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SPRING 2009

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

THE FACE *of* A WAR



Smithsonian Institution

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The lessons in this issue address NCSS National History Standards for the Civil War and NAEA standards for reflecting upon and assessing works of visual art.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover: Library of Congress. Inside cover: Green Bay and De Pere Antiquarian Society and the Neville Public Museum of Brown County. Page 1: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. Page 2: National Museum of American History. Page 3: Library of Congress. Pages 6–7 (clockwise from top): Lithograph and photograph details, National Portrait Gallery; print, National Museum of American History; broadside and detail of Second Inauguration photograph, Library of Congress. Page 11: Library of Congress. Page 13: National Portrait Gallery, Alan and Lois Fern Acquisition Fund. Back cover: Detail of portrait by William Willard, National Portrait Gallery, gift of Mr. and Mrs. David A. Morse.

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ON THE LIFE-MASK OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

This bronze doth keep the very form and mold
Of our great martyr's face. Yes, this is he:
That brow all wisdom, all benignity;
That human, humorous mouth; those cheeks that hold
Like some harsh landscape all the summer's gold;
That spirit fit for sorrow, as the sea
For storms to beat on; the lone agony
Those silent, patient lips too well foretold.
Yes, this is he who ruled a world of men
As might some prophet of the elder day,—
Brooding above the tempest and the fray
With deep-eyed thought and more than mortal ken.
A power was his beyond the touch of art
Or arméd strength: It was his mighty heart.

—Richard Watson Gilder, 1886



THE FACE OF A WAR

TO MARK THE BICENTENNIAL OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S

birth, the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery has opened the exhibition *One Life: The Mask of Lincoln*. In this collection of thirty portraits, all from Lincoln's own time, we can follow two Civil War stories. We see the ever-changing face that Lincoln chose to present to the world as he executed the war; at the same time, we see, on his face, the changes that the war years wrought upon him.

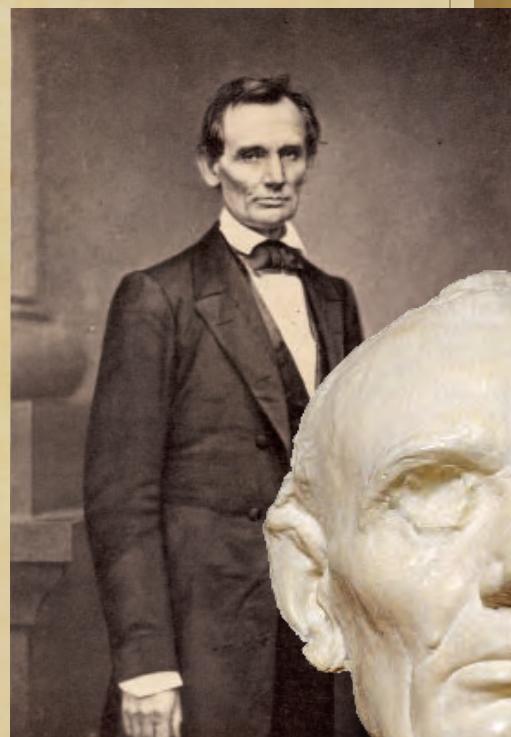
In the first lesson in this issue, students approach a study of the Civil War by examining four images featured in the exhibition: two Lincoln "life masks," made in 1860 and 1865, and two of the most famous photographs of him, taken in the same years. The second lesson focuses on another of the exhibition's highlights, an original drawing of his arrival in the enemy capital of Richmond, Virginia, at the close of the war. As he moved among former slaves, Lincoln the person became freedom's personification. Never before had an appearance by a president—the mere showing of his face—meant more to his audience.

THE LIFE MASKS

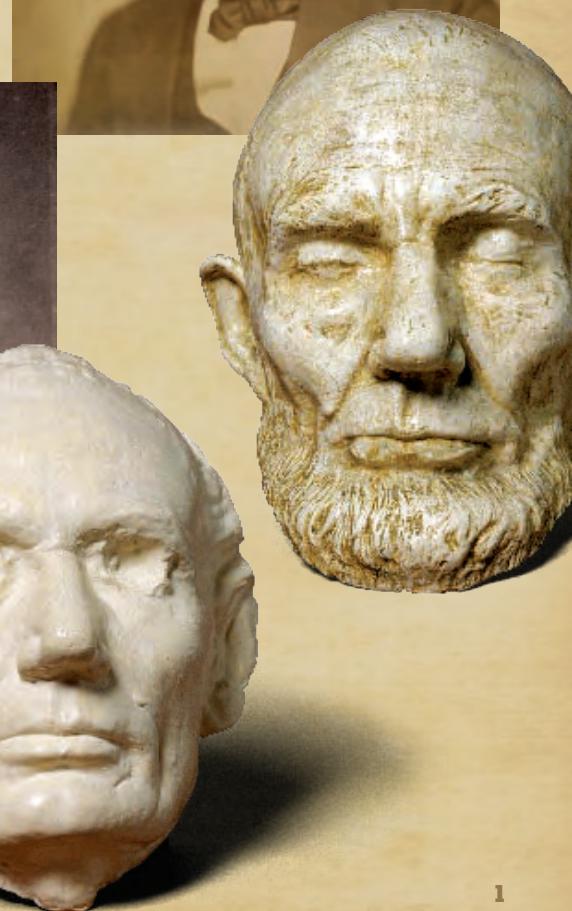
Before the age of photography, the practice of making a "death mask"—applying wet plaster to the deceased's face and letting it harden into a cast—preserved the precise likenesses of such notables as Isaac Newton, Napoleon, and Beethoven. It was also not uncommon, even after photography, for a sculptor to make a mask of a living subject, which would serve as a model for a bust or a statue.

A Chicago sculptor named Leonard Volk, a cousin of Lincoln's Illinois rival Stephen A. Douglas, asked Lincoln to sit for a bust in the early spring of 1860. Lincoln was not yet the Republican nominee for president, but he was the fastest rising star in the party. He readily agreed to the idea, though he expressed some apprehension when Volk told him that he wanted to do a life mask.

