

# Abraham lincoln2 assignment

[History](#)



Michael Hutsell Professor Hershenberg American Government I ??? 2301

Abraham Lincoln Throughout the long history of the United States there have been many hardworking, dedicated politicians that made our country strong and resilient. During the time of the greatest peril to our country one stood out more than any other. This man was Abraham Lincoln, one of the most resilient and pivotal leaders we have known. Abraham Lincoln came from humble origins in the backwoods of Kentucky. He was born on February 12, 1809 in a one room log cabin on Sinking Spring Farm, in southeast Hardin county Kentucky.

His father (Thomas Lincoln) was a poverty stricken frontiersman after losing his farm, which along with his wife (Nancy Hanks Lincoln) and other children had to work hard everyday for the necessities of life. Lincoln was no stranger to hard work; he split logs plowed his families land and used his carpentry skills around the farm. He did prefer reading and learning to the hard work which caused a strained relationship between he and his father. He only received 18 months of formal education and was largely self educated. In 1816 Lincoln's father lost his farm and was forced to move to Perry County, Indiana.

This area of the country near the Ohio River was very remote and rugged. Their first winter at the new homestead was very harsh but they were able to survive. Unfortunately that summer Lincoln's mother died from a deadly disease known as " milk sickness" and left his father with the children to raise alone(Lincoln research project). After the death of his mother the family fell apart and the most of the day to day work was left to Lincoln and his sister. In the winter of 1819 Lincoln's father went back to Kentucky and

<https://assignbuster.com/abraham-lincoln2-assignment/>

found a new wife Sarah Bush Johnson who was a widow with three children (notable biographies. om). His new mother was a very positive light placed in his life. She was very affectionate and treated both sets of children the same as if she borne them all. She was especially fond of Abraham and he referred to her as his “ Angel Mother” (biography. com). In 1830, after further financial misfortune, Lincoln’s father moved his family to Coles County Illinois, but Lincoln did not go with them deciding to head out on his own to New Salem. (Notablebiographies. com). At New Salem Lincoln was placed in charge of a mill and a store where he became very popular through his unique story telling.

Shortly thereafter the New Salem debating society asked him to join where he became a very passionate and persuasive speaker (notable biographies. com). At this time the “ black hawk war” which was a Native American uprising occurred. Lincoln decided to volunteer in New Salem and was elected Captain of his company. He saw little action during the short war and afterwards he stated that “ he had seen no live, fighting Indians during the war but had a good many bloody struggles with the mosquitoes” (biography. com). During this time Lincoln’s store eventually folded leaving him deeply in debt.

He then worked as a rail splitter, land surveyor, and a postmaster all of which fell through increasing his dept even more. He did eventually pay them off thus earning the nickname “ Honest Abe”. After Lincoln’s service in Black Hawk war ended, he decided to run as a candidate for the Illinois legislature. Despite his speaking talents he was not elected but did receive 277 of 300 votes cast in his home precinct in New Salem

<https://assignbuster.com/abraham-lincoln2-assignment/>

(notablebiographies. com). Lincoln was not deterred from his goal of becoming a member of the Illinois legislature, and in 1834 was elected.

At this time John Todd Stuart, the leader of the Whig party, noticed Lincoln's skill during his campaign. Stuart became Lincoln's mentor in the state legislature taking him under his wing and pushed him to begin his law studies. Lincoln started practicing law in 1836 and served 4 terms in the state legislature where he became a Whig leader. In 1837 Lincoln moved to Illinois new capital Springfield. There he joined John Stuart's law firm as a partner and continued his political career (notablebiographies. com) During this time he became the most successful lawyer in the state of Illinois earning 1, 200 to 1, 500 annually (biography. om) This compared to 1, 200 for the governor and 750 for circuit judges (biography. com). His practice was based in Springfield but he would also make the rounds with the circuit court, where at first would earn only small fees for petty cases. After the railroads arrived Lincoln successfully defended the Illinois Central Railroad in many notable lawsuits where he earned sizeable legal fees (biography. com). During his tenure in the state legislature he espoused his opposition to slavery but would not go so far as to call himself and abolitionist.

