

Lincoln's Choice

5th Grade Historical Fiction

Source: Public Domain, adapted by Center for Urban Education, may be copied with citation.

This is a story that someone told about Abe Lincoln.

Abe Lincoln saved my life. We had been going to school together one year; but the next year we had no school, because there were so few students to attend, there being only about twenty in the school the year before.

Consequently Abe and I had not much to do; but, as we did not go to school and our mothers were strict with us, we did not get to see each other very often. They knew there were dangers in the countryside. One Sunday morning my mother waked me up early, saying she was going to see Mrs. Lincoln, and that I could go along. Glad of the chance, I was soon dressed and ready to go. After my mother and I got there, Abe and I played all through the day. We were out in the hills near the river.

While we were wandering up and down the little stream called Knob Creek, Abe said: "Right up there"—pointing to the east—"we saw a lot of blueberries there yesterday. Let's go over. We can bring a lot home."

The stream was too wide for us to jump across. We saw a foot-log, and decided to try it. It was narrow, but Abe said, "Let's do it." He was like that. He would take a chance if it was important to do something.

He went first and reached the other side all right. I went about half way across, when I slipped. He shouted, "Don't look down nor up nor sideways, but look right at me and hold on tight!" But I fell off into the creek. The water was about seven or eight feet deep. I could not swim, and neither could Abe. I was splashing and calling out.

So he got a stick and climbed out and held it out to me. I came up, grabbing with both hands, and he put the stick into my hands. I clung to it, and he pulled me out on the bank, almost dead. He got me by the arms and shook me well. Then he rolled me on the ground, when the water poured out of my mouth.

I was all right very soon. We promised each other that we would never tell anybody about it, and never did for years. My mother would have been so angry. I never told any one. But I can tell you now. He was a great problem solver even when he was a boy.

Identify, analyze, and infer motive – Historical Fiction

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. Why did they cross the stream?

- a. to have fun
- b. to get food
- c. to see what was there
- d. to have an adventure

2. Why did Abe Lincoln say, "Let's do it."

- a. He wanted to help his family.
- b. He was afraid.
- c. The water was deep.
- d. It was risky.

3. Why did Abe Lincoln save his friend?

- a. He cared about him.
- b. He wanted to be a hero.
- c. He could not swim.
- d. He took a risk.

4. Why did their mothers want them to stay at home?

- a. so they would do homework
- b. so they would be safe
- c. so they would help them
- d. so they would learn more

5. *Write your own answer to this question. Why did the two boys keep this a secret?*

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	b	a	a	b

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

Their mothers were strict and they probably would not let them go to play outside again.