



For book *Abraham Lincoln: From Log*

Cabin to the White House, Levels Z, Z1, Z2

Script Levels: Grade 5 (Early, Middle, Upper)

Word Count: 2,190

Script Summary:

Readers tell the life of Abraham Lincoln, including his humble childhood, his political career, and the troubled times of the nation he led. The characters show how Lincoln's simple values of equality and freedom led the United States through its Civil War and made him one of the nation's greatest presidents.

Objectives and Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can

- consistently read their lines with appropriate rate and accuracy
- consistently read their lines with appropriate expression, including pause, inflection, and intonation
- follow along silently and listen for spoken cues

Using the Scripts:

- Each role is assigned a reading level according to the syntactic and semantic difficulty encountered. Feel free to divide roles further to include more readers in a group.
- Discuss vocabulary and encourage readers to practice their lines to promote fluent delivery of the script.
- Have readers highlight their lines on the scripts, and encourage them to follow along as everyone reads.

Vocabulary:

Story words: abolished, campaigns, Civil War, emancipator, equality, orator, privilege, secede, sympathizer

Cast of Characters:

| Grade 5 (Early) | Grade 5 (Middle) | Grade 5 (Upper) |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Pa | Narrator 1 | Lincoln |
| Sarah | Narrator 2 | |
| Mary Todd Lincoln | | |

Cast of Characters:

| Parts | | |
|-------|------------|-------------------|
| Pa | Narrator 1 | Lincoln |
| Sarah | Narrator 2 | Mary Todd Lincoln |

Narrator 1:

Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, on a small log-cabin farm in Kentucky. He grew up to become one of the most famous American presidents and is remembered for his leadership in the **Civil War** and his dedication to freedom.

Narrator 2:

Abraham Lincoln is known as the “Great **Emancipator**,” because he **abolished** slavery in the South. He was known as a “common man,” who was born in a log cabin and had little regular schooling.

Narrator 1:

When Abraham was seven years old, his parents moved the family to Illinois, hoping for a better life for Abraham and his older sister, Sarah. But two years later, tragedy struck.

Pa:

Abraham, Sarah, please sit down and prepare yourselves for some very sad and unfortunate news. I’m so sorry, but your mother has passed away from milk sickness.

Lincoln:

What’s milk sickness, Pa?

Pa:

It's a disease caused by drinking milk from cows that have eaten the poisonous white snakeroot plant. I'm so sorry, my little ones.

Narrator 2:

Not long after Abraham's mother passed away, his father married Sarah Bush Johnston, a woman he knew back in Kentucky. She was a widow and mother of three.

Narrator 1:

Abraham grew into a tall, awkward youth. He spent much of his time in the woods splitting logs for fences, wagons, and farm equipment.

Lincoln:

Pa, I wish I could go to school more often than just a few weeks during the wintertime.

Pa:

I know, son, but we need you on the farm to help with all the work. Everyone tells me what a good worker you are. Besides, why do you want to walk eighteen miles in the snow every day, just to go school?

Lincoln:

I love learning, Pa. I love learning about the world outside the state of Illinois. The pioneers passing through our town on the way to the western territories tell me many fascinating stories.

Pa:

What kinds of things do they tell you, son?

Lincoln:

They tell me about life in the big cities along the eastern seaboard, such as Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C. Washington is the capital of the United States. Maybe I'll get the chance to visit it one day, though that's probably only a silly dream.

Pa:

Abraham Lincoln, I don't ever want to hear you speak that way again. You're a very clever boy, and if you want to learn about and see the world, you'll find a way.

Lincoln:

Well, I do borrow quite a lot of books and newspapers from our neighbors . . .

Pa:

Then you needn't worry. Now, let's stop this dithering and get back to cutting down these trees. You can read your newspapers and books tonight by candlelight after we're done.

Narrator 2:

As a teenager, Lincoln traveled down the Mississippi River and stopped off at the bustling port city of New Orleans.

Narrator 1:

This is where Lincoln first saw black men, women, and children chained at slaveholding pens and auction blocks to be bought and sold.

