

A Fine Fella

Chapter 4 - by Kay Hively

Nine-year-old Abe walked slowly down to the creek. His mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, was deathly sick. Abe wanted to help her, but there was nothing anyone could do.

Sitting by the river, the young frontier boy prayed for his mother. He did not know if his prayer would be heard, but he didn't know what else to do.

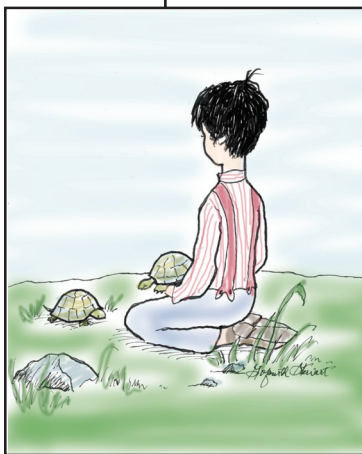
As he sat on the ground, Abe saw a terrapin in some nearby weeds. All summer long he had found terrapins along the creek. Because he had no real pets except for his father's hunting dogs, Abe made these little animals his playmates.

He admired the little terrapins that spent their entire lives carrying heavy shells on their backs. And

although they moved slowly, the terrapins were friendly, and they survived well in the wilderness. Abe had learned from the terrapins that even with a great burden on your back, you must carry on.

With his mother so sick, Abe felt like he had a great burden on his back.

Picking up the terrapin, he placed it on his knee and told it about his troubles. Just talking made him feel better.



That night, after Abe and Sarah finished supper, Mr. Lincoln took them outside and told them their mother would die soon. He said they

should go in to see her one more time. Together, the little brother and sister went to their mother's bedside. She never opened her eyes, but she smiled slightly when they spoke to her. Then the

children kissed their mother and left.

The next morning, on Oct. 5, 1818, Nancy Lincoln died. Neighbors came to help bury her near the cabin.

For many days, Abe visited her grave and talked to his mother the way he had talked to his terrapin. After talking to his mother at the grave, he always felt better.

With his mother gone, Abe still worked on the farm with his father, but he also helped his sister in the house.

Through the winter, he was able to go to school some. His love of reading grew stronger and stronger. Any time he saw a book he asked to borrow it, and he would read each of them over and over. Nearly every night, by the light of the fire, he read. The only book the family

owned was the Bible, and he read it many times.

When spring came, Sarah took over the job of planting the garden. Abe helped her work the ground and soon they were ready to plant. Sarah planted corn and Abe followed along behind, planting pumpkin seeds between every hill of Sarah's corn.

It was a long day in the garden, but Abe and Sarah were proud of their hard work. Now all they needed were rain and sunshine.

Late that night Abe was awakened by the rumble of thunder and the sound of rain falling on the cabin roof. Turning over on his corn husk mattress, he went back to sleep, happy that rain was falling on the garden.

Next Week: Chapter 5 - A Big Muddy Mess

Things to Think About and Do

1. Abraham Lincoln was so poor he did not have a pet, so he played with terrapins he found by the creek. What is a terrapin? What other small animal is like a terrapin? Make a list of as many animals as you can think of that have hard shells on their bodies.
2. If you could plant a garden like Abe and Sarah did, what would you plant? What vegetables do you like? Would you plant flowers in your garden? Write a short poem about fruits and vegetables.
3. Look through your newspaper for a story of someone facing challenges in his life. Write a fictional next chapter in his struggles, imagining how he has overcome his burdens.

GLEs: R1E, R1I, W3A, SS6A, S31D, S31E

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

- <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/twhpw/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