During the mid 1830s Lincoln met and courted Ann Rutledge but this ended in tragedy with her untimely death in 1835. In 1836 Lincoln pursued halfhearted Mary Owens and proposed, but she turned down his proposal. Later he met and courted Mary Todd who belonged to a very distinguished Kentucky family and was part of Springfield's social aristocracy. Many of her family members and friends disliked their relationship which created a strain during the courtship. In 1840 they became engaged but the tension created  
<https://assignbuster.com/abraham-lincoln2-assignment/>

between he and her social standing created much doubt in his mind concerning the marriage.

On January 1, 1841 the engagement was ended and Lincoln fell into a deep depression. Later they worked out the issues related to their engagement and married on November 4, 1842. Lincoln and his wife had four children with only the eldest Thomas Lincoln living to adulthood. In 1846 Lincoln was elected to the U. S. Congress serving a single term in the Whig party. He proposed a bill for the emancipation of slaves in the District of Columbia (gradual and compensated), but due to the lack of support both the free white citizens of the district and the abolitionists it failed (biography. om). He also was outspoken in his criticism of the Mexican War, leading many inquiries challenging the current president James K. Polk real reasons for the war (biography. com). Due to his criticisms he lost his base of support in his own congressional district and was not reelected to the U. S. Congress. After he failed in his second congressional bid he was very frustrated with politics and took a five year hiatus until a new regional issue emerged in 1854.

Lincoln's political rival from Illinois, Stephen A.

Douglas created a bill for opening all the land of the Louisiana Purchase to slavery. This act (Kansas and Nebraska Act) allowed the settlers in Kansas and Nebraska to decide if slavery should be permitted in their region. This created strenuous opposition in Illinois and eventually led to the disintegration of Lincoln's Whig party and gave rise to the Republican Party. When Lincoln heard the Republicans where trying to attract Stephen Douglas he opposed it and decided to join the Republican party and challenge Douglas's leadership within the state of Illinois Republican party (biography. <https://assignbuster.com/abraham-lincoln2-assignment/>)

om). Lincoln ran against Douglas for the Senate in 1858 and a famous series of debates between the two ensued throughout Illinois. During the debates Lincoln's views on slavery emerged insisting Congress must exclude slavery from its territories. Lincoln stated in one of the debates that " A house divided against it cannot stand. I believe the government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free". On the other hand he did not espouse equality for the races nor did he endorse citizenship for African Americans.

He stated to a crowd in Charleston Illinois that " I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors neither of blacks, nor of qualifying them to hold office.... " (biography. com) His inconsistencies regarding slavery led to his eventual defeat by Douglas. Through these debates Lincoln gained national recognition by the debates being published and he began to be considered as a presidential candidate. On May 18, 1860, Lincoln received the presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention in Chicago.

Lincoln's full attention was then turned toward creating unity in the Republican Party. The Democrats on the other hand were much divided and Lincoln won the presidential election on November 6, 1860 by a decisive majority in the Electoral College. This created a serious crisis within the country due to South Carolina's withdrawal from the Union. Several compromises were considered to halt the secession movement but all were unsuccessful in the end due to Lincoln's opposition to any compromise regarding the free-soil position of the Republican Party (biography. com).

After the failure to broker a compromise between the slavery and free soil states six more states seceded and created the Confederate States of America. Shortly after the secession, the issue of holding Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor was the first test of Lincoln's presidency. South Carolina claimed the fort for the Confederacy and threatened to take it by force if needed. Lincoln neither wanted to provoke war or show any signs of weakness towards the Confederacy. He decided to re-supply the besieged fort but before he could do this the Confederates attacked thus starting the Civil War.

After this attack Lincoln decided the Confederacy needed to be actively fought through a war not through a blockade (biography.com). This influenced his decision to send union troops to advance on Virginia at Bull Run resulting in a rout for the Union forces on July 21, 1861. After this setback at Bull Run, Lincoln created his military policy. He felt there should be several fronts which Union troops would use their superior manpower to advance simultaneously. He also used the superior union navy to create a naval blockade of all southern ports to strangle the Confederacy.

At first for nearly two years the Union armies lacked effective command through indecisive generals and lacking unity of command. They consistently could not grasp Lincoln's concept of total multi-pronged attacks. Lincoln, finally through the promotion of Ulysses S. Grant to overall command of Union forces, was able to put into effect his concept of a large, coordinated offensive to topple the Confederacy. This multi-front strategy was a success and on April 14, 1865 General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Grant.

