



Just a Few Words, Mr. Lincoln Abraham Lincoln

Subject(s): Language Arts, Social Studies

Grade Level(s): preK-3

Learning Objectives

- Students will be introduced to the causes of the Civil War.
- Students will describe some of President Lincoln's characteristics.
- Students will define and describe slavery.
- Students will differentiate between nonfiction and fiction using a genre flowchart.

Video Resource

Just a Few Words, Mr. Lincoln

By Jean Fritz

Illustrated by Charles Robinson

Ages: 8-11

Lexile Level: 390

Themes: History, Presidents, Civil War

Running Time: 21:09

Plot Summary: This is the story of the events preceding, and the actual delivery of, President Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address. Children will be introduced to the Civil War, the resulting battles, and President Lincoln's resolve to unify the country. The inclusion of the events surrounding Lincoln's son Tad's illness and recovery during this time help to pull young children into the story and make the emotion behind the burden of the presidency more real for them. The actual Gettysburg Address is printed at the end of the story. Children will come to understand that few words, if carefully chosen, are all that are necessary to communicate important, powerful ideas.

Nonfiction Resource

Abraham Lincoln

By Wil Mara

Grades: 1-3; Ages: 6-8

Lexile Level: 280

Description: A biography of Abraham Lincoln describing his major accomplishments and events in his life.

Before Viewing the Video

1. Introduce students to the vocabulary. You can write vocabulary words on index cards and place them around the room, or pair words with pictures. If you have ESL students, make sure that you introduce the vocabulary words to them a few days before the lesson.
 - accent:** a tone or manner of speaking that is different between regions
 - autograph:** a person's signature
 - knapsack:** backpack
 - lead:** a heavy metal
 - slave:** a person who is owned by another person and forced to work for that person
 - spectacles:** reading glasses
 - tadpole:** a stage in a frog's life cycle between egg and full-grown frog
 - telegram:** a type of letter transmitted over wires, used before the invention of telephones
 - Union:** the name given to the United States during the time of the Civil War
 - united:** joined together
2. Locate Gettysburg on a map. Then research other famous battles of the Civil War and help children find their locations on the map. As children research these sites, discuss what life may have been like if the north and south actually became two separate countries.
3. Introduce the concept of slavery to children. As you discuss this sensitive topic, have children try to imagine what life might have been like for the slaves, what they might have done to find some pleasure in life, and how they might have felt when they were finally freed.

After-Viewing Activities

1. Help children compare and contrast life in the 1800s with modern day living. Share books and films, and visit museums where representations of life during this time can come alive for children. Ask:
 - . What would you have enjoyed about life in the 1800s?
 - . What things would have been more difficult to do than they are today?
 - . How would you travel?
 - . What would you do for entertainment?
 - . What kinds of chores might you have?

2. Did they hear the new vocabulary words? Did it help them to know what those words meant before they watched the video?
 3. Invite children to draw pictures of President Lincoln performing some of the activities he would have been engaged in as president. Encourage children to share their finished drawings with the entire class. Arrange a special "President Lincoln" display area on a classroom wall or bulletin board. Use a cutout of a large stovepipe hat as a background for the display of drawings.
 4. Provide a copy of the text of the Gettysburg Address for the students. Highlight the parts that Lincoln borrowed from the Declaration of Independence ("all men are created equal") and the Constitution ("a government for the people, by the people, and of the people"). Discuss each of these quotes with the students. Guiding questions:
 - . What does it mean to be equal?
 - . What are some examples of ways that people are, or should be, treated equally?
 - . Why did slavery go against the words "all men are created equal?"
 - . What does the government do for people?
 - . How do we choose the leaders for our government?
 - . What kinds of people are chosen to be leaders of the government?
- After the discussion, guide students through writing the main idea of the Gettysburg Address. Post this shared writing piece alongside the students' drawings of Lincoln.

Paired- Text Activities

1. Define "genre" for students. Explain that in some circumstances it is tricky to determine genre, because two books that seem very different may actually be the same genre. Tell students that both texts, *Just a Few Words, Mr. Lincoln* and *Abraham Lincoln* are nonfiction books, but that they seem very different. Guiding questions:
 - . Which book seems more like a story?
 - . What are some clues in each book that show that they are nonfiction? (Photographs, quotes)
 - . Why is *Abraham Lincoln* a biography, but *Just a Few Words, Mr. Lincoln* is not?
2. Make a poster that shows a flowchart to help students identify genre by answering a series of questions. Examples: Is the book real or fake? Are the characters real or made up? Does the book tell facts within a true story or does it tell a made up story? Is the story about someone's life? Could the story really happen?
3. Have students make an annotated and illustrated timeline of Lincoln's life. This project can be completed on butcher paper or oversized construction paper. Students can use index cards to write 1-2 sentences about each major event in Lincoln's life and draw a picture representing the event. The timeline should also include dates of importance in U.S. history.

Further Research

Explore with the students the related Web links about Abraham Lincoln that accompany this selection.

Assessment

Have the students play the educational games about *Just a Few Words, Mr. Lincoln* and *Abraham Lincoln*. Review their results to assess their comprehension of the words and events in the story, as well as their ability to distinguish between fiction and nonfiction.