

# Abe Lincoln:

An Atypical Hoosier Adolescent in a Typical Diaspora

by

Lee Bilderback



## Abe Lincoln: An Atypical Hoosier Adolescent in a Typical Pioneer Community

### Scope

The scope of this project is three fold. First, utilizing primary and secondary sources, elementary students shall identify effects Lincoln's Hoosier years experiences had on one of your greatest presidents. Second, students shall discover the roles and occupations of settlers in a typical "backcountry" community. Finally, through Lincoln, students realize how determination can guide one in meeting and overcoming challenges before them.

Primary and secondary source materials provide one with content allowing more in

depth and exciting lessons and discussions on Abraham Lincoln, as well as the developing frontier. Lesson plans prepared focus on the project's scope while meeting

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*And sadden with the view;*

*There's pleasure in it too . . . .*

*. . . The very spot where grew the bread*

*That formed my bones, I see.*

*How strange, old field, on thee to tread,*

The Lincoln family's backcountry story is typical of many early Hoosier families.

Many classroom teachers convey a "Lincoln was so poor he lived in a log cabin in the

Illinois. This determination eventually led him to the presidency of the United States during its most difficult time. There is little doubt that this man set goals for himself that

would guide him out of the "common" life style he did not want. William Miller notes "[Lincoln] could have become a farmer like his father, but he fled from that alternative as fast as his long legs would take him" (Miller 2002, 92). *see Chicago manual of*

of some of those same church meetings? Would he have become such a successful and well known lawyer if he had not developed his self<sup>teaching</sup> techniques on the Hoosier frontier? Would his views of capitalism have been so strong if he had not been an entrepreneur ferrying people from the Troy riverbank to waiting Ohio River ships? Would his views on the slave question have been different if he had not traveled by flat boat to New Orleans at the request of a Hoosier store owner? Would his ideals about

church, and became very familiar with, if not well versed in, the Bible. Miller writes about Lincoln "One cannot read much from Lincoln's own hand without becoming aware

respect to the doctrines and beliefs of churchgoers in the villages in which he lived, there cannot be much doubt that he read and reread and came to know a good deal of the Bible" (Miller 2002, 49).

Lincoln's church experiences also helped him in other important ways not so common on the frontier. He developed public speaking techniques utilizing humor to make his

the hairs of our head; and He will not forget the dying man, who puts his trust in Him.”  
(Holzer 2000, 34). These thoughts certainly reflect beliefs of a religious man.

Pioneer schools like churches of the 1810's and 1820's served as a social center for the community.

social center for the community. While formal educational experiences in the Little Pigeon Community were barely regular during Abraham's youth, he made the best of it, and excelled. The Lincoln and Webster schools were the only schools in the community.



Backcountry general stores were not only the source of merchandise, but also of news and conversation. Lincoln's local stores, just down the road in Centerville, provided

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As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master.  
This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs  
from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.

(Holzer 2000, 38)

Lincoln also received a great deal of influence from a local blacksmith. The blacksmith shop, a necessity for a developing frontier community, served an important role in day to day life. It was important not only for the goods crafted by the artisan, but for the issues discussed while sitting near the smoldering forge. For Lincoln, however,

a ferry across the Anderson River. Miles tells how the Ohio River is used to

characteristic helped him achieve the respect of not only his peers, but the community's

admiration as well. One Discourse Check reads: "I believe that the most important

on his Simple word" (Gienapp 2002, 8).

Blessed with a unique intellect, traditionally contributed to his mother Nancy Hanks  
Lincoln, and raised around masterful story telling, of which his father Thomas Lincoln  
reportedly excelled. Ahe according to Miller "developed confidence in his own

neighborhood boys, to his effort of self-education, and from his confidence of public speaking to the debating of emotional issues, this young man set his goals and did not give up in achieving them. When he, along with his family, left his Little Pigeon friends for Illinois in 1830, there is little doubt about the impression he left on the community. Within the next three decades, if not during his stay as a member of their community, most of those friends realized Abe Lincoln was definitely an atypical Hoosier adolescent in their typical pioneer community.

