



SC Farm Bureau
Ag in the Classroom
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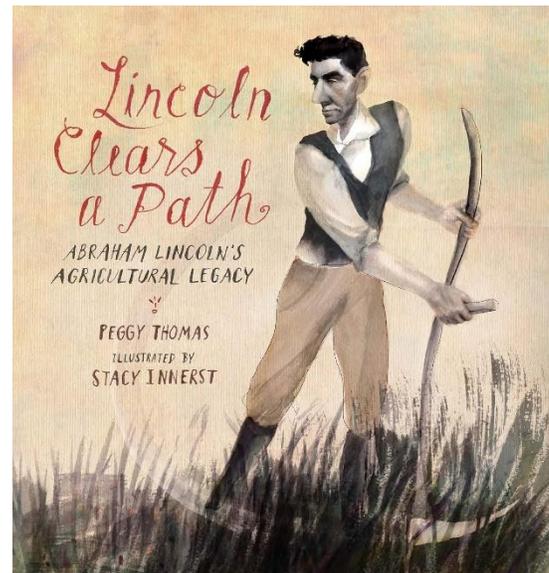


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Lincoln Clears a Path: Abraham Lincoln's Agricultural Legacy

By: Peggy Thomas

As a boy, Abraham Lincoln helped his family break through the wilderness and struggle on a frontier farm. When Lincoln was a young man, friends made it easier for him to get a better education and become a lawyer, so as a politician he paved the way for better schools and roads. President Lincoln cleared a path to better farming, improved transportation, accessible education, and most importantly, freedom. Author Peggy Thomas uncovers Abraham Lincoln's passion for agriculture and his country while illustrator Stacy Innerst cleverly provides a clear look as President Lincoln strives for positive change.¹



Did You Know? (Ag Facts)

1. Abraham Lincoln established the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) during the Civil War. ¹
2. Every month during the Civil War, farmers provided 48,750 bushels of beans and 8.5 million pounds of potatoes to feed 600,000 military men. ¹
3. Rice became the first major export crop from South Carolina. Prior to the Civil War, half of all the rice produced in America came from Georgetown County. ²

Discussion Questions

- When does the author say Abe felt the happiest?
- How did Lincoln help American agriculture?

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Grade Level(s): 3-5

Purpose: Students will diagram the life of President Abraham Lincoln, including his childhood, presidency, and role during the Civil War, and describe his agricultural legacy and impact on agriculture today.

Vocabulary:

- **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA):** a federal agency responsible for developing and executing federal laws related to farming, forestry, and food
- **westward expansion:** the 19th-century movement of settlers into the American West

Background Agricultural Connections: ³

Abraham Lincoln is well known for his presidency during the Civil War, which included his fight for freedom, the passing of the Emancipation Proclamation, and his Gettysburg Address. What some might not realize, however, is his agricultural legacy.

Shortly after being elected the 16th president of the United States, the Civil War began. Abraham Lincoln quickly realized that those fighting for the Union army needed food and clothing, so Lincoln asked farmers to cultivate all of their land in order to support the military men. Because many of the men volunteered to fight in the army, wives, mothers, and sisters often times took over the farms. In 1862, there were 600,000 military men to feed and clothe. Each month during the Civil War, farmers provided 48,750 bushels of beans, 8.5 million pounds of potatoes, 24.3 million pounds of fresh beef, and over 130,000 barrels of flour.¹ Lincoln recognized the hard work of the farmers feeding the army and decided the farmers needed additional support. Lincoln believed agriculture at the time was "the largest interest in the nation," and should have a proper department.¹ On May 15, 1862, Abraham Lincoln established the **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)**. The USDA was created to support the farmers who were supporting the army. Support was offered to the farmers through the USDA by testing farm equipment and finding the best seeds for planting and harvesting. Today, the USDA continues to support farmers and ranchers while also promoting trade, protecting natural resources, and ensuring food safety.

In 1862, Abraham Lincoln continued his agricultural legacy by signing various acts that would impact the United States—and agriculture—for many generations. Within just a few short months, Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, the Pacific Railway Act, and the Morrill Act.

The Homestead Act (May 20, 1862)

Anyone over the age of 17, and who did not fight against the Union, was eligible to apply to receive 160 acres of public land. If granted the acreage, settlers were required to live on the land for five years and make improvements to the land, such as building a house and planting crops. By 1934, the government processed more than 1.6 million applications.¹ Although this act was critical for **westward expansion**, it disrupted Native American nations who lived on the land given to homesteaders.

