

Send a Lincoln Letter

Parent Guide

SUMMARY

During this activity, your child will create a piece of mail and you and your child will visit a post office in your neighborhood.

WHY

By using the post office and meeting postal clerks in their area, children will begin to develop relationships with their community.

TIME

20 minutes at home
travel time
10 minutes at post office

CHALLENGE WORDS

postal clerk: one who works at a sales or service counter at a post office

GET READY

- Read *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* together. This book will help your students see an example of a child using her local post office to send mail. For tips on reading this book together, check out the [Guided Reading Activity](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/lincoln/Reading_Whiskers.pdf) (http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/lincoln/Reading_Whiskers.pdf).
- Be sure to check the hours for the post office you are planning to visit before you leave home. U.S. Post Offices are closed on Sundays and many have limited hours on Saturday. If you can, try to visit at an "off" time, like mid-afternoon on a weekday, as there will be fewer people and the post office staff may be able to answer more questions.

YOU NEED

- Directions sheets (*attached*)
- Background sheet (*attached*)
- Pen/Pencil
- Envelope
- Paper
- Money for at least one stamp
(check current rates here: <http://www.usps.com/tools/calculatemailpostage>)
- Transportation to post office
- (*optional*) Computer(s) with Internet

Read the "Directions" sheets for step-by-step instructions.

Send a Lincoln Letter

Background Information

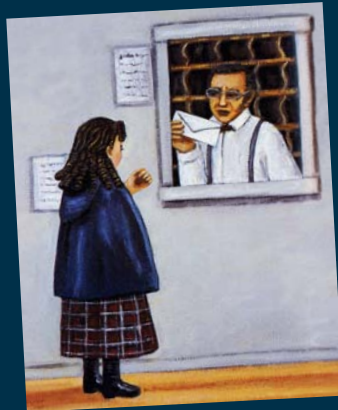
Abraham Lincoln was the president of the United States of America from 1861 to 1865. As a child growing up on the frontier, there were not many opportunities for him to attend school. Abraham Lincoln is famous for leading America through the Civil War, freeing slaves, and giving thoughtful speeches, like the Gettysburg Address. To find out more about Abraham Lincoln, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu/lincoln>.



Lincoln wore high top hats, like this one purchased in Washington, D.C. The last time he put it on was to go to Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865, the night he was assassinated.

In 1860, Abraham Lincoln was campaigning to become the next president. That October, an eleven-year-old girl from New York named Grace wrote a letter to Abraham Lincoln suggesting that he grow a beard. After a few days of waiting, Grace received a response from Lincoln, who was living in Springfield, Illinois. Soon afterwards, Lincoln appeared in public wearing a beard. See Grace's letter and its response from Lincoln at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/5a2d.html>.

Image of Grace Bedell mailing her letter at the post office from *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*.



Post offices have served as the hearts of many cities, small towns, and rural communities. For a long time, America's general and private news traveled through post offices in the form of letters, packages, and newspapers.

Do you like to send mail?

How do you think the mail gets from you to the person you're sending it to?

Create a piece of mail and take it to the post office to send it on its way!

Send a Lincoln Letter

Directions

For kids and adults to follow together

1. Grace, the main character in the book *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*, lived in Westfield, New York. Where did Lincoln live?

Tip: Check the first page of the book, the page after Grace wrote her letter to Lincoln, or the letter from Lincoln to find the answer. Lincoln was living in Springfield, Illinois in October, 1860 when these letters were written.

Tip: For extra challenge, find Illinois and New York on a map. If you have a computer with Internet access, visit [National Geographic's Xpeditions Atlas](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/) (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/>).

2. Think about it: Why did Grace write a letter to Lincoln? Why didn't she talk to him in person, call him on the phone, or e-mail him? What are good and bad things about sending mail?

3. Write a letter to a friend or someone in your family. If you can use the Internet, try [Read, Write Think's Letter Generator](http://readwritethink.org/materials/letter_generator/) (http://readwritethink.org/materials/letter_generator/). You can write about anything that you think would be interesting, but here are some ideas for what you could include in a letter about the last book you read, *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*:

- "I just read a book about Abraham Lincoln. Do you know who he is?" and then share what you learned about Abraham Lincoln.
- "One of my favorite parts was . . ." and then talk about the part you liked best and why it was so good.
- Include a drawing of Abraham Lincoln
- Draw a picture of your favorite scene in the book.
- As part of your letter, ask for your reader to send you a letter or card back.

Tip: This small request could mean a lot. Most kids find it very exciting to get mail addressed to them.

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Directions

For kids and adults to follow together

4. Put your letter or drawing into an envelope and seal it. On the front, be sure to write your address in the top left corner, and the address of the person you're mailing it to in the center.
Tip: Children might need help writing the addresses; make sure the addresses are clear.
5. Before you get to the post office, or on your way there, talk about post offices.
Tip: Guess what you will see there or how much it will cost to send a letter. Think of any questions you have for the postal clerk. Tell a memorable story from a visit to the post office.
6. At the post office, give the clerk your mail, ask how much it will cost to send, pay the clerk, and put the stamp on the envelope. If you thought of any questions to ask the clerk, start a conversation!
Tip: Ask if the clerk has a stamp with Abraham Lincoln on it.

For more activities about Abraham Lincoln and *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*, visit [Our Story: A Letter to Abraham Lincoln](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstoryinhistory/tryathome/lincolnletter.html) (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstoryinhistory/tryathome/lincolnletter.html>).

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Teacher Guide

Read the “Directions” sheets for step-by-step instructions.

SUMMARY:

During this activity, students will create pieces of mail and take the mail to the post office to be paid for and delivered.

RATIONALE:

Students should feel like they are a part of history and that their behaviors can create history. When children feel that they can have an impact on the world, their positive self-esteem is developed. The feeling that they can make history may also encourage an interest in learning and understanding history. In addition, by engaging with the post office and postal clerks in their area, children will begin to develop relationships with their community and feel some ownership and responsibility for the people and things around them.

OBJECTIVES: The students will be better able to

- tell a story using words or pictures.
- address and mail a letter at a post office.
- recall that Lincoln lived in Illinois.

TIME:

- 20 minutes in class
- travel time
- 10 minutes at post office

AGE GROUP: K-4

TARGET VOCABULARY:

- postal clerk: one who works at a sales or service counter at a post office

MATERIALS:

- Directions sheets (*attached*)
- Background sheet (*attached*)
- Pen/Pencil
- Envelope
- Paper
- Money for at least one stamp
(check current rates here: <http://www.usps.com/tools/calculatepostage>)
- Transportation to post office
- (*optional*) Computer(s) with Internet

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PREPARATION:

- Read Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers together. This book will help your students see an example of a child using her local post office to send mail. For tips on reading this book together, check out the [Guided Reading Activity](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/lincoln/Reading_Whiskers.pdf) (http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/lincoln/Reading_Whiskers.pdf).

STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA:

- Follows teacher instructions on envelope.
- Communicates information effectively through written or visual representation.

STANDARDS:

NCHS History Standards

K-4 Historical Thinking Standards

- 4A: Formulate historical questions.
- 4B: Obtain historical data.
- 4D: Marshal needed information of the time and place.
- 5A: Identify problems and dilemmas.

K-4 Historical Content Standards

- 8C: The student understands changes in communication and their effects.

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.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

21st-Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills

Communication and collaboration