Thomas.
- Edward (Eddie) and William (Willie) died in childhood. Thomas (Tad) died when he was 18. Only Robert lived into full adulthood and died at 83.
- Though Lincoln had little formal schooling, his sister Sarah helped him in his early years, but he drew most of his education from reading on his own.
- In 1828, he made a trip by flatboat to New Orleans where he saw first-hand the horrors of chained Africans sold like cattle at auction.

- Elected President in 1860, Lincoln took a stance on slavery that angered Southern states which seceded from the Union and sparked the Civil War.
- After serious set-backs, the Union won the Battle of Gettysburg, and within less than two years General Ulysses S. Grant led the Union to victory, accepting the surrender of General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on April 9, 1865.
- His Gettysburg Address, widely regarded as a literary masterpiece, was a mere two-minute speech at the dedication of the cemetery for those fallen at Gettysburg.
- The ending of slavery began with the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and reached its goal with the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution.
- At the prompting of Frederick Douglas, a former slave, Lincoln extended equality to the Union's African-American troops.
- Lincoln further strengthened the country by supporting the Homestead Act, the Morrill Land-Grant College Act, the Pacific Railway Act, and the National Banking Act, among others.
- The first American President to be assassinated, Lincoln fell to a shot fired by John Wilkes Booth in Ford's Theater in Washington, DC, on April 14, 1865 – five days after Lee's surrender.
- Lincoln's funeral train took his coffin past hundreds of thousands of mourners as it stopped in many cities on its route to Springfield, Illinois.

Teaching Tips

Grades K-2

READING: Lincoln's Life and Times

Discuss the key ideas. Write about the most important things learned from the books.

- Read books, such as ***Abe Lincoln: The Boy Who Loved Books*** (NF) by Kay Winters, to learn how Lincoln taught himself. [Language Arts Reading Standard 2]
- Read books, such as ***Under the Quilt of Night*** (HF) by Deborah Hopkinson, to learn about the struggle for freedom during Lincoln's time. [Language Arts Reading Standard 3]

RESEARCH: Online with Lincoln

Visit the Indiana Lincoln Bicentennial Commission resources online (www.in.gov/lincoln/).

After viewing and discussing the Lincoln poster:

- Use the Internet to look at images of the Lincoln family. Compare your family to Lincoln's. Make a chart of how they are alike and different. [Social Studies Standard 1]
- Use the Internet to learn about Lincoln as President. Make a class mural illustrating what you have learned. [Social Studies Standards 1 and 2]

PROJECT: Lincoln's Living Legacy

(Art, Mathematics, Social Studies)

Look at Lincoln's image that appears on money. Discuss why Lincoln's image is portrayed on these things. Have students design their own coin or paper money to commemorate Lincoln.

Grades 3-5

READING: Lincoln's Life and Times

Discuss the key ideas. Write about the most important things learned from the books.

- Read books by Cheryl Harness, such as **Young Abe Lincoln: The Frontier Days, 1809-1837** (NF) or **Abe Lincoln Goes to Washington, 1837-1863** (NF) to learn Lincoln's life. [Language Arts Reading Standard 2]
- Read books, such as **Forty Acres and Maybe a Mule** (HF) by Harriette Gillem Robinet, to learn about the struggles faced by African Americans after the Emancipation Proclamation freed them. [Language Arts Reading Standard 3]

RESEARCH: Online with Lincoln

Visit the Indiana Lincoln Bicentennial Commission resources online (www.in.gov/lincoln/).

After viewing and discussing the Lincoln poster:

- Study the Lincoln family using the Internet. Make a Lincoln family tree and then research your own family and make your own family tree. [Social Studies Standard 1]
- Use the Internet to trace the history of the cotton industry in United States. Make timelines showing what you learn. [Social Studies Standards 1 and 4]

PROJECT: Lincoln's Living Legacy

(Language Arts, Social Studies)

Use the Internet to find things that are associated with or named for Lincoln today. Make a book about Lincoln based upon the class findings.

Grades 6-8

READING: Lincoln's Life and Times

Discuss the key ideas. Write about the most important things learned from the books.

- Read books, such as **Lincoln: A Photobiography** (NF) by Russell Freedman, to learn about Lincoln's life. [Language Arts Reading Standard 2]
- Read books, such as **Bull Run** (HF) by Paul Fleischman, to learn about the first battle of the Civil War. [Language Arts Reading Standard 3]
- Read books, such as **I've Got a Home in Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad** (HF) by Karolyn Smardz Frost, to learn about the struggles for freedom during Lincoln's time. [Language Arts Reading Standard 3]

RESEARCH: Online with Lincoln

Visit the Indiana Lincoln Bicentennial Commission resources online (www.in.gov/lincoln/).

After viewing and discussing the Lincoln poster:

- Locate a museum or exhibition related to Lincoln and explore its web site. Then create your own exhibit about some aspect of Lincoln's life. [Social Studies Standard 1]
- Using map software, create and illustrated map of Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois depicting Lincoln's connections to each state. [Social Studies Standard 1]

PROJECT: Lincoln's Living Legacy

(Architecture, Art, Geometry, Social Studies)

Research memorials and monuments honoring Abraham Lincoln. Create a model of one of these or design one of your own.

Grades 9-12

READING: Lincoln's Life and Times

Discuss the key ideas. Write about the most important things learned from the books.

- Read books, such as **Abraham Lincoln and Civil War America: A Biography** (NF) by William E. Gienapp, to learn more about Lincoln's life and times. [Language Arts Reading Standard 2]
- Read books, such as **Killer Angels: A Novel of the Civil War** (HF) by Michael Shaara, to learn about the Battle of Gettysburg. [Language Arts Reading Standard 3]
- Read books, such as **Hope and Glory: Essays on the Legacy of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment** (NF) by Martin Henry Blatt, to learn about African Americans who fought during the Civil War. [Language Arts Reading Standard 2]

RESEARCH: Online with Lincoln

Visit the Indiana Lincoln Bicentennial Commission resources online (www.in.gov/lincoln/).

After viewing and discussing the Lincoln poster:

- Locate information about Lincoln using online census information. Create a graphic representation comparing the information. Compile it into a class web site on Lincoln. [US History Standards 1 and 9]
- Make a web site relating to the life of Lincoln or Lincoln and the Civil War [US History Standards 1 and 9]

PROJECT: Lincoln's Living Legacy

(Architecture, Literature, Social Studies, and Music)

- Using the Internet, locate and compare statuary honoring Lincoln. What aspect of Lincoln and his life do they each portray? Make an oral presentation based on your findings.
- Analyze one of Lincoln's speeches. Write an essay describing how it has influenced life today or rewrite the speech in your own words. Present your essay or speech to the class.
- Listen to "A Lincoln Portrait" by American composer Aaron Copland. Discuss your interpretation of the narrative and its relation to the music.