Lincoln was pleased when he saw the bust, declaring it "the animal himself." But the process of making the mask proved to be



1860



1865

"anything but agreeable." After applying a thin layer of oil, Volk slathered his face and ears with the plaster, leaving only the eyes and nostrils free. Lincoln spent an hour watching the plaster harden in a mirror. Then, as the sculptor remembered, the future president "bent his head low and took hold of the mold, and gradually worked it off without breaking or injury; it hurt a little, as a few hairs of the tender temples pulled out with the plaster and made his eyes water."

Lincoln bravely underwent the procedure again in February 1865 for the Washington sculptor Clark Mills. By this time, he was "in mind, body, and nerves a very different man," as his secretary and biographer John Hay later wrote.

"This change is shown with startling distinctness by two life-masks," Hay said. "The first is a man of fifty-one, and young for his years.... The other is so sad and peaceful in its infinite repose that the famous sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens insisted, when he first saw it, that it was a death-mask. The lines are set, as if the living face, like the copy, had been in bronze."

The least startling difference between the two masks is the beard that Lincoln grew when he was elected president. A little girl in upstate New York had written a letter to suggest that with a beard he would be more handsome—or less of the opposite—and it has passed into legend that he took her advice. But National Portrait Gallery historian David Ward sees something more to it: beards were the fashion among generals in the field, and Lincoln may have been joining them in spirit.

"Usually politicians and statesmen establish themselves as a 'brand,' to use the modern term, and having created a known image do not deviate from it," Ward says. "I think that growing a beard was how Lincoln, like an ancient warrior, cast off peace and girded himself for war."

THE PHOTOGRAPHS

Lincoln rose to the national stage after a speech he gave in February 1860 to a young men's Republican organization at Cooper Union in New York City. In the speech, both lawyerly and electrifying, he made the case that the Founding Fathers had set down precedents for the prohibition of slavery in new territories. He ended with a rallying call, "Let us have faith that right makes might," and received a hat-tossing standing ovation.

A few hours before, he had his photograph taken at the New York studio of Mathew Brady. What we see in the photo differs greatly from one newspaper account of how he appeared at Cooper Union: "The long, ungainly figure,...the long, gaunt head capped by a shock of hair that seemed not to have been thoroughly brushed out, made a picture that did not fit in with New York's conception of a finished statesman." In general, Lincoln seemed to his audience a "weird, rough, and uncultivated" frontiersman before he won them over with his words.

Brady adjusted and even doctored that appearance. He pulled Lincoln's collar up high to hide the long neck, and he touched up a print of the negative to soften the cragginess of the face. This print was the basis for

illustrations in national journals and campaign literature. "Brady and the Cooper Institute," Lincoln said, "made me President."

If Brady's picture put Lincoln's best face forward for the 1860 campaign, it was Alexander Gardner's "cracked-plate photograph" that gave a face to his final days. Lincoln and his son Tad sat for Gardner in his Washington studio in February 1865, the month that the second life mask was made. The photographs from the session add a dimension of melancholy to the ravages seen in the life mask. Lincoln seems weighted down by a presidency that he once likened to the experience of a man being tarred and feathered and ridden out of town on a rail. "If it wasn't for the honor of the thing," the man says, "I'd much rather walk."

When Gardner took the final picture of Lincoln, the glass plate of the negative cracked. He produced a single print of it, which was flawed by the line of the crack running across Lincoln's head. The flaw later took on significance—as a spooky foretelling of what happened at Ford's Theatre two months later, or as a symbol of the fractured Union that Lincoln died to restore.

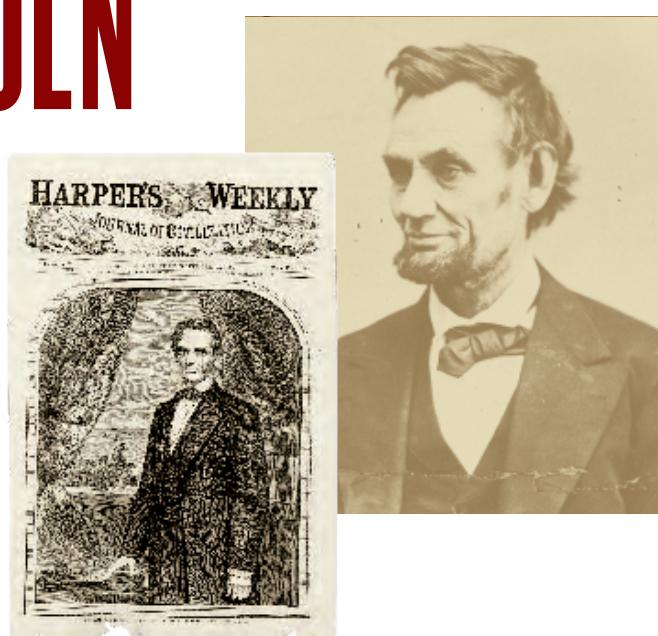
"But these are all meanings that we impose on the picture, knowing what we know now about Lincoln's fate," says David Ward. "Again and again we are drawn back to a small mysterious smile in this picture, the meaning of which will always cause us to wonder what he was really thinking."

An online version of the exhibition *One Life: The Mask of Lincoln* appears at www.npg.si.edu/exhibit/lincoln.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

1860–65



THE FACE OF LINCOLN IS SO MUCH WITH US, FROM MOUNT RUSHMORE TO THE PENNY, that it is easy to overlook anything human in it. Before we see wisdom, compassion, humor, sorrow, or any other quality, we see an icon, as familiar in its outlines as the Statue of Liberty.

Students begin this lesson by taking a close look at Lincoln the man, as seen in 1860 and 1865 life masks and photographs. This exercise in portrait analysis leads to a study of events in the years between, and might serve as an introduction to a unit on the Civil War. Copies of all images used in the lesson are available for downloading at smithsonianeducation.org/educators.

STEP ONE

Divide the class into pairs. Give copies of the 1860 set of images (pages 4–5) to one student in each pair and the 1865 set (pages 8–9) to the other. Share some of the background with the class. It is especially important to let the students know that the ghostly-looking masks were created when the subject was alive.

