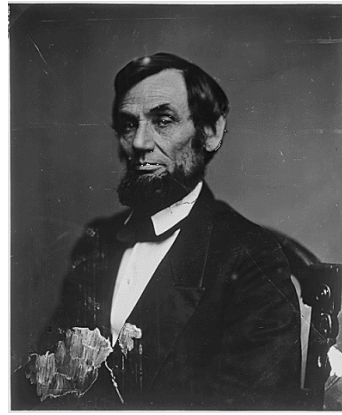




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Abraham Lincoln, also known as Honest Abe, was one of America's greatest presidents. His life was filled with many great achievements. He was the first in his family to learn how to read and write. Lincoln went to school "by littles" and "larned" everything himself, as he would have pronounced it. Most of the time he educated himself by borrowing books and newspapers. By the time Lincoln was 16 years old he was good at running, wrestling, telling stories and being quite the comic. Around this time, Lincoln discovered a book called "Lessons in Elocution" which provided aid in public speaking. He used his newfound skill to talk about slavery and later deliver The Gettysburg Address and other famous speeches. Lincoln first experienced slavery in his childhood, but his conviction to end slavery came later. Both of his parents belonged to a small group of Western abolitionists. They wanted to put an end to slavery so badly that they left their residency in Kentucky and fled to Indiana, a free state. In 1830, they moved to Macon County in Southern Illinois.

While they were living in Indiana, Lincoln got a job working on a river flatboat, hauling freight down the Mississippi River to New Orleans. There he got his first whiff of the unsavory aroma of slavery. There he saw fathers, mothers, and children all being auctioned off like cattle. After settling in the town of New Salem, Illinois, he worked as a postmaster and a shopkeeper. Lincoln became involved in local politics as a supporter of the Whig Party. Like his idols Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, Lincoln opposed the dissemination of slavery and had a grand prospect of the enlarging United States, with a focal point on commerce and cities, rather than farming. Lincoln educated himself in law, passing the bar examination in 1836. The following year (1837), he moved to the recently named Illinois state capital, Springfield. For the next few years, he worked as a lawyer earning his renowned nickname "Honest Abe", servicing clients from individual residents to railroad companies. He met Mary Todd and they married in 1842, much to the dismay of her parents. Together they had four sons, but only one survived to adulthood (Robert Todd Lincoln).

After gaining some law experience, Lincoln went on to win the 1846 election to the house of representatives. Lincoln was disliked by many Illinois voters for his strong position against the US War against Mexico. After he served his term, he returned home to find his party, the Whigs, in ruins. He joined the new Republican party, formed because of the common want for the end of the spread of slavery. In 1858, he returned to the Senate, he successfully campaigned in 1855 as well. In June he delivered his now famous "house divided" speech, quoting from the Gospel to paint the picture of the America that cannot endure, permanently, half slave, half free. Mentioning how the pharaoh and the rest of Egypt were plagued for not letting the Israelites go. After delivering the speech he squared off against Douglas (his political rival) in a series of well-known debates. Even though he lost the election his performance made his reputation national. His profile rose even higher after he gave a rousing speech in New York City's Copper Union. In May, the Republicans choose him as their presidential candidate, passing over Senator William H. Seward and other accomplished and powerful politicians. "Instead, they chose a rangy politician with only one undistinguished congressional term under his belt". In the general election, he faced off against Douglas and won.

Lincoln won the election and became our sixteenth president. This reaped both sweet and sour fruits, the sour fruit had a bitter aftertaste. Sectional tensions had been rising for years and an antislavery Northerner winning the election sent many southerners over the edge. The good side was that he freed the slaves. As soon as Lincoln began his presidency a dilemma arose. Seven states seceded from the Union and formed the

Confederate States of America. The Confederate States were pretty much peaceful until they fired. Lincoln sent troops with supplies to Fort Sumter in South Carolina when the Confederate States fired on both the fort and the Union fleet. That began the Civil War. During the war Lincoln proved to be a more than capable wartime leader by quickly learning about strategy, tactics, and choosing the most adept commanders. During the war, Lincoln drew some criticism for suspending some civil liberties (such as habeas corpus) but considered it necessary to win the war.

