

About the Book

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational Page Count: 16 Word Count: 834

Book Summary

Eleven-year-old Grace Bedell changed history when she wrote a letter to Abraham Lincoln with a simple suggestion: to grow a beard. Lincoln responded to her letter and soon after began to grow into his signature look. *Why Abe Lincoln Grew a Beard* is the delightful story of one little girl's influence on this memorable president. Informative photographs and illustrations provide historical context in this enjoyable nonfiction text.

About the Lesson

Targeted Reading Strategy

- Ask and answer questions

Objectives

- Ask and answer questions to understand text
- Elements of a nonfiction text
- Recognize and use ellipses
- Identify synonyms and antonyms

Materials

Green text indicates resources are available on the website.

- Book—*Why Abe Lincoln Grew a Beard* (copy for each student)
- Chalkboard or dry-erase board
- Dictionaries
- Thesauri
- **KWLS / ask and answer questions, ellipses, synonyms and antonyms worksheets**
- **Discussion cards**



Indicates an opportunity for students to mark in the book. (All activities may be demonstrated by projecting the book on an interactive whiteboard or completed with paper and pencil if the books are reused.)

Vocabulary

*Bold vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com.

- **Content words:**
 Story critical: **beard** (n.), **elected** (adj.), **fashions** (n.), **letters** (n.), **presidents** (n.), **suggestion** (n.)
 Enrichment: **clean-shaven** (adj.), **eager** (adj.), **facial** (adj.), **mustache** (n.), **necessity** (n.), **regret** (v.)

Before Reading

Build Background

- Ask students if they have ever written or received a letter. Invite them to share how writing a letter compares and contrasts to writing an email or a text message. Have students share who they wrote the letter to and what they wrote about. Explain that before email and text messaging, writing letters was the primary way that people stayed in touch with one another.
- Ask students if they have ever written a letter to someone famous who they might not get to meet in person, such as the president of the United States. Have students share these experiences. Ask students why someone might write a letter to a famous or important person.

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Why Abe Lincoln Grew a Beard

- Give each student a penny. Ask students whose picture they see on the penny (Abraham Lincoln). Next, display a five-dollar bill and show students the image of Abraham Lincoln on the bill. Review with students that Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth president of the United States. Ask students how they know that it is a picture of Abraham Lincoln. Point out that he is often identified because of his beard.

Preview the Book

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of the book. Guide them to the front and back covers and have them view the photographs and illustrations. Have students discuss what they see. Ask students how the illustration of Abraham Lincoln on the cover of the book is different from his picture on the penny and on the five-dollar bill (he does not have a beard). Invite students to skim through the images in the book. Explain that this book uses a combination of photographs and illustrations to support the text.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book and author's name).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Ask and answer questions**

- Explain to students that asking questions about a topic before reading and looking for the answers as they read will help them better understand and remember the text.
- Introduce and explain the **KWLS / ask-and-answer-questions worksheet**. Create a chart on the board similar to the KWLS worksheet. Ask students what they know about Abraham Lincoln. Point out to students that this information is recorded in the K section of the chart. Record this information on the board, and then invite students to complete the K section of the worksheet.
- Direct students to the table of contents. Remind them that each section heading provides an idea of what they will read about in the book. After reviewing the table of contents, model using it as a way to think of questions.
- **Think-aloud:** *From what I see on the cover and the title page, I can tell that this book is about why Abraham Lincoln grew a beard. I know from our prior discussion that Abraham Lincoln was well known and easily recognizable because of his beard. I wonder what caused him to decide to grow a beard. When I look at the table of contents, I notice a section titled "Loads of Letters" and another titled "Lincoln's Reply." On the basis of these section titles, I wonder if a letter to Abe Lincoln caused him to grow a beard. I also notice in the table of contents a section titled "What About Whiskers." I am curious to know what whiskers are. As I read, I will look for answers to my questions. I will also think of new questions as I read, which will help me understand and enjoy what I am reading.*
- Record the questions from the think-aloud on the KWLS chart. Invite students to share with the class any questions they may have prior to reading the text. Have them write their questions in the W section of the worksheet. Invite them to share their questions with the class.
- As students read, encourage them to use other reading strategies in addition to the targeted strategy presented in this section.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill: **Elements of a nonfiction text**