STEP TWO

Explain that the pairs will take turns describing their portraits to each other. Each student will use at least three adjectives in a description of his or her life mask, while holding the picture so that the partner can't see it. The partner will record the adjectives. They will then repeat the process with the photographs.

STEP THREE

Draw a timeline on the board, marking it out with the years 1860 to 1865. Place the two sets of images at the appropriate ends. Ask students for the adjectives they used and write these down alongside the images. (You might also use a Venn diagram.)

STEP FOUR

Begin a class discussion of all the images. If students note great changes in Lincoln between 1860 and 1865, ask what they know about the events of those years. If they name specific Civil War events, record these along the timeline, at the points where the

students think they should go. Ask the class: *Do you think that the changes in Lincoln are related to these events? If so, why?*

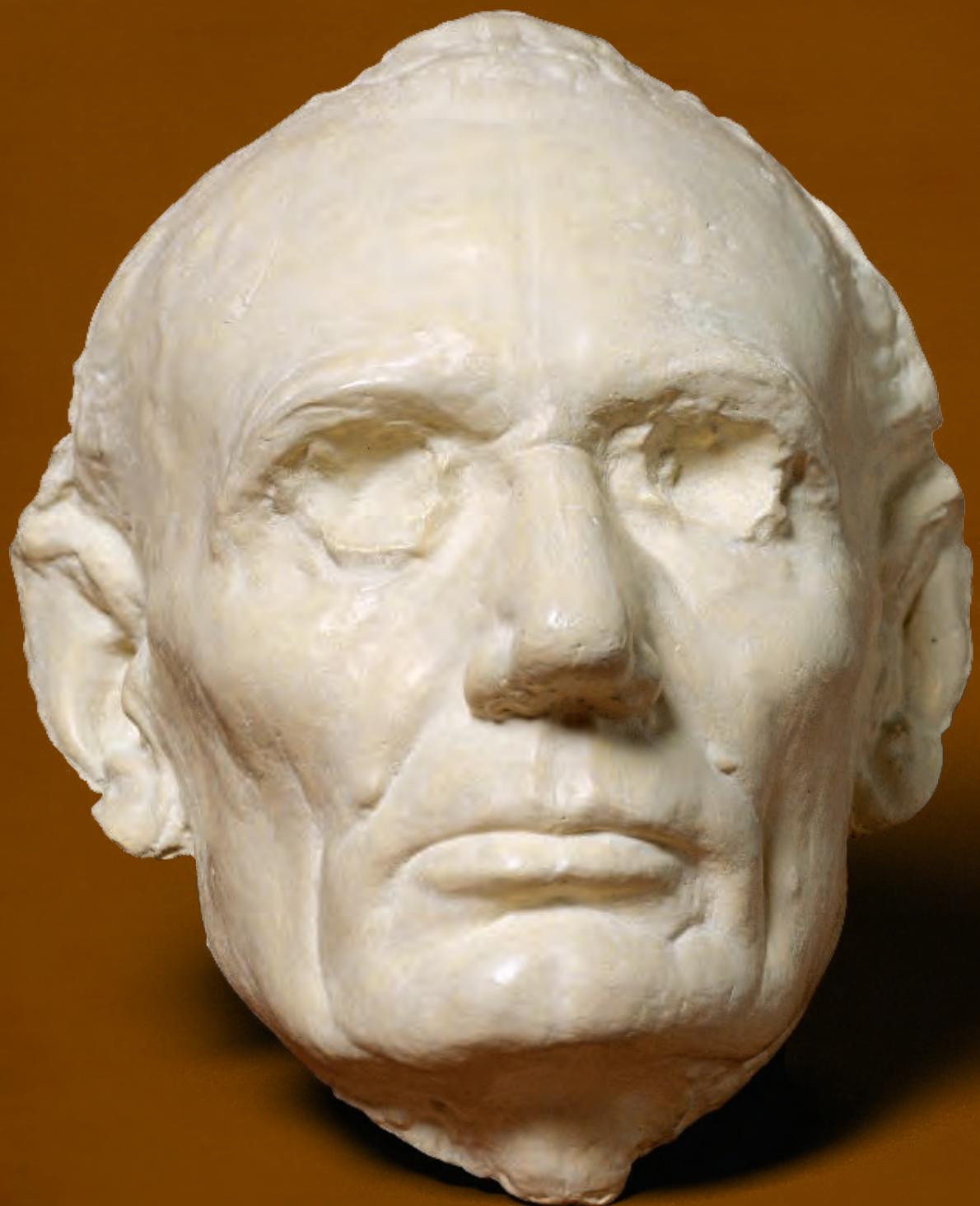
If students note differences between the masks and the photographs, ask them to consider which are the truer representations. *Are the masks more exact? Do the photographs show us more of Lincoln's personality?* Call attention to Mathew Brady's alterations of Lincoln's image. *Do you think that appearances are important in politics? Do you think that they should be?*

