



Learning with Lincoln Institute

Sponsored by Teaching with Primary Sources at
Eastern Illinois University and
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Endorsed by the
Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission



Lincoln's Patent

by Michelle Rogers

Students will view a letter between Abe Lincoln and Zenas C. Robbins about his patent for an improved method for lifting vessels over shoals and view an image of his patent. The students will analyze the letter and drawing using a provided guide and then explain the importance of Lincoln's invention.



Overview

Objectives:

After completing the activity, students will be able to:

- analyze an image and letter for meaning
- become familiar with primary sources
- understand why inventors choose to create inventions and patent them

Understanding Goal:

I can investigate a letter and drawing and explain why inventions are made. (kid friendly language)

Investigative Question:

How can the LOC primary sources help us understand why inventions are created?

Time Required:

One class period, approximately 47 minutes

Grade Level:

5 - 8

Topic:

Science (Technology, Industry)

Era:

National Expansion and Reform, 1815-1860

Illinois Learning Standards:

Science: 13B

For information on specific Illinois Learning Standards go to www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/



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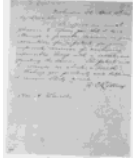
Preparation

Background for Lesson:

This will be used as an introduction to a unit about inventors and inventions.

Library of Congress Items:

Title: Zenas C. Robbins to Abraham Lincoln, Friday, April 13, 1849 (Patent)



Collection or Exhibit Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress


Media Image

Type:

URL:


<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mal&fileName=mal1/002/0024500/malpage.db&recNum=0>

Additional Materials:

 Computer with internet connection
LCD projector

 Picture of Lincoln's patent.

 Letter Analysis Form (one per student)

 Goad, M. (2005). A Presidential Patent. *American Civil War Anecdotes, Incidents, Articles, and Books*. Retrieved June 18, 2008, from http://www.pddoc.com/skedaddle/articles/abraham_lincolns_patent.html

Procedure

Description of Teacher Actions:

Introduction:

1. Start the lesson by asking if any students know of a president that is also an inventor. Write any suggestions on the board as the students throw out ideas.
2. If the students do not come up with the president then announce that Abe Lincoln is the only U.S. president to hold a patent for an invention.



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3. Ask if any of the students know what a patent is. Lead the class to the correct answer so that they understand patents.

Inquiry:

4. Explain to the students that they are going to look at a letter regarding Lincoln's patent and pass out the letter analysis form. Go over the form with the students so they know what they are going to be doing. Use the computer and LCD projector to project the letter for the class to see. Allow for time for the student to complete the top portion of the letter analysis.
5. Display the transcript of the letter for the students to view. Have the students complete the bottom portion of the letter analysis.
6. Go over the letter analysis form with the class allowing for class discussion of the letter.
7. Display a picture of Lincoln's patent (invention) using the LCD projector. Go over the patent with the class and explain any key words that they do not understand for example, students may not know what a "shoal" is and they need to find out so that they can better understand Lincoln's invention.
8. Discuss with the class the importance of Lincoln's invention.

Application:

9. Have the students write a paragraph telling why they feel that Lincoln made his invention.

Extension Ideas:

This lesson is an introduction to a larger unit on inventors and inventions. Activities about other inventions such as the cotton gin, telegraph, Morse code, etc. and the inventors will be completed. Students will work in groups to create a presentation on an assigned inventor/invention. After presenting to the class, students will set up an inventor/invention fair for parents, teachers, and other students.

Evaluation

Evaluation Letter Analysis Form – After the students have finished the top part of the form the students will then look at the transcript of the letter and then complete the bottom portion on the form. Students will write a paragraph explaining why Lincoln felt that he needed to make this invention



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Attachments

First Reading

On the copy of the letter provided:

Circle the date the letter was written.

Underline any words you don't recognize or can't read.

Looking at the letter

Who wrote the letter?

Who was the letter written to?

Do they know each other?
If yes, how?

Reading what you can in the letter, go back and write in words that you think make sense for some that you underlined.

Choose one sentence from the letter and rewrite it here:

What about this sentence attracted your attention?

What do you think this letter is about?

After reading a transcript or listening to a reading of the Letter

What new information do you have about the letter?

How accurate was the sentence you wrote?

What questions do you have about this letter?

How could you learn the answers to your questions?

Why do you think someone saved this letter?

LETTER ANALYSIS