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Brief Presidential Biographies

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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Abraham Lincoln was the 16th President. (The U.S. has now had nearly 50 presidents.)

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He is probably best known for having signed the *Emancipation Proclamation* that declared forever free those slaves within the Confederacy (southern slave states) in 1863.

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He swore, in his Inaugural Address, to uphold his oath to preserve, protect, and defend the United States Government.

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He was not born into a wealthy family. He grew up in Kentucky and had limited access to higher education.

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He taught himself the law by reading William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*.

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He worked on a farm, in a store, and served as a lawyer in a law firm partnership with another lawyer. Sometimes, as the circuit court traveled through various counties, to make a living as a lawyer, he would travel with the court as well.

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At the age of 33, he married Mary Todd, who was a high-spirited woman from a well-known family in Kentucky. They had 4 sons, only one of which lived into adulthood.

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189 He served in the Illinois state government.

201 While serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, he spoke out
206 against the Mexican-American War.

220 He ran for Senator in Illinois, and lost to Steven Douglas, but gained a
232 reputation as a speaker and thinker that later helped him win the
233 Presidency.

244 As President, he wanted the American people to know how important
257 the Civil War was to history and the future of the United States.

270 To fight the Civil War, he distributed \$2,000,000 from the U.S.
281 Treasury for war weapons, supplies, and food for soldiers, without an
285 appropriation (permission) from Congress.

297 He called for 75,000 volunteers into military service without a
300 declaration of war.

312 He suspended the writ of *habeas corpus* (*due process for a suspect*),
319 arresting and imprisoning suspected Confederate States sympathizers
322 without a warrant.

331 He faced antagonism (anger and disagreement) from the opposition,
342 his own staff and army generals, and the majority of the American
343 People.

357 He was a very active Commander in Chief of his armed forces in the
 370 Civil War, often sleeping in the telegraph room of the White House to
 382 send and receive messages, to and from, the battlefields. He also made
 393 appearances with his generals and soldiers in the places where they
 404 fought. He studied military strategies, and was aware of which generals
 414 fought aggressively, and which ones were more tentative (cautious) in
 416 seeking combat.

428 His *Gettysburg Address* is considered to be one of the most important
 441 speeches ever made. The speech was given at a ceremony to establish a
 455 cemetery to honor soldiers who died in the Civil War. He said that, "*We*
 469 *here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain - that this*
 481 *nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom - and that*
 494 *government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish*
 497 *from the earth.*"

511 He won re-election in 1864, planning for the return of the Southern
 515 States to the Union.

526 In his Second Inaugural Address, he stated his spirit of reconciliation
 537 (getting along) towards the southern states that had seceded (left, or
 548 separated themselves). The famous words are now inscribed on one wall
 559 of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.: "*With malice toward*

574 *none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to*
592 *see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the*
594 *nation's wounds.... ”*

604 Tragically, he was assassinated (shot and killed) while attending a
615 theatre performance in April 1865. His absence further tragically
625 hampered (hurt) the nation's recovery from the Civil War and
635 Reconstruction (the physical and social rebuilding of the southern states
638 after the war).

648 He is considered to be one of America's greatest heroes.

657 He appears on the U.S. five dollar bill.

666 His likeness appears on Mount Rushmore, in South Dakota.