Only a few hours after Lee Surrendered to Grant Lincoln attended the play Our American Cousin at Ford's Theatre. During the play John Wilkes Booth entered the state box where Lincoln was watching the play. At 10: 15 P. M. , he shot Lincoln in the back of the head mortally wounding him. Lincoln was carried to the Petersen House across the street where at 7: 22 A. M. April 15, 1865 he passed away (biography. com). He was not able to see the end to hostilities of the Civil War which he worked tirelessly to preserve the Union and plant the seeds that led to the end of slavery in the United States.

I chose Abraham Lincoln because he was able to preserve our nation through his expert leadership, moral character and through the use of his superior speaking abilities. He exemplified this through several key speeches just prior and during the Civil War. His effective vision energized people, created meaning for followers, established a standard of excellence and bridged the gap between the present and the future (Johnson p. 85). The first speech occurred during his first inaugural address to the nation.

In his inaugural address, Lincoln was faced with the difficult problem of building credibility with a relatively hostile audience. The Southern states were beginning to secede from the Union, only two federal forts were left standing in the South (these were under siege) and he had to be under armed guard because of death threats (Braden p. 68). To counter this explosive atmosphere Lincoln remained very calm and up to the actual address remained silent because he didn't want to make any comments that might unnecessarily make the South explode in anger.



On March 4, 1861, Lincoln began his address. His strategy for the address was to increase his credibility by appearing thoughtful, law-abiding, and by keeping strictly to his prepared manuscript. Lincoln directed his address mainly to the Southerners and to the border states that could either join the Union or the Confederacy. He first wanted to make it clear to the South that he did not want to interfere with the institution of slavery or the Fugitive Slave Act (Braden p. 74). Lincoln also wanted to make it clear that the Union of states cannot be separated into a separate North and South.

Another goal Lincoln proposed was peaceful reconciliation. He would leave the Southern people alone if they would elect loyalists to office and uphold the constitution of the United States. In return he would not use force to enact this process. In his inaugural address Lincoln was successful at projecting and building his credibility as president. He exhibited trustworthiness by talking in a clear and simple way and by being very honest regarding his goals and views. The speeches outcome enabled his followers to share in his views and fight to preserve the Union.

He also tried to alleviate the fears of the Southerners and Border States by diminishing his abolitionist persona and lessening the probability of an invasion of the South. Lincoln's dynamic and unifying speaking skill was demonstrated with his Gettysburg address. The Gettysburg address was given by Lincoln after the terrible battle had taken place and the area was to be consecrated as a national cemetery on November 19, 1863. During this speech Lincoln wanted to commemorate the men who died in the battle by giving a short but eloquent speech.

He also had a larger purpose, he wanted to make a statement that would make the citizens from both the North and the South start to think about peace. He also wanted to rekindle the Union's patriotic resolve to win the war and preserve the Union. The Gettysburg address as presented by Lincoln: "Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great Civil War, testing whether that nation-or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated ??? can long endure.

We are now on a great battlefield of that war. We are met to dedicate a portion of it as the final resting-place of those who have given their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this, but, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will very little note nor long remember what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here.

It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated, here, to the unfinished work that they have thus far so noble carried on. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that the nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth" (Barton p. 1-82). The speeches eloquence <https://assignbuster.com/abraham-lincoln2-assignment/>

and shortness took the audience by surprise and they were very affected by its delivery. Lincoln knew this was a pivotal opportunity and he also realized the audience was motivated to be there to remember the soldiers who died in the battle. He played on their strong emotions by prompting them to not let these soldiers die in vain, but to let their memory give them renewed strength to win the war.

His most important aim was to strengthen the resolves of the Unionists to continue the struggle and to save the United States. He also masterfully empowered his audience by handing his vision to them by telling them to honor the dead soldiers by becoming resolved to win the war no matter what. I feel through these two compelling speeches Lincoln was able to bring the country together and save the citizens from the depths of the Civil War. Through these speeches Lincoln demonstrated the power of the spoken word.

Without Lincoln's genius and abilities the Civil War could have been lost and the world today would be a vastly different place. Works Cited Braden, Waldo. Abraham Lincoln: Public Speaker. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988. Johnson, Craig, Hackman, Michael. Leadership: A Communication Perspective. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press Inc. , 1996. www. Biography. com Abraham Lincoln (www. biography. com/search/article. do? id"= 9382540 www. notablebiographies. com/Ki-Lo/Lincoln-Abraham. html