

## TO TELL THE TRUTH: ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Three class members will be chosen to pretend they are Abraham Lincoln. They will stand next to each other in the front of the room facing the class. During the game, the three will be asked questions by other students in class. The questions will be about Abraham Lincoln's life.

Twelve students will now be chosen to ask one question each during the game. They will be given a number from 1 to 12. This number tells which question they will ask when the game begins. The questions will be asked in order starting with the student who has number 1.

For every question that is asked, the three Abraham Lincolns will each give an answer. Abraham Lincoln "number 1" will always answer first, "number 2" second, and "number 3" third. Only one of the three is really Abraham Lincoln. The real one will always tell the truth when answering questions. The other two will only tell the truth once in awhile. After all questions have been asked, class members will vote for the person they think is the real Abraham Lincoln.

This game will be played like a television game show. The teacher will be the "MC," or Master of Ceremonies. The three Abraham Lincolns will be called contestant "number 1," "number 2," and "number 3." The people who ask questions are the "panelists." After a panelist asks a question, all three contestants will answer before the next panelist asks a question.



MC: Now let us meet Abraham Lincoln. Number 1, what is your name please?

Number 1: My name is Abraham Lincoln.

MC: Number 2?

Number 2: My name is Abraham Lincoln.

MC: Number 3?

Number 3: My name is Abraham Lincoln.

MC: And here is Abraham Lincoln's story. He says, "I, Abraham Lincoln, was born on the frontier in Kentucky. My family later moved to Indiana and Illinois. As a young man, I did farm work, took goods on a flatboat to New Orleans, and worked as a store clerk and postmaster. When I got older, I entered politics and became a state senator in Illinois and a member of the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. I joined the newly formed Republican Party in 1856 because the Republicans were against the extension of slavery into the territories. I took office as the 16th President of the United States in 1861. My views on slavery influenced 11 Southern states to secede and form a new country called the Confederate States of America. I decided that these states had to be brought back into the Union. The Civil War was fought to make the United States one strong nation again."

**Panelist 1:** Your ancestors came to America from England in 1637, just 17 years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. The Lincoln family and its descendants lived in Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Kentucky. You were born on the Kentucky frontier, the son of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, whom you described as "ordinary people." Tell us some things about the early years of your life.

Number 1: My youth was greatly affected by my parents. Father and mother operated a general store, and it was there that I learned how to get along with people and accept responsibility. I was mature beyond my years. While working at the store, I earned the nickname "Honest Abe" for walking 6 miles to the house of a customer that I had accidentally shortchanged by 5 cents.

Number 2: We lived in a log cabin, as did most families in the West during the early 1800s. Mother and father owned a farm. My older sister and I were well fed and well clothed for the times. When I was 8 years old, we moved to Indiana and bought 160 acres of land from the government. After being there two years, mother died. I suffered through a long period of loneliness before my

father married a widow who had three children. As for my stepmother, all that I was or ever hoped to be, I owed to her. She came along at a critical time in my life.

Number 3: I was the seventh of nine children. Two brothers and a sister died in infancy because there were no doctors or medicine on the frontier. Our family worked hard in order to make the farm a success. We provided for all of our own food needs by raising cows, goats, chickens, and a variety of crops. Surplus wheat and corn were sent by flatboat to New Orleans. When the chores were done, I spent my time at play just like the other kids did. I especially enjoyed fishing and horseback riding.

**Panelist 2:** How good an education did you get growing up on the Western frontier?

Number 1: Most kids worked on the family farm, because there weren't any schools in the West except in a few scattered cities. But fortunately for me, I got to know a lawyer in town who regularly came into our store. He was impressed with my conversational skills and desire to learn. I was invited to his house several evenings a week to read some of his books and an occasional newspaper. This experience had a lot to do with me becoming a lawyer later in life. It also opened my eyes to what was happening in the rest of the world.

Number 2: There were a few schools in the wilderness, but no qualified teachers. If a straggler came through the neighborhood pretending to know something about education, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing that excited me about learning, and I attended school for less than one year. Somehow, by the age of 21, I could read, write, and do a little arithmetic. I used to do arithmetic problems on a board, then shave it clean with a knife and start over again. I knew the Bible thoroughly, however, because it was the only book my parents owned.

Number 3: There was a one-room log schoolhouse 4 miles from where we lived. I walked to school on days when I wasn't needed on the farm. Like the other boys, I never went to school during the planting and harvesting seasons. I studied at home by the light of the fireplace. Mother helped me with my reading, writing, and arithmetic.

**Panelist 3:** By your late teens, you had reached your full height of 6 feet 4 inches. You were thin and awkward, but very strong in the arms and legs. Your size and strength helped you get such jobs as cutting firewood, splitting logs for fence rails, and plowing fields. Of all the different kinds of work you did, what was the first job you had which paid some money?

Number 1: A neighbor paid me 50 cents a day to cut and husk corn and thresh wheat.

Number 2: The first money I earned was for rowing passengers to a steamboat in the middle of the Ohio River.

Number 3: A trader hired me and two other young men to take a flatboat to New Orleans.