The Pacific Railway Act (July 1, 1862)

Abraham Lincoln signed the Pacific Railway Act in order to fund railway construction. The Union Pacific Railroad Company started their railway in Missouri and worked west, while the Central Pacific Railroad Company started their railway in San Francisco and headed east. The two

companies connected their railroad lines in Promontory, Utah, on May 10, 1869. This new railroad line, that spanned from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean, allowed citizens to travel the plains in eight days and offered farmers faster transportation for products.

The Morrill Act (July 2, 1862)

A representative from Vermont, by the name of Justin Morill, proposed that the federal government grant each state 30,000 acres to establish at least one land-grant college. Land grant-universities were designed to teach agriculture, engineering, and mechanical arts. Some states already had public universities, so in response to this act, they created new agricultural colleges rather than adding to existing universities. In 1890, Justin Morrill proposed a second land-grant act that ensured African Americans equal access to colleges in southern states.¹

During his presidency, Abraham Lincoln accelerated agricultural research, production, and education. The USDA was able to quickly spread information to farmers about new equipment and technologies, homesteading increased the number of farms throughout the west, railways provided quick transportation of livestock and crops across states, and land-grant universities furthered agricultural education and research.

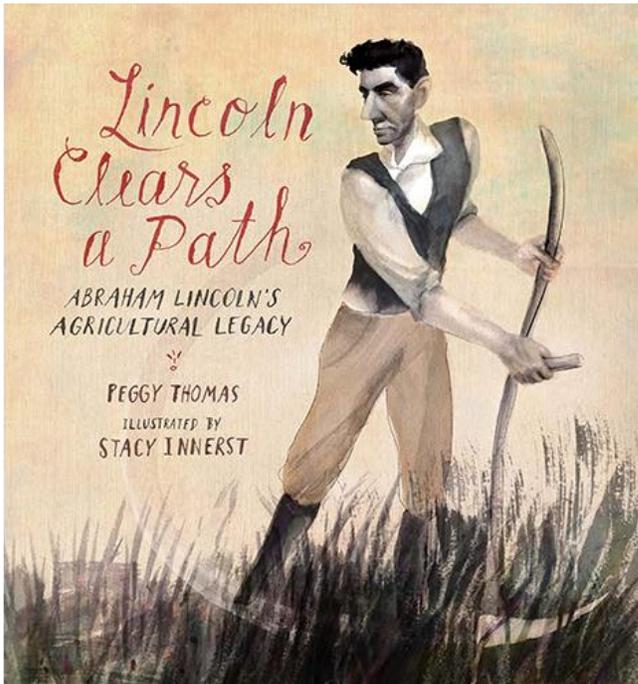
Lincoln Clears a Path³

Materials:

- *Lincoln Clears a Path* by Peggy Thomas

Procedures:

1. Explain to the students that Abraham Lincoln often used the phrase, "clearing a path" in his writing. Ask the students, "What does it mean to clear a path?" (*Someone can literally clear a path by removing trees, bushes, or stumps. Someone can figuratively clear a path by making changes that positively affect others, creating new laws, or leading the way to a new way of life.*)
2. Ask the students to create a T-chart on a piece of paper and title it, "Lincoln Clears a Path."
3. Instruct the students to label one side of the chart "Literally" and the other side "Figuratively." Explain the difference between literal and figurative phrases.
 - Literal phrases mean exactly what they say.
 - Figurative phrases use similes, metaphors, hyperbole, and personification to describe something often through comparison with something different.
4. As you read *Lincoln Clears a Path* by Peggy Thomas, ask the students to write down each time Lincoln "clears a path" in the correct column of the T-chart.



Lincoln Clears a Path

| Literally | Figuratively |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abe helped his father fell trees • Abe helped cleared brush • Abe plowed fields • Abe pulled stumps | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abe cleared a path for better schools • Lincoln cleared a path for agriculture • Established the USDA • Signed the Homestead Act • Signed the Pacific Railway Act • Created land-grant colleges • Cleared a path to freedom by signing the Emancipation Proclamation |

A Path for Lincoln ³

Materials:

- Hexagon Tiles (individually cut out, 1 per student)
- Colored pencils

Procedures:

Part One

1. Pass out a Hexagon Tile to each student. Explain that each tile represents an important part of Lincoln's life, the Civil War, or agriculture.
2. Instruct the students to illustrate their tile according to the caption.
3. When each student has finished their illustration, ask students to hang each of their tiles on the wall, connected to each other creating a "path." Allow the students to decide how to connect each of the hexagon tiles for the path. There is no one correct way to connect all the tiles. Allow the students to create their path as a class.

