

Send a Lincoln Letter

Parent Guide

Read the “Directions” sheets for specific instructions.

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

- 30 minutes

RECOMMENDED AGE GROUP

This activity will work best for children in kindergarten through 4th grade.

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 child see an example of a girl 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/lincoln_reading.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 sheet (*attached*)
- Envelope
- Pen/pencil
- (*optional*) Computer with Internet
- Step Back in Time sheet (*attached*)
- Paper
- Transportation to post office
- Money for at least one stamp

More information at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/lincoln/>.



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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.

For extra challenge, find Illinois and New York on a map.

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://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/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 of the story you liked best and why it was so good.
- Include a drawing of Abraham Lincoln or 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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- 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 to in the center.

Tip Children might need help writing the addresses; make sure the addresses are clear.

- 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.

- 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 <http://americanhistory.si.edu/ourstory/activities/lincoln/>.

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Step Back in Time

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

Abraham 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.

In 1860, 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 at http://www.detroitpubliclibrary.org/LincolnCollection/lincoln_collection/bh005001.html or the letter and its response from Lincoln at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/5a2d.html>.

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.

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Read the “Parent Guide” and “Directions” sheets for specific instructions.

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 Abraham Lincoln lived in Illinois

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.

21st-Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills

- Communication and Collaboration

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IRA/NCTE Language Arts Standards

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint 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.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.