

# LESSON 4: LIFE AS PRESIDENT

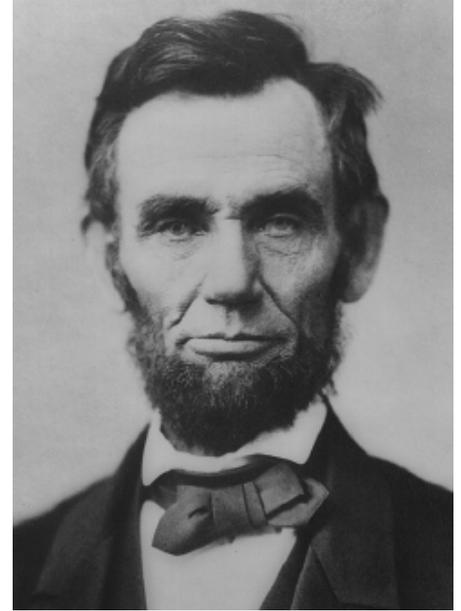
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

## INTRODUCTION

Lincoln's years in the White House proved particularly challenging. Faced with a divided nation, a bloody civil war, death threats, political pressures and family tragedy, Lincoln's years as president transformed his family in ways no one could have imagined when he took office in 1861.

### Objectives

- *Name the four functions of the White House.*
- *Explain the symbolic meaning of the White House.*
- *Identify at least three differences between Lincoln's White House and the White House of today.*
- *Outline the pros and cons of living in the White House.*
- *Name at least one person who worked for Lincoln in the White House.*



### Materials

- *Books about Abraham Lincoln from the "Lincoln Biography Reading Kit" or other sources*
- *Documents from "Lincoln Biography Reading Kit" (optional)*
- *Internet Access (optional)*
- *Discussion Questions (see below)*
- *"Biographical Sketch of Abraham Lincoln" (in this lesson plan)*
- *"Who's Who in Lincoln's White House" (in this lesson plan)*

## PROCEDURE

1. Discuss with your students the four functions of the White House.
2. Have students review the biographical sketch of Abraham Lincoln. Review the "Who's Who in Lincoln's White House" handout.
3. Using the resources from the kit or online, have students research and answer the following discussion questions. Students may work in groups; each group could address one of the four functions. Discuss the answers as a class.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

- Lincoln Time Line  
[www.alplm.org/timeline/timeline.html](http://www.alplm.org/timeline/timeline.html)
- Mr. Lincoln's White House  
[www.mrlincolnswhitehouse.org](http://www.mrlincolnswhitehouse.org)
- The White House Historical Association  
[www.whitehousehistory.org/](http://www.whitehousehistory.org/)
- The White House  
[www.whitehouse.gov/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/)

## LESSON 4: LIFE AS PRESIDENT

### Four Functions of the White House

- Home of the president and his family
- Office and headquarters for the president and his staff
- Historic museum open to the public
- A symbol of the United States

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### *Home of the president and his family*

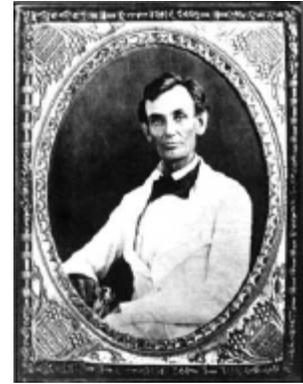
1. Who were the members of Lincoln's family when he lived in the White House? What were their ages?
2. What was the condition of the White House when the Lincoln's moved in? What did Mary Lincoln think of the place?
3. Describe what life was like for the Lincoln boys in the White House? How would living in the White House differ from living in your own house?
4. What tragedy occurred in the Lincoln family in February 1862? How did the family cope privately and in the public eye?

### *Office and headquarters for the president and his staff*

1. What important document did Lincoln sign at the White House in January 1863? Why was it so important? In what room did he sign it?
2. What is a cabinet and how do they assist the president? Lincoln's cabinet met in what room of the White House? Identify one key member of Lincoln's cabinet and explain his role in Lincoln's presidency.
3. Identify two White House staff people during the Lincoln family's term. What kinds of jobs did they perform?
4. Describe a typical day for Lincoln at the White House.

### *Historic museum*

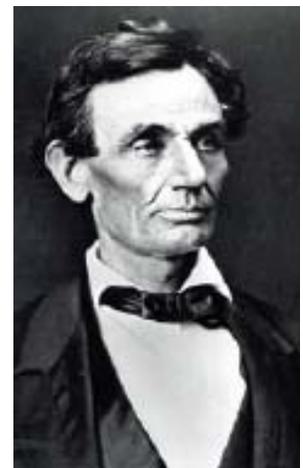
1. Who was the original architect of the White House?
2. How did Lincoln's White House differ from the White House today? Consider size, living conditions security, ease of access and privacy in your answer.
3. Imagine you are planning a trip to Washington, D.C. and want to tour the White House. Research information on tour times, rules, security, costs and directions. What might you see on a tour of the White House today?
4. Is the Lincoln Bedroom in today's White House really Lincoln's bedroom?



