



## **Lincoln Penny Lesson Plans**

**Written by Samantha Albert, English teacher, Hamilton Heights Middle School, Arcadia, IN**

**Assisted by Daniel B. Smith, History teacher, Hamilton Heights Middle School, Arcadia, IN**

### **Objectives**

- Students will be introduced to the new penny design featuring Lincoln's childhood in Indiana.
- Students will be able to analyze primary documents.
- Students will be able to discuss in depth an aspect of Lincoln's life.
- Students will demonstrate research skills.
- Students will demonstrate writing skills.

### **Materials**

- A penny for each student
- Student worksheet
- Penny Fun Facts handout
- Picture of background of new penny "Youth in Indiana", found at web site: <http://www.usmint.gov/kids/coinNews/cents>
- Lincoln Boyhood handout
- Carl Sandburg article, "Lincoln on Pennies"
- Quotes about Reading handout

### **Procedure**

#### **I. Opener**

- Ask students: If one scene from your childhood was drawn to best represent you, what would the scene be? What would you be doing?
- Give 2-3 minutes to sketch it out.
- If someone who didn't know you saw this scene, what would he or she be able to learn/assume about you from it?
- Make a short list.

#### **II. Activating Prior Knowledge/Background Info**

- Warm-up: Ask the students to list as many things (pictures, phrases, etc.) as they can think of that are on the penny, without looking. (Consider letting the student with the most correct keep his/her penny. Make note of his/her reaction for future discussion point after reading the Carl Sandburg article.)
- Then provide the students with a penny and the fun facts about a penny. Give them some time to read through the facts and examine their coins. Then provide them with information about the new penny backgrounds this year.

#### **III. Lesson**

- Show the Indiana penny background.
- Ask students: What is Lincoln doing in this picture? Make a list of 3 things you can learn/imply from this picture. (2-3 minutes) Share with the class.

List concepts that come from this penny background:

- Lincoln as a poor person/commoner
- Work Lincoln did
- Lincoln and Reading

Then discuss each concept. Each student should fill in the blanks on the notes worksheet.

1. Lincoln the common person

--Go over basic notes about Lincoln's upbringing and lifestyle in Indiana, highlighting the basic/primitive conditions he lived in. Use Lincoln Boyhood handout and information from additional websites:

<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/e-resources/ebooks/records/eep7832.html> (Most of the information on the student handout is directly from this site.)

[http://www.nps.gov/libo/forteachers/upload/teacher\\_packet.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/libo/forteachers/upload/teacher_packet.pdf)

<http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2009/02/young-abraham-lincoln-child-of-the-american-frontier/>

<http://www.finebooksmagazine.com/issue/200902/lincoln-1.phtml>

<http://www.apples4theteacher.com/holidays/presidents-day/abraham-lincoln/biography/lincolns-childhood.html>

--Read the Carl Sandburg article addressing the controversy about the penny in 1909. Answer reading comprehension questions. (Consider asking the student who “won” the penny to keep what his/her reaction was to such a small prize. How does that relate to Sandburg’s article?)

\*Additional Enrichment Activity:

- Students can explore the connection between Carl Sandburg and Abraham Lincoln. They will find he won the Pulitzer Prize for one of his Lincoln biographies.
- Students can compare the sentiment of the Carl Sandburg article to this poem:

*The millionaire may seldom  
Those noble outlines grasp,  
But childhood’s chubby fingers  
The image oft will clasp.  
The poor man will esteem it,  
And mothers hold it dear.  
The plain and common people  
He loved when he was here.*

“The Lincoln Cent”

The New York Sun, February 1909

## 2. Work Lincoln did

--Briefly discuss what kind of work Lincoln had to do as a child. Highlight such things as what he is depicted doing in the scene on the penny, how he helped his father make his own mother's coffin, etc. Discuss his strong work ethic and how that was a quality that led to his success.

## 3. Lincoln and Reading

--Point out how the focus of this penny's background is on him reading. Obviously, this was a crucial part of his childhood and development. Go over his schooling (or lack thereof) and discuss how he attained his education. List specific books he read and how they influenced him. Discuss why reading continues to be so important today.

## IV. Written Application

Provide each student with a handout of the following quotes.

"A capacity, and taste, for reading, gives access to whatever has already been discovered by others. It is the key, or one of the keys, to the already solved problems. And not only so. It gives a relish, and facility, for successfully pursuing the [yet] unsolved ones."

-- September 30, 1859 - Lincoln's Address before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society

Books serve to show a man that those original thoughts of his aren't very new at all. ~Abraham Lincoln

The worth of a book is to be measured by what you can carry away from it. ~James Bryce

Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers. ~Charles W. Eliot

The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them. ~Mark Twain, attributed

How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book. ~Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Books are the bees which carry the quickening pollen from one to another mind. ~James Russell Lowell

Books are the compasses and telescopes and sextants and charts which other men have prepared to help us navigate the dangerous seas of human life. ~Jesse Lee Bennett

A book is a garden, an orchard, a storehouse, a party, a company by the way, a counsellor, a multitude of counsellors. ~Henry Ward Beecher

To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all the miseries of life. ~W. Somerset Maugham

Except a living man there is nothing more wonderful than a book! A message to us from the dead, - from human souls whom we never saw, who lived perhaps thousands of miles away; and yet these, on those little sheets of paper, speak to us, teach us, comfort us, open their hearts to us as brothers.

~Charles Kingsley

A truly good book teaches me better than to read it. I must soon lay it down, and commence living on its hint.... What I began by reading, I must finish by acting. ~Henry David Thoreau

- Choose one of the quotes. Using specific facts and examples from the notes and class discussion, explain in your own words what the quote means and how it relates to Lincoln's childhood and life accomplishments.

\*Additional Enrichment Activity: Ask students which quote best relates to their experience with reading. The students should explain the quote in their own words and provide an example of how they connect to the quote.

#### IV. Closer

In first person, writing in Lincoln's perspective, describe what is happening in the scene on the penny. Explain what the setting (time and place) is, what you are doing, what book you are reading, how this scene represents who you are, and why you are pleased that this scene was chosen to represent your childhood in Indiana.