

71.2009 0857 03550



scan front page

# Abraham Lincoln and Education

## Lincoln's Self-Education

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

# TAUGHT LINCOLN GRAMMAR.

## REMINISCENCES OF A CHUM OF THE GREAT WAR PRESIDENT.

How the Two Clerks Slept "Spoon Fashion" on Offutt's Counter—"When He Turned Over I Did, Too"—Lincoln's Contest for a Captaincy in the Black Hawk War—A Hat as a Remedy for Betting.

DALLAS, TEX., May 25.—There is a remarkable old man visiting here from his Illinois home. His name is William Graham Green, and he is 80 years old. He has had a curious life, and he is proud of the fact that he is the man who first taught Abraham Lincoln the principles of English grammar. "I taught Abe Lincoln all he ever knew about grammar," he says, "and a mighty smart pupil he was, too." Mr. Green's story of how he came to do this and how he did it is as follows:

"My father moved over to Menard county, Ill., in 1820, and I have been living in that State ever since. I went to the Illinois college in Jacksonville to get a business education, and I made a specialty of grammar. In 1830 I went to work as a clerk in the store of Denton Offutt, in New Salem, Menard county. There I first met Abe Lincoln. He had helped Offutt take his flatboat on a trading expedition down the Sangamon River. They ran aground on the dam at Salem, and Offutt set up his store there with the goods from his boat. This was in 1831. Lincoln was 22 years old at the time, but he was six feet four inches tall, and one of the strongest men I ever saw. Lincoln had steered the boat for Offutt, and, I reckon, he had run her around. I got \$8 a month in the store and Lincoln got \$10 a month. He and I slept on a single mattress on the counter, and it was so narrow we had to sleep spoon fashion. When he turned over, I did, too. One night he said to me:

"Bill, haven't you an English grammar you could lend me?"

"I told him that I had a Kirkham's Grammar, and he said:

"Bring it to me when you go home on Sunday."

"He used to read it at night after the store shut up, and when he had read for a while I would hear him his lesson. He went through the grammar in about two weeks, and then, at his request, I got him another grammar—Lindley Murray's, I think, it was—and he went through that one the same way. In six weeks he knew five times as much about grammar as I did.

"Lincoln did something else for me while we were in that store together—he broke me of betting. There was a fellow named John Mastep, who would come in there and spend a lot of time loafing around. He was a betting, trifling kind of a man and he had a lot of tricks that he was always betting on. He had a trick of doubling up his hand in some way so as to hide his middle finger. Then he would bet you that you couldn't mark his middle finger with a pen. I lost some nickels betting with him, and one day Abe Lincoln said to me:

"Billy, you ought to know better than to bet on anything, but especially than to bet with a man on his own tricks. You ought to quit it."

"But, Abe, he's got ninety cents the best of me," I said. "If I could get that back I would be willing to quit."

"Will you promise me that you'll never bet any more if I manage it so that you can get way ahead of him with one bet?" asked Lincoln.

"Yes," I said, "but I'd hate to quit loser."

"Billy," said Lincoln, "you are getting to an age when you're beginning to think a good deal about the girls. Wouldn't you like to have a plug hat to wear when you go calling on them?"

"Yes, I would," I said, "but they cost \$7 apiece, and that is more than I can afford to pay."

"Well," said Lincoln, "when Enoch comes in here again and wants to bet with you on his tricks, you just say that you don't care to bet on such trifling things with him, but that you will bet that Abe can take a forty-gallon barrel of whiskey off the floor and take a dram from the bung hole. You say that you'll bet him a plug hat on it."

"But can you do it?" I asked.

"You wait until after the store closes to-night and I'll show you," said Abe.

"So that night he took a barrel of whiskey and chined it up a little on his left knee, and

then tilted it on his right knee, and kind of bent back, and I pulled the bung out of the hole and he took a dram sure enough, and spurted it right out again on the floor. The next day I won the plug hat from Enoch, as Abe had said I would. I have kept my word ever since, and I've never bet on anything. And what's more, I wouldn't for \$1,000.

"Lincoln left the store after a while and went to work hauling logs to the sawmill for William Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick had eight or ten other men working for him, and he paid them each \$10 a month. Lincoln drove an ox team and had a boy to help him. One day Lincoln told Kirkpatrick that he wanted to get a cant-hook to help him load the logs on the wagon. He said that a cant-hook would cost only \$5, but Kirkpatrick said: 'Now, Lincoln, if you'll manage to haul the logs without the cant-hook I'll give you \$3 a month extra.' Lincoln said that he would do it, but at the end of the month he only got \$10, instead of \$13. When he asked for the other \$3, Kirkpatrick said: 'Abe, I can't pay you \$3 extra.' But you promised to do it," said Abe. "Yes, I know," said Kirkpatrick, "but the other men would raise hell if I paid you more than they are getting, so I can't do it." Lincoln quit work for Kirkpatrick then.

"The next year in 1832, old Black Hawk came back into Illinois with the Sacs and Foxes, and militia companies were raised to go and fight them. All the young men went into the Black Hawk war, and Lincoln and I were among them. Major Moses K. Anderson came to form the companies and get them into shape. Now, Kirkpatrick was very anxious to be elected Captain of our company, and so was Abe Lincoln. Major Anderson got us all together, and then he called out:

"You aspirants for the Captaincy walk twenty paces to the front and face the line," Kirkpatrick and Lincoln stepped out and faced about.

"Now," said the Major, "the rest of you fall in alongside of the man you want for your Captain!"

"I was the first to run to Lincoln's side, and I stood at his right. Kirkpatrick's men formed on his left. After a while, when all had chosen, there were two long lines, one to the right of Lincoln and one to the left of Kirkpatrick. Then we saw that Lincoln had beaten Kirkpatrick two to one and had seven over to spare. I'll never forget how, when Abe saw how things had gone, the old fellow put his big, horny hand on my shoulder, and I could feel him all trembling with delight, as he said:

"Bill, I'll be damned if I hadn't beat him! That was the first time that I ever heard Abe swear, and I know he must have been powerfully excited to do it."

"It was at that time that Lincoln first met Jefferson Davis. Zachary Taylor and Davis were both there, and Jeff Davis swore Lincoln into the service of the United States as Captain of our company. I saw him do it."

Mr. Green had many other reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln's young manhood. When Lincoln was elected President he did not forget his old fellow clerk and friend. It was in 1862 that they came together again, but each had watched the other's career with great interest. When Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency ex-Gov. Dennison of Ohio went to Springfield to see him and get from him a sketch of his life, to be used for campaign purposes. Lincoln said: "Oh, let it alone; I never did anything worth writing about." The Governor insisted that a sketch was very necessary, and then Lincoln gave the Governor the names of some of his friends to get his history from. Among those names was Green's, and Lincoln said when he gave it to Dennison: "He knows what not to tell you, which is more important than what he does tell you." In 1862 Mr. Green had become President of the Tonnekey and Peterburgh Railroad, now a branch of the Chicago and Alton. He was a very busy man. One day he received a message from Lincoln to come to Washington. He went and Lincoln said to him:

"Billy, I want you to be the Internal Revenue Collector for your district. It takes a very determined man for the place, for J. W. Ross, that copperhead Congressman of yours, is giving the Government trouble there."

"I tried to beg off," said Mr. Green in telling the story yesterday. "I told Lincoln that I had invested all my money in the railroad, and that I couldn't put it through, perhaps, unless I gave it my undivided attention."

"Bill," he said, "whether you are rich or broke, you must do all you can for the country. You have four sons in the army. I know, but if we don't save the country we will all go to hell in a handbasket any how, so you must take the place. You can resign in three or four months, and I'll let you name your successor."

"So I went back home and took the office and the first thing I did was to plant a cannon near Ross's place and make my headquarters close to it. Then I sent for Ross and said to him: 'I have trained that cannon on that fine brick house of yours because I want you to do all you can to help me in my work.' And Ross turned in and helped me, too. I never had any trouble with him after that."

Mr. Green would not say who was his choice for the Presidency in 1892, but he did say that he had never voted anything but a straight Democratic ticket, except when he voted for Lincoln, and that he would keep up the practice as long as he lived.

N. A. J.

## LINCOLN AND SUMNER.

### The Difference Between the Student of Books and the Student of Men.

[Marquis de Chambrun in Scribner's.]

On the day following we had left Richmond, and joined Mr. Lincoln at the headquarters. I was then at leisure to observe closely the existing relations between these two men, so different in origin and education, who represented opinions and convictions so distinctly apart, and who, notwithstanding, had found themselves bound to one another by the ties of a similar political faith, and united by a sentiment of mutual esteem. Their natures so straightforward, their unquestionable honesty, the true patriotism which guided both, seemed a sort of platform upon which they naturally met; they were therefore made to appreciate one another.

But, on the other hand, it must be admitted that their two minds were scarcely intended to agree. Mr. Sumner took pleasure in mentioning that he had studied the Summa of St. Thomas. I do not know if it was from that source that he had derived his reasoning methods; it is true, however, that in many respects his mind had been accustomed to the argumentative process of the Scholastics. Mr. Sumner reasoned as reasons a professor of theology. From the days of his youth he had felt that he had a calling in life; that he would devote his existence to opposing injustice everywhere.

