

Extraordinary Evidence

Teacher Guide

SUMMARY:

Students review the National Museum of American History's *Abraham Lincoln: An Extraordinary Life* online exhibition, then conduct targeted historical research on Abraham Lincoln to present to the class.

RATIONALE:

Artifacts and primary source documents are the foundation of historical research. Learning to interpret these objects will prepare the students to develop their own research questions and projects, as well as build their critical analysis skills for everyday life.

OBJECTIVES: The students will be better able to

- conduct targeted historical research.
- present research to others in support of a thesis.
- use artifacts to interpret elements of Abraham Lincoln's life and historical context.
- choose examples and artifacts to support a central idea.
- synthesize individual characteristics of Abraham Lincoln into an overall portrait of his life.
- analyze the way historical circumstances shaped Abraham Lincoln and our understanding of him.

TIME: Approximately 95–220 minutes, varies by depth of research

- 20 minutes to view exhibition (could be done out of class)
- 20–35 minutes to read or develop topics, make groups, assign topics, and explain project
- 35–135 minutes to research topics, discuss, and build presentations (could be done out of class)
- 20–35 minutes of presentations (3–5 minutes each)
- 10–15 minutes of synthesis discussion following each day of discussion

AGE GROUP: 5–12

TARGET VOCABULARY: (*none*)

MATERIALS:

- (*attached*) Directions sheet(s)
- (*attached*) Performance Criteria sheets for each student
- Computer(s) with Internet
- Digital presentation software such as Microsoft PowerPoint (Open Office Impress is available for free download at <http://download.openoffice.org/index.html>)
- (*preferred*) Classroom digital projector
- (*optional*) Print-outs of object images and quotes

PREPARATION:

- Preview the online exhibition and the images, quotes, and artifacts available for students to use in their presentations.
- For some steps of the directions, there are two approaches: one for “younger” students and one for “older” students. The directions labeled “approach for younger students” are aimed towards students in grades 5–8; the research project will be shorter and less complicated. The directions labeled “approach for older students” are aimed towards students in grades 9–12; the research project will be longer and more student-directed, and include more synthesis.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:

- (*all*) Describes, supports, and presents a concept using examples
- (*all*) Connects historical information to modern-day parallels
- (*all*) Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions
- (*Logistics Manager*) Communicates messages, and both follows and gives directions within group
- (*Logistics Manager*) Organizes research
- (*Technology Specialist*) Acquires and formats images, quotes, and explanatory text within presentation
- (*Technology Specialist*) Coordinates with team members
- (*In-class Presenters*) Uses appropriate volume and speed, and tone or voice, gestures, and stance
- (*In-class Presenters*) Incorporates images, quotes, and explanatory text into verbal presentation

STANDARDS:

NCHS History Standards

5–12 Historical Thinking Standards

- 2E: Read historical narratives imaginatively.
- 2F: Appreciate historical perspectives.
- 2I: Draw upon the visual, literary, and musical sources.
- 3B: Consider multiple perspectives.
- 3C: Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation, including the importance of the individual, the influence of ideas.
- 3D: Draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues.
- 3J: Hypothesize the influence of the past.
- 4B: Obtain historical data.
- 4C: Interrogate historical data.
- 4D: Identify the gaps in the available records, marshal contextual knowledge and perspective of the time and place.
- 4F: Support interpretations with historical evidence.

5–12 U.S. History Content Standard

Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850–1877)

- 2A: The student understands how the resources of the Union and Confederacy affected the course of the war.

IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

ISTE Education Technology Standards for Students (NETS.S)

Creativity and Innovation

- A. Apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes.

Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making

- C. Collect and analyze data to identify solutions and/or make informed decisions.

Technology Operations and Concepts

- B. Understand and use technology systems.

21st-Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication and Collaboration

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

- Media Literacy
- ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) Literacy

Life and Career Skills

- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Productivity and Accountability
- Leadership and Responsibility

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Directions

Part One: Create a thesis statement

1. Have students look at the online exhibition *Abraham Lincoln: An Extraordinary Life*. This first look should take about 20 minutes.

Tip: For extra guidance, offer the following guiding question: What abilities, personality traits, or life experiences made Lincoln special?