**Panelist 4:** When you were a teenager, people used to gather at the general store to exchange news and good conversation. What did you do on these occasions?

Number 1: The adults did the talking, while the younger people listened. I paid close attention to what was being said. It was during those times that I developed a keen interest in politics. Much was said for and against the extension of slavery into the Western territories. From those small town debates, I arrived at my life-long position of opposing slavery.

Number 2: When we got together at the general store, I told interesting and oftentimes funny stories. I made people laugh by imitating preachers or politicians who had recently spoken in the area.

Number 3: I loved visiting with neighbors and sharing news and information. I also kept an eye on the young ladies, but none kept an eye on me because I was so homely. One of the things I liked doing on these occasions was playing guitar and singing. People used to laugh because they thought I was purposely missing notes and singing off key. I was actually that bad, but never told anybody because I enjoyed the laughter. My sense of humor stayed with me throughout my life, and even helped me during the difficult years of the Civil War.

**Panelist 5:** You went through some hard times while searching for a career. Tell us about a few things which happened to you during your mid-20s.

Number 1: My father died, leaving me with the responsibility of operating the general store. But I soon lost interest in the business, and wanted to do something else with my life. I left for Springfield,

Illinois, to study law. This caused some bad feelings between my mother and I, and we were not on speaking terms for the next five years.

Number 2: There were four major setbacks in my life within a period of just a few years. I ran for a seat in the Illinois state legislature and lost. Then I purchased a store, which failed after three months. A girl that I had strong feelings for died. Another girl rejected my marriage proposal.

Number 3: My troubles began when the federal government moved the Sauk and Fox Indians across the Mississippi River to Iowa. In the spring of 1832, Chief Black Hawk and several hundred warriors came back across the river to regain their lands. The governor of Illinois called out the militia, and I volunteered for service. Because of my upbringing on the frontier, I thought very seriously about a military career. But when my brother and best friend were killed, I knew that the army was not for me.

**Panelist 6:** Political success first came your way when you won four consecutive terms in the Illinois General Assembly. In 1842, you married a Kentucky girl named Mary Todd, and made your home in Springfield, the state capital. Several years of work as a lawyer were followed by a two-year term in the U.S. House of Representatives. When you and your fellow Whig Party members criticized President James K. Polk for the Mexican War, voters back home lost confidence in you. Thinking your political career was over, you returned to the practice of law. But what happened in the mid-1850s that made you determined to enter politics once again?

Number 1: It was alarming to me that there were 3 1/2 million slaves in the United States. I gave speeches throughout Illinois, in which I attacked the evils of slavery. People were aroused by my words, and elected me to another term in the House of Representatives.

Number 2: The Missouri Compromise of 1820 had closed the northern part of the Louisiana Territory to slavery. But in 1854, Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act. It gave planters a chance to take their slaves into previously closed areas. This made me angry because I thought slavery had been permanently limited.

Number 3: I decided to re-enter politics after hearing a speech by William Lloyd Garrison. He was a leading abolitionist and publisher of *The Liberator*. His words stirred my emotions on the slavery issue. I wanted to go back to Congress and work for the abolition of slavery in the United States. However, I never dreamed that I would go to Washington as the President of the country.

**Panelist 7:** In 1858, the newly formed Republican Party nominated you to run against Democrat Stephen A. Douglas for the United States Senate. In your acceptance speech, you said: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free." In a series of debates held throughout Illinois, you called slavery "a moral, social, and political evil." You opposed the extension of slavery into the territories. But Douglas said people should decide whether they wanted slavery or not by the principle of popular sovereignty. Although you lost the Senate election, you gained national attention which helped you win the presidency two years later. You won an easy victory in the Election of 1860, because of a split in the Democratic Party. Can you tell us what was on your mind between Election Day in November and Inauguration Day in March?

Number 1: I was greatly disturbed that outgoing President James Buchanan did nothing to stop seven Southern states from seceding. He should have ordered federal troops to South Carolina as soon as that state left the Union. This would have served as a warning to the other states which followed.

Number 2: In the months before taking office, I thought about how I had spent 25 years of my life in Springfield, and how I had raised a family there. I wondered if I would ever return. It was obvious that the crisis which I faced was greater than the one George Washington faced upon becoming the first President. Yet I knew that with the help of God, I could not fail in the task before me.

Number 3: I used the period between November and March to carefully choose a Cabinet to help me run the government. I also met with Congressional leaders, and discussed what actions could be taken to handle the secession crisis. And I remember wondering if I really should have run for the presidency.