In contrast to this character so marked, this nature so vigorous, to this scholar so formed by the most profound studies, stood Mr. Lincoln, the man of the people, of the humblest origin, molded for state affairs by the practice of affairs themselves, having risen little by little, through fatigue and toil, knowing from experience all the difficulties of life, whose disposition was sweet and sad more than persistent and audacious. He, too, had devoted himself to the triumph of his ideas of justice and emancipation, but he was accustomed to measure obstacles and to appreciate them. Gifted, furthermore, with an uncommon resisting power, he felt himself sufficiently strong to oppose by the sole force of his obstinacy all efforts made with a view to alter his opinions.

1853



# ABLY DEFENDS HIS STATEMENT

DR. F. H. WINES STANDS BY HIS  
LINCOLN ASSERTION.

In Support of It He Produces Statement From Judge James A. Creighton of the Circuit Court to Show That The Martyred President Was an Educated Man—Jurist Close Student Of All Lincoln's Writings—Has Made Special Study of His Law Writings.

In a highly interesting communication to The Sunday Journal, Dr. Frederick H. Wines ably defends his statement in his Memorial day address on Abraham Lincoln, in which he declared that when Lincoln was a law student in the office of John T. Stuart, Lincoln had studied with care all the text books on mathematics, physics and belles-lettres which were at that time included in the curriculum of Yale college.

In support of this assertion he produces a statement from Judge James A. Creighton of the circuit court on the subject. There is no one in the whole United States, perhaps, better qualified to speak in this regard, as Judge Creighton has been a close student of all Lincoln's writings, and has made a special study of his law writings.

Judge Creighton shows in his statement, that by evidence deduced from the remains of Lincoln's personal library, part of which is in his possession, and from remnants of papers in handwriting which is indisputably that of Lincoln, there can be not the least doubt but that he has studied such text books.

## Did Not Realize His Education.

Doctor Wines takes pains to state that he does not claim that Mr. Lincoln was a scholar in the general acceptance of that term, nor does he think that Lincoln gained as much knowledge from books, as from nature and life, but declares that he was far more highly educated than his associates were aware or able at the time to realize.

Doctor Wines communication is as follows:

Editor The Sunday Journal: A doubt has been expressed as to the accuracy of the following statement made by me in the Memorial address on Lincoln which I had the honor to deliver in this city on Decoration day: "He was self-educated, but the remains of his library attest the fact that, when he was a law-student in the office of John T. Stuart, he had studied with care all the text-books on mathematics, physics and belles-lettres which were at that time included in the curriculum of Yale college."

My reason for making this assertion was a conversation had by me with Judge Creighton of the circuit court, who has kindly assumed the responsibility for it in a written paper, which is herewith submitted for the information of any persons who may be interested, and which is as follows:

## Judge Creighton's Statement.

"All I know about Mr. Lincoln's education or the books he read is derived from hearsay and circumstantial evidence. He had been a member of congress before I was born, and I was but a small boy when he was elected president. I never saw him.

"I remember that his political enemies charged that he was an ignoramus. And while his friends boasted of the fact that he was a self-made man, they insisted that he was neither illiterate nor ignorant, but that he had acquired an education by his own efforts and without the advantage of attendance at school or college. This they deemed greatly to his credit. They did not concede his lack of educa-

tion and that he had an elementary knowledge of chemistry.

## Was an Educated Man.

That Lincoln was a scholar, in the usual signification of that word, I do not claim, nor that he had a wide knowledge of English literature derived from general reading. I do not think that he learned as much from books as from nature and life. But he was an educated man, and far more highly educated than his associates were aware or were able at the time to realize. He gained his education late in life, and by his own almost unaided exertions; but he had it. The lecture of which Judge Creighton speaks, written in early manhood, was on inventions. He was himself an inventor, and I believe that he once applied for and secured a patent. The famous law case in the United States court at Cincinnati, in which Edwin M. Stanton took advantage of his modesty and courtesy to elbow him out of an opportunity to plead, was a patent case, demanding for its elucidation an extensive and minute familiarity with the principles of mechanics. And when he was invited to deliver an address in the city of New York, before the Cooper institute, he chose as his theme the probable future of physical discovery and invention, and this before a learned body. He was persuaded to speak on the political issues of the time instead; but he would not have dared to attempt so ambitious a program had he not been conscious of his ability to carry it out to his own credit and the satisfaction of his audience.

## Mental Grasp Is Illustrated

His mental grasp and the ease with which he acquired information, as well as the tenacity with which he retained it for practical use at the right moment, are illustrated by his almost forgotten connection with the construction of the Pacific railway, the bill authorizing which was passed during his administration and received his signature. Years before he had a talk with General Granville M. Dodge, then in camp at Council Bluffs, on the proper route for such a road, should it ever be built. The act required the president to fix the terminus of the Iowa branch of the road; and Lincoln, recalling this conversation, named Council Bluffs. Congress further imposed upon him the duty of determin-

tion, but boasted of the fact that notwithstanding the disadvantages under which he labored he had attained an education. At that time this all seemed reasonable to me, and I accepted it as true. For an aspiring young man who had not the advantage of a school training to take up and pursue text-book studies was not a very unusual thing in those days.

"Some time after Mr. Lincoln's death I saw in a newspaper published in one of the eastern cities what purported to be the substance of a conversation with him during the time he was president. The writer stated that he asked Mr. Lincoln if it were true that he had attended school but a few months, and Mr. Lincoln said it was. He then asked him if he had not studied or read the school books. Mr. Lincoln said yes. He mentioned arithmetic, grammar, rhetoric, history and other subjects, adding that after he was admitted to the bar he studied geometry and logic.

#### Contained Old Text Books.

"When I came to Springfield, about twenty-eight years ago, General Orendorff admitted me into his law office as a partner. He had succeeded to the old Lincoln and Herndon office. It had been removed to another building, but it contained what remained of the Lincoln and Herndon library. In a little back room in that office was a miscellaneous and most incongruous lot of books, numbering perhaps three hundred, most of which were old, though a few were more modern and were doubtless put there by Judge Zane or General Orendorff. In this collection there were some old text-books of the kind used in Yale college seventy or seventy-five years ago, such as I had seen among my grandfather's books.

"One day I asked Mr. Herndon if Mr. Lincoln had read these books. He said that he had. He went out and returned after a few minutes with a book made up of foolscap paper, the sheets stitched together by hand, in which was written out in detail the solution of many problems in arithmetic and geometry, and there were in it some exercises in composition. Mr. Herndon said this was Lincoln's copy-book. The writing I know to be in Mr. Lincoln's hand.

"Captain Kidd once told me that Lincoln had read everything on 'physical philosophy,' and I have often heard it said that he prepared a lecture on that subject and delivered it in one of the neighboring towns.

#### Was Accurate in Spelling.

"He was unusually accurate in spelling. His sentences were correctly constructed when tested by the book rules of grammar and rhetoric; and the Inducement, the major premise, the minor premise, and the conclusion, as taught in the text-books on logic, can easily be detected in his writings and speeches."

The foregoing is a very abridged summary of what Judge Creighton has said to me on more than one occasion. He mentioned certain books by name, on mental and moral philosophy, and Paley's Evidences of Christianity. He said that he had not of course seen Mr. Lincoln read these books, but that their presence in the library to which he had access, part of which he personally owned, taken in connection with Mr. Herndon's statements made to him in frequent conversations at intervals during a period of seven years, produced such a conviction of the substantial truth of the assertion which I ventured to make on his authority as to leave in his mind no reasonable doubt; he has sentenced men to be hung on less satisfactory proof.

Mr. A. M. Brooks has said to me that he was interested in the question of Lincoln's education from the point of view of a teacher; that he had an opportunity to know, and did know, that he was well versed in the history of England, Greece and Rome, that he had read Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Em-

ing the width of the gauge of this road, and this he did, in the midst of all his other cases and duties, while the civil war was raging.

As a physician of Springfield once said to Judge Creighton, "No man is born with sense enough to know, as Lincoln knew, how to spell phthisis and asafetida, without having studied his spelling-book." Many things may be learned from association with other men on the streets; but there are some things that can be learned only from assiduous study of books. If Lincoln knew these things, as he certainly knew his Euclid, not to mention anything else, he must have studied. Where or when or how, is immaterial. Admit it, and the mystery which has been erroneously said to attach to it totally disappears. This line of reasoning is inferential but it is unanswerable. Frederick Howard Wines.

W. T. Baker, the postmaster at Bollivia, Ill., who were well acquainted with Lincoln, sends the following communication relative to the education of Mr. Lincoln:

Editor the Sunday Journal: I see in the issue of the 13th inst., an article about Abraham Lincoln with request to add knowledge from any one. I am just turning into my 78th year. I came to Springfield, November 14, 1828, and my father, James Baker and Abraham Lincoln were mess mates in the Black Hawk war. I knew him well. (Mr. Lincoln) have ground his and M. Hank's corn meal when they chopped cord wood and made rails. I helped him over father's mill dam with the boat. I have slept with him several nights and have been at his house a good many times. General Whitesides lived three miles up the river and they would meet at father's and fish and hunt. I think Mr. Wines is mistaken. It seems to be generally understood that Mr. Lincoln's schooling was limited but great and he never forgot anything. I could tell you a good many of his anecdotes. There is no doubt in my mind but Mr. Jayne and Thayer are correct. I know both of them. I am also a member of the Lincoln and Yates organization. With respects, W. T. Baker, Bollivia.