Part Two

1. Use the information from *Lincoln Clears a Path* by Peggy Thomas and the hexagon path from Activity 2 to lead a classroom discussion about Lincoln's impact on the United States and agriculture. Consider asking the following questions:
 - What parts of Lincoln's childhood and young adult life prepared him to become President of the United States?
 - What role did agriculture play during the Civil War?
 - Is agriculture still important today? Why?
 - How did Lincoln impact agriculture today?
 - What is the purpose of the USDA today?
 - What are land-grant universities?
 - Does our state have a land-grant university? What is it called?
 - How did the Pacific Railway Act benefit farmers and citizens?

- How did the Homestead Act benefit farmers, citizens, and immigrants?
2. Reinforce the idea that Lincoln made changes in the 1800s that still impact us today.
 3. Ask students to consider how they are personally impacted by any of the acts that Lincoln signed in 1862. (*Students might know someone who attended a land grant university; the USDA regulates programs like the school lunch program and MyPlate; students might have had ancestors who homesteaded in the western United States; etc.*)

Extension Activities:

- Have your students journal about how important the USDA is to farmers across the nation. Students can research more on the topic if needed.
- Students can complete the word search or crossword puzzle on Lincoln to review. ⁴

Suggested Companion Resources:

- [Farmer George Plants a Nation](#)
- [If You Lived At the Time of the Civil War](#)
- [Lincoln Clears a Path: Abraham Lincoln's Agricultural Legacy](#)
- [Right Here on this Spot](#)
- [Thomas Jefferson Grows a Nation](#)
- [Tuttle's Red Barn: The Story of America's Oldest Family Farm](#)
- [Growing a Nation Multimedia Timeline](#)

Sources/Credits:

1. Thomas, Peggy. *Lincoln Clears a Path: Abraham Lincoln's Agricultural Legacy*, The Creative Company, 2019.
2. USDA - NASS
3. Utah Ag in the Classroom
4. [Peggythomaswrites.com](#) – Stephanie Bearce lesson plan

Suggested SC Standards Met:

English/Language Arts:

- 3.RI.5.1 Ask and answer literal and inferential questions to determine meaning; refer explicitly to the text to support inferences and conclusions.
- 3.RI.12.3 Read and respond according to task and purpose to become selfdirected, critical readers and thinkers.
- 4.RI.5.1 Ask and answer inferential questions to analyze meaning beyond the text; refer to details and examples within a text to support inferences and conclusions.
- 4.RI.12.3 Read and respond according to task and purpose to become selfdirected, critical readers and thinkers.
- 5.RI.5.1 Quote accurately from a text to analyze meaning in and beyond the text.
- 5.RI.12.3 Read and respond according to task and purpose to become selfdirected, critical readers and thinkers.

Social Studies (2019 standards):

- 3.2.2.ER Identify and analyze the ways people interact with the physical environment in different regions of the state, the country, and the world..
- 3.4.2.HS Investigate the economic and land use characteristics of places and regions around the world.
- 4.5.P Summarize Reconstruction as a turning point in American history.
- 5.1.CO Compare the physical landscape and demographics of the U.S. before and after the Transcontinental Railroad.

Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, in central Kentucky.

When Lincoln was 21 years old, he moved to Illinois.

From a young age, Lincoln helped fell trees, split logs, harvest fields, and take grain to the mill.

Some jobs of Lincoln included floating produce to market on a flatboat, running a general store, and a being a postmaster.

As a boy, Lincoln farmed during the day. At night, he studied math, poetry, and the founding fathers.

Lincoln's friends encouraged him to run for office.

In 1832, Lincoln ran for Illinois state representative but failed. He won in 1834.

Eleven southern states left the Union.

Lincoln taught himself law and in 1837 became an attorney in Springfield.

On April 12, 1861, the Civil War began.

In 1860, voters elected Lincoln the 16th president of the United States.

