

Quiz: RI.9-10.7

Read the passages. Then answer the questions.

Abraham Lincoln
Annie L. Burton

Context Statement: Annie L. Burton was born a slave in Clayton, Alabama in 1858. In 1909, she published her book, detailing her memories and impressions of Abraham Lincoln.

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- 1 In a little clearing in the backwoods of Harding County, Kentucky, there stood years ago a rude cabin within whose walls Abraham Lincoln passed his childhood. An “unaccountable” man he has been called, and the adjective was well chosen, for who could account for a mind and nature like Lincoln’s with the ancestry he owned? His father was a thriftless, idle carpenter, scarcely supporting his family, and with but the poorest living. His mother was an uneducated woman, but must have been of an entirely different nature, for she was able to impress upon her boy a love of learning. During her life, his chief, in fact his only book, was the Bible, and in this he learned to read. Just before he was nine years old, the father brought his family across the Ohio River into Illinois, and there in the unfloored log cabin, minus windows and doors, Abraham lived and grew. It was during this time that the mother died, and in a short time the shiftless father with his family drifted back to the old home, and here found another for his children in one who was a friend of earlier days. This woman was of a thrifty nature, and her energy made him floor the cabin, hang doors, and open up windows. She was fond of the children and cared for them tenderly, and to her the boy Abraham owed many pleasant hours.
- 2 As he grew older, his love for knowledge increased and he obtained whatever books he could, studying by the firelight, and once walking six miles for an English Grammar. After he read it, he walked the six miles to return it. He needed the book no longer, for with this as with his small collection of books, what he once read was his. He absorbed the books he read.
- 3 During these early years he did “odd jobs” for the neighbors. Even at this age, his gift of story telling was a notable one, as well as his sterling honesty. His first knowledge of slavery in all its horrors came to him when he was about twenty-one years old. He had made a trip to New Orleans, and there in the old slave market he saw an auction. His face paled, and his spirits rose in revolt at the coarse jest of the auctioneer, and there he registered a vow within himself, “If ever I have a chance to strike against slavery, I will strike and strike hard.” To this end he worked and for this he paid “the last full measure of devotion.”
- 4 His political life began with a defeat for the Illinois Legislature in 1830, but he was returned in 1834, 1836, 1838, and declined re-election in 1840, preferring to study law and prepare for his future. “Honest Abe” he has been called, and throughout Illinois that characteristic was the prominent one known of him. From this time his rise was rapid. Sent to the Congress of the nation, he seldom spoke, but when he did his terse though simple expression always won him a hearing. His simplicity and frankness was deceptive to the political leaders, and from its very fearlessness often defeated them.