*Spencer*  
June 25 1905





# EDITORIAL SECTION



CHICAGO SUNDAY AMERICAN, FEBRUARY 11, 1906.

## LINCOLN AND EDUCATION.

Copyright, 1906, by American-Journal-Examiner.



"MY father, at the death of his father, was but six years of age, and he grew up literally without education. He removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer County, Indiana, in my eighth year. We reached our new home about the time the state came into the Union. It was a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods. There I grew up. There were some schools, so-called, but no qualification was ever required of a teacher beyond 'readin', writin' and cipherin'' to the rule of three. If a straggler supposed to understand Latin happened to sojourn in the neighborhood, he was looked upon as a wizard. There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education. Of course, when I came of age I did not know much. Still, somehow, I could read, write and cipher to the rule of three, but that was all. I HAVE NOT BEEN TO SCHOOL SINCE. The little advance I now have upon this store of education I have picked up from time to time under the pressure of necessity.

"If any personal description of me is thought desirable it may be said I am, in height, six feet four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing on an average one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair and gray eyes. No other marks or brands recollected."—ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

### He WOULD Feed His Brain. He WOULD Have Knowledge. He WOULD Have an Education. His Noble Life and Useful Work Prove That LOVE OF KNOWLEDGE IS First Among the Essentials of Success.

THE birthday of Lincoln, remembered with loving admiration throughout the world, might supply with texts every pupil, every newspaper, every father, mother or teacher.

The world loves Lincoln for his purity of character and of purpose. That character, blackened by envy, while the man lived and worked for his country, shines now brightly as the sun.

The world admires Lincoln for his courage, unflinching. It admires him perhaps even more for his marvelous patience, for the mind here that gave him power to deal with those so far below him in manhood.

To look upon this character, this beautiful spirit born in the rugged body for hard work, is to look upon one who, like a great range of mountains, must be studied in detail. The mind cannot grasp it in all its details and power.

For the children, and young men, and OLDER men and women; for the parents and the teachers, the makers and sellers of books and of education, we choose for comment to-day Lincoln's passionate love of knowledge.

On this page we publish an extract from his own brief account of himself. Read that first.

Have you read it?

Do you realize that that marvelous man, struggling even for the ability to read, reaching manhood deficient in the knowledge of to-day's early childhood, DID MUCH WORK AS FEW MEN ON EARTH HAVE EVER DONE?

Do you realize that SELF-TAUGHT he made his brain superior to that of the best educated men of his day? Do you realize HOW

MUCH HE OWED to that knowledge gained so painfully, with such difficulty and with only his determination to help him?

The scholars of his day, the men learned in all branches of knowledge, were those whom he gathered most eagerly about him, in his Cabinet and as advisers among his friends. Not one of them outshone him. Not one equaled him. For the knowledge that HE possessed he had gained by struggle, by self-sacrifice. He walked twenty miles and back to get hold of a simple English grammar. His books were few—but with the few books and the hard work, HE COMBINED CONSTANT THINKING.

What he studied he studied HARD. Every word of a book received his earnest thought, and difficulty was not a word in his list.

Young men, you who complain of lack of opportunity, GO GET AN EDUCATION. Teach yourselves to think, as you read. Determine to make yourselves well-informed men. Have your vitality for your brain, as Lincoln saved his.

When he was keeping store Lincoln bought a barrel for fifty cents. It was supposed to be empty. But a book fell out of it—a copy of Blackstone.

Lincoln's store was a failure—that did not discourage him. An old man after the failure saw long, lanky young Lincoln sitting on a pile of cord wood, barked in his blackstone, TRYING TO EDUCATE HIMSELF. His clothes were as grotesque as his figure.

When asked what he was reading he answered, "Studying law, sir."

The surprised old man, according to the historian, exclaimed, "Great God Almighty!" and could think of nothing else to say.

But that ridiculous-looking man "studying law" on a wood pile made himself into a really great lawyer; he laid down rules for a lawyer's conduct that would improve certain lawyers and hurt their profile to-day. He could have been great, or greatest among the lawyers of the country, had not Destiny reserved for him greater

work than fighting the petty quarrels of individuals.

Luckily the books that came into Lincoln's hands were GOOD books. In his cabin were "Aesop's Fables," "Robinson Crusoe," "Pilgrim's Progress," a life of Washington and a history of the United States.

These he read and reread. The fables helped his imagination and sense of humor. Bunyan taught him simplicity and directness of expression. Later he read Shakespeare and Burns. What he read he read over and over. He made good writing a part of himself. HE DIGESTED EVERY WORD AND THOUGHT.

And he TAUGHT HIMSELF to write such speeches and state papers as have never been excelled in beauty of language or of sentiment in this country or any other.

In Shakespeare Lincoln read most often "King Lear," "Richard III.," "Henry VIII.," "Hamlet," and "Macbeth." He liked best of all "Macbeth." If you will honor Lincoln's birthday and memory by devoting your evenings for the next few weeks or months to reading carefully OVER AGAIN, if read already, the books we have mentioned—you will find yourself on the road to good thinking and to good expression of thought.

Men, women, YOUNG AND OLD, let the memory of Lincoln inspire you. Let it force upon your mind your duty to yourselves, which is THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE. Libraries, schools, SYSTEM, make easy for you what was so hard for the great man whom we revere. You cannot honor him better than by LEARNING FROM HIM, by following in his steps, with earnest thought, and earnest, patient study.

The politicians and the would-be statesmen of to-day should be set to earnest thinking by any mention of Lincoln.

Every word and thought in the man was a proposal to the present them "government by the people." Lincoln TOOK THE PEOPLE AND THEIR POWER SERIOUSLY.

When he announced his intention to do certain things, he added, and he MEANT IT: "Unless my RIGHTEFUL MASTERS, the American people, shall withhold the requisite means, or in some other authoritative manner direct the contrary."

That sounds VERY old-fashioned, doesn't it. Lincoln, greatest American since Washington, spoke of the people who chose him, as "MY MASTERS." He recognized their rights and power. It is a little different in our day, isn't it?

He said AND MEANT IT: "This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it."

He had HIGHER respect for the winning of the dollar. No man could bother him or divert him with foolish talk of "money danger or trade worries," such as recently set all our statements to talking for cattle labor. He was interested in the prosperity of the people—more truly interested than any modern trust puppet in office. But he could not be bullied by the big politicians trying to govern. He said:

"I am not assailable to any commercial or financial depression that may exist, but nothing is to be gained by fawning UPON THE 'RESPECTABLE SCOUNDRELS' WHO GOT IT UP. Let them go to work and repair the mischief of their own making, and then, perhaps, they will be less greedy to do the like again."

Hearst that a good American sound? It would strike with a jar on the ear of a modern Wall street gambler going to Washington for government gambling funds, or bonds at half-price.

Lincoln studied for himself—be studied a few books and many men. He saved his country, by his own death he hastened the healing of the wound that was inevitable, and all of his preaching and all of his practice were bound up in these few words from his first inaugural address, March 4th, 1861:

"Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?"

ROBERT CARTER



# Lincoln A Student

His Industry, Concentration,  
Self-Reliance

As the decades pass, the figure of Lincoln looms greater and greater. Time is giving us the right perspective, and each year makes him seem more of a miracle. Yet, in sober truth no man ever had less of the miraculous in his history. His rise was not even sudden; it was by the slowest and most tedious gradation. Every step has been distinctly traced and there is not one of them that any other man might not have taken.

He began absolutely at the bottom. There was not even a step to the front door of the house in which he was born. Until he was twenty-one not a board separated his feet from Mother Earth. No artificial contrivance of civilization aided his advance he pushed himself along by the sheer force of elemental qualities. Social jackscrews and financial derricks may lift a little man to a certain altitude, but they have their limits. Lincoln did not need them. Had they been at his command they might have made him a figure, but they could not have made him a force.

Character alone can give a man an inaccessible place in the history of civilization and in the heart of mankind. In its last analysis character is crystallized habit. A man is the sum of his thoughts, feelings, acts. When Lincoln stood on the steps of the Capitol in 1865 and all printing presses of the world were stopped for his second Inaugural Address, he was the embodiment of fifty-six years of slowly accumulated habits. The next morning every land rang with applause and the London Times said the Inaugural was "the greatest state paper of the century." The flawless logic and the faultless phrase whence came they? According to his own account, Lincoln went to school "by littles"; "in all it did not amount to more than a year." And what teachers there were in those days! Scarcely one of them could go beyond "readin', writin', and cipherin' to the rule of three." Such a curriculum was not likely to lead to "the greatest state paper of the century," such a school was hardly planned for the making of a President. We must find the secret elsewhere.

It is here: Lincoln developed the study habit.

But the study habit implies three other habits—Industry, Concentration, and Self-reliance.

Shut off from schools and colleges, Lincoln read and studied every book he could find. His father's little library was pitifully small, so he borrowed from far and wide. He once told a friend that he "read through every book he had ever heard of in that country, for a circuit of fifty miles."

