



Lincoln Lesson Plans

Grade Level:
4-5

Materials

- paper (legal-sized or tabloid-sized) for pages
- crayons and/or colored pencils
- old magazines
- scissors
- glue
- books on 19th century life
- Student Handout: Planning Your Story
- Student Handout: Designing Your Picture Book
- Student Handout: Story Ideas for Picture Books
- Student Handout: Picture Book Rubric

Technology

- DVD player or computer
- laminator to laminate covers of books
- computer with Internet access for research

Vocabulary

audience
beginning, middle, and end
organization
plot
primary source
purpose
secondary source

As the Twig Is Bent: Mr. Lincoln's Character In Picture Books

Length

Four or five 50-minute class sessions

Concepts/Objectives

- Students will learn how to communicate an abstract quality or characteristic in literary writing.
- Students will learn about Abraham Lincoln's first seven years in Kentucky and how his experiences influenced the kind of man he became.
- Students will learn that the state of Kentucky values its connection to Lincoln and recognizes the importance of his legacy.

Activity

After examining picture books about Lincoln's childhood, students retell historic stories or create "might-have-been" stories to illustrate qualities of character Lincoln possessed, e.g., determination, integrity, compassion, fairness, generosity, and courage. The books can be shared with younger children.

Lincoln Resources

KET documentary *I, too, am a Kentuckian*

- Segment 5: Lincoln's Early Education, OR

Lincoln: The Kentucky Years (14-minute DVD mailed to Kentucky schools and available free from KET)

Instructional Strategies and Activities

Not only did Abraham Lincoln begin a lifetime love of words and stories during his first seven years in Kentucky, those years were also important in shaping the morals, character, and attitudes he carried through life.

Days 1-2: Introducing the Activity

Day 1: Show students video segment 5 from the KET documentary *I, too, am a Kentuckian*. Briefly discuss what students learned about Lincoln's childhood from the segment. How did his childhood influence the type of man he was to become?

Read two or three of the many excellent picture books about Lincoln aloud to the class. (Several are listed below.) As you read, stop occasionally to ask students questions about the story and the illustrations. Why has the artist chosen to depict this particular scene? What do readers learn about 19th century life from the illustrations? What does the writer want his or her readers to learn about Lincoln from the story? Leave these books and other picture books about Lincoln in a reading center so that students can look through them on their own.

Day 2: Tell students that Lincoln is one of the most admired men in history. How

would they describe him? What characteristics made him a good friend or a good leader? What about his own character helped him succeed in his personal life and as president?

For example, the documentary segment describes how Lincoln was determined to learn to read. Determination is a specific characteristic that helped Lincoln succeed in his later life. The books you've already read to the students should prompt other ideas. Write characteristics the students suggest on the board and keep adding to the list until you have at least 12, e.g., responsible, fair, ambitious, compassionate, kind, respectful, honest, smart, friendly, entertaining, self-controlled, considerate, loyal, curious, resourceful, brave, concerned, wise, sincere, humble. You may need to turn a full-sentence description into one word and then define that word, e.g., turn "he always thought about other people" into "considerate." As the students think of more characteristics, get them to explain how Lincoln showed each characteristic as an adult, or explain it yourself.

Now write this phrase on the board:

As the twig is bent, so grows the tree.

You can even draw a tree seedling on the board and give it a distinct bend. Then draw the full-grown tree and show how the bend remains in its trunk. Ask students if they know what the phrase means when it's applied to a person. Lead them to the realization that a person's basic personality and character are formed when he or she is very young.

The students know that Abraham Lincoln spent his first seven years in Kentucky. What experiences could he have had as a young boy that shaped his character as a man?

Their task is to write and illustrate a picture book for young children about Lincoln's years in Kentucky. They must focus on one character trait and tell a story that shows (a) how young Abraham acquired that trait or (b) how he showed he already possessed it. They must also be prepared to tell the class how Lincoln showed this characteristic as an adult. Have an example ready to show them. You can use one of the picture books, or, preferably, make one yourself.