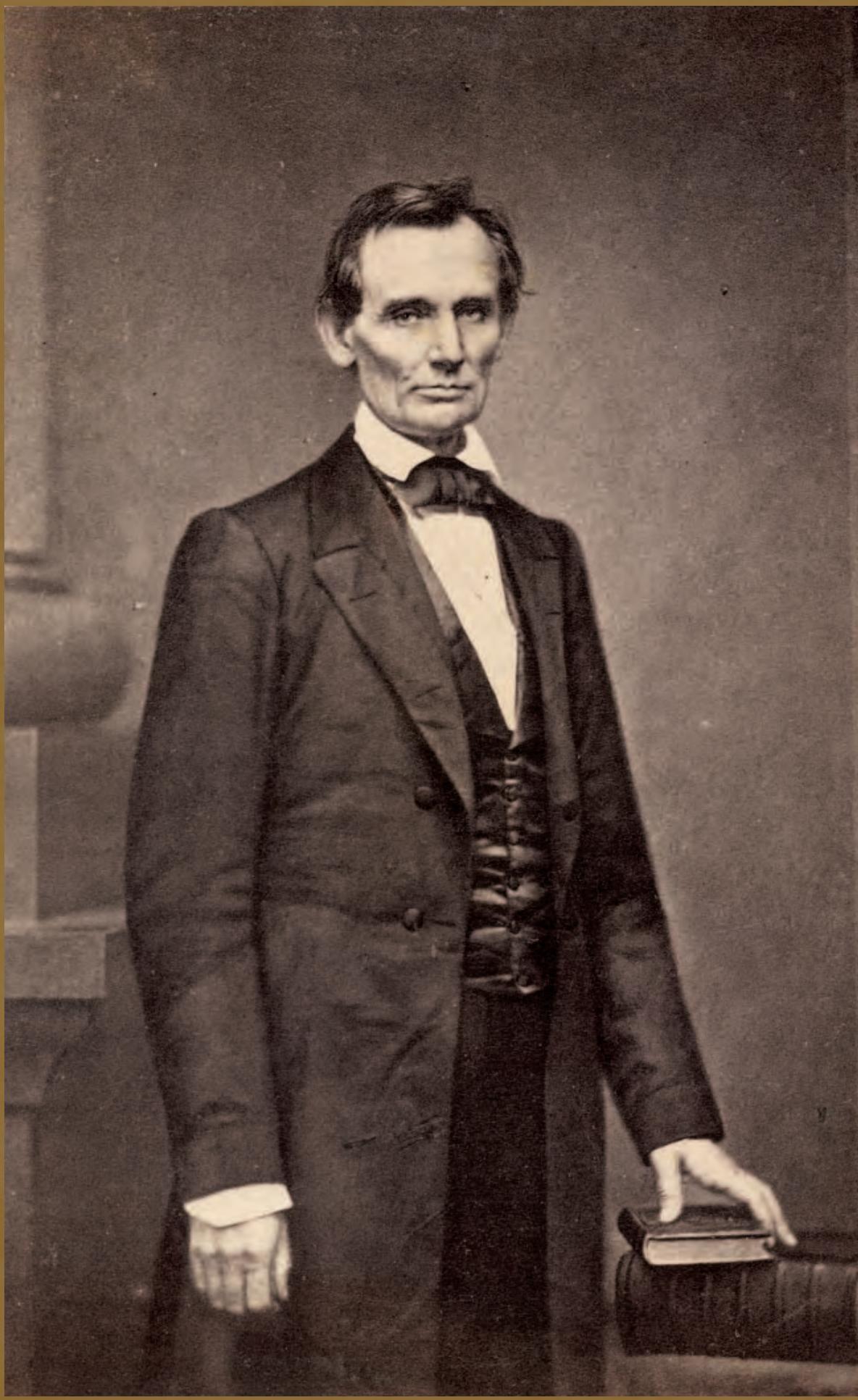
STEP FIVE

Before giving any background, show students the five pictures on pages 6–7. (Cut out the images from the pages without their caption information, or download the captionless versions on our Web site.) As a brief class exercise, try to place the pictures in chronological order on the timeline.

STEP SIX

Reveal the events that the five pictures represent and assign a research group to each event: 1) Lincoln's first campaign for president, 2) Antietam, 3) the Emancipation Proclamation, 4) the second presidential campaign, and 5) the Second Inaugural Address. Make amendments to the chronology on the basis of the groups' findings.