1847



1858



1860



1861

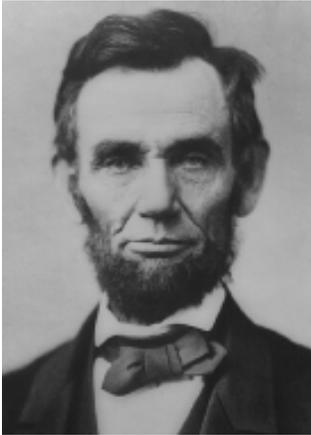
1862



*A symbol of the United States*

1. Who owns the White House? Who does it belong to?
2. Mary Lincoln spent a lot of money redecorating the White House and was criticized for it. Do you think it is important that the White House be well-maintained and beautifully decorated? Who should pay for it?
3. In your opinion, has the White House as a symbol changed much since Lincoln's time?
4. What are some other symbols of the United States? Explain in detail.

1863



## FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Would it be fun to live in the White House? Would it be hard to lose your privacy? Make two columns on the black board. Entitle one column "Pros" and the other "Cons." As a class, debate the pros and cons of living in the White House. List your arguments in the appropriate columns.
2. Study the photographic timeline of Lincoln or create one yourself from the images found in the "Lincoln Biography Reading Kit" or online. What can you infer about the impact of his term in White House from an examination of these photographs? Search for images of other presidents at the beginning and end of their terms in office and make your own timeline. What did you discover? Was Lincoln's experience unique?
3. Provide each student with an image of Lincoln from the photographic timeline or from the "Lincoln Biography Reading Kit" or online. What was going on in Lincoln's life when this photo was taken? Write a journal entry as Lincoln reflecting on the events at the time of the photo, or write a newspaper article and caption to accompany the photo.

1864



1865



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### WHO'S WHO IN LINCOLN'S WHITE HOUSE

**Abraham Lincoln** (1809-1865) was born near Hodgenville, Kentucky on February 12, 1809. He was elected the Sixteenth President of the United States in 1860. He is best known for keeping the country united in the midst of a bloody Civil War and his work to end slavery through the Emancipation Proclamation and the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

**Mary Todd Lincoln** (1818-1882) was born to a wealthy Kentucky family. She married Abraham Lincoln on November 4, 1842. As First Lady, she oversaw a major renovation of the White House.

**Robert Todd Lincoln** (1843-1926) was the first son of Abraham and Mary Lincoln. He became a prominent lawyer in Chicago. In 1881 he was Secretary of War under President James Garfield. In 1889, President Benjamin Harrison appointed him minister to England. Later he was president of the Pullman Company, a large corporation that made passenger rail cars.

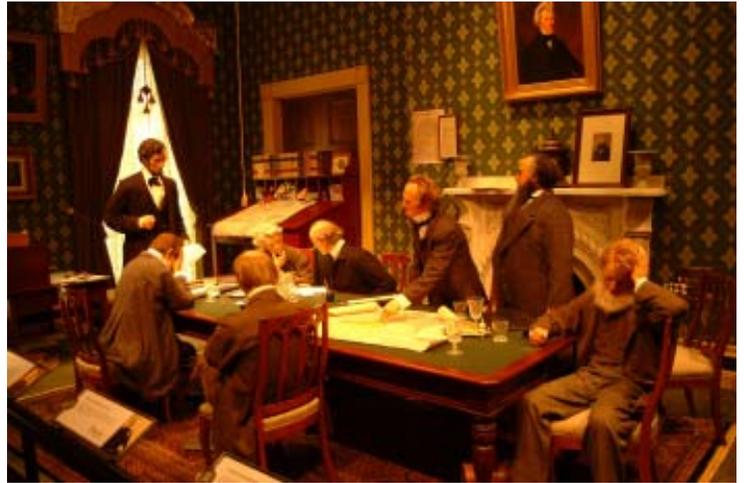
**William Wallace Lincoln** (1850-1862) was the third son of Abraham and Mary Lincoln. He was fondly called "Willie." He died in the White House from "bilious fever" at age eleven.

**Thomas (Tad) Lincoln** (1853-1871) was the fourth son of Abraham and Mary Lincoln who was nicknamed "Tad" because his father thought he looked like a tadpole as a baby with his head bigger than his body.

**John Hay** (1838-1905) was the Assistant Private Secretary to Lincoln. He oversaw White House security and made up one-half of Lincoln's two-man staff--the other aide being John Nicolay.

