

Abe's Honest Words: The Life of Abraham Lincoln

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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 that 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. Encourage students to watch the movie carefully to see if they can listen for Lincoln's words from his letters and speeches, primary documents.

Give students an outline map of the United States. Guide them through coloring the southern region where slaves were owned, and the northern region where most people did not own slaves. Briefly discuss some of the reasons that people in the south owned more slaves than people in the north (plantations, cash crops). Have students locate and label places from the movie: Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Mississippi River, New Orleans, South Carolina, and Washington D.C.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Revisit the KWL chart. Students should independently make a list of what they learned from the movie. Then, have students share what they learned and record it on the KWL chart. Then lead students in a discussion in which they compare and contrast life in Abraham Lincoln's time with life today. Guiding questions:

- What were some of the differences between the time that Abraham Lincoln lived and today?
- Why was the Civil War fought? How did it change the United States?
- What did the Emancipation Proclamation say? How did it change life in the United States for African Americans?
- How were Abraham Lincoln's beliefs different from other people in his time?

Consider having students use a graphic organizer such as a Venn diagram or a table to record their ideas. Conclude the discussion with having students write a comparative essay about the two time periods.

Have students work to create an annotated and/or illustrated timeline of Lincoln's life. Encourage them to re-watch the movie, or read the book, Abe's Honest Words. Provide students with a note-taking template:

Date	Important Event

After students have recorded the dates and important events, provide them with butcher paper to make the timeline. For each event, students should write more information or add an illustration.

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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