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- Slatkin, Richard. 2000. *Abraham Lincoln: A Biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Warren, Louis. 1959. *Lincoln's Youth: Indiana Years, Seven to Twenty, 1816-1820*. New York: Oxford University Press.



Digitized Lincoln Collections  
Primary Sources on Abraham Lincoln's Indiana Years

*Church of Christ Constituted Regular Bapstis, Little Pigeon Church, Warreen County  
Indeanne Teritory (1816 TO 1842).* [online]. Rootsweb [accessed 22 October  
2004]. Available from the World Wide Web:  
(<http://www.rootsquest.com/~jmurphy/spencer/f2774.htm>)

original membership records (transcript) of the Little Pigeon church

*Indiana's storyteller, connecting people to the past* [online]. Indianapolis: The Indiana  
Historical Society [accessed 18 October 2004]. Available for the World Wide  
Web:  
([http://www.indianahistory.org/library/digital\\_image/digitalpics.html#lincoln\\_other](http://www.indianahistory.org/library/digital_image/digitalpics.html#lincoln_other))

Images of *Lincoln Sum Book Leaf*, dated from 1824-26(?), and written by Lincoln  
while living in Indiana

Kingsbury, Robert C. 1970. *Transportation & recreation, early routes of transportation*



*Writings on Abraham Lincoln, speeches and writings* [online]. Abraham Lincoln On Line [accessed 18 October 2004]. Available from the World Wide Web: ([http:// showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/autobiog.htm](http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/autobiog.htm))

Autobiographical entries submitted by Lincoln and including family genealogy and happenings in Indiana

*Writings on Abraham Lincoln, speeches and writings* [online]. Abraham Lincoln On Line [accessed 18 October 2004]. Available from the World Wide Web: ([http:// showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/poetry.htm](http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/poetry.htm))

Transcripts of poetry about Lincoln's Indiana life

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## Lesson Plans

# Lesson: Hoosier Bear Hunt

Fifth Grade Social Studies and Language Arts

By: Lee Bilderback

**Goal:** Students will gain an insight on pioneer life by reading and discussing a poem popular during Lincoln's Indiana years.

- Objectives:**
1. Students will identify how pioneers hunted in order to make their homes safe.
  2. Students will compare/contrast the basic needs of the 1820's with 2004.
  3. Students will analyze the poem to gather meaning.
  4. Students will write the steps in "hunting" the bear in sequential order.
  5. Students will identify symbolism used in the poem.

- Materials:**
1. *Hoosier Bear Hunt* sheet
  2. Venn Diagram overhead
  3. paper
  4. markers
  5. book construction materials

**Assessment:** Student mastery is measured by participation in Venn Diagram activity.

**Social Science Standards:**

5. *Indigenous Civilizations*

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survive, such as the need for food, water, shelter, and safety, and give examples of how people in early America adapted to meet basic needs.

# Hoosier Bear Hunt

by Abraham Lincoln

From Lincoln's Youth, Indiana Years, 1817-1830

A wild-bear chace [sic], didst never see?  
Then hast thou lived in vain,  
Thy richest bump of glorious glee,  
Lies desert in thy brain

The panther's scream, filled night with fear  
And bear preyed on the swine.

But wo for Bruin's short lived fun,  
When rose the squealing cry;  
Now man and horse, with dog and gun,  
For vengeance, at him fly.

And fresh recruits are dropping in  
To join the merry corps:  
With yelp and yell,-a mingled din-  
The woods are in a roar.

And round, and round the chace [sic] now goes,

And more Hill drops his gun

Now sorely pressed, bear glances back,  
And lolls his tired tongue;  
When as, to force him from his track,  
An ambush on him sprung.