- Ask students to explain the difference between *fiction* and *nonfiction*. (*Fiction* is a story created from the imagination of the author. *Nonfiction* is a story about real people and real events.) Ask students if they think *Why Abe Lincoln Grew a Beard* is a work of fiction or nonfiction. Have students explain what clues they found while previewing the book help them to know that it is a nonfiction text (photographs, glossary, maps, and so on).
- **Think-aloud:** *As I previewed the book, I was able to tell this is a nonfiction text. I know that Abraham Lincoln was a real person and that nonfiction books are about real people and events. I also noticed photographs throughout the book of Abraham Lincoln. These clues help me know that I will be reading a nonfiction book.*

Lesson Plan *(continued)*

Why Abe Lincoln Grew a Beard

- Explain to students that nonfiction books contain text features that are often not found in works of fiction. Write the heading *Features of Nonfiction Text* on the board. Below this heading, list the following features: *table of contents, glossary, headings and subheadings, captions, photographs, maps*. Invite a volunteer to read the list of features aloud. Explain to students that as they read the book, they will encounter these nonfiction text features.
- Ask students why the author might include features such as photographs, maps, captions, and so on (*to help readers find their way around the text; to provide more information about the content; to make the book more interesting and enjoyable to read*).
- Have students turn to page 3. Explain that on this page there are three features of a nonfiction text. Invite students to use the list of features on the board to help them identify these elements: *table of contents, caption, photograph*. Explain that these features give the reader a preview into the text. The table of contents provides clues about each section. The photograph and the caption support and provide information about the historical letter written by Grace Bedell.

Introduce the Vocabulary

- Write the following content vocabulary words on the board: *elected, fashions, presidents, and suggestion*.
- Point out that these four words can be found in the text and that knowing what they mean will help students understand what they are reading. Divide students into pairs and give each set of students a blank piece of paper. Have students divide the paper into four sections and label each section with one vocabulary word. Invite them to draw and write what they know about each word and create a definition using their own prior knowledge.
- Model how students can use a dictionary to find the meaning of a word. Have them locate the word *elected* in the dictionary. Remind students to remove the suffix from a word and identify the root word before searching in the dictionary. Ask a volunteer to name the root word of *elected*. Invite a volunteer to read the definition aloud.
- Show students the glossary on page 16. Have students locate the word *elected* in the glossary. Have students compare the dictionary definition with the glossary definition. Ask them to compare these definitions with their prior knowledge of the word.
- Ask students to locate the word *elected* on page 12 and read the sentence containing the word aloud. Repeat the exercise with the remaining vocabulary words. Have students compare and contrast the three sources: the dictionary, the glossary, and the text.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to learn about how a letter from Grace Bedell influenced Abraham Lincoln.

During Reading

Student Reading


- **Guide the reading:** Have students read from page 4 to the end of page 9. Remind them to read for information about Abe Lincoln that will answer questions on their KWLS chart. Encourage students who finish early to go back and reread.




When they have finished reading, have students circle any questions on their KWLS worksheet that were answered and underline the information in the book that answers those questions.


- **Think-aloud:** *I wanted to know what caused Abe Lincoln to grow a beard. I was surprised to learn that a letter from an eleven-year-old girl, named Grace Bedell, is what gave him the idea. I learned that Grace saw a picture of Abe Lincoln and thought he looked very sad. In her letter to President Lincoln, she suggested he would look better with a beard. I also wanted to know what whiskers are. After reading, I now know that whiskers is an old-fashioned word for a beard. I will write this information in the L section of my chart.*