A rubric for grading the finished books is included with this lesson. Share the rubric with the students before they begin to work.

Days 3-4: Planning the Story and the Illustrations

Make sure the students know that their **audience** for this book is children in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. They need to choose words and express ideas that can be understood easily by young children. The young children would not be expected to read the book, however. An older student or parents would read the book to them.

The students' **purpose** for writing is to share their knowledge of Lincoln with the younger children, focusing on his experiences as a child in Kentucky and how these experiences influenced his character as an adult. Perhaps their words will inspire a younger child to be more like Lincoln.

Vocabulary Cont.

A variety of characteristics, such as:

ambitious
brave
compassionate
concerned
considerate
curious
entertaining
fair
friendly
honest
humble
kind
loyal
resourceful
respectful
responsible
self-controlled
sincere
smart
wise

Kentucky Academic Content

Academic Expectations

1.11
2.20

Program of Studies

Understandings
SS-5-HP-U-2
SS-4/5-HP-U-3

Skills and Concepts

SS-4/5-HP-S-1
SS-4/5-HP-S-2

Core Content

SS-04/05-5.1.1

Applications Across the Curriculum

- This activity is particularly effective if you have been reading the first few chapters of Carl Sandburg's *Abe Lincoln Grows Up* aloud to your students.
- The activity works extremely well when taught in collaboration with the language arts teacher, who can address the core content for literary writing directly. The art teacher can also collaborate with you to guide students in the creation of the illustrations for the books.

Their ideas for the story must be **organized**. Remind them that the plot is what happens in the story. Plots are organized by beginning, middle, and end.

The beginning: Introduce the characters and the situation

The middle: Something interesting or exciting happens

The end: Explains what happens next

As an example, tell the students how young Abraham Lincoln fell in the creek and was saved by his friend Austin:

The beginning: Austin and Abraham go outside to play.

The middle: The two boys decide to cross the creek. Abraham falls in, and Austin rescues him.

The end: The two boys realize that friendship means looking out for each other.

As an adult, Lincoln had many friendships that he kept throughout his life.

Not much is known of Lincoln's experiences in Kentucky as a child. In addition to the story about falling in the creek, Lincoln himself recalled only these stories:

- He helped his father plant a crop and then watched it wash away in a flash flood the next day.
- He once gave a fish he'd caught in the creek to a hungry soldier on the road.
- He and his older sister Sarah walked four miles a day to attend the "blab school."
- Lots of visitors stayed overnight with the Lincoln family since their farm was on the main road between Nashville and Louisville.
- His baby brother Thomas died a few days after he was born.

Students may retell one of these stories, or stories based on what they learned from the documentary and other books, but they also should be given the creative freedom to make up stories that might have happened on the Kentucky frontier. For those who may have difficulty getting started, a list of possible plots is provided.

A planning form is provided to help students organize their ideas. Some will prefer to work alone, but others may be more productive if they work with one or two other students. Have students work from the plan to write their first drafts. Tell students to keep their stories short: Each page should have two or three sentences at the most. Give them the option of finishing the draft at home.

Students should also plan their illustrations before they begin working on the book. A design form is provided for this purpose. Most students will prefer to draw their illustrations, but give them the option of cutting out illustrations from magazines or going online to find illustrations. Have picture books on 19th century life available so that students can search them for visual inspiration.

Check with students as they work to provide guidance with story plotting, word choice, sentence structure, ideas for illustrations, and layout. Approve the design sheet, which should contain all words and rough sketches for illustrations, before students proceed to the final copy.

Students should create the cover for the book on Day 3 or 4 so that you have time to laminate the covers. Use a legal-sized or tabloid-sized sheet of paper folded in half for the cover. Make sure students realize that the front cover illustrations should be drawn only on the right half of the full sheet of paper.

Day 5: Completing the Book

Put the books together before the students begin to enter the text and illustrations. For an eight-page book, each student will need two legal-sized or tabloid-sized sheets of paper, folded in half, plus the cover. Staple or sew the pages together at the middle fold.

