

U.S. Presidents Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was America's 16th President and perhaps one of our nation's greatest leaders. He helped guide America through the Civil War. Lincoln also helped end slavery in the United States. His leadership proved that America's democratic government could survive even a war at home. Sadly, Lincoln was assassinated near the end of the Civil War in 1865. He became the first U.S. President to be killed in office.

Lincoln became President in 1860 in a very tight election. Most people did not know much about Lincoln or his humble background. He was born on Feb. 12, 1809 in a Kentucky log cabin. When he was eight, his family moved to the wild Indiana frontier. Shortly afterward Lincoln's mother died. Lincoln helped his father farm and work the fields. He barely had time for school. He only spent one year in a classroom. Even so, he learned how to read and write on his own. Books were scarce on the frontier, but he read every book he could get his hands on. Lincoln pored over the family Bible. He would walk for miles to borrow great titles like *Aesop's Fables* and *Pilgrim's Progress*.

As a young man, Lincoln worked many jobs to earn a living. He was tall and strong. He split logs and fence rails for neighbors. He helped take a flatboat down a river to New Orleans. Eventually, he started a general store with a friend. When the store went into debt, he paid those debts off working other jobs for a year. His **integrity**¹ earned him the nickname "Honest Abe." A friend eventually encouraged Lincoln to become a lawyer. In Lincoln's day there were few law schools. That didn't stop him. Lincoln taught himself what he needed to know. "Your own **resolution**² to succeed is more important than any one thing," he would later say.

Lincoln was a keen judge of character and able to use that skill in his political career. He saw ways to deal with the deep differences between Northerners and Southerners over slavery. He also persuaded people with his great speeches and writing. His most famous piece of writing is the Emancipation Proclamation. It declared that the slaves in the southern states rebelling during the Civil War were free. The

¹ **integrity** – honesty or sincerity

² **resolution** – determination

proclamation³ paved the way for the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which ended slavery in the U.S. In his most famous speech, known as the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln’s words reassured a suffering people at war that democracy would survive.

Lincoln’s stand against slavery caused him to make many enemies. Even so, his assassination was felt across the nation from North to South. Millions of people admired his spirit and service to his country. They called him “Father Abraham” and mourned as if they had lost a father. Mourners lined the tracks as a train carried his body to Springfield, Illinois. People visit Lincoln’s grave to pay their respects to this day.

³ **proclamation** – an official announcement

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Lincoln worked as all of the following *except*
 - a. a lawyer.
 - b. a teacher.
 - c. a flatboat worker.
 - d. a general store worker.

2. Which of the following describes the correct sequence of events in Lincoln's life?
 - a. He became a lawyer, he started a general store, his mother died.
 - b. He became President, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, he moved to Indiana.
 - c. He issued the Emancipation Proclamation, his mother died, he moved to Indiana.
 - d. He moved to Indiana, he became President, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

3. Which of the following was probably *least* important in Lincoln being a successful president?
 - a. He was persuasive.
 - b. He was tall and strong.
 - c. He had political skill.
 - d. He was a great writer.

4. The passage states, "Lincoln was a keen judge of character." The word *keen* most nearly means
 - a. dull.
 - b. good.
 - c. legal.
 - d. poor.

5. Which statement is most likely the main idea of the passage?
 - a. Lincoln was the first U.S. President to be killed in office.
 - b. Lincoln's speech, the Gettysburg Address, reassured people.
 - c. Millions of people admired Lincoln's spirit and service to his country.
 - d. Lincoln was one of our nations' greatest leaders.

6. Lincoln believed that “your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing.” How did Lincoln apply this belief to his own life?

7. What could be a reason for Lincoln’s death being mourned even in the South?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

During the Civil War, the American people were deeply divided _____ the issue of slavery.

- a. with
- b. over
- c. beside
- d. among

9. Read the following sentence.

After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in order to free the slaves.

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

1. What is the main verb of the sentence? passed

2. What passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution? _____

3. Why? _____

4. When? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** assassinate: to murder an important person for political or religious reasons.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 700

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines, or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: This passage discusses the life of Abraham Lincoln, from his childhood to his death. His personal character is explored as well as key events of the Civil War in which Lincoln played a part.

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- Lincoln was the first U.S. President to be killed in office.
 - Lincoln's speech, the Gettysburg Address, reassured people.
 - Millions of people admired Lincoln's spirit and service to his country.
 - Lincoln was one of our nations' greatest leaders.**
6. Lincoln believed that "Your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing." How did Lincoln apply this belief to his own life?

Suggested answer: He did not let the many obstacles in his way stop him. For example, when he did not have time to go to school he found a way to teach himself.

7. What could be a reason for Lincoln's death being mourned even in the South?

Suggested answer: Even though he had many enemies, Lincoln was a man of integrity, which means a lot of people respected him, even if they did not agree with him.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

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- What passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution? **Congress**
- Why? **in order to free the slaves**
- When? **after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** assassinate: to murder an important person for political or religious reasons.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.