**Elizabeth Keckley** (ca. 1818-1907) was Mary Todd Lincoln's dressmaker and close friend at the White House. She was born a slave but bought her freedom as well as the freedom of her son, who later fought for the Union army and was killed in battle.

**John Nicolay** (1832-1901) was Private Secretary to President Lincoln. He was pivotal in moving the Lincolns into the White House. His frequent clashes with Mary over social affairs at the White House led to his departure at the end of Lincoln's first term.



*Lincoln's Cabinet Room as depicted at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum*

#### LINCOLN'S CABINET

##### Secretary of State

William H. Seward (March 1861-March 1869)

##### Secretary of the Treasury

Salmon P. Chase, (March 1861-June 1864)

William P. Fessenden (July 1865-March 1865)

Hugh McCulloch (March 1865-March 1869)

##### Secretary of War

Simon Cameron (March 1861-January 1862)

Edwin M. Stanton (January 1862-May 1868)

##### Secretary of the Navy

Gideon Welles (March 1861-March 1869)

##### Attorney General

Edward Bates (March 1861-November 1864)

James Speed (December 1864-July 1866)

##### Secretary of the Interior

Caleb B. Smith (March 1861-January 1863)

John P. Usher (January 1863-May 1865)

##### Postmaster General

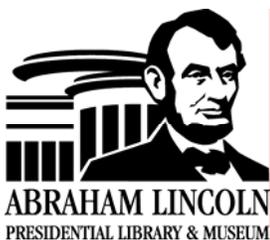
Montgomery Blair (March 1861-September 1864)

William Dennison (October 1864-July 1866)

##### Vice President

Hannibal Hamlin (March 1861-March 1865)

Andrew Johnson (March 1865-April 1865)



## BIOGRAPHY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Abraham Lincoln is one of our best remembered presidents. He preserved the union of the United States and issued the Emancipation Proclamation which freed all slaves.

He was born on February 12, 1809 in a one-room log cabin, a few miles from Hodgenville, Kentucky. Named after his paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln was the second-born child of Thomas Lincoln, a carpenter and farmer, and his wife, Nancy Hanks Lincoln. He had a sister, Sarah, who was three years older. Nancy Hanks had another son Thomas who died in infancy.

When Abraham was seven, his family purchased land and moved to southern Indiana where slavery was prohibited. Life on the frontier was difficult, but Thomas worked hard to provide for his family. In 1818, Nancy Hanks Lincoln died from milk sickness, a disease obtained from drinking the milk of cows which had grazed on poisonous white snakeroot. The next year Thomas Lincoln married Sarah Bush Johnston. She had three children of her own from her first marriage. During their time in Kentucky, the Lincoln children were able to attend school for brief periods of time; but mostly Abraham Lincoln was self-educated. He taught himself to read by studying borrowed books.

In 1828, Abraham was hired to take a flatboat trip to New Orleans. It is possible that on this trip, Lincoln had his first encounter with slavery, perhaps at a slave auction. In 1830 Thomas Lincoln moved his family

to Illinois. The following year, the younger Lincoln made a second flatboat trip to New Orleans for Denton Offutt. Offutt owned a store in New Salem, Illinois and hired Abraham to be work there as a clerk.

Lincoln lived in New Salem until 1837. While there he had a variety of jobs, including postmaster and surveyor. He became a part-owner of a store with William F. Berry and, as a result of his honesty in business, he earned his nickname of "Honest Abe." In New Salem, Lincoln met and possibly courted Anne Rutledge, who died in 1836. He also served in the Black Hawk War as a captain. In 1832, Lincoln ran for the state legislature and lost. He ran again in 1834 and won, serving four consecutive terms. Lincoln decided to pursue a career in law and, after three years of study, he received his license and became an attorney. He moved to Springfield in 1837, and became a partner in a law firm

with John T. Stuart.

In Springfield, Lincoln met and courted Mary Todd. She was a well-educated young woman from a wealthy family in Kentucky. Her family did not approve of Lincoln and his common upbringing. Nevertheless, the two were married on November 4, 1842 at the home of her sister and brother-in-law, Elizabeth and Ninian Edwards, in Springfield. The Lincolns set up housekeeping at the Globe Tavern in Springfield, where their first child, Robert Todd, was born on August 1, 1843. The following year, the couple purchased a house at Eighth and Jackson Streets for \$1,200. By March of 1846, the Lincoln's second son, Edward Baker Lincoln, was born. Eddie died just four short years later in 1850. A third son was born to the Lincolns that same year—William Wallace Lincoln.

