



After moving to Illinois, Abraham Lincoln put his childhood behind him. He still worked hard, and he still wanted to read and learn. He still loved being around people, talking and telling stories and jokes. He also began to see that some of the nation's problems could only be solved by government.

This led him to try to win a seat in the Illinois legislature. He didn't win at first, but he was finally elected in 1834.

While in the state legislature, Abraham Lincoln began to study law.

In 1837 he passed the examination and began to practice law. That same year he moved to Springfield, the Illinois state capital.

As a lawyer, Abraham Lincoln worked on problems that interested him. He saw the nation's rivers as the best means of transportation, and he wanted them improved

so transportation could expand farther and farther. He also took up the problem of slavery and spoke strongly against it.

In 1842 Abraham Lincoln married Mary Todd. They had four sons, but three of them died when they were still young.

Four years after his marriage, Abraham Lincoln was elected to the United States House of Representatives. He spent two years in Washington, D.C., fighting for his causes. Then he returned to his law practice in Illinois.

In 1860 Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States. Shortly after he took the oath of office, Civil War erupted. Leading his country during this war was the biggest challenge of his life. He devoted every moment to ending the war, ending slavery, and keeping his country united.



Living in the White House, President Lincoln was able to spend more time with his family, but he had great worries about the war. He also mourned the death of his son "Willie," who died in the White House on Feb. 20, 1862.

One of Abraham Lincoln's most famous actions was to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, an order to free slaves in the Confederate states. As President, he was able to finally help the men he saw trudging into slavery when he was a child.

Another great event in Lincoln's presidency was the Gettysburg Address.

Given on Nov. 19, 1863, after a Union victory in one of the bloodiest battles of the war, this speech is among the greatest in American history. In the most memorable line from that speech, Abraham

Lincoln said that government "of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

In 1864, Abraham Lincoln was elected to a second term as President of the United States, and on April 10, 1865, the Civil War ended. At last, President Lincoln would preside over a nation at peace.

But, on April 14, 1865, four days after the peace treaty was signed, Mr. Lincoln was shot. He died the next day and never lived to enjoy the peace and freedoms he worked for.

Like the little terrapins he once befriended, Abraham Lincoln spent his years in the White House with a heavy burden on his back. And, like the slaves he saw on Knob Creek almost 50 years ago, he was never able to enjoy the rewards of his hard work when peace finally came.

The End

Things to Think About and Do

1. Abraham Lincoln was shot by a man. Who was the gunman? Why did he shoot President Lincoln? Where did the shooting take place? What happened to the gunman?
2. Presidents are given a number, according to the order in which they are elected. What is Abraham Lincoln's number? Who was President before Lincoln, and who became President after Lincoln?
3. To be a leader in your school, your community or your country, you must be well-informed. Abe Lincoln read books and newspapers. How can you stay informed? Write an editorial, expressing your opinion on the importance of reading to keep informed.

Learn more about Abraham Lincoln by visiting the following Web sites:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/126libo/>
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/abrahamlincoln/>
<http://home.att.net/~rjnorton/Lincoln77.html>
http://www.conservapedia.com/Abraham_Lincoln

Author Kay Hively and Illustrator Billie Gofourth-Stewart are both from Neosho, MO. Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation, ©2009