The Civil War ended on April 9, 1865, when the Confederate army surrendered to Union forces.

Voters respected Lincoln's frontier background, his capacity for hard work, and his desire to help others.

Lincoln signed the Homestead Act on May 20, 1862.

In the middle of the Civil War, Lincoln established the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on May 15, 1862.

Lincoln signed the Pacific Railway Act on July 1, 1862.

The USDA supported the farmers who supported the troops. The USDA tested farm equipment and searched the world for seeds.

Lincoln signed the Morrill Act on July 2, 1862, which created land-grant colleges.

During the Civil War, Lincoln asked farmers to cultivate all the land they had to feed and supply the Union army.

On January 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and cleared a path to freedom.

In 1862, there were 600,000 military men to feed. Every month, farmers provided 48,750 bushels of beans, and 8.5 million pounds of potatoes.

Every soldier wore a wool uniform. It is estimated that the army would need 1.5 million pounds of wool each year of the war.

The basement of the Capitol building was made into a giant bakery that turned 230 barrels of flour into 60,000 loaves of bread a day.

Even though the army consumed an enormous amount of food and fiber, farmers still grew more than enough grain to send to Europe.

Because many farmers volunteered to fight in the army, mothers, sisters, and wives stepped in to take over the farming.

The Morrill Act granted each state 30 acres to build a college on that land. Land-grant colleges were designed to teach agriculture, engineering, and mechanical arts.

Today, the USDA continues to support farmers and ranchers, promotes trade, ensures food safety, protects natural resources, develops rural areas, and prevents hunger.

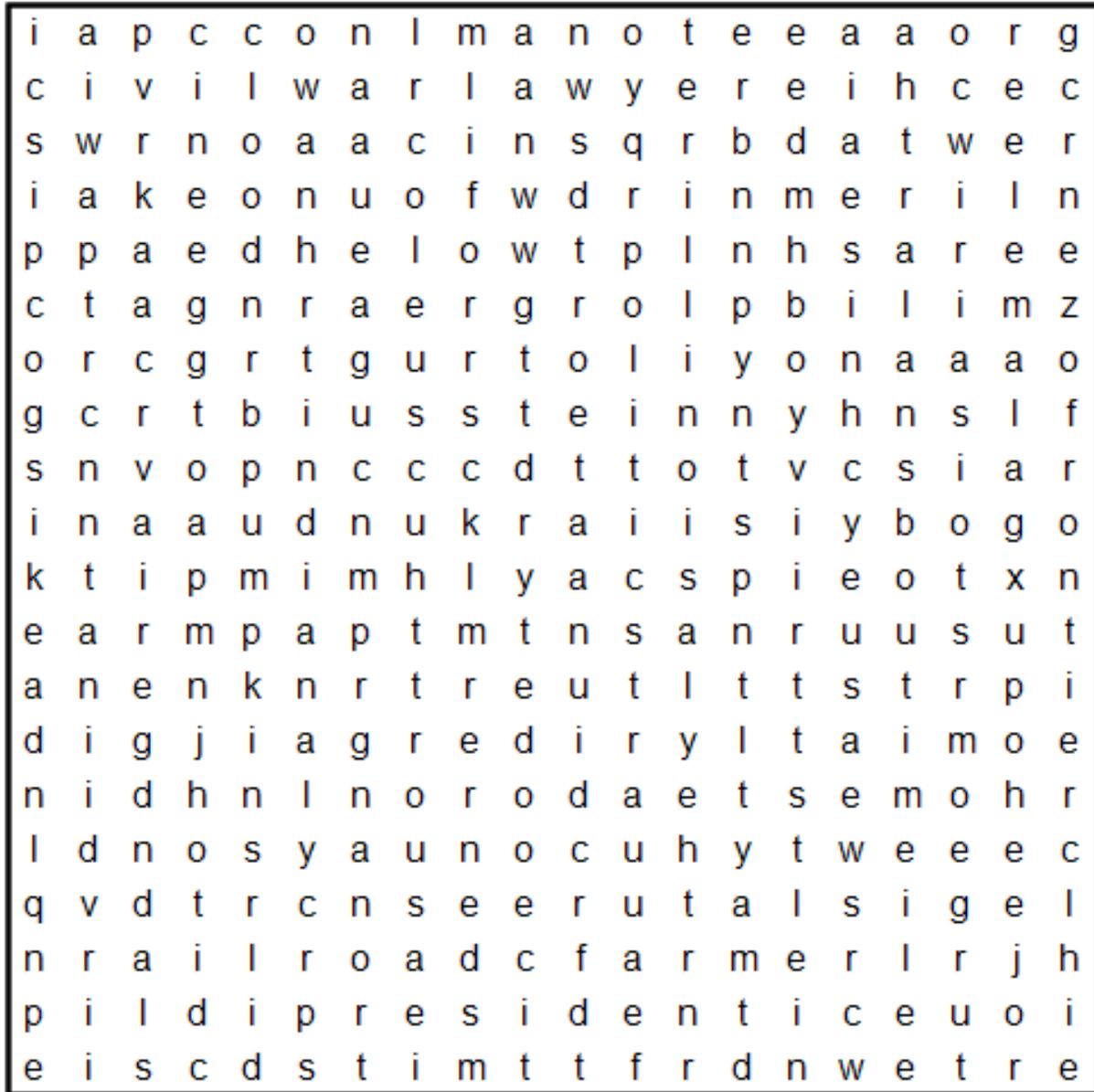
Any citizen or immigrant interested in homesteading could apply for 160 acres of public land. Applicants had to be over 21 years of age and did not fight against the Union.