- Ask students what nonfiction text features they noticed while reading this section and list them on the board. Have students turn to page 5 and locate the photograph and the caption. Have a volunteer read the caption aloud, and invite students to discuss why the author chose to include this information.
- Have students turn to page 7 and identify the photograph and the caption. Ask students why the author might include the picture of Abe Lincoln without a beard. Next, have students turn to page 8 and explain how the illustration on this page supports the text. Have students discuss why the author has included both illustrations and photographs in this nonfiction text.
- Have students turn to page 9. Ask a volunteer to read the caption aloud. Point out to students that often an author will include a photograph and a caption to give the reader more information about the topic being discussed. In this case, the author has included the caption to help readers understand why Grace wrote, “If I was a man I would vote for you. . . .” The picture and the caption point out that during this time in history women were not yet allowed to vote.
- Ask students what new questions came to mind as they read pages 4 through 9. Have students share these questions with the class and then record them on the KWLS chart. Remind students to look for answers to these questions in the text. Point out that the nonfiction text features, such as captions, headings, photographs, maps, and so on may also provide answers to their questions.

 Have students read to the end of page 13. When they have finished reading, have students circle any questions on their KWLS worksheet that were answered and underline the information in the book that answers those questions.

- Have students locate the map on page 12. Ask a volunteer to read the caption. Ask students why the author included this map for the section “Grace and Abe Meet” rather than in another section of the book. Have students explain how the map is helpful in understanding the text.


 **Check for understanding:** Have students work with a partner to read pages 14 and 15. Ask them to identify and label the nonfiction text features. If time allows, invite them to share their findings with the class.

 Have students make a question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. Encourage them to use the strategies they have learned to read each word and figure out its meaning.

After Reading

- Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Reflect on the Reading Strategy

 Have students circle the questions on their KWLS worksheet that were answered from pages 14 and 15 and underline the information in the book that answers those questions. Then have them write answers they found while reading in the *L* section of the KWLS worksheet.

- Invite students to share information they learned and the additional questions they generated as they read the book.
- Discuss with students how asking questions before and during reading, and looking for answers while reading, helps them remember and enjoy what they read.
- Point out to students that all of their questions may not have been answered in this text. Brainstorm to generate other sources they might use to locate additional information to answer their questions. Invite students to fill in the *S* section of the worksheet with information they would still like to know about Abe Lincoln or Grace Bedell.

Reflect on the Comprehension Skill

- Discuss how the nonfiction text features helped students to understand the text. Remind students that the author includes these features for several purposes: to help the reader find their way around the text; to provide more information about the content of the book; to make the text more appealing and interesting.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the following nonfiction text features on the board: *table of contents*, *glossary*, *captions*, *photographs* and *illustrations*, and *maps*. Divide the class into five groups. Assign each group a nonfiction text element. Have students work in groups to record where in the book these features can be found. Invite students to discuss why the author chose to use the feature and how it helps the reader to better understand the text. Have each group share their findings with the class.
- **Enduring understanding:** In this book, you learned about Grace Bedell, a little girl who wrote to Abe Lincoln and suggested he grow a beard. Do you think growing a beard helped Abe Lincoln win the presidential election? Why or why not?

Build Skills

Grammar and Mechanics: Ellipses

- Have students turn to page 9 and circle the phrase: *and if you let your whiskers grow I will try to get the rest of them to vote for you . . .* Write this phrase on the board and circle the ellipsis. Explain to students that these three periods, or dots, are called an *ellipsis*. Write the word *ellipsis* on the board.
- Explain to students that an ellipsis can be used in several different ways. One way an ellipsis can be used is to show an unfinished thought. Write the following example on the board: *I don't know about that . . .* Have a volunteer come to the board and circle the ellipsis. Explain to students that this sentence expresses an unfinished thought. Ask a volunteer how this sentence could end.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *Well . . . I guess you can come too.* Have a volunteer circle the ellipsis. Explain to students that another way an ellipsis can be used is to indicate a pause in a speech. Ask volunteers for other examples of an ellipsis used to indicate a pause in speech and record these examples on the board.
- Explain to students that another use for an ellipsis is to show that part of a text is missing or has been intentionally left out. Point out that the example you circled in the text is an example of this. Explain to students that because the author cannot include the entire letter written by Grace, he includes only a small part of the letter followed by an ellipsis to indicate that some of the letter has been left out.
- Have students locate the last sentence on page 9 and identify the ellipsis. Ask a volunteer to read the sentence aloud. Ask students if the ellipsis is being used for an incomplete thought, a pause in speech, or to indicate that text has been left out (*text has been omitted*).
- **Check for understanding:** Have students locate the third sentence on page 10. Have a volunteer read the sentence aloud. Invite students to turn to a partner and indicate how the ellipsis is being used in the sentence. Have students share their findings with the class. Point out to students that every ellipsis used in *Why Abe Lincoln Grew a Beard* is used to indicate that text has been omitted.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [ellipses worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their responses aloud.

