

Reading *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*

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For parents and children to explore together.

SUMMARY

Actively read *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* together, using these suggested reading questions.

WHY

Through this activity, your child will learn some details about Abraham Lincoln's life and how he looked. In the process, your child will build reading skills, like being able to answer questions related to a written story and its pictures. Asking and answering questions involves understanding, assessing, and sharing information from different resources like pictures, books, and conversations with other people.

TIME

- 30 minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in kindergarten through 4th grade.

CHALLENGE WORDS

- **Advise:** recommend
- **Affection:** (historical meaning) the act of taking on or displaying an attitude or mode of behavior not natural to oneself or not genuinely felt
- **Election:** the act or process of selecting by vote for an office, position, or membership
- **Hollows:** depressed or low part of a surface
- **Parlor:** a room used primarily for conversation or the reception of guests
- **Platform:** a usually raised horizontal flat surface ; especially: a raised flooring
- **President:** the chief officer of an organization (as a corporation or institution)

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/lincoln/>.

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CHALLENGE WORDS

usually entrusted with the direction and administration of its policies

- **Rail-splitter:** one that makes logs into fence rails
- **Slavery:** the state of a person who is a property of another
- **Telegraph:** an apparatus for communication at a distance by coded signals; especially: an apparatus, system, or process for communication at a distance by electric transmission over wire

PARENT PREPARATION

- If you have time, read the story yourself before sharing it with your child. Also read the Step Back in Time sheets and the notes on the last page of the book.
- If you have time, preview some of the reading suggestions below. Pick just a few suggestions that look interesting and fun for you.

YOU NEED

- This reading guide
- Step Back in Time sheets (*attached*)
- *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* book written by Karen Winnick

DURING READING

- **Build Vocabulary!** You might not know all of the words that are used in this book, so you have the chance to learn some new words! If you come across a word you don't know, here are a few ways to figure out what it means:
 - Look at the whole sentence where you see the word. Try to figure out what the word means based on what the sentence is talking about.
 - Look at the picture to see if there is an image of the word. For example, maybe you don't know the word "parlor," and the sentence says, "The family sat in the parlor." Look at the picture on that page to examine the location of the family—that might be what a parlor looks like!

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- Ask a parent, teacher, or friend.
- Look the word up in a dictionary. There might be more than one definition, so see which one fits best with the sentence you're reading.
- ***Guess What Happens Next!*** It can be a lot of fun to try to guess what will happen next in the story. During exciting parts of the story, try asking yourself what will happen next, then keep reading and find out if you were right. Here are some good spots to try this:
 - After Grace talks to her brothers at dinner, what will happen next?
 - After Grace sees the shadow on the poster of Mr. Lincoln, what will she do next?
 - After Grace returns to the post office after mailing her letter, will Mr. Lincoln ever write back?
 - After Grace gets Mr. Lincoln's letter in the mail and before she reads it to her family, what do you think the letter will say?
 - When Papa and Grace's brothers go to vote, will Mr. Lincoln win the election or not?
- ***How Does Grace Feel?*** Grace Bedell is the main character in this story. She feels a lot of different emotions during the story. Try to find those emotions through the words of the story or the pictures. If it doesn't say what she's feeling, guess her feelings based on what's happening in the story. How does Grace feel . . .
 - . . . when she gets the poster from Papa?
 - . . . after talking to her brothers at dinner?
 - . . . on her way to the post office to mail her letter?
 - . . . after talking to Mr. Mann at the post office and sending her letter?

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- ... as she is running home from the post office with Mr. Lincoln's letter?
 - ... when her brothers and Papa go to vote on election day?
 - ... as she waits in the crowd at the train station?
 - ... after Mr. Mann tells her Mr. Lincoln wants to meet Grace?
 - ... when she meets Mr. Lincoln and sees his new whiskers?
- *What if...?* The characters in *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* make some important choices during the story. After reading the whole story, think about some of the choices the characters made and guess what might have happened if they had chosen differently. For example, what if ...
- ... Grace decided not to send her letter?
 - ... Mr. Lincoln didn't write back to Grace?
 - ... Mr. Lincoln didn't grow whiskers?

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Reading *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*

Step Back in Time

For more information, visit the National Museum of American History Web site <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/lincoln/>.

Abraham Lincoln was the president of the United States of America from 1861 to 1865. As a child, he grew up in a poor family and wasn't able to spend much time in school because he had to work to help support his family. Abraham Lincoln is famous for leading America through the Civil War, freeing slaves, and giving thoughtful speeches, like the Gettysburg Address. To find out more about Abraham Lincoln, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu/lincoln/>.



Lincoln wore high top hats, like this one. The last time he put it on was to go to Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865, the night he was assassinated.



"Passage Through Baltimore"
Etching by Adalbert John Volck, 1863. [National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution]

Lincoln grew up in the woods. People who wanted him to become president talked about his job as a rail-splitter to show that he was a hard worker and was like a lot of other normal Americans.

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Read the “Reading Guide” sheets for specific reading tips.

OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to:

- read for understanding.
- answer questions using written and image resources.
- recall one or more fact about Abraham Lincoln’s life and/or appearance.
- recognize images of Abraham Lincoln by his beard, hat, or height.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- Discussion exhibits understanding of story and historical details.
- Discussion exhibits understanding of vocabulary in the context of the story.

STANDARDS

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

- 2D: Read historical narratives imaginatively.
- 2H: Draw upon the visual data presented in photographs, paintings, cartoons, and architectural drawings.
- 3C: Analyze historical fiction.
- 3F: Analyze illustrations in historical stories.
- 3I: Challenge arguments of historical inevitability.
- 3J: Hypothesize the influence of the past.

K-4 Historical Content Standards

- 4C: The student understands historic figures who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.

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IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

21st-Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

Information Literacy

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