Abe’s Honest Words: The Life of Abraham Lincoln

Written by Doreen Rappaport, Illustrated by Kadir Nelson
Ages: 6-8; Grades 1-3
Themes: Biography, American History

SUMMARY
From the author of Martin’s Big Words comes another beautifully written biography of one of our country’s greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln. Students will learn about Lincoln’s life, from his humble beginnings in the woods of Kentucky, through his journey to the White House. They will also learn about Lincoln’s views towards slavery and the beliefs that propelled him to enter into the Civil War and sign the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln’s own words from his speeches and writing are woven throughout the text, providing even more insight into Lincoln’s thoughts. This movie is vibrantly illustrated by Kadir Nelson, who captures the turbulent and emotional experience of Lincoln’s life and times.

OBJECTIVES
• Students will differentiate between primary and secondary sources.
• Students will identify regions-states that had slavery and those that did not.
• Students will create a timeline of Lincoln’s life.
• Students will do further research on a related topic of their interest.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES
Use a KWL chart (a three-columned chart: What I Know, What I Want to Know, What I Learned) to elicit students’ background knowledge about slavery. Encourage students to brainstorm what they know about slavery, the Civil War, and any other background knowledge they may have. Record all of this information in the “What I Know” column of the KWL chart. Guide students with the following questions:
- What was slavery?
- What did slaves have to do?
- What part of the country had slavery?
- How were slaves treated?
- How did slaves become free?
- Who were important people who helped slaves?

If students don’t know the answers to any of these questions, record them in the W (What I Want to Know) column. Next, have students generate a list of other questions about what they want to know about slavery and the Civil War. Record these ideas in the next column. Tell them that they are about to watch a movie about the life of an important American president who fought for, and signed, the law that got rid of slavery. Encourage students to watch and listen for answers to their questions about slavery. Revisit the KWL chart after viewing the movie to fill in the “What I Learned” column.

Define primary and secondary sources for students. Suggested definitions:
• Primary sources are words from people who were actually present when an event happened. Secondary sources are written or made by people who were not actually there when an event happened. After students record definitions, give examples of primary and secondary sources. Then, provide a sampling of copies of primary sources (photographs, letters, diary entries, birth certificates) and secondary sources (encyclopedia entries, newspaper articles, textbook excerpts) for the students to sort.

Revisit the KWL chart after viewing the movie to fill in the “What I Learned” column.

Revisit the KWL chart after viewing the movie to fill in the “What I Learned” column.

Have students generate a list of further questions that they have after learning about Abraham Lincoln and life. Then, guide students through an internet research project to discover more about their question. Finally, have students write an informational essay synthesizing what they learned. Suggested lessons include:
- Essay structure
- Writing a thesis statement
- Choosing strong supporting details
- Including examples, facts, statistics, and anecdotes
- Citing sources
- Writing a strong introduction and conclusion

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