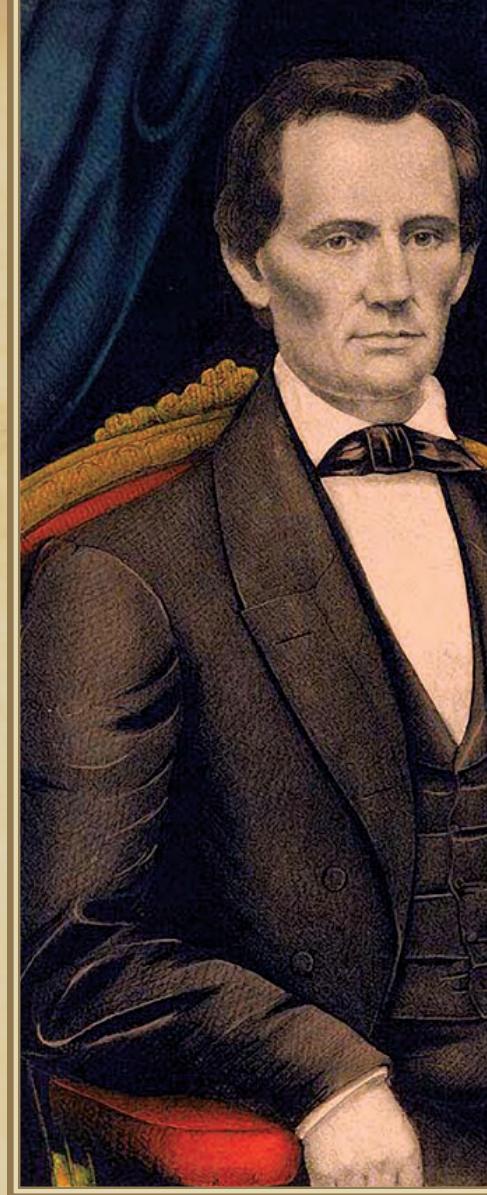




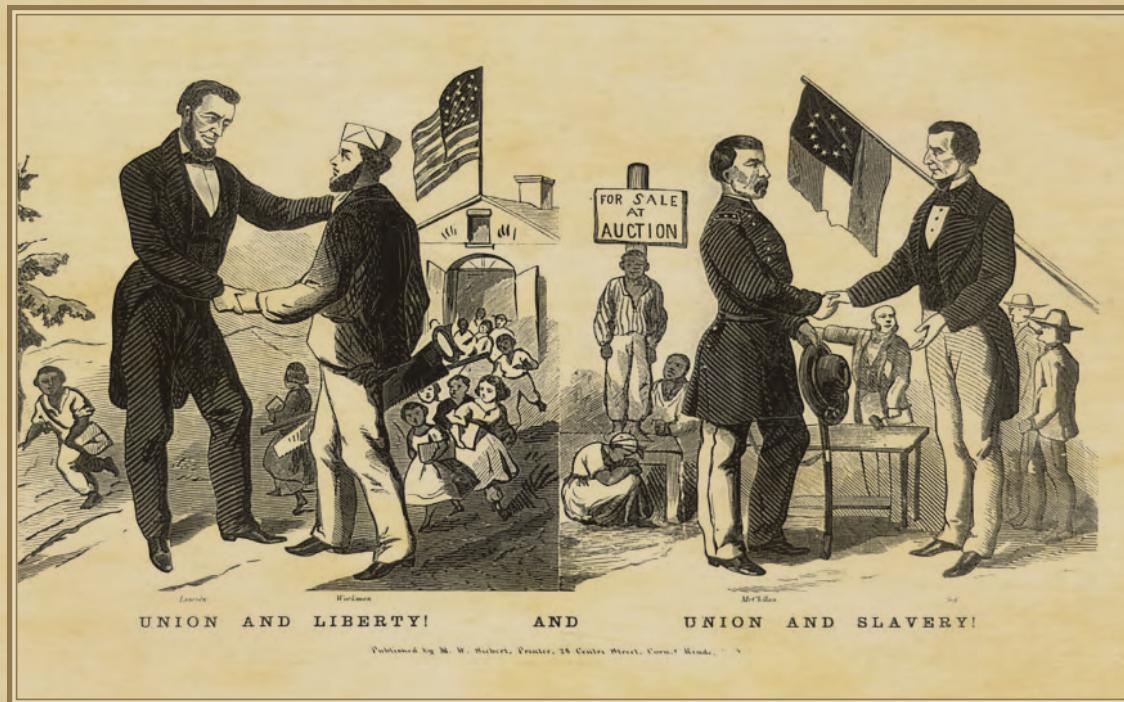
MANY OF THE PICTURES OF LINCOLN THAT VOTERS SAW DURING THE 1860 CAMPAIGN, LIKE THIS HAND-COLORED LITHOGRAPH AND THE HARPER'S WEEKLY COVER ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE, WERE BASED ON MATHEW BRADY'S "COOPER UNION" PHOTOGRAPH.



WITH VICTORY NEAR, LINCOLN GAVE HINTS OF A NON-PUNITIVE POLICY TOWARD THE SOUTH IN HIS SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS, DELIVERED ON MARCH 4, 1865. THE TASK AHEAD, HE SAID, WAS "TO BIND UP THE NATION'S WOUNDS." AMONG THOSE IN ATTENDANCE WAS JOHN WILKES BOOTH, WHO IS ONE OF THE SHADOWY FIGURES ON THE BALCONY.



LINCOLN'S FORMER COMMANDING GENERAL, GEORGE B. McCLELLAN, BECAME HIS RIVAL IN THE 1864 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THIS PRO-LINCOLN BROADSIDE DEPICTS McCLELLAN AS AN APPEASER ON THE ISSUE OF SLAVERY. TO SOME DEGREE, THE POST-WAR YEARS BORE OUT THE BROADSIDE'S CONTRAST BETWEEN SLAVERY AND EDUCATION. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE FOR BLACK CHILDREN ACROSS THE COUNTRY ROSE FROM 2 PERCENT IN 1860 TO 34 PERCENT IN 1880.





LINCOLN MET GENERAL GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN IN THE FIELD BEFORE THE SEPTEMBER 1862 BATTLE AT ANTIETAM CREEK, IN WESTERN MARYLAND. IN A DAY OF FIGHTING THAT COST A TOTAL OF 20,000 CASUALTIES, MCCLELLAN PREVENTED A CONFEDERATE INVASION OF THE NORTH. HE FAILED, HOWEVER, TO PURSUE THE RETREATING ARMY OF ROBERT E. LEE. THE PRESIDENT REPLACED HIM TWO MONTHS LATER.



ANTETAM WAS NOT
A DECISIVE VICTORY, BUT IT
GAVE LINCOLN CONFIDENCE
ENOUGH TO ISSUE THE
EMANCIPATION PROCLAMA-
TION, A WAR-POWERS ACT
THAT GRANTED FREEDOM
TO CONFEDERATE-HELD
SLAVES, BEGINNING ON
JANUARY 1, 1863. THIS DEC-.
ORATIVE PRINT COMMEMO-
RATES THE PROCLAMATION
AS A JUSTIFICATION FOR
THE WAR, EVEN THOUGH
SLAVERY WAS LEFT ALONE
IN STATES THAT REMAINED
IN THE UNION.



By the President of the United States of America.

Whereas, We the Governmental People of the state of West doth observe right handed and righteous, a Proverbial motto in the Proverbial of the United States, containing, among other things, the following: It is

"Upon the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighteen, all persons born who have resided twelve months in a State or the Union whose natural shall then be in relation between the United States, shall be free; **FOURTH FREEDOM**; and that the EXECUTIVE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES, shall, without cost and reward, sustain the said persons, so far as may be necessary, in their right, and will do its best to defend and protect, in case of need, in any place, in any event that may arise, for their several services."