2. **Approach for Younger Students:** Tell students that they will be doing a research project on what made Abraham Lincoln was extraordinary. Share this list of suggested topics with students:
 - Humble origins
 - Inventiveness/embracing technology
 - Dedication to learning
 - Diplomacy and people skills
 - Appreciation of multiple perspectives
 - Resolve/dedication
 - Awareness of public image
 - Resiliency in the face of tragedy
 - Commitment to behaving ethically
 - Willingness to change/open-mindedness

Approach for Older Students: Ask students about what they saw while looking at the exhibition. Guide students to list ways in which Abraham Lincoln was extraordinary. Each of these “ways” will become a topic for research and presentation.

Tip: For extra guidance, consider asking students to name important moments in Abraham Lincoln’s life and then discuss what characteristics he needed to be successful at each time.

3. Distribute printed copies of the Student Guide and rubrics, which will assist in the discussion outlined in steps four through seven.
4. Have students divide into teams of four. Each team will work together on a single topic. The team will consist of one “logistics manager,” two “in-class presenters,” and one “technology specialist,” but all of them will research together and plan the presentation.
5. Assign one topic (way in which Lincoln was extraordinary) to each team.

Part Two: Work together to use primary and secondary sources

6. Explain that each team will be creating a presentation about its topic. The presentations will use evidence to show that Lincoln was extraordinary in a specific way. Students can visit <http://www.smithsonianconferences.org/2009/nmahgallery/> to preview the primary source evidence (quotes and images of objects) they have to support their presentations.
7. To engage the students in thinking about how objects can tell stories, consider using either of these two discussion questions:

Status Symbols: Look at Lincoln’s gold pocket watch. The exhibition states “Lincoln was not outwardly vain, but the fine gold watch was a conspicuous symbol of his success.” Lincoln’s peers might have seen the gold watch and understood that Lincoln was a successful lawyer. What kinds of things do we have today that suggest wealth, success, or power to others? (Possible answers include: designer handbags, portable electronics, Super Bowl rings, etc.)

Heirlooms: Many of the objects in the exhibition were kept as ways of remembering Lincoln specifically. Consider the White House coffee cup, which was preserved by a servant “as a relic of that tragic night” when Lincoln was assassinated. Do you have any objects that are part of your family or local history? Do any of the things you own have special meanings because of the memories connected to them? (Possible answers include: souvenirs from a trip, a quilt made by an older relative, photographs of ancestors, etc.)

8. **Approach for Younger Students:** Have students revisit the exhibition and review the evidence they can use for their presentations. Students will spend time finding out more about the story of the objects they are interested in.

Approach for Older Students: Have students review the evidence available for their presentations. Students should then research the objects by returning to the exhibition.

Tip: Consider assigning a minimum number of “Additional Suggested Resources” for further research.

Tip: Some of this research can be done outside of class, as homework or during study hall.

Part Three: Share the research with peers

9. Have students build their presentations. Students can use presentation software, like Microsoft PowerPoint or Open Office Impress. The technology specialist in each team should lead the group in creating the electronic presentation.

Tip: In order to download all of the images, visit http://americanhistory.si.edu/exhibitions/small_exhibition.cfm?key=1267&exkey=696&pagekey=755 and click on Downloadable Images. This will save a .zip file to your computer that includes all of the object images and quotes. Open this file using a tool like WinZip or StuffIt to see the individual .jpg files.

Tip: To insert images into presentations, select “Insert Picture from File” from the “Insert” menu bar. Navigate to the location of the .jpg file on your computer to complete the insertion.

10. Each team should meet together to review the presentation before sharing it with the class. The technology specialist should make changes or revisions to the presentation as needed.
11. Have students share their presentations with each other. Each team should have two presenters who will work together to describe the team’s research, explain the evidence the team selected, and answer questions from the audience. The rubrics could be used for peer review, with the team members (anonymously) assessing each other or the students observing the presentations assessing the team that is presenting.
12. After all presentations have been shown, have a class discussion to synthesize all of the information from all of the presentations. Consider using these questions:
 - Which specific characteristics were important during specific time periods of Lincoln’s life? (early life, time as a lawyer, time as a representative, time as president)
 - Debate which characteristic was most extraordinary or most useful over Lincoln’s entire life.
 - Suggest other historical figures who have/had or use/used the same characteristics as Abraham Lincoln.
 - Compare and contrast modern presidents to Abraham Lincoln.