With nothing but a turkey buzzard pen and home made ink he made a careful synopsis or copied long extracts from everything he read. These he read over and over until committed to memory. Shingles, boards, shovels doors served as notebooks in the crack of the log near his rough bed ready to seize the moment he awoke in the morning. At night he made use of the fire on the hearth for light and studied for hours after the other members of the family were fast asleep. He carried books with him wherever he went, valued every spare moment as an opportunity for reading, even chose his occupation with a view to the chances they offered for study.

The habit of focusing every power of the brain upon one occupation is the key to successful scholarship. One that gives only a part of his mind masters only a part of his subject. When Lincoln learned anything it was his for all time; he never had to go back to verify impressions: the acts and principles, even the very words, were fixed in his memory forever. Concentration is the only path that leads to thoroughness.

When twenty-four years old Lincoln saw that there was not much of a future in general storekeeping. He was offered the position of deputy

county surveyor. The only difficulty in the way of accepting was that he knew absolutely nothing about surveying. But what did so trivial an obstacle amount to? He borrowed Flint and Gibson's treatise on the subject and bent his will to the task of mastering it. He worked as if his temporal and eternal well-being depended on the effort; everything else was banished—friends, pleasures, and food were almost forgotten; day and night he kept at it, denying himself sleep until he was pale and haggard and the neighbors expostulated. In six short weeks he mastered every branch of the subject upon which he could get any information and reported for work. No wonder he was a good surveyor. One of his biographers says: Lincoln's surveys had the extraordinary merit of being correct. His verdict was the end of any dispute so general was the confidence in his honesty and skill."

While keeping his grocery store in New Salem, Lincoln bought a barrel of old household stuff for fifty cents. In it he found Blackstone's "Commentaries." He began to study them. Speaking of it in after life he said: "The more I read, the more intensely interested I became. Never in my life was my mind so thoroughly absorbed. I read until I devoured them."

Difficulties could not daunt a man that early in life had cultivated such a habit. When Lincoln began to study law he had to tramp twenty miles every time he wanted a law book. In doing so he would read and digest about forty pages each trip. He never allowed the subject to slip from his mind, when manual labor made it impossible for him to be reading he would recite aloud what he had last read and fix it forever in his mind. Twenty years after this time when he was an acknowledged leader of the Illinois bar he gave the following advice to a young man wishing to become a lawyer; "Get books, and read and study them carefully. Begin with 'Blackstone's Commentaries,' then take up Chitty's 'Pleadings,' Greenleaf's 'Evidence,' and Story's 'Equity.' Work, work, work, is the

main thing." One day while still a law student in Springfield, Lincoln found that he did not understand the meaning of the word "demonstrate." He tells the story himself: "At last, said, Lincoln you can never make a lawyer if you do not understand what demonstrate mean; and I left my situation at Springfield, went home, and stayed there until I could give at sight any proposition in the six books of Euclid. I then found out what 'demonstrate' meant."

Some time after Lincoln had achieved considerable success as a lawyer, he was engaged upon an important case in Cincinnati, in which he found himself associated with men of high training: college graduates, equipped with the culture of the more developed east. After the trial he said to a friend: "Emerson, I am going home to study law." "Why Mr. Lincoln," Emerson exclaimed, "you stand at the head of the bar in Illinois now. What are you talking about!" "Ah, yes," he said, "I do occupy a good position there, and I think I can get along with the way things are done there now. But these college-trained men, who have devoted their whole lives to study, ~~are coming west, don't you see?~~ And they study their cases as we never do. They have got as far as Cincinnati now. They will soon be in Illinois. I am going home to study law. I am as good as any of them, and when they get out to Illinois I will be ready for them." What difficulty was there that Lincoln did not overcome? What ambition was there that he did not realize? What position he could not reach? And all the equipment in his possession was Industry, Concentration, and Self-reliance.

—Joseph H. Odell

Studiosness

Lincoln was studious, is to follow eagerly and fearlessly the curiosity of a mind which will not be satisfied unless it understands. That is a deep studiosness; that is the thing which lays bare the map of life and enables men to understand the circumstances in which they live, as nothing else can do.—Woodrow Wilson.

Lincoln was a singularly studious man —not studious in the ordinary conventional sense. To be studious in the ordinary, conventional sense, if I may judge by my observation of a university, is to do the things you have to do and not understand them particularly. But to be studious in the sense in which Mr.

*Christian Science Monitor, Nov. 1915.*



## LINCOLN, THE STUDENT.

His Industry, Concentration, Self-Reliance. 1520

By Joseph H. Odell.

As the decades pass, the figure of Lincoln looms greater and greater. Time is given us the right perspective, and each year makes him seem more of a miracle. Yet the sober truth, no man ever had less of the miraculous in his history. His rise was not even sudden; it was by the slowest and most tedious graduation. Every step has been distinctly traced and there was not one of them that any other man might not have taken.

He began absolutely at the bottom. There was not even a step to the front door of the house in which he was born. Until he was twenty-one, not a board separated his feet from Mother Earth. No artificial contrivances of civilization aided in his advance; he pushed himself along by the sheer force of elemental qualities. Social jackscrews and financial derricks, may lift a little man to a certain altitude, but they have their limits. Lincoln did not need them. Had they been at his command they might have made him a figure, but they could not have made him a force.

Character alone can give a man an inaccessible place in the history of civilization and in the heart of mankind. In its last analysis, character is crystalized habit. A man is the sum of his thoughts, feelings, acts. When Lincoln stood on the steps of the Capitol in 1865 and all the printing presses of the world were stopped for his second Inaugural Address, he was the embodiment of fifty-six years of slowly accumulated habits. The next morning every land rang with applause, and the London Times said the Inaugural was "the greatest state paper of the century." The flawless logic and the faultless phrase—whence come they? According to his own account, Lincoln went to school "by littles"; "in all it did not amount to more than a year." And what teachers there were in those days! Scarcely one of them could go beyond "readin', writin' and cipherin' to the rule of three." Such a curriculum was not likely to lead to "the greatest state paper of the century"; such a school was hardly planned for the making of a President. We must find the secret elsewhere.

It is here: Lincoln developed the study habit.

But the study habit implies three other habits, Industry, Concentration and Self-Reliance.

Shut off from schools and colleges, Lincoln read and studied every book he could find. His father's library was pitifully small, so he borrowed from far and wide. He once told a friend that he "read through every book he had ever heard of in that country, for a circuit of fifty miles."

With nothing but a turkey-buzzard pen and home-made ink, he made a careful synopsis or copied long extracts from everything he read. These he read over and over until committed to memory. Shingles, boards, shovels, doors, served as notebooks, when he ran short of paper. He always kept a book in the crack of the logs near his rough bed, ready to

seize, the moment he awoke in the morning. At night he made use of the fire on the hearth for light, and studied for hours after the other members of the family were fast asleep. He carried books with him wherever he went, valued every spare moment as an opportunity for reading, even chose his occupations with a view to the chances they offered for study.

When twenty-four years old, Lincoln saw that there was not much of a future in general storekeeping. He was offered the position of deputy county surveyor. The only difficulty in the way of accepting was that he knew absolutely nothing about surveying. But what did so trivial an obstacle amount to? He borrowed Flint and Gibson's treatise on the subject and bent his will to the task of mastering it. He worked as if his temporal and external well-being depended on the effort; everything else was banished—friends, pleasures, and food were almost forgotten; day and night he kept at it, denying himself sleep until he was pale and haggard and the neighbors expostulated. In six short weeks, he had mastered every branch of the subject on which he could get any information, and reported for work. No wonder he was a good surveyor. One of his biographers says: "Lincoln's surveys had the extraordinary merit of being correct. His verdict was the end of any dispute, so general was the confidence in his honesty and skill."

While keeping his grocery store in New Salem, Lincoln bought a barrel of old household goods for fifty cents. In it he found Blackstone's "Commentaries." He began to study them. Speaking of it in after-life, he said, "The more I read, the more intensely interested I became. Never in my life was my mind so thoroughly absorbed. I read until I devoured them."

Difficulties could not daunt a man that in early life had cultivated such a habit. When Lincoln began to study law he had to tramp twenty miles every time he wanted a law book. In doing so he would read and digest about forty pages each trip. He never allowed the subject to slip from his mind. When manual labor made it impossible for him to be reading he would recite aloud what he had last read and fix it forever in his mind. Twenty years after this time, when he was acknowledged leader of the Illinois bar, he gave the following advice to a young man wishing to become a lawyer: "Get books, and read and study them carefully. Begin with 'Blackstone's Commentaries,' then take up Chitty's 'Pleadings,' Greenleaf's 'Evidence,' and Story's 'Equity.' Work, work work, is the main thing."

Some time after Lincoln had achieved considerable success as a lawyer, he engaged upon an important case in Cincinnati in which he found himself associated with men of high training, college graduates, equipped with the culture of the more developed east. After the trial he said to a friend: "Emerson, I am going home to study law." "Why, Mr. Lincoln," Emerson exclaimed, "you stand at the head of the bar in Illinois now. What are you talking about, 'Ah, yes, he said, 'I do occupy a good position there, and I think I can get along with the way things are done there now. But these

college trained men, who have devoted their whole lives to study, are coming west, don't you see? And they study their cases as we never do. They have got as far as Cincinnati now. They will soon be in Illinois. I am going home to study law. I will be ready for them." What difficulty was there that Lincoln did not overcome? What ambition was there that he did not realize. What position he could not reach? And all the equipment in his possession was Industry, Concentration and Self-reliance.