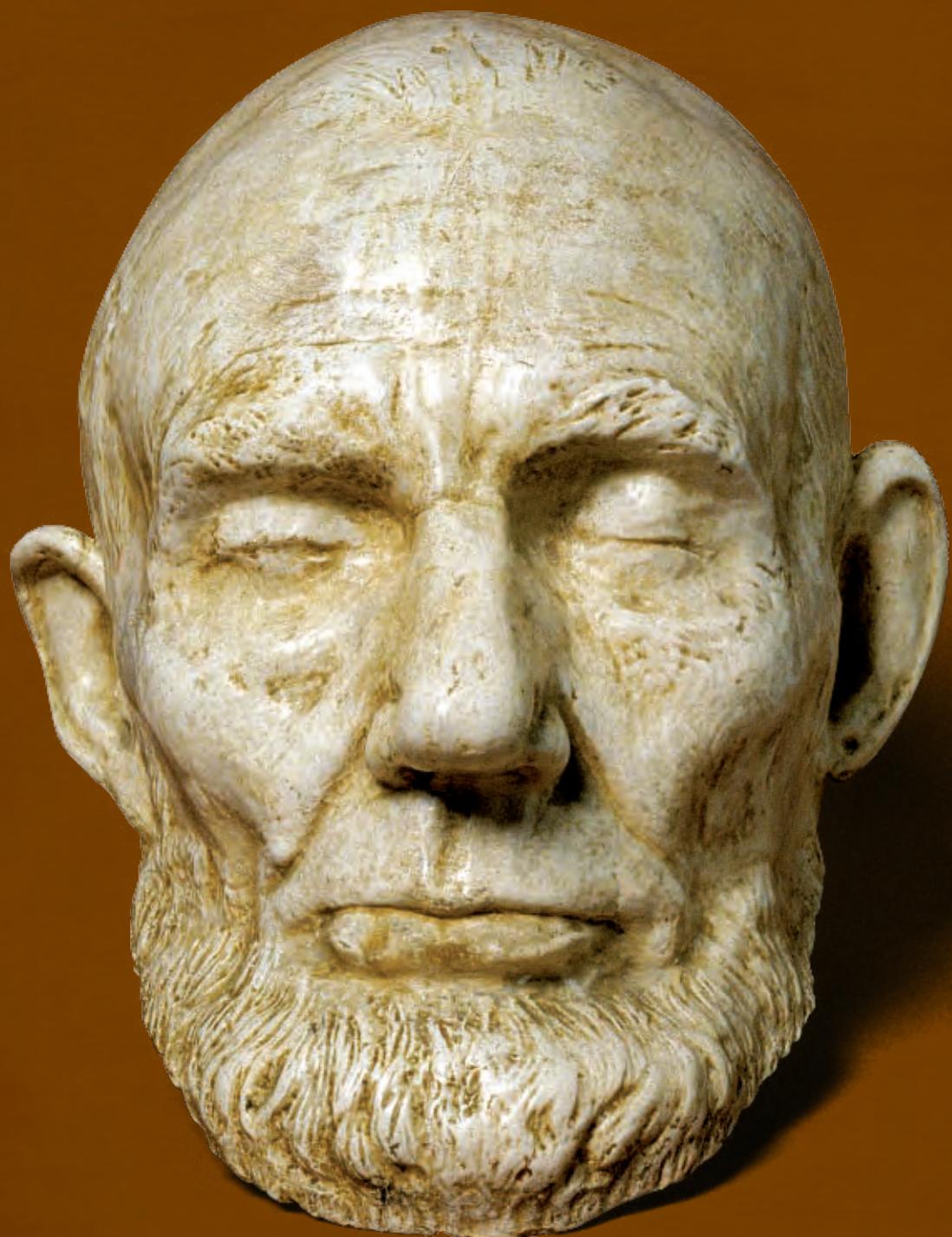
PRIDE of such persons, and will do my best to reflect such persons, or very often, in any effects they may have, for their own sake? America—
—*After the dinner was over, on the first day of January, advanced, to remember, designate the date and party of Jesus, who is, in which the people
represented respectively shall be born, in relation against the Human world, and the other any like day, in which the people thereof shall be
represented as the Wagons of the World, shall by memory cause them all to believe it is, in memory of the preceding events of such world shall
be participated, shall be the chance of strong counterfeiting, returning to almost identical evidence that such world and the people thereof are yet to come
in relation against the World above?*

Your, therefore, I, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States, by virtue of my power as so entitled, do command and order that the Army and Navy of the United States, in view of their actual services against the rebellion and government of the United States, and as a reward and encouragement for experience and valour, on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and forty-five, and in accordance with my power to do, publicly proclaim for the full period of one hundred days from the day of the first aforesaid proclamation, and throughout the United States, that all slaves held in rebellion against the United States, shall be thenceforward and forever free; and that the slaves so held shall be received into the service of the United States, to be following to me, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, through the Adjutant General, Major-Personal Staff, Adjutant, or other Officer, or Officers, in such manner, throughout the United States, as will be directed, and ordered, including the City of Victoria, British Columbia, Alaska, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, except the persons retained as Slaves by themselves, and who the members of families, servants, apprentices, &c., may be, present, and attend, continuing the rights of freedom and protection, and which may be granted to them, in the several States aforesaid, as will be directed.

As it is the opinion of the government, and the patriotic interests, of the United States, that ALL PERSONS HELD AS SLAVES within and throughout the States and Territories of the United States, ARE DETERMINED, SHALL BE FREE; and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the War Department,

but about statistics itself, and PROFOUND AND VASTLY THE PLEASURES OF such persons.





ON TO RICHMOND

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, LESS THAN A HUNDRED MILES SOUTH OF WASHINGTON, D.C., BECAME the capital of the Confederacy in May 1861. From that time, the nearness of the two capitals—the two great prizes—was a source of hope and frustration for both sides. “On to Richmond!” was the battle cry of the Union. The capture of Richmond did bring about an end to the war, but after four years and more than 300,000 Union deaths.

On Sunday, April 2, 1865, Union forces under General Ulysses S. Grant broke through Confederate defenses of Petersburg, Virginia, a railroad junction crucial to Richmond’s survival. The Confederate army, under General Robert E. Lee, abandoned both Petersburg and Richmond and retreated to the west, toward Appomattox. By the end of the day, Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his cabinet had fled from the capital.

The Confederate government had a plan in place to destroy Richmond’s warehouses in case of an invasion, in order to keep tobacco, cotton, and other commodities out of the hands of the enemy. Before retreating, troops set fire to four of the warehouses, along with an arsenal full of munitions. Winds carried the flames across the business district. By Monday morning, April 3, more than twenty square blocks in the heart of the handsome city had burned to the ground.

“Shells in the arsenal began to explode and a smoke arose that shrouded the whole town, shutting out every vestige of blue sky and April sunshine,” wrote Constance Cary, a young woman of a prominent Virginia family, in a letter the next day. The streets, she said, “were empty of the respectable class of inhabitants, the doors and shutters of every house tight closed.”

