

U.S. Presidents – Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln was America's 16th president and perhaps one of the nation's greatest leaders. He helped guide America through the Civil War. Lincoln also helped to end slavery in the United States. 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 popular titles, such as *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." Then a friend encouraged Lincoln to become a lawyer. In Lincoln's day there were few law schools. Instead of learning at a law school, Lincoln taught himself law. "Your own **resolution**² to succeed is more important than any one thing," he would later say.

Lincoln was a great writer and speaker. His most famous piece of writing is the Emancipation Proclamation, which was issued during the Civil War. It declared that the slaves in the southern states rebelling against the U.S. government were free. The **proclamation**³ 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 the North to the 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. As a train carried Lincoln's body to Springfield, Illinois, mourners lined the tracks. People visit Lincoln's grave to pay their respects to this day.

¹ **integrity** – honesty or sincerity

² **resolution** – determination

³ **proclamation** – an official announcement

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What did Abraham Lincoln help to end in the United States?

- A slavery
- B war
- C democracy
- D discrimination

2. Which of the following lists 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. Abraham Lincoln was a man of integrity. What evidence from the passage best supports this statement?

- A "A friend encouraged Lincoln to become a lawyer."
- B "As a young man, Lincoln worked many jobs to earn a living."
- C "When the store went into debt, he paid those debts off working other jobs for a year."
- D "He split logs and fence rails for neighbors. He helped take a flatboat down a river to New Orleans."

4. 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.

5. What is the main idea of this passage?

- A Lincoln was the first U.S. President to be killed in office.
- B Lincoln's most famous speech, the Gettysburg Address, reassured people.
- C Millions of people admired Lincoln's spirit and service to his country.
- D Lincoln was one of America's greatest leaders.