Left—the boy Lincoln and his mother.

Right—Lincoln, the railsplitter. Hundreds of rails was the price of a few yards of cheap home-spun cloth for a suit of clothes.

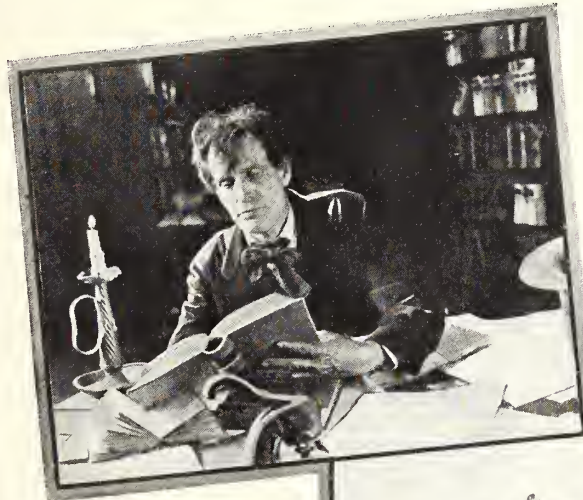
Below—Overland travel in the boyhood days of Lincoln was accomplished by slow, springless, covered wagons.



Illustrations from the First National Picture "Abraham Lincoln"

*Lincoln* said: "I will study and get ready and some day my chance will come"

Perhaps it is not written in the stars that you will become another Lincoln. Few men saw the making of a great President in the humble railsplitter. But—Lincoln Looked Ahead. He Studied and Got Ready. He Made Each Day Count.



Above, Left—Abraham Lincoln knew the value of study. As a boy he ciphered with charcoal on the back of a shovel before the fitful glow of a log fire. As a young man he studied law far into the night with the aid of a flickering candle.



Above, Right—George Billings as he appears in the First National Picture, "Abraham Lincoln."



Left — Every schoolboy knows the famous Gettysburg address of Abraham Lincoln. "Four score and seven years ago," it reads. The man who preceded the beloved Lincoln spoke for an hour and a half. Lincoln spoke for barely five minutes. The words of the one are practically forgotten; the words of the other have become immortal.

Compliments, International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, Pa.

### **LINCOLN AND HOME STUDY**

Possibly one of the best arguments in favor of HOME STUDY COURSES for those who cannot enjoy the advantages of a college, university or private school education and training is the success of Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln's parents were poor. He could never expect to attend the public schools regularly, to say nothing of his chances of attending a college or university. But Lincoln knew the advantages of having an education, if he was to ever make any mark in life. He wanted to attend the schools at New Harmony, Ind., but it cost one hundred dollars a year and he did not have the hundred dollars.

With a determination to learn, Lincoln planned his own way of gaining this education that he sought. He would walk miles to borrow certain books that he needed and by candle light he sat for hours during the evenings in his father's log cabin and by his own planned course of home study educated himself to the point where he finally became a successful lawyer and later one of the outstanding figures in American history.

Through HOME STUDY, Lincoln educated himself and became President of the United States. Some of his addresses and state papers are regarded as among the finest productions in the English language.

Today there are carefully planned HOME STUDY COURSES laid out by those who have studied the situation, and which if properly applied will help anyone gain additional knowledge and training in his chosen profession or occupation.



*Reuben Binns*  
**Incident in Lincoln's** 711-78  
**Quest for Education**

An instance of the indomitable determination of Abraham Lincoln to get the best education possible is told by Dr. William E. Barton in an article in Liberty in which he draws a comparison between Lincoln and George Washington. "Lincoln's eminence in the matter of his education grows upon us," Doctor Barton writes. "when we remember his subsequent attempts to make good, in part, the disadvantages of his early preparation. There is nothing in the career of George Washington that can be cited as a parallel for the way in which Lincoln studied law in Salem, nor for the way in which, after his term of congress, and at the age of forty, he mastered Euclid and the Elements of Logic.

"When John Locke Scripps wrote his campaign Life of Lincoln, in 1860," Doctor Barton continues. "he enumerated Plutarch's Lives among the books that Lincoln had read. Lincoln had not read that work, but, deeming the inclusion of the title in the list of his supposed accomplishments an indication that he ought to have read it, he did not correct the proof, but obtained the four volumes and read them."

# Owen's New Harmony Project Fascinated Young Lincoln

But Abe's Dream of Getting  
"Book Larnin'" There  
Was Dashed

*Evening* 1827-28

It was in January of 1826 that Robert Owen came down the Ohio river with 30 people on his "Boatload of Knowledge" and founded the idyllic community, New Harmony,

## LINCOLN SAYINGS

*"Abraham Lincoln,  
His hand and pen,  
He will be good  
But God knows when."*

Ind.

Owen was a rich English business man and had paid \$132,000 for the land, and put \$50,000 into livestock, tools, and merchandise to put over the project. Word of his scheme had been broadcast thru a speech he made before congress telling that the community was going to be one where "people would live their lives together, without fighting, cheating or exploiting each other, where work would be honorable yet there would be time for play and learning; they would share and share alike, each for all and all for each."

They came by boat and ox wagon and pack horse to join the new community, and Abe Lincoln caught the fever. He would like to go to that place of New Harmony and get some real schooling. He found this would cost about \$100 a year and he could work for his board.

But Tom Lincoln had other plans and Abe's dreams of book larnin' came to naught at this time.

## Lincoln as a Student

Editor of The Record, Hillsboro, N. C.  
Str:—Lincoln, self-educated, made his brain superior to that of the best educated men of the day.

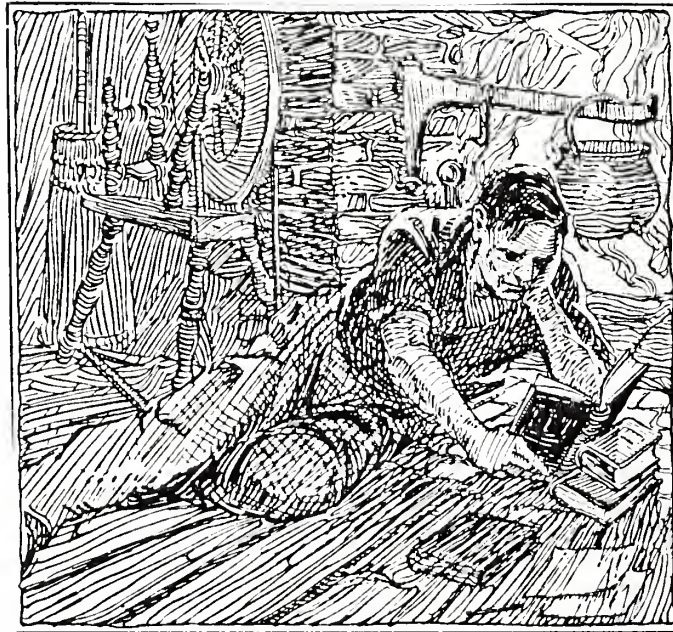
The knowledge he possessed he had gained by struggle, by self-sacrifice. ~~He walked 20 miles and back to get~~ hold of a simple English grammar. His books were few, but with the few books and the hard work, he combined constant thinking. What he studied, he studied hard. Every word of a book received his earnest thought, and "difficulty" was not a word in his list.

When he was keeping store, Lincoln bought a barrel for 50 cents. It was supposed to be empty. But a book fell out of it, a copy of Blackstone. Lincoln's store was a failure, but that did not discourage him. He made himself into a really great lawyer; he could have been great or greatest among the lawyers of the country had not Destiny reserved for him greater work than fighting the petty quarrels of individuals.

Luckily the books that came into Lincoln's hands were good books. In his cabin were "Aesop's Fables," "Robinson Crusoe," "Pilgrim's Progress," a life of Washington and a history of the United States. These he read and reread. The fables helped his imagination and sense of humor. Bunyan taught him simplicity and directness of expression. Later he read Shakespeare and Burns. What he read, he read over and over. He made good writing a part of himself. He digested every word and thought. And he taught himself to write such speeches and State papers as have never been excelled in beauty of language or of sentiment in this country or any other.

We cannot honor him better than by learning from him, by following in his steps, with earnest thought and patient study. WILLIAM H. RITZ.





Lincoln the Student

# LINCOLN AS STUDENT: HIS OWN NARRATIVE

Little-Known Incidents That  
Show His Hard Efforts Are  
Recalled by Dr. Finley.

## EDUCATION WAS 'DEFECTIVE'

So Described It for Congressional  
Directory—Mastered Euclid at 40  
as Part of His Study of Law.

*Adult education, of which so much is heard today, had a hard pacemaker in Lincoln. Some little-known incidents recalled in a commencement address by Dr. John H. Finley at Gettysburg College last week show how he went about it. The address, in part, appears below.*

By JOHN H. FINLEY.

No biographical account of the education of Abraham Lincoln extends over a page or two, while Lincoln's own biographical story is told by himself, though in the third person. After speaking in detail of the ABC schools and their teachers he said:

"Abraham now thinks that the aggregate of all his schooling did not amount to a year. He was never in a college or academy as a student and never inside of a college or academy building till since he had a law license. What he has in the way of an education he picked up. After he was 23 and had separated from his father, he studied English grammar—imperfectly of course but so as to speak and write as well as he now does. He studied and nearly mastered the six books of Euclid since he was a member of Congress. He regrets his want of an education and does what he can to supply the want."