Across the glade he sweeps for flight,  
And fully is in view.  
The dogs, new-fired, by the sight,  
Their cry, and speed, renew.

The foremost ones, now reach his rear

# Hoosier Bear Hunt

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read the Hoosier Bear Hunt. On the lines provided, list the events

of the bear hunt.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

# Lesson: *Honestly, Honest Abe!*

A Lesson on the Abe Lincoln's Character  
Fourth Grade Indiana History, Fifth Grade Social Studies,  
Language Arts, Character Education

By: Lee Bilderback

**Goal:** Students will discover how different events may affect one's character.

- Objectives:**
1. Students will identify typical occupations found on the frontier
  2. Students will recognize individuals and occupations effecting Lincoln while he lived in the Little Pigeon Community
  3. Students will identify economic patterns on the frontier.
  4. Students will present plays using expressive reading
  5. Students will recognize traits of positive character
  6. Students will journal about their learning experience.

- Materials:**
1. d'Aulaire Ingri and Edgra Parin d'Aulaire. 1939. *Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Dutton, Doubleday, Dorland.



- 5.7.10 Deliver an informative presentation about an important idea . . . develop the topic with simple facts, details, examples, and explanations.

**Social Studies Standards:**

- 5.5.2 Give examples of groups who made up communities in early America, and compare the different ways that communities were organized.

**Sources:** d'Aulaire Ingri and Edgra Parin d'Aulaire. 1939. *Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Books.  
Harness, Cheryl. 1996. *Young Abe Lincoln, The frontier days, 1809-1837*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society.

Slotkin, Richard. 2000. *Abe, A novel*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.  
Warren, Louis. 1959. *Lincoln's youth, Indiana years, seven to twenty-one, 1816-1830*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society.  
*Webster's new collegiate dictionary*. 1981. Springfield, MA: G. C. Merriam Company.

**Activities:**

**Day 1** 1. Define character

Character: moral excellence and firmness.

Source: *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*. 1981.

2. Brainstorm how positive character provides one with greater success and happiness.

- 8. James Taylor at Troy ferry/Abe getting paid for delivering passengers to steamboat
- 9. James Gentry at Gentry Store/asking Abe to go on flat boat trip
- c. students practice scenes

Day 2 1 Students present scenes

***But Mom . . . .***

**Nancy Hanks Lincoln and Abe Lincoln discuss helping others**

Cast: Nancy Hanks Lincoln, Abe Lincoln, and Narrator

Narrator: During the early 1800's a strange sickness appeared in many pioneer communities in southern Indiana. People would get dizzy and weak and shake all over! Most of the people catching this disease died. Over half the population of Dubois County, Indiana, adjacent to Lincoln's Spencer County home, died. The Lincoln's neighbors and relatives, Tom and Elizabeth Sparrow, came down with the sickness. Abe's mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, went to help her aunt's family. Watch as Abe and his mother discuss helping others. The setting is the Lincoln's Indiana cabin in 1818.

Abe: (sitting with Nancy at table) Mama, why do you have to help 'em? I'm afraid you might come down with the sickness.

*To Read or Not to Read*

**Thomas and Abe Lincoln debate reading and working**

Cast: Thomas Lincoln, Abe Lincoln, and Narrator

Narrator: Abe Lincoln loved to read. He wanted so much to learn about the world around him. His father had differing views. Thomas Lincoln felt like boys should work on the farm and not worry as much about reading and studying. The setting of this scene is on the Lincoln Farm in the Little Pigeon Community.

Thomas: ...

***So You Love to Read . . . Good for You!***  
**Sally Bush Johnston Lincoln talks to Abe about his love of reading**

Cast: Sally Bush Johnston Lincoln, Abe Lincoln, Narrator

Narrator: After the death of Abe's mother, Thomas Lincoln married Sally Bush Johnston. Abe didn't know Sally until the day his dad drove up to the Lincoln cabin with her three children and her in his wagon. Over time, Sally and Abe became close friends. They spent a lot of time together reading books.

