

# Young Abe Lincoln: A Lesson in Choices (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade)



**Written by Janelle Baughman**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher**  
**Highland Elementary School**

**Assisted by Daniel B. Smith**  
**8th grade U.S. History Teacher**  
**Hamilton Heights Middle School Arcadia, IN**

## **Overview**

As a young boy growing up in Indiana, Abraham Lincoln learned and practiced the act of taking personal responsibility. Abraham borrowed a biography of George Washington from his neighbor, Josiah Crawford. After reading a portion of the book, he left it overnight in the window. A rain storm ruined it. Young Abraham acknowledged to Mr. Crawford his accountability. Abraham agreed to work off this debt to Mr. Crawford by pulling fodder for two days. The "Lesson in Choices" is based upon this Indiana experience.

## **Objectives**

1. Students will recognize opportunities to practice responsibility in their own lives.
2. Students will relate to Abraham Lincoln's childhood dilemmas.
3. Students will be able to synthesize their learning into instructional displays for sharing.

## **Resources**

Copy of the book *Abe Lincoln: The boy who loved books* by Kay Winters & Nancy Carpenter

## **Websites (Optional)**

<http://home.att.net/~rjnorton/Lincoln23.html>

## **Procedure**

Connect- Teacher shares a personal experience they had in their childhood in which they were faced with a dilemma (i.e. breaking a neighbor's window, borrowing something and losing it, stealing bubble gum from a store). Leave out the ending of the story, allow students to pair and share about possible ways to resolve the situation. Encourage students to brainstorm as many resolutions as possible. Have them write their endings on multiple sticky notes.

Attend- Write the words "Responsible" and "Irresponsible" as headings on the board. Discuss and categorize the brainstormed outcomes as a class and place the sticky notes on the board under the appropriate headings as determined by the class.

Image- Have students write about a time they were faced with a difficult situation when they had the opportunity to practice responsibility and what the outcomes of their choices were.

Inform- Read the book *Abe Lincoln: The boy who loved books* Refocus on the part in the story where Abe works off a debt because of a borrowed book getting ruined. Discuss how he took responsibility and worked to repay the cost of the book.

Practice- Have students pick out other dilemmas in Lincoln's life and identify how he demonstrated responsibility in each situation. Use the timeline of Lincoln's life or other books that share events that took place in his childhood to provide more situations for the students to consider if necessary.

Extend- In groups, brainstorm dilemmas that students may run into during the school year and how a responsible person would respond. Formulate slogans that embody the theme of the school-based dilemmas (i.e. "If you borrow it, bring it back"; "Always help a person in need").

Refine- Have students create posters depicting a young Abe Lincoln using the slogans in school settings. Allow each group to present their poster to the rest of the class and explain how they think a young Abe Lincoln would have responded.

Perform- Display posters in classroom or hallway for other students to see.





Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Young Abe Lincoln- Responsibility

We have been discussing the time Lincoln took responsibility for a book he had borrowed that was ruined by the rain and then he worked to pay off the expense. There are several other events in his childhood where he showed responsibility. Go through the time line or books that we have read and pick one event to write about.

Abe's Dilemma: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

His Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Choice he made: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you think this was a responsible decision? Why or why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What other choices could he have made? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do dilemmas like this still take place? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What advice would you give to a friend who is facing a similar situation?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Everyday Dilemmas

We are faced with dilemmas every day where we have a choice to make. Think of 3-4 situations here at school that students are faced with and the responsible choice they can make to solve their dilemma.

Dilemma	Responsible choice

Pick one of the situations above to write a slogan or phrase that will encourage students to make the responsible choice.

“  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_”

On the back of this paper sketch out your idea for a poster where you have young Abe Lincoln sharing this advice with students in your school.