Word Work: Synonyms and antonyms

- Write the word *before* on the board. Ask students to suggest a word that means almost the same thing (*previous*, *earlier*). Review or explain that a word that means the same or almost the same as another word is called a *synonym*. Ask students to suggest a word that means the opposite of *before* (*after*, *later*). Review or explain that a word that means the opposite of another word is called an *antonym*.

- Have students turn to page 4 and locate the second sentence in the second paragraph on the page: *Sometimes good news . . . might reach people through a letter.* Read the sentence aloud and record it on the board. Circle the word *good*. Ask students to suggest a word that means the same or almost the same as *good* (*pleasant, wonderful*). Ask students to locate a word in the next sentence that is an antonym of the word *good* (*bad*). Invite students to name synonyms for the word *bad* (*terrible, awful*).
- **Check for understanding:** Give pairs of students a thesaurus. Ask them to find the word *funny* and have them name the synonyms listed. If the thesaurus lists antonyms, have them find the antonyms for *funny*. If needed, provide additional practice using the thesaurus using the following words: *angry, many, young, struggle*.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [synonyms-and-antonyms worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss answers aloud after they are finished.

Build Fluency

Independent Reading

- Allow students to read their book independently. Additionally, partners can take turns reading parts of the book to each other.

Home Connection

- Give students their book to take home to read with parents, caregivers, siblings, or friends. Have them discuss the connections they made to the book with someone at home.

Extend the Reading

Writing Connection

Invite students to write a letter to the president of the United States. Review with students how to write a formal letter including proper formatting and the importance of legible handwriting. Remind students that a letter can tell a story, offer a suggestion, or express an opinion. Encourage students to brainstorm to arrive at what kind of letter they would like to write. Have students write a rough draft of their letter and then exchange letters with a partner for peer editing. Once editing is complete, have students write a final draft of their letter. Provide each student with a stamp and an envelope. Review with students how to label the envelope with both shipping and return addresses.

Visit WritingA-Z.com for a lesson and leveled materials on writing.

Social Studies Connection

Have students research forms of communication throughout history and create a timeline. Remind students of the purpose and usefulness of a timeline. If necessary, provide an example of a timeline on the board listing the major events of your life in chronological order. Provide research materials for students including nonfiction texts and the Internet in order to gather information about the evolution of communication technology. Give each student a large piece of paper to create the timeline and invite students to illustrate their findings. If time allows, have students share their timelines with the class.

Skill Review

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided as an extension activity. The following is a list of some ways these cards can be used with students:

- Use as discussion starters for literature circles.
- Have students choose one or more cards and write a response, either as an essay or as a journal entry.
- Distribute before reading the book and have students use one of the questions as a purpose for reading.
- Cut apart and use the cards as game cards with a board game.
- Conduct a class discussion as a review before the book quiz.

Assessment

Monitor students to determine if they can:

- consistently use the strategy of asking and answering questions to comprehend the text during discussion and on a worksheet
- correctly identify elements of a nonfiction text
- correctly identify ellipses in the text and on a worksheet
- consistently identify and correctly use synonyms and antonyms in the text, during discussion, and on a worksheet

Comprehension Checks

- **Book Quiz**
- **Retelling Rubric**