

9-B Abraham Lincoln, February 5, 1865

Alexander Gardner (1821–1882)



9-B Alexander Gardner (1821–1882), Abraham Lincoln, February 5, 1865. Photographic print. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The Art

This work of art is a photograph of President Abraham Lincoln taken on February 5, 1865. At that time, picture-taking, or photography, was very new and cameras were very large. Taking a picture took much longer than it does today. Lincoln had to sit very still for a long time. In the picture, Lincoln is sitting in a chair, looking like a regular person, rather than a president. His face is serious, yet caring and friendly. His bowtie is crooked and his hair looks uncombed. He is holding eyeglasses and a pencil. Lincoln was 55 years old in this picture, but he looks older.

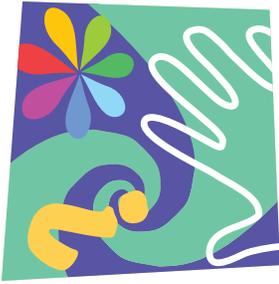
The Artist

Alexander Gardner was a famous photographer who was one of a group of photographers that worked to record the Civil War through pictures. Many of the pictures he took were of soldiers leaving home to go to war.

Gardner opened his own photography studio in Washington, D.C., at the end of the Civil War. One Sunday in 1865, Lincoln came to Gardner's studio to have his picture taken. Gardner was to provide a photograph for another artist, a painter, who had been hired to paint Lincoln's portrait. Since the president was very busy, he did not want to spend time posing for the painter. They decided the artist could paint the portrait from a photograph instead. Gardner took this photograph, which has become more famous than the painting.

The Historical Perspective

The medium of photography was still new when this picture was taken. The picture was not the first one of Lincoln. The president thought photographs were a great invention to help politicians get elected. It was a new way for people to see the faces of leaders who made decisions and ran the country. Photographs helped people feel like they knew their leaders. The Civil War was ending at the time this photo was taken. The stress of war and all of the losses Americans suffered weighed heavy on Lincoln's mind and showed on his face. This photo was taken only three months before President Lincoln was shot and killed. He, like many others, sacrificed his life in the process of preserving the union and upholding the ideals of freedom and equality.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look closely at the photograph. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the artwork.

Describing



- ✓ What do you see in this photograph?
- ✓ Who is Abraham Lincoln?
- ✓ What is a president? What does a president of the United States do?
- ✓ How does Lincoln look in this picture? How is he dressed?
- ✓ What jewelry do you see in this picture?

Analyzing and Interpreting



Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- What do you think about this picture of Abraham Lincoln?
- Does Lincoln look like a person you would like to talk to?
- Why do you think he had his picture taken?
- Do you think the photographer should have fixed Lincoln's tie?
- How is a photograph different from a painting?
- Do you have a photograph of someone important in your house?
- What is the name of the president of the United States now? Have you seen a picture of him? Have you seen a photo of his family?
- Are there other things you would like to say about this photograph?

Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

beard	photograph
calm	portrait
camera	pose
famous	president
fingertips	slavery
freedom	
jewelry	



Books

Abraham Lincoln by Wil Mara (Children's Press, 2003)

People called Abraham Lincoln "Honest Abe" because he believed in doing what was right.

Mr. Lincoln's Whiskers by Karen Winnick (Boyd's Mill Press, 1996)

Eleven-year-old Grace Bedell writes to Abraham Lincoln suggesting that he grow whiskers to win himself some presidential votes. This story is based on a true incident.

So You Want to be President? by Judith St. George (Philomel, 2004)

A humorous roundup of anecdotes and trivia is cast as a handbook of helpful hints to aspiring presidential candidates.

Books continued on page 60

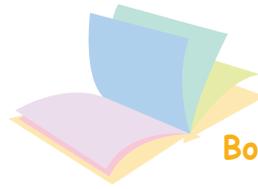


Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

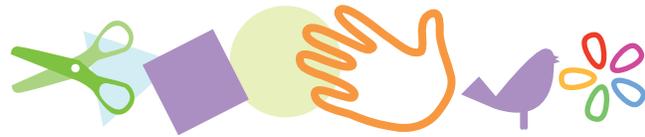
Parents and children can:

- ✓ look at old and recent family pictures and talk about the similarities and differences in the pictures.
- ✓ play "Guess Who?" Parents, grandparents, or other relatives and children take turns describing different members of their family and guessing who is being described.



Books continued...

The Story of Abraham Lincoln by Patricia Pingry (Candy Cane Press, 2001)
Simple words and pictures introduce very young children to the life of Abraham Lincoln.



Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ Bring in several time pieces. Include an unbreakable hour glass or small egg timer, a pocket watch, a kitchen timer, a picture of a grandfather clock, and/or a wristwatch. Engage children in discussions about how these objects are used. Have fun timing how long children can sit without moving, as if they are posing.
- ✓ Mount a penny on a card and laminate one for each child. Compare the image of Lincoln on the penny and in the portrait.
- ✓ Make a name tag for each child. Take a "sitting portrait" photo of each child; label each photograph.
- ✓ Set up a mirror in the dramatic play area. Include a few props such as eyeglasses or sunglasses without lenses, hats, scarves, and bowties.
- ✓ In group time, give clues to describe a child. Other children try to guess who is being described.

The ideas listed are just a few of the many activities that could be used to introduce or extend children's learning. Your knowledge of your children and families supports your ability to ensure positive learning experiences and outcomes for students. As an educator, you probably have ideas for books, songs, finger plays, and activities that you have thought of when introducing or extending children's learning related to the "A Head Start on Picturing America" artworks. We encourage you to confer with your colleagues, visit the local library or bookstore, and share your ideas with others.