Sally brought something with her that young Abraham wanted dearly . . . books to read! The scene is the Lincoln cabin.

Sally: Abe! A-bra-ham! Come her for a moment.

Abe: (running in from outside) Yes, ma'm.

Sally: I brought somethin' with me from Elizabethtown. Your dad told me how

*Doing What's Right is Right!*

Cast: Nathaniel Grigsby, Matthew Gentry, Abe Lincoln, Narrator

## *Teacher's Pet?*

### **Abe Lincoln helps a student with spelling**

Cast: Mr. Crawford (teacher), Abe Lincoln, Ann Roby, Narrator

Narrator: Abraham and his sister Sarah attended the Crawford School. The school was a one room log schoolhouse. Every Friday there would be a "spelling match." Lincoln was the best speller in the school and most people knew

known to help them if he could. During one match he helped his friend Ann Roby. This scene is set in the school house on a Friday afternoon.

*Once Upon A Time . . . .*



***All the News that's Fit to Print!***

**William Jones talks with Abe Lincoln about some issues of the day**

Cast: William Jones, Abe Lincoln, Narrator

Narrator: Abe worked in a general store with William Jones. Jones knew Abe liked to read newspapers. Since most newspapers were delivered and sold at

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ \_\_\_\_\_ ~~Abe had the chance to read them. News from cities such~~

as Vincennes and Louisville told about events, especially politics,  
\_\_\_\_\_ ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ \_\_\_\_\_ Jones also liked to discuss politics

*A Half Dollar for Your Thoughts!*  
Abe gets paid for helping passengers board a steamboat

Cast: Man 1, Man 2, Abe Lincoln, Narrator

Narrator: One of Lincoln's earliest jobs was working with a ferry boat along the Ohio River near Troy, Indiana. Lincoln apparently loved this job, and at

realized the importance of hard work and determination in making money. This was an important event during Lincoln's Indiana years. The scene is on the Ohio River at Troy.

Man 1: Excuse me young man, but Mr. James Taylor told us to see you.

Man 2: Yes, we were told you'd row our belongings and us out to the steamer waiting in the river.

Abe: Yes, I can do that for you.

Man 1: Great! Kindly help us load our trunks. What is your name young man?

*So You Want to Travel?*

Cast: James Gentry, Abe Lincoln, Narrator

Narrator: James Gentry was one of the wealthiest men in the Little Pigeon

# Lesson: The Little Pigeon Community

## A Mini Unit on Backcountry Communities Fifth Grade Social Studies and Language Arts

By: Lee Bilderback

**Goal:** Students will discover roles and occupations in a typical frontier community.

- Objectives:**
1. Students will identify typical occupations found on the frontier.
  2. Students will recognize individuals and occupations effecting Lincoln in the Little Pigeon Community.
  3. Students will identify economic patterns on the frontier.
  4. Students will master basic research skills.
  5. Students will prepare research data using writing process.
  6. Students will write complete paragraphs based upon their research.
  7. Students will present research orally.
  8. Students will follow instructions to prepare a shoebox building.

*Note: This lesson plan is for use in the classroom. It is not to be used for any other purpose.*

- 19. straw (optional)
- 20. small pebbles (optional)

**Assessment:** 1. Content mastery is assessed through questioning and project completion.  
2. Skill mastery is determined by completion of Little Pigeon Community Data Sheet, shoebox building project, and presentation.

**Language Arts Standards:**



**Activities:**

**Day 1** 1. Prepare a KWL on pioneer communities

*[Faint, illegible text, possibly a page number or reference]*

[The remainder of the page is a series of horizontal lines, likely a template for a KWL chart or a writing area.]

# *Little Pigeon Community*

## *Data Sheet*

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Pioneer Settler/Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Data about the Pioneer Settler/Occupation:

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3. Sources: \_\_\_\_\_

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