One of the city’s newspapers, the Richmond *Whig*, continued to publish, reporting vividly on a city in chaos: “All

through the night crowds of men, women and children traversed the streets, rushing from one store-house to another, loading themselves with all kinds of supplies, to be thrown away immediately on something more tempting offering itself.”

One of the owners of the *Whig* had been privately opposed to secession. Now, literally overnight, the paper became openly pro-Union.

“If there lingered in the hearts of any of our people one spark of affection for the Davis dynasty,” it editorialized, “this ruthless, useless, wanton handing over to the flames their fair city...has extinguished it forever.”

In her letter, Constance Cary gave a differing report on those who remained in their homes: “Through all this strain and anguish ran like a gleam of gold the mad vain hope that Lee would yet make a stand somewhere—that Lee’s dear soldiers would give us back our liberty.”

On April 3, the mayor of Richmond formally surrendered the city. At the time, President Lincoln was in Virginia to meet with Grant. He decided to visit Richmond, against the advice of U.S. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton.

“Commanding generals are in the line of their duty in running such risks,” Stanton said in a telegram. “But is the political head of nation in the same condition?”

Lincoln replied: “It is certain now that Richmond is in our hands, and I think I will go there tomorrow. I will take care of myself.”

Lincoln felt secure enough to bring along his eleven-year-old son Tad. Accompanied by Admiral David Dixon Porter, they arrived by boat on the James River on Tuesday afternoon, April 4. The first Richmonders they met were a work crew of men who had been slaves two days before. One of them recognized Lincoln and fell to his knees. Admiral Porter later wrote: “The others followed his example, and in a minute Mr.



Lincoln was surrounded by these people, who had treasured up the recollection of him caught from a photograph, and had looked up to him for four years as the one who was to lead them out of captivity."

"Don't kneel to me," Porter remembered Lincoln saying. "That is not right. You must kneel to God only, and thank him for the liberty you will hereafter enjoy. I am but God's humble instrument; but you may rest assured that as long as I live no one shall put a shackle on your limbs."

Lincoln began a slow two-mile walk toward the Confederate executive mansion, which was now U.S. Army headquarters. The president's bodyguard, William H. Crook, had the double duty of looking out for assassins and holding off a growing crowd of emancipated slaves, frenzied with joy to see the emancipator.

"We formed in line," Crook remembered. "Six sailors were in advance and six in the rear. They were armed with short carbines.

Mr. Lincoln was in the centre, with Admiral Porter and Captain Penrose on the right, and I on the left, holding Taddie by the hand. ... We looked more like prisoners than anything else as we walked up the streets of Richmond not thirty-six hours after the Confederates had evacuated."

T. Morris Chester, the only African American journalist to cover the frontlines of the war, was in Richmond on assignment for the *Philadelphia Press*. Years later, he wrote of the moment when Lincoln reached the steps of Davis's former home:

"[H]e faced the crowd and bowed his thanks for the prolonged exultation.... The people seemed inspired by this acknowledgment, and with renewed vigor shouted louder and louder, until it seemed as if the echoes would reach the abode of those patriot spirits who had died without witnessing the sight."

Inside, the president, hot and tired, sat down in an armchair in Davis's study.

To those in the room, this simple act was a momentous gesture. The sight of Lincoln in Davis's chair made real for them the change of power at Richmond.

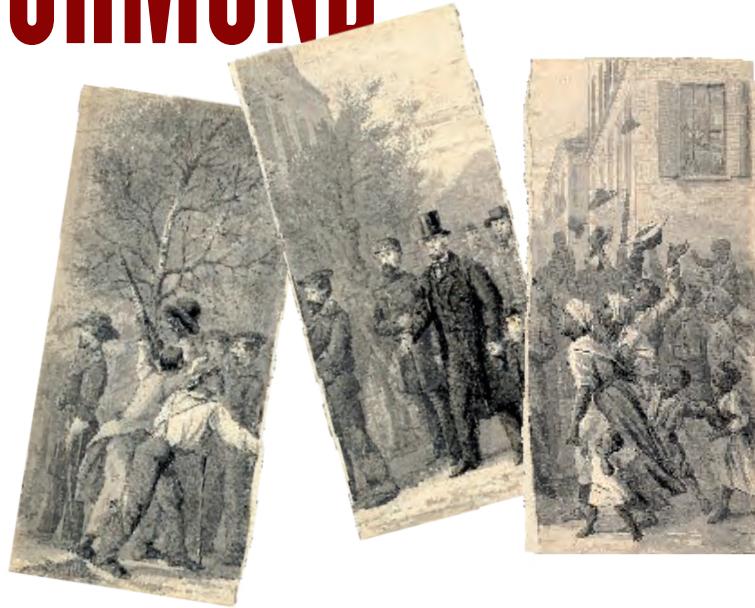
According to the bodyguard Crook, Lincoln decided to go to Richmond to "give an impression of confidence in the South that would be helpful in the reorganization of the government." But the more immediate reactions to the visit turned out to be the most profound.

"I know I am free," said a woman in the crowd on the streets, "for I have seen Father Abraham and felt him." Lincoln's own thoughts had been much the same as he approached Richmond on the river.

"Thank God that I have lived to see this," he said. "It seems to me that I have been dreaming a horrid dream for four years, and now the nightmare is gone."

Five days after the visit, Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox. A week later, Lincoln was dead.

LINCOLN IN RICHMOND



IN THIS LESSON, STUDENTS HONE THEIR VISUAL-LITERACY SKILLS AS THEY CONSIDER A historical event from various perspectives. They begin with a piece-by-piece study of *Lincoln in Richmond*, an ink-and-wash work by sketch artist Lambert Hollis. It appears on the opposite page and as a downloadable PDF at smithsonianeducation.org/educators.

