

A Short Biography of Abraham Lincoln



Lincoln was born in Hodgenville, Kentucky on Feb 12, 1809. Raised by poor parents, he received less than a year of formal education by the time he reached the age of 21. His primary means of education was schooling at home, using borrowed books and the Bible.

At the age of 22, he moved to the Illinois village of New Salem in 1831, and continued his self-education. He worked as a store clerk in two different general stores. He taught himself surveying, and worked part time at this vocation. He ran for the state legislature. Although defeated in this initial effort he decided to run again the next term.

His second effort proved successful, and he was elected one of Sangamon County's Whig representatives to the Illinois State Legislature in 1834.

Vocally anti-slavery, he served four consecutive terms as state legislator. He soon became one of the most respected lawyers in the region, known for his honesty and influential manner with juries.

From 1847 to 1849 Lincoln served a single term in Congress, and then went into semi-retirement from politics in order to concentrate more on his law practice. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which allowed for the propagation of slavery into the new territories, became a catalyst to Lincoln's decision to seek political office again. He joined the new Republican Party in 1856 and ran for the US Senate in 1858, providing energetic moral argument against slavery in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates with Stephen A. Douglas.

He was elected President in 1860. As a result of his nomination, eleven southern states declared their independence from the Union. On April 12, 1861, Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to help put down the rebellion.

After over a year of indecisive fighting, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves of the rebelling southern states. The Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863. It was during a dedication ceremony at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on November 19, 1863 that he presented the Gettysburg Address, now recognized as one of the world's greatest speeches.

Lincoln was re-elected president in November of 1864.

Lincoln pushed the "Thirteenth Amendment" freeing all slaves everywhere, through congress in late 1864/early 1865. The House of Representatives passed the Thirteenth Amendment on January 31, 1865.

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address summed up his beliefs. These were that the underlying cause of the war had been slavery, the war was God's punishment on the nation for its failure to remove slavery from the land, and it was every American's duty to not only eliminate slavery, but to re-unite the nation, forgive his or her fellow man, and build a lasting peace among all nations.

Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865 and died the following day.