Lincoln:

I reckon I've never seen anything so horrendous in my life. Those poor souls in chains are suffering mightily, and they haven't yet been sold as slaves. I simply cannot abide this notion of slavery after witnessing such misery.

Narrator 1:

Lincoln returned home, and the family moved again, to central Illinois near the town of Decatur. After helping his father build a new log cabin, Abe decided it was time to venture out on his own.

Lincoln:

Pa, do you remember when I was a boy, and I yearned to learn more about the world beyond Illinois?

Pa:

Of course I do, son. You traveled down the Mississippi River and visited New Orleans.

Lincoln:

I'm twenty-two years old, Pa, and I think it's time I establish a life of my own. I know this means more hardship for you without your son to help you on the farm, but this is something I've dreamed of doing for a long time. I hope you understand.

Narrator 2:

Lincoln left the family homestead and moved to the frontier town of New Salem. He worked at various jobs, including storekeeper, surveyor, and carpenter. He also became a well-known wrestler. As the years passed, Lincoln would visit his sister, Sarah, and tell her what he learned in his new life.

Sarah:

It's wonderful to see you, Abe. Father and I have missed you terribly.

Lincoln:

Sarah, it's good to see you, too. I've missed you and father, as well.

Sarah:

Tell me about your new life, Abe. I can't wait to hear all about it, so don't leave out any detail.

Lincoln:

I've experienced and learned about many strange and wonderful things that have opened my eyes about the world and about myself, as well. First, I've learned many new skills and am able to support myself financially.

Sarah:

Congratulations, Abe. That's wonderful news, and I'm sure Pa is very proud.

Lincoln:

I've also become quite a skilled wrestler and once fought a man named Jack Armstrong. He was the leader of a gang in New Salem, called the Clary's Grove Street Boys. He challenged me to a wrestling match to see who would be called the best wrestler in town.

Sarah:

Jack Armstrong sounds like quite a dangerous fellow. You could have been hurt.

Lincoln:

I almost was hurt, because Armstrong tried to win the fight by cheating. Nevertheless, after I spoke some words to him, he eventually admitted that I was indeed the victor and accepted defeat gracefully.

Sarah:

I hope that gang leader was punished for his devious ways and sent to prison. I'm very pleased that he's no longer a threat to you and to the town.

Lincoln:

On the contrary, Armstrong and I are presently very good friends. I've learned that a person who is open to hearing different viewpoints and is willing to change his or her mind is a person to be respected.

Sarah:

Those are wise words, and I'm thankful that you learned such a valuable lesson. You've always been able to sway people with your words.

Lincoln:

Thank you, Sarah. I even joined the New Salem Debating Society so I could improve my skills as an **orator**. In fact, I'm thinking of running for the Illinois state legislature.

Sarah:

That's a wonderful idea. You'd really be able to do some good for the people of Illinois by helping to write and pass laws. However, wouldn't your reputation as a wrestler hurt your chances of winning an election?

Narrator 1:

In the 1800s, politicians were expected to display feats of bravery in order to earn the votes of their constituents. Lincoln's legendary skills as a wrestler served him well in his future **campaigns**.

Narrator 2:

In 1832, Lincoln ran for a seat in the Illinois state legislature, but he didn't win. Two years later, however, he ran again, and this time he won.

Sarah:

Abe, I'm so proud of you for not giving up on your dream to enter politics.

Lincoln:

Failure is a good teacher. I learned from my mistakes the first time I ran for the legislature, and I didn't let that failure discourage me from running again.

Narrator 2:

While a representative, Lincoln studied law on his own, passed the exams, and became a lawyer.

Sarah:

Congratulations, Abraham. With your grit, determination, and skills dealing with people, who knows how far you'll go?

Narrator 1:

As the years progressed, Lincoln developed political views that were based on his strong belief in democratic rights for the common man.

Lincoln:

I believe that each person is important regardless of wealth or **privilege**, and that is one of the reasons I oppose slavery.

Narrator 2:

As an Illinois representative, Lincoln felt that the practice of slavery was protected by the state laws in the South, but he fought the spread of slavery in the western territories.