In August 1846, Lincoln was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. He became known in Wash-



*In Springfield, Lincoln met and courted Mary Todd. The two were married on November 4, 1842 in Springfield.*



*The Lincoln Home in Springfield, Illinois.*

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ington for his opposition to slavery and the Mexican War. Lincoln served one term before returning to Springfield where he became a law partner of William Herndon. Their practice was very successful. Every spring and fall Lincoln traveled throughout central Illinois as a lawyer on the Eighth Judicial Circuit. He became well-known throughout the circuit, representing many people in many county courthouses throughout central Illinois.

In 1858 Lincoln ran for the Senate against the popular Democratic Senator Stephen Douglas. They participated in a series of debates throughout the state. Lincoln's speeches against slavery brought him national attention. He lost the Senate election, but because of his fame as a speaker on the issue of slavery, he was nominated by the Republican Party to run for president in 1860. In this hotly contested race, he defeated three other candidates and won the presidency.

By the time he was inaugurated in March 1861, several Southern states had already seceded from the Union and formed the Confederacy. In April, Fort Sumter was fired upon and the War Between the States had begun. Lincoln issued orders to convene a special session of Congress. He called for troops and proclaimed a blockade of ports in the South. In addition, he suspended the *writ of habeas corpus*. A *writ of habeas corpus* is a judicial mandate to a prison official ordering that an inmate be brought to the court so it can be determined whether or not that person is imprisoned lawfully and whether or not he should be released from custody. Many

of these measures were criticized but Lincoln felt them necessary to prepare for war and to preserve the Union.

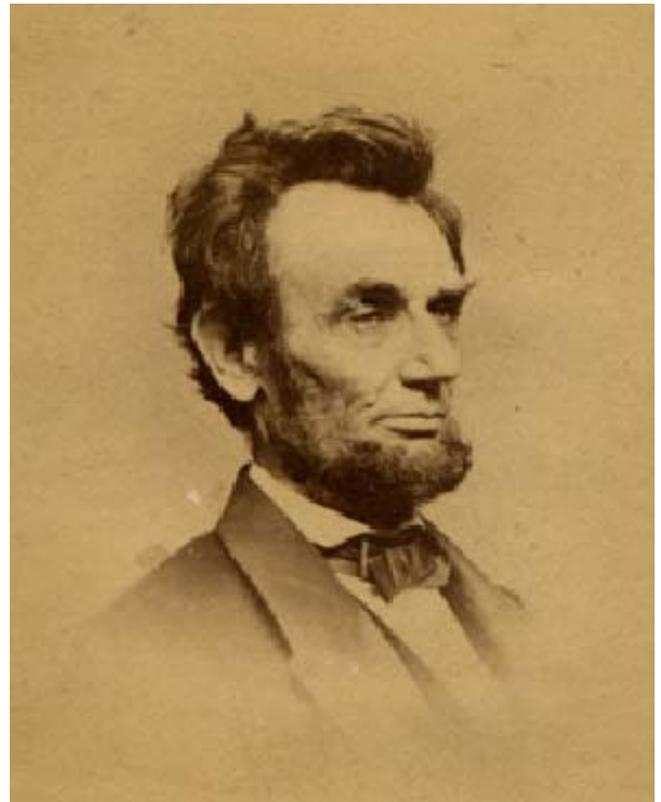
Lincoln was very involved as Commander in Chief during the war, often meeting with his generals to discuss military strategy and issuing many General War Orders himself. He hired and fired several generals after many early defeats. He further increased the punishments for treason, rebellion, and confiscation of property. He also ordered a draft for military service.

In September 1862, Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation and declared its final issue to be effective on January 1, 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation declared freedom for all slaves in the states which were in rebellion.

In November 1863, Lincoln went to the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania where he delivered the famous Gettysburg Address.

Lincoln was nominated for a second term as president with the choice of Andrew Johnson of Tennessee as the vice-presidential candidate. Lincoln was easily re-elected, defeating his opponent, General George B. McClellan. On March 4, Lincoln delivered his Second Inaugural Address and promised to carry out his term "with malice toward none and charity for all."

On April 9, 1865 after four long years of Civil War, General Robert E. Lee of the Confederate Army surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant of the Union Army at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia. In Lincoln's



last speech, he spoke about the Confederate states and his plans to unify the country. On the evening of April 14, while attending the play, *Our American Cousin*, at Ford's Theatre, Lincoln was shot by actor John Wilkes Booth. President Abraham Lincoln never regained consciousness and died at 7:22 a.m. the next morning at William Petersen's home, across from Ford's Theatre.

Funeral services were held at the White House. Mrs. Lincoln, overcome with grief, did not attend. The funeral train bearing Lincoln's body traveled from Washington, making stops in Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Indiana, Chicago, and finally his home of Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln was buried on May 4, 1865 at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield.

