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# Biographies and Primary Sources of Abraham Lincoln

Mary Ann Stearn

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# Biographies and Primary Sources Using Abraham Lincoln

## 1. Overview:

Students in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades will be exposed to Primary sources using material from the Library of Congress on Abraham Lincoln. Biographies on Lincoln will be looked at, to see how these Primary sources are used in writing biographies.

## 2. Goal

Biographies and the role of primary sources will be explored.

## 3. Objectives

- Students will be able to identify primary sources.
- Students will understand the concept that authors do research when writing biographies, and use and include primary sources.

## 5. Investigative Question

What are primary sources, and how do biography authors use them?

## 6. Time Required: 50 min. (or could be divided into one or two 30 min. sessions)

5 min. – Discuss what a biography is. Where do authors get their information? Introduce primary sources.

5 min. – Divide students into groups of 3 -4. Give them some primary source materials (pictures and simple writing) on Lincoln. Have students look at sources and write down facts they have observed about Lincoln from the primary sources , also any questions prompted by the primary sources.

5 min. – Make a list of the group’s observations and questions about Lincoln.

15 min. – Read a simple biography about Lincoln, looking for the facts and answers to questions that the students observed in the primary sources.

15 min. – Share the book *Mr. Lincoln’s Whiskers* by Karin B. Winnick, showing the primary sources used in the book

5 min. – Evaluate the student’s understanding of primary sources. Show them assorted pictures, photographs of people and writing and have them indicate if they are primary sources or not. Can do this by writing answers on a piece of paper or show of hands.

## 7. Recommended Grade Range

2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grades

## 8. Subject / Sub-Subject:

Language Arts – Biography

Social Studies – Primary sources, Abraham Lincoln

## 9. Standards:

Common Core Standards

**CC.2.R.L.7 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:** Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

**CC.2.R.I.3 Key Ideas and Details:** Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.

**CC.2.R.I.8 Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:** Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text.

**CC.2.W.8 Research to Build and Present Knowledge:** Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

**CC.3.R.I.3 Key Ideas and Details:** Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

### Illinois State Standards

**5.A.1a** Identify questions and gather information.

**5.A.1b** Locate information using a variety of resources.

**5.B.1a** Select and organize information from various sources for a specific purpose.

**10. Credits:** Mary Ann Stearn, Harrison St. School, Geneva, IL

### **PREPARATION**

#### **11. Materials Used:**

Copies of the primary source photographs for each group to have a set.

For the written assessment: a piece of paper numbered 1 - ? for how many sources will be shown. This would be 1 paper for each student.

1 copy of photographs, pictures (drawings), journals, letters, etc. to be used for the assessment.

#### **12. Resources Used:**

Winnick, Karen B. *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*. Honesdale, Pennsylvania: Boyds Mills Press. 1996.

A simple biography with photographs such as:

Ford, Carin T. *Abraham Lincoln: The 16<sup>th</sup> President*. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publisher's, Inc., 2003.

Or

Greene, Carol. *Abraham Lincoln: President of a Divided Country*. Chicago, IL: Childrens Press, 1989.

LOC Primary Sources:

From the Library of Congress: Primary Sources about Lincoln

Title: Lincoln Log Cabin. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/pnp/ggbain/21700/21723r.jpg>

Author/Creator: Bain News Service, Publisher.

Date: between ca. 1915 and ca. 1920.

URL: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/pnp/ggbain/21700/21723r.jpg>

Title: Abraham Lincoln-Hannibal Hamlin campaign button for 1860 presidential election

Author/Creator: [unknown]

Date: 1860

URL: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3c20000/3c26000/3c26400/3c26415r.jpg>

Title: Abraham Lincoln, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing slightly left, taken in Pittsfield, Illinois, two weeks before the final Lincoln-Douglas debate in Lincoln's unsuccessful bid for the Senate, October 1, 1858.

Author/Creator: Calvin Jackson, photographer

Date: October 1, 1858

URL: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3a10000/3a18000/3a18600/3a18600r.jpg>

Title: Abraham Lincoln, head-and-shoulders portrait, traditionally called "last photograph of Lincoln from life".

Author/Creator: Alexander Gardner, photographer

Date: 1930s?, from a photo taken on Feb. 5, 1865.

URL: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3a50000/3a52000/3a52000/3a52094r.jpg>

Title: Abraham Lincoln and family looking at a book

Author/Creator: [unknown]

Date: between 1861 and 1900

URL: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3c30000/3c34000/3c34000/3c34038r.jpg>

Title: Mary Todd Lincoln

Author/Creator: Mathew B. Brady, photographer

Date: 1861

URL: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/pnp/ppmsca/19200/19221r.jpg>

Title: President Abraham Lincoln, full-length portrait, standing

Author/Creator: [unknown]

URL: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3a10000/3a15000/3a15500/3a15585r.jpg>

Date: May 16, 1861, printed later, ca. 1900.