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Student Guide

Summary:

Investigate Abraham Lincoln like a historian would! Work with a team to use primary and secondary sources to prove your thesis about Abraham Lincoln.

Guiding Question:

What abilities, personality traits, or life experiences made Abraham Lincoln special?

What's your topic?

Lincoln's extraordinary _____

With people today or from the past, how would this characteristic come to life?

- In what kinds of situations would this characteristic be useful?
- What kinds of jobs would allow a person with this characteristic to thrive?

For your presentation, try to answer all of these questions:

- What is your topic? "Lincoln's Extraordinary _____"
- What evidence do we have of it?
- What other situations might Lincoln have used it in that we don't have evidence for?
- How could we, everyday people today, use this characteristic?
- What famous person in our time uses this characteristic a lot?

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Student Guide (*continued*)

Each team will have four people: One logistics manager, one technology specialist, and two in-class presenters. Here's a quick description of each:

Title	Logistics Manager	Technology Specialist	In-Class Presenters
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize research Focus discussion Manage time Assign research tasks Contribute research to the group presentation Contribute to the class discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire images Lay out images, quotes, and explanatory text in digital presentation Coordinate slides with Presenters and Manager Contribute research to the group presentation Contribute to the class discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate between each other to divide the presentation's content Practice the presentation Incorporate the image, quotes, and explanatory text with the verbal presentation Contribute research to the group presentation Contribute to the class discussion
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes to work behind-the-scenes Keeps to schedules and stays focused on the task at hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes to work behind-the-scenes Likes to use computers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Likes to take center stage Comfortably answers questions

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Resources

Your main resources are the exhibition called *Abraham Lincoln: An Extraordinary Life* and the downloadable images. You may also want to do more research by using the additional suggested resources.

Main Resources

- *Abraham Lincoln: An Extraordinary Life* exhibition (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/lincoln/>)
- Downloadable Images (http://americanhistory.si.edu/exhibitions/resources/lincoln/Lincoln_Folder.zip)

Additional Suggested Resources

- Hear a curator from the National Museum of American History discuss some objects related to Abraham Lincoln (http://americanhistory.si.edu/lincoln/lincoln_artifacts.aspx)
- Read the exhibition catalog book and examine over 125 color photographs. Rubenstein, Harry R. *Abraham Lincoln: An Extraordinary Life*. (Washington, D.C.): Smithsonian Books, 2008.
- Explore the National Museum of American History's exhibition *American Presidency: A Glorious Burden* (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/home.html>)
- Explore the National Museum of American History's exhibition *The Price of Freedom: Americans at War* for its section on the Civil War: (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/>)
- Explore the National Museum of American History's exhibition *The Gettysburg Address* (http://americanhistory.si.edu/documentgallery/exhibitions/gettysburg_address_1.html)
- Explore the National Museum of American History's exhibition *America's New Birth of Freedom* (http://americanhistory.si.edu/documentgallery/exhibitions/americas_new_birth_of_freedom_1.html)
- Explore the Lincoln multimedia presented by Lincoln experts from around the Smithsonian Institution, organized and recorded by the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies (<http://www.smithsonianconferences.org/sessions/>)
- Explore the National Portrait Gallery's online exhibition *One Life: The Mask of Abraham Lincoln* (<http://www.npg.si.edu/exhibit/lincoln/>)
- Read a magazine article about Lincoln's skills as a speechwriter. (<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/man-of-his-words.html>)
- Read a magazine article about Lincoln's debates with Stephen A. Douglas (<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/face-the-nation.html>)
- Read a magazine article about Lincoln's invention (<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/object-oct06.html>)
- Listen to a song about Lincoln (http://microsite.smithsonianmag.com/si_jukebox/200810-october/Lincoln/jukebox-lincoln.html)

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Logistics Manager Performance Criteria

Individual Performance Criteria

	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Excellent
Communicates messages, and follows and gives directions within group	Needs assistance to communicate messages, and follow and give directions	Suitably communicates messages, and follows and gives directions	Capably communicates messages, and follows and gives directions	Expertly communicates messages, and follows and gives directions
Organizes research	Research demonstrates limited organization	Research demonstrates some organization	Research demonstrates suitable organization	Research demonstrates expert organization