If students are working in a group and decide one will create the illustrations and the other will write the text, don't staple the book together until they are finished. However, you must make sure they understand how the book will be put together. Page 1 will be on the right and page 8 will be on the left of one sheet of paper. Number the pages for them and remind them to follow their design plan as they figure out where to put the words and illustrations.

Concluding the Activity

Ask students to read their books aloud to the class, or form smaller reading circles so that more students have the opportunity to share.

If you can partner with an elementary classroom, you might be able to arrange a visit so that the young authors can read their own books to the younger children. If the students are willing, you can even give the books to the younger children —after they're autographed by the young authors, of course!

Support/Connections/Resources

Picture Books:

There are dozens of excellent children's picture books about Lincoln. Some of the following have been recently published.

Borden, Louise W. and. A. *Lincoln and Me*. Illustrated by Ted Lewin. New York: Scholastic, 2001. A sensitive teacher tells a boy "skinny as a beanpole and tall for my age" how much he has in common with Lincoln. He comes to believe that if Lincoln could go on to greatness, anyone can.

Brenner, Margaret. *Abe Lincoln's Hat*. Illustrated by Donald Cook. New York: Random House, 1994. Lots of humorous anecdotes enliven this picture-book introduction to Lincoln.

Bryant, Jen, and Bates, Amy Lin. *Abe's Fish: A Boyhood Tale of Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Sterling, 2009. The true story of young Lincoln's encounter with a soldier returning home from the War of 1812.

Jackson, Ellen, and Ettlinger, Doris. *Abe Lincoln Loved Animals*. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman, 2008. Even though he lived on the frontier, Lincoln refused to hunt large animals. This book explains why and traces his love for animals throughout his life.

Adaptations for Diverse Learners/Lesson Extensions

- If children work in pairs or in small groups, each can bring his or her own set of strengths to the project.

- Consider allowing students who have difficulty with the written language or LEP students to create a wordless picture book. There aren't any samples of Lincoln picture books told only with illustrations, but there are several others, e.g., *Pancakes for Breakfast* by Tomie DePaola; *Tuesday* by David Wiesner; *Anno's Journey* by Mitsumasa Anno; *A Boy, a Dog, and a Frog* and *The Great Cat Chase* by Mercer Mayer

- LEP students might write the story in their own language and present it to the LEP program. (See if you can get a translation from the LEP teacher or the child's parent.)

Krensky, Stephen. *Abe Lincoln and the Muddy Pig*. Illustrated by Gersom Griffith. New York: Aladdin, 2002. The author uses the story of how Lincoln once rescued a drowning pig — even though he was wearing his best suit and was on his way to make an important speech — to reveal much about his character.

Polacco, Patricia. *Pink and Say*. New York: Philomel, 1994. This picture book about an interracial friendship between two 15-year-old Union soldiers during the Civil War is honest, heart wrenching, and beautifully told. “Let me touch the hand that touched Mr. Lincoln,” the African-American boy says to his friend, and, as the novel ends, the survivor tells his children, who tell theirs, that they have touched the hand that touched the hand. (It’s intended for grades 2-5, but is meaningful to any age.)

Rappaport, Doreen, and Nelson, Kadir. *Abe’s Honest Words: The Life of Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Hyperion, 2008. A beautifully written account of Lincoln’s life that emphasizes his passion for humanity. Words that Lincoln said enrich each page.

St. George, Judith. *Stand Tall, Abe Lincoln*. Illustrated by Matt Faulkner. New York: Philomel, 2008. This picture book is more comprehensive than most. It is an excellent account of the years Lincoln spent living in poverty on the Kentucky and Indiana frontiers and emphasizes the influence of his stepmother on his will to succeed in life and work.

Turner, Ann. *Abe Lincoln Remembers*. Illustrated by Wendell Minor. New York: HarperCollins, 2001. The language in this picture book is written in first person, as if Lincoln is looking back on his own life and recalling what was most important. Written for young people, but older ones will enjoy the musical language and beautiful illustrations as well.