- Panelist 8:** Just to change the subject for a minute, I'm curious to know why you waited until you were President before growing a beard. What made you decide to grow one?
- Number 1:** Several Presidents before me had beards. I thought it made them look more distinguished.
- Number 2:** A little girl wrote me a letter saying I would look better with whiskers.
- Number 3:** My wife Mary, who had a sense of humor, told me that the only way to improve my looks was to cover up half of my face.
- Panelist 9:** In your opinion, the Civil War was being fought not only to preserve the Union, but to show the kings and dictators of the world that people have the ability to govern themselves. After becoming President, you took immediate action against the Confederate States. You ordered a blockade of Southern ports, and asked for 75,000 volunteers for the armed forces. However, you were unable to find a skillful commander for the Union Army in the East, and the war went badly for two years. Victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg finally turned the tide in favor of the North. You had a certain book setting on your desk which helped you through the darkest hours of the war. What was it called?
- Number 1:** *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. I deeply admired Mr. Franklin, and loved reading his stories. His jokes made me laugh and helped ease the pressure I was under. His book also contained advice and inspiration.
- Number 2:** Being a man of deep religious feelings, I kept a Bible on my desk, and opened it for comfort and guidance.
- Number 3:** The book was called *Life of Washington*. I had owned it since I was a boy in Illinois. I read all the accounts of the Revolutionary War battles and struggles for the liberties of our country. It gave me a true understanding of the meaning of democracy.
- Panelist 10:** There were few happy days in the White House because the Civil War consumed all of your energies. Visits to army hospitals strained your emotions. To relax, you sometimes took carriage rides or went to the theater. As for Mrs. Lincoln, what effect did the war have on her?
- Number 1:** She was a woman of courage and determination, characteristics she developed when we lived on the frontier. Her inner strength helped me through the toughest of times.
- Number 2:** My wife had several relatives who were serving in the Confederate Army, so she was under constant suspicion. Her high-strung personality led to jealousy and numerous temper tantrums. A lot of people didn't like her.
- Number 3:** My wife died less than one year after the Civil War began. This loss added dearly to the heavy burden I already carried.
- Panelist 11:** During the war, you issued the Emancipation Proclamation which freed the slaves in states that were fighting against the Union. However, this declaration allowed slavery to continue in the border states which had not seceded. But you urged the border states to free their slaves anyway, and pay the owners for their losses. Another noteworthy event during the war was your appearance at ceremonies at a cemetery on the Gettysburg battlefield. After Edward Everett, the featured speaker, gave a two-hour speech, you were asked to say a few words. You proceeded to deliver what came to be known as the Gettysburg Address. It lasted just three minutes, but has been called one of the great speeches of American history. It included the famous words: "Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." How long did it take to prepare this speech?
- Number 1:** I delivered so many speeches during my life that I rarely had to write one ahead of time. Since I wasn't the main speaker that day, I simply got up and expressed my feelings on the spur of the moment.
- Number 2:** I prepared the speech carefully, well ahead of the ceremonies.
- Number 3:** People give me credit for the Gettysburg Address, when actually it was written by one of my speech writers. I didn't have time to write speeches because all of my attention was given to conducting the war.
- Panelist 12:** Union victories by General William T. Sherman and General Ulysses S. Grant helped you

win reelection in 1864. With the end of the war in sight, you used your Second Inaugural Address to urge Northerners to show “malice toward none” and “charity for all.” By this, you meant that the North should not seek revenge against the South when the war was over. A month later, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House. Did it ever cross your mind that a Southerner might hold you responsible for the South losing the war, and try to assassinate you?

Number 1: Actually, I was more concerned about an attack by somebody from the North. The Radical Republicans in Congress wanted to punish the South for having caused the Civil War. They strongly opposed my call to “bind up the nation’s wounds; to do all which may achieve a just and lasting peace.”

Number 2: There were a lot of people in the country who loved me, and a lot of people who hated me. I once dreamed that I was walking through the White House and heard people crying. I asked what the crying was about, and they said President Lincoln had been assassinated.

Number 3: A man once smuggled a gun into the White House and shot two people before being killed by guards. I received dozens of threatening letters, but never let them stop me from carrying out my duties as President.

MC: It’s time now to vote for NUMBER 1, NUMBER 2, or NUMBER 3. All those who think NUMBER 1 is the real Abraham Lincoln, please raise your hand. All those who think NUMBER 2 is the real Abraham Lincoln, raise your hand. And all those who think NUMBER 3 is the real Abraham Lincoln, raise your hand.

The votes are all in. Will the real Abraham Lincoln please step forward?

Questions: Now that you know who the real Abraham Lincoln is, look back at the answers given by this person. All information in these answers is correct. Use the information to answer the following true/false questions. Also, use facts given in the MC’s introduction and in the questions asked by the panelists during the game.

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_ Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky, and later moved to Indiana and Illinois.
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_ He went to a lawyer’s house several evenings a week to read books and an occasional newspaper.
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_ Lincoln sometimes entertained neighbors at the general store by imitating a preacher or politician.
- (4) \_\_\_\_\_ The only time he lost an election was when Stephen A. Douglas defeated him in the Illinois Senate race in 1858.
- (5) \_\_\_\_\_ Lincoln faced numerous personal problems during his life.
- (6) \_\_\_\_\_ He believed the people of a territory should decide for themselves whether or not they wanted slavery.
- (7) \_\_\_\_\_ Lincoln joined the newly organized Democratic Party in 1856.
- (8) \_\_\_\_\_ Seven states seceded after Lincoln took office as the 16th President.
- (9) \_\_\_\_\_ He ordered a blockade of Southern ports, and asked for 75,000 volunteers for the Union Army.
- (10) \_\_\_\_\_ In his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln announced the freeing of the slaves.