

## Find Grace's Family

### Parent Guide

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

#### SUMMARY

Children will read a letter closely, then draw a picture using the hints they found in the letter.

#### WHY

During this activity, you and your child will use critical thinking skills to read between the lines of a letter. Letters like this one, along with other historical artifacts, are very important sources of information for historians and researchers.

#### TIME

- 15 minutes to read and analyze Grace's letter
- 10 minutes to draw a picture

#### RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in 3rd or 4th grades.

#### CHALLENGE WORDS

- **bold:** impudent, presumptuous
- **cunning:** dexterous or crafty in the use of special resources (as skill or knowledge) or in attaining an end or prettily appealing

#### GET READY

- Read *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* together. *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers* tells the story of the historical letter used in this activity and the 11-year old girl who wrote it. For tips on reading this book together, check out the Guided Reading Activity [http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/lincoln/lincoln\\_reading.pdf](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/pdf/lincoln/lincoln_reading.pdf).

#### YOU NEED

- (*attached*) Directions sheet
- (*attached*) Step Back in Time sheets
- (*attached*) Who's in Grace's Family?/Famous Letter to Abraham Lincoln sheet
- Pen or pencil
- Art materials
- Blank paper

## Find Grace's Family

### Directions

For adults and kids to follow together.

1. Read Grace Bedell's letter on the Who's in Grace's Family?/Famous Letter to Abraham Lincoln sheet. What was the main reason Grace wrote the Lincoln? What was she trying to help him with?

**Tip** Historians would call this letter a primary source. A primary source is written or created by someone who experienced events at the time they took place. Grace was a person in the past who wrote a letter that included information about her family life.

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2. This time, read through the letter and underline any sentences or phrases where Grace talks about a person in her family.
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3. Look at the sentences and phrases you have underlined. Use the chart on the bottom of the sheet to sort out the information you have learned. Only use the information from the letter to fill out the chart—don't assume anything!

**Tip** For extra challenge, read through the letter again to see what you can learn about Grace. Make inferences about her personality from the things she writes. Is she rude or polite? Is she a good observer?

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4. With all of this information, draw a picture of Grace's family. Draw Grace holding a letter in the middle of the picture.

**Tip** Don't look at the pictures in *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*. Try to draw the picture based only on what's in the letter.

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5. Once you've finished your picture, take another look at the pictures in *Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers*. These pictures were made by Karen Winnick, the author and illustrator of the book. Compare your picture to the pictures in the book.

**Tip** Historians would call your picture and Ms. Winnick's pictures secondary sources. Secondary sources are made by a person or group of people who did not witness an event. Ms. Winnick did extra research and looked at more than just Grace's letter to learn about other people in Grace's family.

## Find Grace's Family

### Who's in Grace's Family?

#### A Famous Letter to Abraham Lincoln

In this letter to presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln, 11-year-old Grace Bedell suggests that Lincoln change his looks. Here is a copy of her letter:

Dear Sir

My father has just [come] home from the fair and brought home your picture and Mr. [Hannibal] Hamlin's. I am a little girl only 11 years old, but want you should be President of the United States very much so I hope you won't think me very bold to write to such a great man as you are. Have you any little girls about as large as I am if so give them my love and tell her to write to me if you cannot answer this letter. I have got 4 brother's and part of them will vote for you any way and if you let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest of them to vote for you you would look a great deal better for your face is so thin. All the ladies like whiskers and they would tease their husband's to vote for you and if I was a man I would vote for you to but I will try and get every oneto vote for you that I can. I think that rail fence around your picture makes it look very pretty. I have got a little baby sister she is nine weeks old and is just as cunning as can be. When you direct your letter dir[e]ct to Grace Bedell Westfield Chatauque County New York.

I must not write any more answer this letter right off Good bye

Grace Bedell

To see this letter just the way Grace wrote it and the response from Lincoln, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/5a2d.html>.

#### Who's in Grace's Family?

Take notes if they are older or younger than Grace.

Parents	Brothers	Sisters

## Find Grace's Family

### Step Back in Time, page 1 of 2

For more information, visit the National Museum of American History website <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/lincoln/>.

**A**braham Lincoln was the president of the United States of America from 1861 to 1865. As a child, he grew up in a poor family and wasn't able to spend much time in school because he had to work to help support his family. 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. The last time he put it on was to go to Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865, the night he was assassinated.



"Passage Through Baltimore"  
Etching by Adalbert John  
Volck, 1863. [National Portrait  
Gallery, Smithsonian Institution]

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>.

## Find Grace's Family

### *Step Back in Time, page 2 of 2*

For more information, visit the National Museum of American History website <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/lincoln/>.

**H**istorians learn more about people from the past through reading letters, diaries, and newspapers very carefully. The writers didn't always tell the whole story, so historians have to look for hints to connect the writer to other things in history.

*Have you ever written a letter? What could a historian learn about you from reading it?*

*Read a letter written to Abraham Lincoln and look for hints about the girl who wrote it.*



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

## Find Grace's Family

### Teacher Guide, Page 1 of 2

Read the “Directions” sheet and “Parent Guide” for step-by-step instructions.

#### OBJECTIVES

The students will be better able to

- name the office Abraham Lincoln campaigned for and held.
- analyze, classify, and interpret information.
- collect and evaluate information.
- begin to develop research skills.
- make inferences while reading.

#### STUDENT PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- analyze, classify, and interpret information.
- collect and evaluate information.
- make inferences while reading.
- include all appropriate details in drawing.

#### STANDARDS

##### *NCHS History Standards*

##### *K-4 Historical Thinking Standards*

2A: Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative.

2B: Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.

4B: Obtain historical data from a variety of sources.

4C: Interrogate historical data.

##### *K-4 History Content Standards*

1A: The student understands family life now and in the recent past; family life in various places long ago.

4C: The student understands historic figures who have exemplified values and principles of American democracy.

4D: The student understands events that celebrate and exemplify fundamental values and principles of American democracy.



## Find Grace's Family

### Teacher Guide, Page 2 of 2

#### *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).

#### *21st-Century Skills*

Learning and Innovation Skills

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Communication and Collaboration

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

ICT (Information, Communications, and Technology) Literacy

Life and Career Skills

Social and Cross-Cultural Skills