

JUST A FEW WORDS, MR. LINCOLN

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The Story of the Gettysburg Address

by Jean Fritz, ill. by Charles Robinson (Grosset & Dunlap)

Themes: American History/Presidents

Grade Level: 2 – 5

Running Time: 18 minutes

SUMMARY

This is the story of the events preceding, and the actual delivery of, President Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address.

Children will be introduced to the Civil War, the resulting battles, and President Lincoln's resolve to unify the country. The inclusion of the events surrounding Lincoln's son Tad's illness and recovery during this time help to pull young children into the story and make the emotion behind the burden of the presidency more real for them.

The actual Gettysburg Address is printed at the end of the story. Children will come to understand that few words, if carefully chosen, are all that are necessary to communicate important, powerful ideas.

OBJECTIVES

- Children will be introduced to the Civil War
- Children will learn about President Lincoln
- Children will become familiar with the Gettysburg Address

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Share the book *JUST A FEW WORDS, MR. LINCOLN* with children. Then ask:

- What did you learn about the cause of the Civil War at the beginning of the story?
- What happened in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania?

- Why was it decided to build a special cemetery in Gettysburg?
- What did President Lincoln want to tell the people at Gettysburg?
- Why do you think the Gettysburg Address became such a famous speech?

Locate Gettysburg on a map. Then research other famous battles of the Civil War and help children find their locations on the map. As children research these sites, discuss what life may have been like if the North and South actually became two separate countries.

Share simple picture and chapter books about President Lincoln with children. Discuss Lincoln's policies, family life, and character with children. Give children an opportunity to share with their classmates those things they felt were most important about Lincoln and his presidency.

Introduce the concept of slavery to children. As you discuss this sensitive topic, have children try to imagine what life might have been like for the slaves, what they might have done to find some pleasure in life, and how they might have felt when they were finally freed.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Have children consider what kind of message they might give to their classmates that would have meaning for all of them. Children might want to write these messages in the form of a speech, or on note cards. Let children take turns delivering their "messages."

Help children compare and contrast life in the 1800s with modern day living. Share books and films and visit museums where representations of life during this time can come alive for children. Ask:

- What would you have enjoyed about life in the 1800s?

- What things would have been more difficult to do than they are today?
- How would you travel?
- What would you do for entertainment?
- What kinds of chores might you have?

Invite children to draw pictures of President Lincoln performing some of the activities he would have been engaged in as president. Encourage children to share their finished drawings with the entire class. Arrange a special "President Lincoln" display area on a classroom wall or bulletin board. Use a cutout of a large stovepipe hat as a background for the display of drawings.

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