"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln was born in a one-room log cabin in Kentucky and had only a year of formal schooling, but that didn’t stop him from educating himself. He impressed people with his intelligence and honesty throughout his life, eventually earning the nickname “Honest Abe.” When he got elected, he faced the biggest crisis the young nation had ever seen. Between his election and inauguration, seven states left the Union to form the Confederate States of America, complete with their own president. To lawyer Lincoln, this was not legal. So he committed himself to bringing the country back together. The next four years were going to be one uphill battle after another.

FIRST SHOTS AT FORT SUMTER
Outgoing President Buchanan had refused to give up Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, to the Confederates. The only problem was that there were 80 soldiers trapped inside and the food was about to run out. When Lincoln took office, he needed to figure out how to get the men supplies without starting a war. He told the Confederates that he’d be sending in unarmed supply ships to feed the hungry men. On April 12, 1861, before the ships could get there, the Confederates fired on the fort. Fort Sumter surrendered to the Confederates after 33 hours of bombardment—and the Civil War officially began.

MAN OF ACTION
Lincoln moved quickly after that. Congress wasn’t meeting, so he issued an executive order, which comes from the president and is as powerful as a law.

telegram for quicker battlefield reporting, and he became a regular at the telegraph office.
TEST YOUR SMARTS!

Every four years, including THIS year, we vote to decide who is going to be our president. Beginning with George Washington in 1789, we have had 45 different presidents, although some have served more than one term. You might have heard your parents or the news talking about the current presidential campaign, so now is a great time to learn some important information and some weird but true facts about past presidents and the presidency.

1/Lincoln had only one year of formal schooling, but he was able to study on his own to become a lawyer and one of the most revered presidents of the United States. Now that you are experiencing learning at home, what challenges do you think that Lincoln faced in trying to educate himself? Who else during this time was not able to receive education of any kind? Why do you think education is important?

2/Lincoln communicated with his generals by telegram, which was much faster than the usual way—sending letters by the Pony Express! Ask a parent or another adult if you can look up these words on the internet. What do you think of these methods of communication compared with what we use today? Why don’t you write a letter to one of your friends and ask a parent or another adult to mail it? You and your friend both might enjoy this slower way to “talk.”

3/Many presidents are remembered for a specific, important accomplishment during their time in office. For Lincoln, it was keeping the country together and abolishing slavery. On the lighter side, presidents also have done some pretty weird (but true) things. Can you think of any weird things that you or your friends do for fun? Why is it important to laugh sometimes?

DID YOU KNOW?

1 The White House has 6 floors, 147 windows, 132 rooms, 8 staircases, 28 fireplaces, and 3 elevators. It takes 570 gallons of paint to keep it white!

2 At 6 feet 4 inches tall, Lincoln towered over most people of his day. He added more height with his iconic “stovepipe” top hats. He was even known to keep important documents in his hat!

3 As a young man, Lincoln tried all kinds of jobs, including mail carrier, blacksmith, store clerk, nail splitter, and lawyer.

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