

America's Story

from America's Library



Meet Amazing Americans



Jump Back in Time



Explore the States



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See, Hear and Sing

Meet Amazing Americans ▶

U.S. Presidents ▶ Abraham Lincoln



What a find! - - - ✕



Lincoln's student sum book

Abraham Lincoln's Youth

"Abraham Lincoln
his hand and pen
he will be good but
[God] knows When"

These are the words Lincoln wrote in his schoolbook when he was a young boy. In his autobiography, Lincoln estimated that his time in school totaled one year. His teachers in the pioneer schools in Indiana didn't have any arithmetic textbooks, so Lincoln found some paper, which was hard to come by, tied it together, and created his own "sum book."

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Even though Lincoln had very little formal education, he loved to read, and neighbors remembered how he would walk for miles to borrow a book. Some of his favorite books included *Life and Memorable Actions of George Washington*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Aesop's Fables*. How far would you go to borrow a book?

page 1 of 3





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Lincoln, taking a break from splitting rails

Abraham Lincoln's Youth

Lincoln's childhood was rough. His mother died when he was nine and his family moved several times; from Kentucky, where he was born, to Indiana, and then on to Illinois in his early 20s. After he arrived in Illinois, he had no interest in being a farmer and instead started splitting rails and clearing his father's farm. Then he enlisted in the Black Hawk War (a fight to move the Indians westward) as a volunteer. He was elected to lead his company of soldiers. He later admitted that this gave him more satisfaction than any election he had ever won. After the Black Hawk War, Lincoln did a number of different things. Do you know what some of them were?

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page 2 of 3





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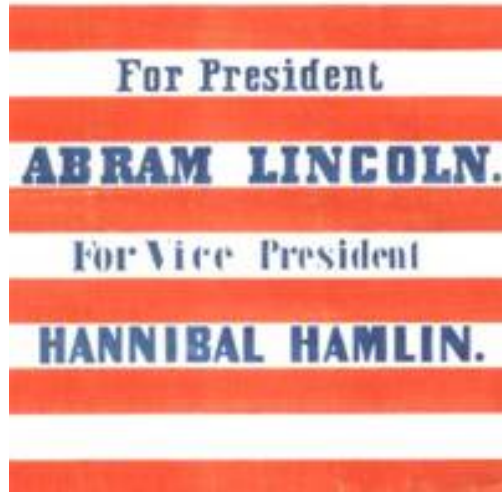
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A Lincoln for President poster from 1860

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Abraham Lincoln's Youth

Lincoln worked on a riverboat, ran a store, and thought about becoming a blacksmith. Instead, he decided to study law and started his own successful law practice. He also served in both the Illinois and U.S. legislatures. Lincoln was not successful at everything he attempted. He lost several law cases, was passed over as the Republican Party's vice presidential nominee, and when he ran for the U.S. Senate against Stephen Douglas, he lost. But he didn't let these defeats stop him. In 1860, Lincoln ran for president and won.



page 3 of 3