Not long after the Battle of Antietam Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It took effect New Years day in 1863 the proclamation freed all the slaves in the rebellious states (Confederate States) but left all the Union state's slaves (loyal to the Union) in bondage. Though Lincoln once maintained that his "paramount object in his struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery" he nevertheless came to regard emancipation as one of his greatest achievements. His proclamation would eventually argue for the passage of a constitutional amendment outlawing slavery (eventually passed as the thirteenth amendment after Lincoln's death in 1865).

Two important victories happened in July 1863 at Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Those victories finally turned the tide of the war. In November of 1863, Lincoln delivered a short speech, (only 272 words), at the dedication ceremony for the new national cemetery at Gettysburg. Published widely, The Gettysburg Address eloquently expressed the purpose of the war. Harking back to the founding fathers, the Declaration of Independence, and the pursuit of human equality. The Gettysburg Address became the most well-known speech of Lincoln's presidency and eventually one of the most quoted speeches in history. Lincoln gave another speech at the White House on April 11 urging the audience to welcome the Southern states back into the fold. During his second inaugural address on March 4. He addressed the need to reconstruct the South and rebuild the Union: "With malice toward none; charity for all".

Abraham Lincoln's life was filled with many great achievements but all great things must come to an end. Lincoln was assassinated on April 14, 1865. The actor and Confederate sympathizer, John Wilkes Booth, slipped into the president's box and shot Lincoln directly in the neck. Lincoln was brought to a boarding house across the street and died there early the next morning. What you may not know is that Lincoln's death was planned. As the Civil War entered its final stages, Booth and several of his colleagues planned to kidnap the president and bring him to the Confederate Capital; it was Richmond, Virginia at the time. "However, on March 20, 1865, the day of the planned kidnapping, Lincoln failed to appear at the spot where Booth and his six fellow conspirators lay in wait. Two weeks later, Richmond fell to Union forces. In April, with Confederate armies near collapse across the South, Booth came up with a desperate plan to save the Confederacy", Abraham Lincoln's Assassination, 2009. Booth learned that the president would be of attendance at Laura Keene's famous play "Our American Cousin". Lincoln was sitting there, enjoying the show when he was shot by Booth with a 44 caliber single shot derringer in the back of the head. When attempting to escape he stabbed Henry Rathbone who charged Booth shoulder first. Booth fell out of the president's box onto the stage shouting, Si semper tyrannis (Thus ever to tyrants! Virginia's state motto). Booth was a highly acclaimed actor at the time so the audience interpreted the unfolding drama as part of the show, but the first lady's scream told them otherwise. Although Booth broke his leg in the fall he managed to escape on horseback. Charles Leale, a doctor in the audience rushed to the president's box. He found the president slumped in his chair, paralyzed, barely able to breathe. A few soldiers carried Lincoln to a house across the street and a surgeon was called. The surgeon concluded that Lincoln wouldn't make it through the night and the president died at 7:22 the next morning. The president may have died but don't forget about his assassin. Booth escaped with an accomplice, David Herold and they sought medical attention for his leg. Samuel Mudd provided this attention totally unaware that this man killed the president. Lincoln may have died that night but left a great legacy behind, one that stands strong, even today.

Lincoln's actions during his presidency pointed to the fact that the president alone is sworn to preserve, protect, and defend the nation. He is responsible for the well-being and survival of the country, especially in times of war. Lincoln did things no president had ever done he abolished slavery whereas our founding fathers just said each slave was 3/5 of a person. Lincoln's greatest achievement, historians say, is his ability to energize and organize the country by appealing to it's best ideals while acting "with malice toward none", pursuing a purer, more equitable, more enduring nation. None of this would have happened with a lesser man handling the situation. No president in history has ever been faced with a challenge as extreme as the one Lincoln was faced with and no president in history has ever accomplished as much as Lincoln accomplished. Nor will any other president's legacy will ever live down in history as the legacy Lincoln left behind.