This is supplemented by an interview which he gave to Dr. John C. Gulliver \* \* \* who \* \* \* met Mr. Lincoln one day in Connecticut and asked him, \* \* \* "How did you prepare for your profession?"

"I read law, as the phrase is; that is, I became a lawyer's clerk in Springfield and copied odious documents and picked up what I could of law in the intervals of other work."

### Lincoln's System.

"But your question reminds me of a bit of education I had which I am bound in honesty to mention. I thought, at first, that I understood the meaning [of the word demonstrate] but soon became satisfied that I did not. I said to myself, 'What do I do when I demonstrate more than when I reason and prove? How does demonstration differ from any other proof?'"

"I consulted Webster's Dictionary. That told of certain proof ('proof beyond possibility of doubt'); but I could form no idea of what sort of proof that was. I thought a great many things were proved beyond a possibility of doubt, without recourse to any such extraordinary process of reasoning as I understood 'demonstration' to be. I consulted all the dictionaries and books of reference I could find but with no better results."

You might as well have defined 'blue' to a blind man.

"At last I said, 'Lincoln, you can never make a lawyer if you do not understand what "demonstrate" means.' And I left my situation in Springfield, went home to my father's house, and stayed there until I could give any proposition in the six books of Euclid at sight. I then found out what 'demonstrate' means and went back to my law studies."

Dr. Newton Bateman, \* \* \* Superintendent of Public Instruction in Illinois at the time when Lincoln was first nominated for the Presidency, had a room adjoining that which Mr. Lincoln used during the eight months preceding his departure for Washington. The door between the offices was "wide open" and there was a frequent passing to and fro, so that Dr. Bateman, as he says, saw Lincoln every day for several hours. Mr. Lincoln brought to Dr. Bateman (whom Lincoln called his "little friend the big schoolmaster") his letter of acceptance, saying: "I think it is all right, but grammar, you know, is not my stronghold, and as several persons will probably read that little thing, I wish you would look it over and see if it needs doctoring anywhere."

### His Regard for Grammar.

Dr. Bateman read it slowly and handing it back said that it was strictly correct with one very slight exception almost too trivial to mention. "Well, what is it?" said Mr. Lincoln, "I wish to be correct without any exception, however trivial." "Well then," said Dr. Bateman, remembering the rule about the avoidance of a "split infinitive," "it would be as well to transpose the 'to' and the 'not' in the sentence, and it shall be my care to not violate it."

"Oh," replied Mr. Lincoln after looking at it a moment, "you think I'd better turn those two little fellows end to end?" and he did (though I am not sure that he improved the sentence: it was stronger as it was).

Of his Cooper Union speech he wrote to some one who wanted to edit it that if it was intended to improve the grammar and elegance of composition, he was agreed, but he added, "I do not wish the sense changed to a hair's breadth." \* \* \*

I have given the \* \* \* statement of his "education" in his own language, but he himself condensed it into one word, when he was asked to state for the Congressional Directory what his education was. This one word was "defective." \* \* \*

If it was a "defective" education that gave us such a man, then, as Lincoln said when complaint was made to him about General Grant, we ought to find out what the brand is and give it to others. What was there in the education of Abraham Lincoln to carry into a system for the education of youth in a democracy—not only youth but men and women?

The outstanding fact is that his own education did not stop with the school, nor with learning to read and write, nor even with his professional studies. He went back to Euclid at 40. He kept on growing till the sudden end of his life. That is the supreme lesson of it to those who are living in the Republic which is the "central fact" in the world today.

We have set up a wonderfully effectual machine for elementary education and compelled every child to pass through it on the way to literacy. But if in doing this we do not inspire or foster in the child a zeal for knowledge, a desire to go on and on as did Lincoln in his search for ideas and in his effort to put them into plain language, bounding his thought north, south, east and west, and finally demonstrating it, we are missing the major purpose of education.

N.Y. Times

June 5 1932

# Lincoln's Method of Learning Language Worth Teacher's Study

News \_\_\_\_\_ 2/15/39  
By GARRY C. MYERSS, Ph.D.

How did it happen that Abraham Lincoln, with parents practically illiterate, spoke and wrote in language that has lived?

From early boyhood he read aloud a great deal, from about the choicest literature. The books of his boyhood included the Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, Arabian Nights, Aesop's Fables, Robinson Crusoe and a few others. But these he read over and over again.

John Hawks, who worked barefoot in the fields with young Abe Lincoln said:

"When Abe and I came back to the house from work, he used to go to the cupboard, snatch a piece of corn bread, sit down, take a book, cock his legs up high as his head, and read. Whenever Abe had a chance in the field while at work, or at the house, he would stop and read."

Lincoln's step-mother once told Mr. Herndon that Abe devoured everything he could get in the book line; that he kept the Bible and Aesop's Fables within his reach, and read them over and over again. Lincoln once said himself that as a boy he read all the books he could find for 50 miles around.

Abe's step-mother once said that when neighbors came to visit in the home, "Abe was a silent and attentive observer, never speaking or asking a question until they were gone and then he must understand everything . . . he would then repeat it over to himself again and again, sometimes in one form, then in another and when it was fixed in his mind to suit him he became easy

and never lost that fact or his understanding of it."

## Little Schooling

Abe Lincoln attended three different schools in Kentucky and two in Indiana, but not for many weeks in any one of them.

President Lincoln, in 1860, told a newspaper reporter:

"I never went to school more than six months in my life, but I can say this: That among my earliest recollections I remember how, when a mere child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way I could not understand . . . I can remember going to my little bed room, after hearing the neighbors talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down and trying to make out what was the exact meaning of their, to me, dark sayings.

## Couldn't Sleep

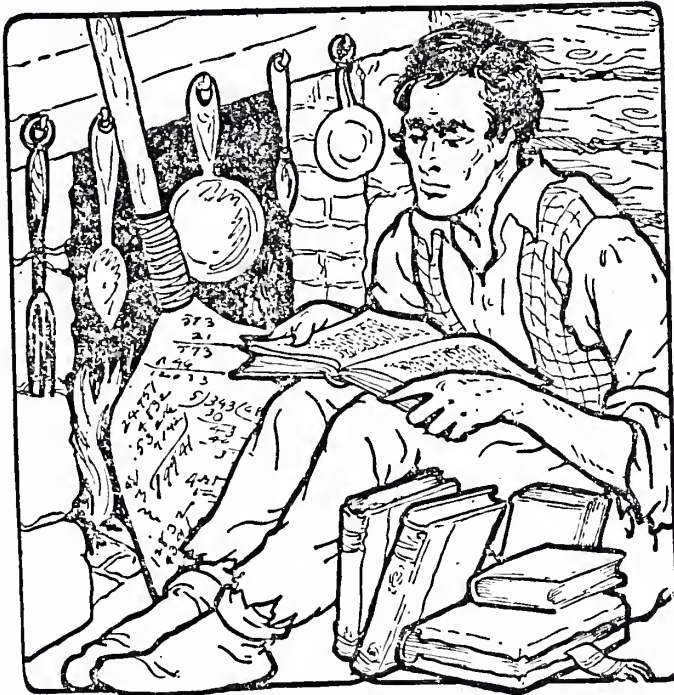
"I could not sleep, although I tried to, when I got on such a hunt for an idea until I had caught it; and when I thought I had got it, I was not satisfied until I had repeated it over and over; until I had put it in language plain enough, as I thought, for any boy I knew to comprehend. This was a kind of passion with me; for I am never easy now, when I am handling a thought, till I have bounded it north and bounded it south and bounded it east and bounded it west."

Teachers of English might get some tips to pass on to their students from Abe Lincoln's way of learning to speak and write effectively.



Today's Assignment for—

## JUNIOR EDITORS



THE YOUNG LINCOLN

Abraham Lincoln, our 16th President, educated himself studying his few books by the flickering light of a log fire and working out arithmetic problems with a burned stick on a wooden fire shovel.

By the time he was 9 years old, he was doing a man's job, clearing land for planting, splitting rails for fences and helping build a log cabin.

Lincoln set out to make his way in the world when he was 21. He carried his belongings—a few home-spun shirts and home-knit socks—tied up in a big handkerchief.

He traveled down the Mississippi River on a flatboat. The trip was adventurous but not very profitable. After that, he settled in New Salem, Ill., where he was a clerk in a small store.