Lincoln:

Would the western territories enter the union as "free" or "slave" states? The South wants these new lands for slave-grown cotton, but the North doesn't support slavery. The Northern states don't want any of these new states to become slave states. I've learned so much about the horrors of slavery. How can I help the Northern states' cause?

Narrator 1:

Lincoln decided to join the Republican Party, which opposed slavery. In 1858, he became the party's candidate for United States senator.

Narrator 2:

His opponent was a man named Stephen Douglas. During the campaign, they held the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates, which captured the attention of the entire country. Much of the debate concerned the issue of slavery and its effect on the future of the union.

Lincoln:

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free."

Narrator 1:

Douglas said that the Constitution of the United States guaranteed **equality** only to white citizens, not to blacks. Each state, he believed, had the right to decide whether it would be slave or free.

Narrator 2:

Lincoln didn't win the election, but the debates made him popular, particularly in the Republican Party.

Narrator 1:

In 1860, Lincoln ran as the Republicans' choice for president of the United States. On the eve of the election, Abraham and his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln, reflect on their lives, the election, and what the presidency might entail.

Mary Todd Lincoln:

Abraham, to think that you've come this far: from log cabins in Kentucky and Illinois to the threshold of the White House in Washington, D.C. You're a remarkable example of how much anyone in this country can achieve with hard work and a desire to learn and make the world a better place for everyone.

Script (continued)

Abraham Lincoln: From Log Cabin to the White House

Lincoln:

We've come this far, Mary.

Mary Todd Lincoln:

If only all our children could be here with us to commemorate this moment in our lives. Why did Edward have to die so young?

Lincoln:

My dear Mary, I wish I knew.

Narrator 1:

The Lincoln's lost their son, Edward, at a very young age. Mary Todd Lincoln never fully recovered from his death or the deaths of two sons yet to come.

Lincoln:

If I succeed at winning this election tomorrow, my work as president of the United States will be difficult indeed. We are living in very troubling times.

Mary Todd Lincoln:

Yes, but if there's anyone who can help our country survive these grave challenges, it's you, Abraham. You are famous for your honesty, hard work, and inspiring speeches. The people will listen to you, and you can convince them of what is right. You've learned so much; now it's time for you to teach.

Lincoln:

I hope you're right. The Union is in peril. This issue of slavery is dividing our country. I'll work hard to bring the country back together, but I truly do not know if I can succeed.

Narrator 1:

On November 6, 1860, Lincoln was elected president of the United States. The North rejoiced, but the South was outraged. Even before Lincoln's inauguration on March 4, 1861, seven Southern states voted to **secede** from the United States.

Lincoln:

There's talk of the Southern states seceding from the Union. That means they will cease being part of the United States of America and may form a country of their own. I can't allow this country to be torn apart. We are one nation.

Mary Todd Lincoln:

If you become president, wouldn't there be something you could do to keep the Southern states from seceding?

Lincoln:

I would do everything in my power that I could. As the great patriot Benjamin Franklin said at the signing of the Declaration of Independence: "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

Mary Todd Lincoln:

Those are wise words to which you must pay heed.

Narrator 2:

On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln became the sixteenth president of the United States. The North and the western territories rejoiced at the election results, but the South was outraged. Southern states began to secede from the nation and formed the Confederate States of America.

Narrator 1:

The Civil War began in April 1861. It was a terrible war that took the lives of more than 600,000 Americans. The war finally ended on April 9, 1865. The North won, and the Union was preserved. President Lincoln worked with Congress to pass the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery forever. He signed the amendment on February 1, 1865, but he would not live to see it ratified by two-thirds of the U.S. States.

Mary Todd Lincoln:

It was April 15, 1865, and my husband and I had decided to attend a play at Ford's Theatre. While we were enjoying the play, a Confederate **sympathizer** named John Wilkes Booth shot my husband and killed him.

Lincoln:

What I learned was simple. "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy." I died for my beliefs, and I would do it all again if I had the chance.