10 Interesting Facts About Lincoln's Life

1. Lincoln established Thanksgiving as a natural holiday.
2. Someone shot at him in 1864 and put a hole in his hat.
3. He kept his important documents in his hat.
4. John Wilkes Booth's brother saved Lincoln's son life
5. Lincoln is the first president to have attained a patent, he built a device that would lift the boat over shoals and obstructions in a river.
6. Lincoln is enshrined in the wrestling hall of fame and was quite the smack talker. He once challenged a whole crowd saying , "I'm the big buck of this lick. If any of you want to try it, come on and whet your horns."
7. Abraham Lincoln apparently disliked being called Abe, he preferred to be called by his last name.
8. Lincoln created the Secret Service hours on April 14, 1865, the same day he was assassinated. Even if they had been there they wouldn't have saved our beloved president. Their original job was to stop the widespread use of counterfeit money. It wasn't until 1901 when two other presidents were killed that they were posted by the commander in chief's side and had the formal job of protecting him.

9.Lincoln's tomb was dug up by a gang of Chicago counterfeiters in their attempt to hold it for ransom.They wanted 200,000 for ransom and the release of their best counterfeiter.

10.Lincoln personally tested firearms on the White House lawn.

“Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.” - Abraham Lincoln

Footnotes:

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- 3) History.com staff, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, <http://www.history.com/>, Dec/31/1969, May/26/2016, <http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/abraham-lincoln>
- 4) History.com staff, Abraham Lincoln’s Assassination, <http://www.history.com/>, Dec/31/1969, May/28/2016, <http://www.history.com/topics/abraham-lincoln-assassination>
- 5) NCC Staff, 50 interesting facts about Abraham Lincoln’s life, National Constitution Center , Feb/12/2014, May/29/2016, <http://blog.constitutioncenter.org/2014/02/50-shades-of-abraham-lincoln-2/>
- 6) Michael Burlingame, Abraham Lincoln: Impact and Legacy, <http://millercenter.org/>, Dec/31/1969, May/30/2016, <http://millercenter.org/president/biography/lincoln-impact-and-legacy>
- 7) Bos, Carole, Gettysburg Address, awesomestories.com, Oct/07/2016, May/31/2016, <https://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gettysburg-Address>
- 8) Bos, Carole, Gettysburg Battlefield - Bodies on the Field, awesomestories.com, Oct/07/2016, May/31/2016, <https://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Gettysburg-Battlefield-Bodies-on-the-Field>

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/The-Legacy-of-Abraham-Lincoln>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/The-Legacy-of-Abraham-Lincoln>

Questions 2 Ponder

Why Did Mary Todd's Parents Oppose Her Marriage to Abe Lincoln?

Why didn't Mary Todd's parents want her to marry Lincoln?

Why Would Someone Want to Assassinate President Lincoln?

Why would someone want to assassinate Lincoln?

The Legacy of Abraham Lincoln By Kaiser L. Louis

Which states were part of The Confederate States of America?

Media Stream

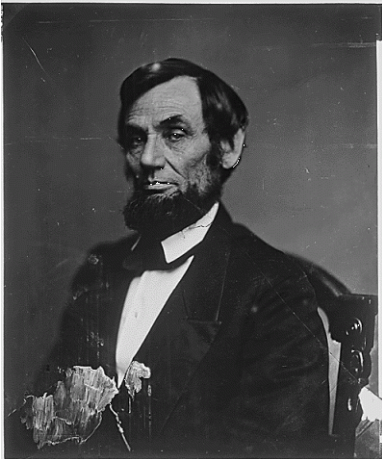


Abraham Lincoln - Photo, 10 April 1865

Photo, U.S. National Park Service - from the NPS Historical Handbook, Number 1969.

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Abraham Lincoln - America's 16th President

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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