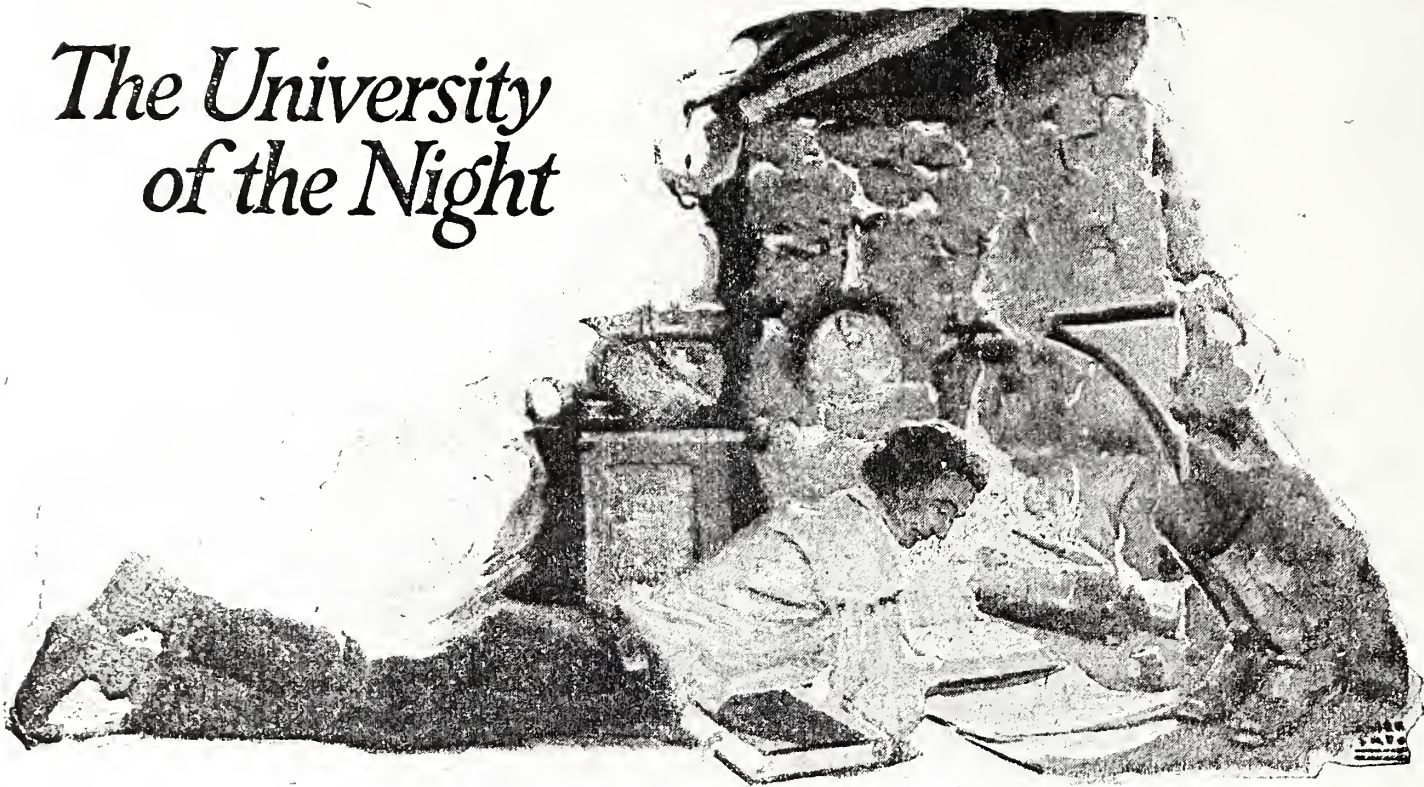
The village of New Salem has been carefully restored so that people of today can see it just as it looked in Lincoln's days there. Cut out and color this picture and mount it on cardboard. Mrs. Henry Loser of Deer Creek, Ill., sent in this idea.

(Violet Moore Higgins, AP Newsfeatures)

Tomorrow: Lincoln the Man /

THE EVENING STAR, Washington, D. C.  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1957

# *The University of the Night*



**T**HE young Lincoln, poring over borrowed schoolbooks far into the night—seeking in the dim light of his log fire the transforming light of knowledge—eager to grow—eager to do—here is a picture that has touched the hearts of men in every country on the earth—here is an example which, for three score years, has inspired the man who strives against the odds of circumstance to make his place in the world.

#### **HIS STUDY IN GERMAN.**

Along in the winter of 1849-'50 a class of us began the study of German in Lincoln & Herndon's office. I think Mr. Lincoln, when in Congress, had seen the necessity for a better education in foreign languages, and so when a German teacher came from Philadelphia he helped to get up a school for him. Mr. Lincoln's sense of humor stood in the way of our doing much, and after twelve or fourteen lessons we gave it up. The lessons too often were stopped by Mr. Lincoln being reminded of something to be of much use in the mastery of German. Yet with all his jocularly Mr. Lincoln was a serious man, and those who came in contact with him well realize it. A. W. FRENCH.



## WHAT HE DID AT HOME



**ENNIS HANKS** tells how Abraham spent his time at home:

Sometimes he would write with a piece of charcoal, or the p'int of a burnt stick, on the fence or floor. We sometimes got a little paper at the country town—(Gentryville, a mile and a half from Prairie Fork). His first reading book was Webster's Speller. Then he got hold of a book—I can't rikkilect the name. It told a yarn about a feller that sailed a flatboat up to a rock, and the rock was magnetized and drewed the nails out of his boat, and he got a duckin', or drowned or suthin', I forget now. (The books was "The Arabian Nights.") Abe would lay on the floor with a chair under his head and laugh over them stories by the hour. I told him they was likely lies from end to end; but he learned to read right well in them."

John Hanks, another cousin, relates: "When Abe and I returned to the house from work, he would go to the cupboard, snatch a piece of corn-bread, take a book, sit down, cock his legs up as high as his head, and read."

Abraham read all the books he could borrow within a circuit of fifty miles, and that was not very many. A book was a precious thing in the sight of young Abraham. He read some of them, including the Bible, over and over. He read the "Revised Statutes of Indiana," which he found at Constable Turnham's, as eagerly as boys to-day read "The Count of Monte Cristo" or the stories of Conan Doyle. At this time he read, some of them repeatedly, besides the Bible, "The Pilgrim's Progress," "Robinson Crusoe," "Æsop's Fables," a History of the United States, and Weems's "Life of Washington." In connection with the last-named book he had a queer experience which will be described in another story.

As candles were scarce and costly, Abraham read and studied by the firelight until far into the night. With a piece of charcoal he would cipher on a wide wooden shovel and erase his figures by shaving the shovel clean with his father's drawknife. Whenever he found anything in his voracious reading that he wished to preserve, he would write it on smooth board, on the under sides of chairs and shelves, and leave his odd notes there until he could supply himself with paper which he made into a rough kind of "commonplace book" and copied into it the data and quotations from their queer hiding places, high on the walls or under the benches and stools. He used to talk over what he had read, sometimes with his mother, sometimes with those of his companions who were interested.

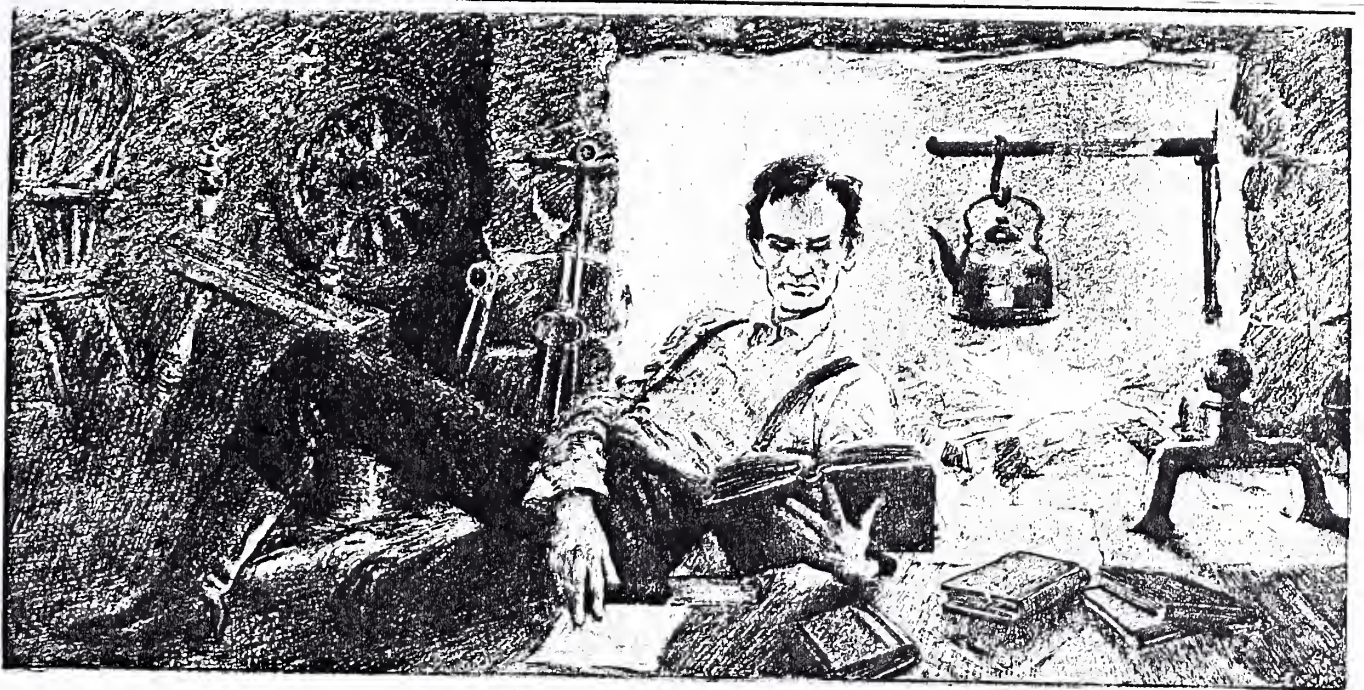
His stepmother, not long before her death, referring to this time in the life of Abraham Lincoln, said:

I can say what scarcely one mother in a thousand can say: Abe never gave me a cross word or look, and never refused in fact or appearance to do anything I asked him. His mind and mine—what little I had—seemed to run together. I had a son John, who was raised with Abe. Both were good boys, but I must say, both being now dead, that Abe was the best boy I ever saw or expect to see.