### Primary sources for *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*

Title: Grace Bedell to Abraham Lincoln, Thursday, October 18, 1860 (Typed copy).

Author/Creator: Grace Bedell

Date: October 18, 1860

URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mal/mal1/040/0402800/001.jpg>

Title: Abraham Lincoln to Grace Bedell, Friday, October 19, 1860 (Reply to Bedell's letter concerning Lincoln's beard)

Author/Creator: Abraham Lincoln

Date: October 19, 1860

URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mal/mal1/040/0404000/001.jpg>

Title: Correspondence between President-Elect Lincoln And Grace Bedell. ("Advice of a Little Girl" exhibit)

Author/Creator: Abraham Lincoln

Date: 1860

URL: <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0903/detail/letter03.html>

Title: Correspondence between President-Elect Lincoln And Grace Bedell. Correspondence between President-Elect Lincoln And Grace Bedell. ("Advice of a Little Girl" exhibit)

Author/Creator: Grace Bedell

Date: 1860

URL: <http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0903/detail/letter02.html>

### **PROCEDURE**

#### **13. Description of Procedure:**

5 min. – Discuss or review that a biography is a book about a real person. Can the author just sit down and write a biography from his head? What does a biography author have to do first? Research is asking questions and finding the answers. Where would a biography author find his answers or information? One place is in primary sources. Primary sources are real photographs, letters, newspapers, and journals from the time the person lived. Today we are going to look at some primary sources from the Library of Congress on Abraham Lincoln. Show them the selected resources. Discuss how biography authors would use these sources. The primary sources may also prompt some questions. Have them write down any questions about Lincoln they may have from observing the primary sources.

5 min. – Divide students into groups of 3 -4. Give them some primary source materials on Lincoln (photographs that are listed under resources). Have students look at sources and write down facts and questions they have observed about Lincoln from the primary sources.

5 min. – Make a list of the groups observations and questions about Lincoln.

15 min. – Read a simple biography about Lincoln (suggestions given under resources), looking for the facts and answers to questions that the students observed in the Primary sources. Stop and point out the facts and answers in the biography. You can also discuss with the students what primary sources might have been used to find the other facts about Lincoln (journals, letters, etc.).

**This is where you could make it a 30 min. lesson and do a quick assessment by show of hands.**

15 min. – Share the book *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* by Karin B. Winnick showing the Primary sources (from the Library of Congress listed under resources) used in the book.

5 min. – Evaluate the student understanding of primary sources. Show them assorted pictures, photographs of people, and writing and have them indicate if they are primary sources or not. This can be done by writing answers on a piece of paper or a show of hands.

**14. Extensions** (if applicable): N/A

## **EVALUATION**

### **15. Evaluation:**

Evaluate the student understanding of primary sources by showing them assorted pictures, photographs, and writing and have them indicate if they are primary sources or not. This can be done by writing answers on a piece of paper or a show of hands.

## Reflection on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade lesson on Primary Sources

When teaching this lesson, prior knowledge of biographies would be helpful. Students should know that a biography is about a person who really lived versus a fiction character such as Junie B. Jones. Since a biography is about someone who lived, the authors have to do research on that person. This is why they use primary sources. They cannot rely on what they know in their head. For example I could write that Abraham Lincoln cut down a cherry tree and could not lie about it. Is this a real fact about Lincoln?

Biography writers use primary sources for information, but also to formulate interesting questions about their subjects which they will research further. When the students are looking at the primary sources they should write down the observations they make from the pictures, plus any questions they have about Lincoln from the primary sources presented. They can use who, what, when, where, and how questioning strategies. These questions can be added to the list of observations. Then when reading the biography on Lincoln, answers to the questions could be pointed out.

When the students start the activity, emphasize that they can only record facts that they see in the picture. They may know that Lincoln was assassinated (shot in the head), but is there a primary source provided that shows that? Again they can only write down information and questions they see in the pictures, not what they know from other sources.

The students enjoyed the lesson and came up with some very good observations and questions. They noted that Lincoln had lived in a log cabin and was probably poor. One of the questions was how did he get his money? The biography we shared mentioned all the ways he earned money (splitting fence rails, shopkeeper, and lawyer) and the students were excited to point these out in the biography.

A follow up lesson on primary sources later in the year or in the next grade would be advised. The students did OK on the assessment, since this was their first introduction to primary sources, but further lessons would strengthen their knowledge of primary sources.

-Mary Ann Stearn