Group Performance Criteria

	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Excellent
Describes, supports, and presents a concept using examples	Presentation makes limited reference to examples	Presentation makes some reference to examples	Presentation makes considerable reference to examples	Presentation makes thorough reference to examples
Connects historical information to modern-day parallels	Needs assistance to make connections between historical information and modern-day parallels	Is beginning to make connections between historical information and modern-day parallels independently	Makes suitable connections between historical information and modern-day parallels	Makes strong connections between historical information and modern-day parallels
Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with limited success	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with some success	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with considerable success	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with excellent success
Uses presentation time effectively and within target time period	Presentation took less than 1 minute or more than 7 minutes	Presentation took less than 2 minutes or more than 6 minutes	Uses presentation time somewhat effectively and completed presentation within 3 to 5 minutes	Uses presentation time very effectively and completed presentation within 3 to 5 minutes

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Technology Specialist Performance Criteria

Individual Performance Criteria

	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Excellent
Acquires and formats images, quotes, and explanatory text within presentation	Acquires and formats images, quotes, and explanatory text within presentation with assistance	Adequately acquires and formats images, quotes, and explanatory text within presentation	Competently acquires and formats images, quotes, and explanatory text within presentation	Masterfully acquires and formats images, quotes, and explanatory text within presentation
Coordinates with team members	Needs assistance to coordinate with team members	Suitably coordinates with team members	Capably coordinates with team members	Expertly coordinates with team members

Group Performance Criteria

	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Excellent
Describes, supports, and presents a concept using examples	Presentation makes limited reference to examples	Presentation makes some reference to examples	Presentation makes considerable reference to examples	Presentation makes thorough reference to examples
Connects historical information to modern-day parallels	Needs assistance to make connections between historical information and modern-day parallels	Is beginning to make connections between historical information and modern-day parallels independently	Makes suitable connections between historical information and modern-day parallels	Makes strong connections between historical information and modern-day parallels
Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with limited success	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with some success	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with considerable success	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with excellent success
Uses presentation time effectively and within target time period	Presentation took less than 1 minute or more than 7 minutes	Presentation took less than 2 minutes or more than 6 minutes	Uses presentation time somewhat effectively and completed presentation within 3 to 5 minutes	Uses presentation time very effectively and completed presentation within 3 to 5 minutes

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In-Class Presenter Performance Criteria

Individual Performance Criteria

	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Excellent
Uses appropriate volume and speed, and tone of voice, gestures, and stance	Is beginning to use appropriate volume and speed, and tone of voice, gestures, and stance	Uses appropriate volume and speed, and tone of voice, gestures, and stance satisfactorily	Uses appropriate volume and speed, and tone of voice, gestures, and stance effectively	Uses appropriate volume and speed, and tone of voice, gestures, and stance with expertise
Incorporates images, quotes, and explanatory text into verbal presentation	Needs assistance when incorporating images, quotes, and explanatory text into verbal presentation	Suitably incorporates images, quotes, and explanatory text into verbal presentation	Capably incorporates images, quotes, and explanatory text into verbal presentation	Expertly incorporates images, quotes, and explanatory text into verbal presentation

Group Performance Criteria

	Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Excellent
Describes, supports, and presents a concept using examples	Presentation makes limited reference to examples	Presentation makes some reference to examples	Presentation makes considerable reference to examples	Presentation makes thorough reference to examples
Connects historical information to modern-day parallels	Needs assistance to make connections between historical information and modern-day parallels	Is beginning to make connections between historical information and modern-day parallels independently	Makes suitable connections between historical information and modern-day parallels	Makes strong connections between historical information and modern-day parallels
Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with limited success	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with some success	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with considerable success	Listens to discussions and asks relevant questions with excellent success
Uses presentation time effectively and within target time period	Presentation took less than 1 minute or more than 7 minutes	Presentation took less than 2 minutes or more than 6 minutes	Uses presentation time somewhat effectively and completed presentation within 3 to 5 minutes	Uses presentation time very effectively and completed presentation within 3 to 5 minutes