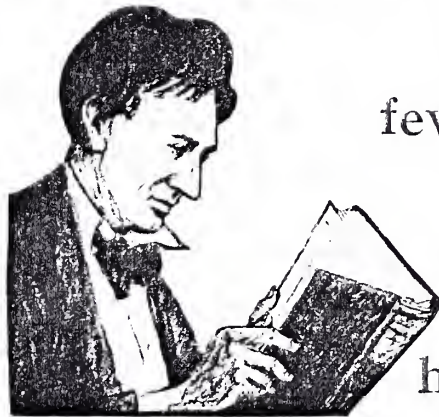


He read and studied by the firelight until far into the night





## A Few Great Books Started Lincoln



Just a  
few great  
books  
gave  
Lincoln  
his start

**YOU** probably have read as many books as Lincoln read in the first thirty years of his life. Why is it that you have gained only a smattering of knowledge from your books while he gained a liberal education from his? The answer is that he knew what few books were really worth-while. He made every moment count.

LINCOLN'S ARITHMETIC

Lincoln attended school for a few months during his boyhood in Indiana. A page of the Arithmetic he made is here shown. In the lower left corner of the page he wrote:

" Abraham Lincoln  
his hand and pen  
he will be good but  
god knows When "





## Lincoln Thought It Out

ABE NODDED. "Got a heap of time to think. They's days an' days an' weeks when I'm in the woods an' don't see a soul till I git home. Jes' me an' the axe an' the trees an' the sound of the wind in the trees. Kearn't he'p figgerin'..."

"You figgered 'bout schoolin', too?"

"Figgered thet. Pappy ain't wanted me to mess 'round blab-schools but Mammy, she made him see it like I see it."

Hugh struggled with a stubborn chip. "What good's schoolin' fer folks thet live like us?"

Abe held out his long arms. "I kin use them hands. But so kin a coon. Mebbe better. I kearn't ketch suckers in my hands like a coon does. But all folks don't live like we live. I kearn't see that the Almighty was ever minded thet folks spend all their lives jes' breakin' land an' choppin' trees an' plowin' an' harvestin'. An' then choppin' more trees, breakin' more land, plowin' more fields—jes' movin' from one quarter-section to another. They's things in books thet'll he'p folks he'p themse'ves, he'p 'em to he'p other folks." He paused, axe resting easily in his scarred hands. "Know what's wrong with folks, mostly? Ignorance. Thet's it—jes' plumb ignorance. They don't know no better."

"Never heard no one talk like you afore, Abe. You kin read thet clock back to the cabin. What good it do you? Tell time by the sun good enough. . . . Don't know what you read in books, but I bet they ain't anything you kearn't figger fer yourse'f in a corn-patch."

Abe frowned. "They's a heap more things in this world than corn-patches. I aim to know 'bout 'em. Sometimes I look up to the stars an' try to figger what they're seein'. Seein' a heap more'n jes' cornfields. They're seein' me an' they're seein' folks in Pittsburgh an' N'Orleans. They're seein' the President in Washin'ton an' rich folk in New York. They're seein' the Wabash an' the Mississipp' an' the Ohio an' a heap of rivers I ain't even heard on—all them rivers an' the folks that lives along 'em. They're seein' the oceans an' them furrin countries, an' I heard of some of them. Jes' countries filled with folks same as Indianny." He poised his axe. "Kinda sets you figgerin', lookin' at the stars."

Hugh hacked on silently, then asked, "What thet got to do with gittin' this tree down?"

"They's a powerful sight of trees an' a powerful sight of folks under 'em. Jes' 'cause we're here in a clearin' we don't fergit 'bout thet cabin yonder. We *know* 'bout it. We'll sleep thar, eat thar. Then you start figgerin' what's beyond the cabin—what sort of folks live thar. An' beyond thet, an' beyond thet? What do they think? What they do? Jes' figger like that an' purty soon you've gon round the world, jes' from this clearin'. Thet's what I aim to know. Not jes' one clearin' or one cabin. If you're workin' in a clearin' an' know all 'bout another one, thet he'ps you with the clearin' you're workin'." He pushed his coon-skin cap back on his head. "Kinda hard to explain. I allus want to know what an' why. Caleb Hazel, he was another blab-schooler an'

he tolt Pappy I was a l'arner, an' I reckon he was 'bout right." . . .

Abe gave a warning shout. "She's a-comin'! I'll take the last licks. No, you done fine, but I know jes' whar I want her laid." He chopped rapidly. The tree tottered, roared to the ground in a swirl of snapping branches.

Hugh stared. "How you do thet? Never seed a tree laid so close."

"Pappy l'arnt me. 'Tain't much of a trick. You c'd 'a' done as good only you wouldn't 'a' knowed whar to lay her. You c'd 'a' cut jes' like I done, right here. Thet's what laid her. Now let's trim her."—From "For Us, the Living," by BRUCE LANCASTER. (New York: Stokes.)

## 'BY SIGHT, SCENT, HEARING.'

That Is How Dennis Hanks Described  
the Way He and Lincoln Learned in  
the Early Times.

Dennis Hanks insists that Abe and he became learned men and expert disputants not by a course of judicious reading but by attending "speechmakings, gatherings," etc. "How did Lincoln and yourself learn so much in Indiana under such disadvantages?" said Mr. Herndon to Dennis, on one of his two oral examinations.

"We learned," said Dennis, "by sight, scent, and hearing. We heard all that was said, and talked over and over the questions heard; wore them slick, greasy, and threadbare. Went to political and other speeches and gatherings, as you do now; we would hear all sides and opinions, talk them over, discuss them, agreeing or disagreeing. Abe, as I said before, was originally a Democrat after the order of Jackson; so was his father; so we all were. He preached, made speeches, read for us, explained to us, etc. Abe was a cheerful boy, a witty boy, was humorous always; sometimes he got sad, not very often. Lincoln would frequently make political and other speeches to the boys; he was calm, logical, and clear always."

*Dennis Hanks*

---

## The Living Lincoln

(Continued from page 87)

---

"If you are going before the public, Abe, you should study grammar."

"But where can I get a grammar?" asked Abe.

Mr. Graham knew of but one grammar in all the countryside, and that at a place six miles away. Leaving his unfinished breakfast, Abe rose from the table and walked straight to the place mentioned to borrow the precious book: For many weeks after, in every leisure moment during the day's work, and at night when the chores were all done, he pored over its contents until he knew every rule and precept from cover to cover. Then he said: "If that is what they call a science, I think I'll go into another."

Lincoln never stopped until he had completely mastered whatever he undertook. He borrowed and read, until its contents were his own, every book he had ever heard of in that region for a circuit of forty miles.

It didn't matter to him that his feet were sore and his whole body weary after walking twenty miles or more from his log cabin home in the wilderness to borrow some volume he had heard of, when the coveted treasure was in his hands he forgot everything else. So eager was he for knowledge, he sometimes would read as much as a hundred pages of one of those books on his way home.

When Abe Lincoln got hold of a book, he would drink it in as a man drinks at a spring of water in a desert when nearly dead with thirst. And when he had finished reading and re-reading a book it no longer belonged to the owner—it was his! *He had its contents in his head. It had become a part of him.*

At night, long after everyone else was in bed, he studied arithmetic; his slate a wooden shovel, on which he ciphered with the carbon end of a burned stick. When the shovel was covered with figures, he would shave it off again and again, for hours at a stretch. He always kept books under the eaves, near his bed in the loft where he slept, so that he could get hold of them in the morning as soon as it was light enough to read.



## LINCOLN'S EDUCATION

FROM HERRON'S

LIFE OF LINCOLN

The business done over Offut's counter gave his clerk frequent intervals of rest, so that, if so inclined, an abundance of time for study was always at his disposal. Lincoln had long before realized the deficiencies of his education, and resolved, now that the conditions were favorable, to atone for early neglect by a course of study. Nothing was more apparent to him than his limited knowledge of language, and the proper way of expressing his ideas.

Moreover, it may be said that he appreciated his inefficiency in a rhetorical sense, and therefore determined to overcome all these obstacles by mastering the intricacies of grammatical construction. Acting on the advice of Mentor Graham he hunted up one Vaner, who was the reputed owner of Kirkham's grammar, and after a walk of several miles returned to the store with the coveted volume under his arm.

With zealous perseverance he at once applied himself to the book. Sometimes he would stretch out at full length on the counter, his head propped up on a stack of calico prints, studying it; or he would steal away to the shade of some inviting tree, and there spend hours at a time in a determined effort to fix in his mind the arbitrary rule that "adverbs qualify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs."

From the vapidness of grammar it was now and then a great relaxation to turn to the more agreeable subject of mathematics; and he might often have been seen lying face downwards, stretched out over six feet of grass, figuring out on scraps of paper some problem given for solution by a quizzical store lounger, or endeavoring to prove that, "multiplying the denominator of a fraction divides it, while dividing the denominator multiplies it." Rather a poor prospect one is forced to admit for a successful man of business.