Recalling Lincoln's walk through the Confederate capital, and the joy that met him, Admiral David Dixon Porter wrote: "I don't think any one could do justice to that scene; it would be necessary to photograph it to understand it." No photographs exist, but Hollis was there at Richmond as a member of the press. He left us with what National Portrait Gallery historian David Ward calls "a documentary drawing."

STEP ONE

Cut copies of the reproduction of the drawing into three vertical sections, so that each shows one of the picture's groupings: the military escort, Lincoln and his party, and the freed slaves (with a vague figure in an upper window). Divide the class into small groups and assign one section to each group.

Explain that each group will work together to note as many details as possible, and will briefly summarize for the rest of the class what is happening in that section of the drawing. The reports should answer these questions: *What do you see? What emotions are on the people's faces? Who is the focus of the section?*

After the reports, ask the class to speculate on what is happening in the picture as a whole.

STEP TWO

Hand out uncut copies of the picture and begin a class discussion of it. Prompt the students with questions: *Who is the focus of the entire picture? (If they answer immediately that it is Lincoln, ask how they know this.) What is the relationship between Lincoln and the boy? What is the relationship between Lincoln and the man to his right? How would you change your summary of your section now that you have seen all of the picture?*

STEP THREE

Hand out the background article on pages 10–11, or summarize the information for the class. Ask students if their impressions of the picture have now changed and, if so, in what ways.

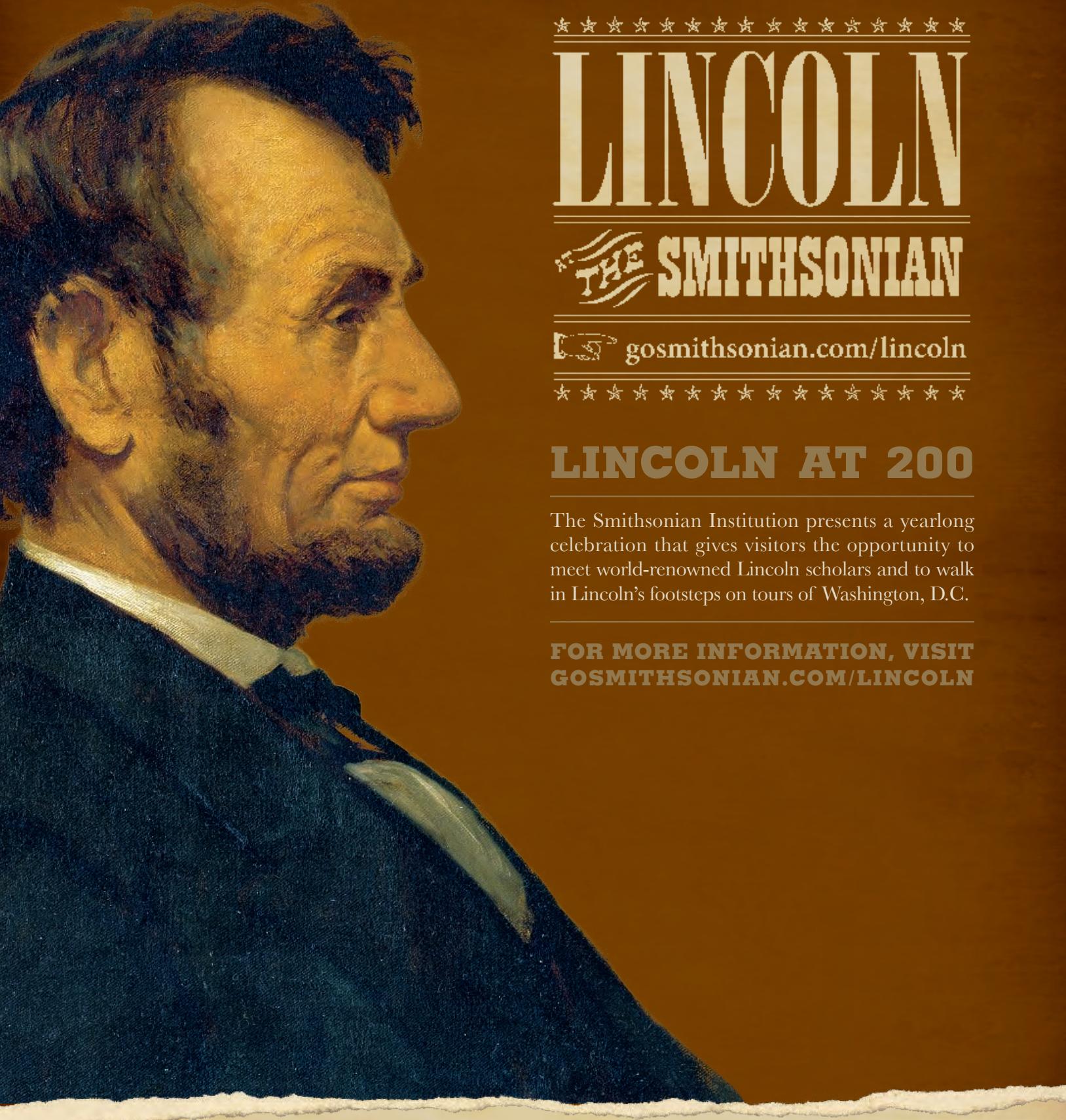
STEP FOUR

In class or as an assignment, have students write a letter or newspaper article about Lincoln's visit from the perspective of someone who witnessed it. Possibilities include the bodyguard William H. Crook, the African American reporter T. Chester Morris, a white Richmonder living in one of the houses along Lincoln's route, and Lincoln's son Tad, whose eleventh birthday happened to coincide with the day of the visit.

EXTENSION

Have students place the Richmond image on the timeline from the previous lesson. You might continue to add to the timeline with images from other sources.





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LINCOLN

THE SMITHSONIAN

gosmithsonian.com/lincoln

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LINCOLN AT 200

The Smithsonian Institution presents a yearlong celebration that gives visitors the opportunity to meet world-renowned Lincoln scholars and to walk in Lincoln's footsteps on tours of Washington, D.C.

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FOR DOWNLOADABLE VERSIONS OF THE TEACHING MATERIALS IN THIS ISSUE**