Winnick, Karen, B. *Mr. Lincoln’s Whiskers*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills, 1996. This book tells the story of an 11-year-old girl who wrote to Lincoln and encouraged him to grow a beard to get more votes. On the way to his inaugural, Lincoln met her and thanked her for her advice.

Van Steenwyk, Elizabeth. *When Abraham Talked to the Trees*. Illustrated by Bill Farnsworth. Eerdmans, 2000. Focusing on Lincoln’s youth, this picture-book biography traces the growth of his love for words and reading despite an impoverished childhood and lack of education.

Winters, Kay. *Abe Lincoln: The Boy Who Loved Books*. Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. Simon & Schuster, 2003. The free verse narrative in this biography emphasizes Lincoln’s childhood and adolescence. Pages are dominated by illustrations that include many details of pioneer life.

Books for teachers:

Carpenter, Katie Fraser. *Learning About Lincoln*. Louisville: EvaMedia, 2009. The picture book activity is similar to one found in this publication. This publication also includes biographical information on Mr. Lincoln, a timeline, complete lesson plans, resources lists, more ideas for classroom study, field trip information, full text of important speeches and letters, and more.

Open Response Assessment

Prompt: A person's character is shaped by his or her early experiences.

Directions: Did Abraham Lincoln's boyhood in Kentucky influence his character and his later life and career? Give at least two examples to support your answer.

Answer Key for Multiple Choice Questions

1. D
2. A
3. B

Open Response Scoring Guide				
4	3	2	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student explains that his years in Kentucky shaped Lincoln's character.• Student supports his answer with at least two examples that are insightful and relevant and demonstrate extensive knowledge of Lincoln's experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student explains that his years in Kentucky shaped Lincoln's character.• Student supports his answer with two examples that are relevant and show broad knowledge of Lincoln's life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student connects Lincoln's experiences in Kentucky to his later life.• Student supports his answer with examples that demonstrate basic understanding, but they lack detail, or there is only one example.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student makes a vague or incomplete connection between Lincoln's life and his years in Kentucky.• Student does not support his answer with examples, or the examples chosen are confusing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No answer or irrelevant answer.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. What did Abraham Lincoln learn as a child in Kentucky that would help him be a good president?
 - A. He learned how to read and write.
 - B. He learned to entertain people as a speaker.
 - C. He learned how to get along with people.
 - D. All of the above
2. Based on what you saw in the video, what characteristics would describe young Abraham Lincoln?
 - A. ambitious and eager to learn
 - B. unfriendly and thoughtless
 - C. loud and inconsiderate
 - D. sad and lonely
3. As a seven year old, Abraham Lincoln fell in the creek and was rescued by his friend Austin. This story suggests that, as an adult,
 - A. Lincoln was a very determined person.
 - B. Lincoln valued his friends.
 - C. Lincoln always thought before he did something.
 - D. Lincoln had a sense of humor.

Author: Katie Fraser Carpenter

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Planning Your Story

What characteristic are you writing about?

Names of Characters

1. Abraham Lincoln

2.

3.

4.

How are your characters related to Abraham Lincoln?

2.

3.

4.

The Plot

Beginning

Middle

End

What do you want your readers to learn from your story?

STORY IDEAS FOR PICTURE BOOKS

1. Abraham Lincoln was **DEPENDABLE** and **RESPONSIBLE**.

Lincoln was born into poverty and had very little education. As an adult, he was successful in part because he always showed up when he was supposed to, did his work thoroughly and well, and never made excuses for himself.

The Story

Young Abraham sneaks away to read a book and his older sister Sarah has to do his chores. Abraham is very sorry and promises it will never happen again.

2. Abraham Lincoln was **HONEST**.

In his work as a storekeeper, a postmaster, a politician, and a lawyer, Lincoln had a reputation for honesty.

The Story

Young Abraham sets a snake loose in the schoolhouse and frightens the girls. When he's questioned about the incident, he admits he was at fault and accepts his punishment.

3. Abraham Lincoln was **FAIR**.

As an adult, Lincoln believed that all men were created equal. He thought that the United States should govern itself with that understanding.