The Pacific Railway Act funded the construction of railway lines from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean. The two lines connected in Promontory, Utah, in 1869.

In 1890, Justin Morrill proposed a second land-grant act to ensure African Americans equal access to colleges in Southern states.

Lincoln Clears A Path

Name _____



Can you find these words?

agriculture
frontier
liberty
railroad

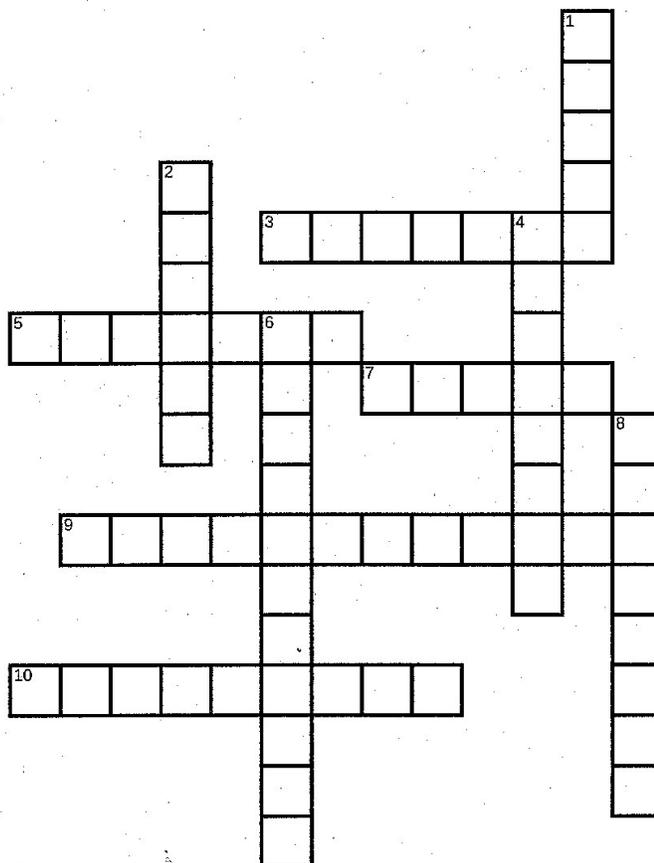
Civil War
homestead
pioneer
USDA

emancipation
Illinois
politics

farmer
Indiana
president

flatboat
Kentucky
pumpkins

Lincoln Review



Across

- 3 The type of seed Lincoln planted that washed away
- 5 The act that established trainlines across America.
- 7 Lincoln was born in a log
- 9 The proclamation that freed enslaved people.
- 10 The act that allowed African Americans to own land.

Down

- 1 During the Civil War the North was known as the
- 2 Lincoln's son who died in 1862
- 4 Lincoln became a legislator for this state.
- 6 Lincoln established the department of
- 8 State where Lincoln was born.

Crossword Puzzle Answers

Across

3. pumpkin
5. Railway
7. Cabin
9. Emancipation
10. Homestead

Down

1. Union
2. Willie
4. Illinois
6. Agriculture
8. Kentucky