The Story

Abraham makes friends with an African-American boy his own age. He is very upset when he finds out the boy is a slave and people don't think they should play together. He plans to do something about this when he gets older.

4. Abraham Lincoln was **SMART**.

Even though he had very little education, Lincoln worked hard on his own. He was one of the best thinkers and writers of his times.

The Story

Abraham's teacher, Mr. Hazel, visits his home. Abraham is worried that he's in trouble but the teacher has come to give him a present – his very own book – because he is such a good student.

5. Abraham Lincoln was KINDHEARTED.

As an adult, Lincoln was able to understand how people felt. This meant he could say the right words at the right time. He was unfailingly kind to children and to animals.

The Story

Abraham and his older sister Sarah find a wounded bird in the bushes and take care of it until it can fly away.

6. Abraham Lincoln was DETERMINED.

As an adult, Lincoln was determined to put an end to slavery. As president, he went to war partly because he knew slavery was a terrible evil and he could see no other way to end it.

The Story

The weather is terrible. Abraham's mother thinks he should stay home from school, but he walks the two miles through the pouring rain and arrives at the schoolhouse to find no one else is there but the teacher.

7. Abraham Lincoln was BRAVE.

Even though slavery was legal and Lincoln was a lawyer, he had the courage to speak out against it.

The Story

Abraham's dog, Sandy, is attacked by a wolf. Although he is terrified, Abraham attacks the wolf with a stick and breaks up the fight.

8. Abraham Lincoln was SELF-CONTROLLED.

As an adult and as a powerful politician, Lincoln hardly ever lost his temper, even though he was under a lot of stress. If he did, he apologized immediately. This won him the admiration of other politicians.

The Story

Young Abraham loses his temper and says some mean things to his best friend Austin. Later on, when he wants to go fishing, Austin won't play with him. Abraham learns that losing his temper doesn't solve anything.

9. Abraham Lincoln had a good SENSE OF HUMOR.

As an adult, Lincoln used humor to turn enemies into friends and relax people going through difficult times.

The Story

Abraham's sister Sarah and his friend Austin are angry at each other. Abraham starts clowning around, telling jokes and standing on his head. They both break out laughing, and the fight is forgotten.

Designing Your Picture Book

Look at several picture books to see how they are designed.

Use these pages to draft your own book. Where will you place the words and the pictures on each page?

Ask your teacher to approve this draft before you begin your book.

Back Cover	Front Cover
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Page 1: Beginning	Page 1: Beginning
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Page 3: Middle

Page 4: Middle

Page 5: Middle

Page 6: Middle

Page 7: Middle

Page 8: End

Picture Book Rubric

	Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Planning the Story	Planning sheet shows thorough thought and excellent detail.	Planning sheet shows good thought and detail.	Planning sheet shows thought and detail. It may be slightly confusing.	Planning sheet does not exist or it is confusing and shows little thought.
Designing the Book	Illustrations are carefully planned to enrich the story.	The design is clear, and illustrations correspond to the story.	The design is a little confusing. The illustrations don't always match the story.	The design sheet does not exist or it is confusing and unclear.
Story	The story is very creative and interesting. There is a clear beginning, middle, and end.	The story is interesting. There is a beginning, middle, and end.	The story is a little confusing. The beginning, middle, and end are not clear.	The story does not exist or is very confusing. There is no structure.
Relevance	The story is clearly related to Lincoln's life.	The story is related to Lincoln's life.	The relationship of the story to Lincoln's life is not clear.	There is no effort to relate the story to Lincoln's life.
The Book	Student made an excellent effort to make the book attractive and to make the illustrations and lettering very neat.	Student made an effort to make the illustrations and lettering neat, and they are generally neat and attractive.	Student made a basic effort to make the book attractive, but illustrations and lettering may be messy and hard to understand.	Student made little or no effort to make the book attractive, and the illustrations and the lettering are almost impossible to understand.
Work Habits	The student made excellent use of time in class to complete the book.	The student made good use of time in class to complete the book.	The student's attention occasionally wandered.	The student did not focus on the task.