

Analyze and Infer Author's Point of View and Purpose

Training for the Presidency

8th Grade Historical Fiction

Public Domain Text by Orison Swett Marden; Questions by Center for Urban Education

"I meant to take good care of your book, Mr. Crawford," said the boy, "but I've damaged it a good deal without intending to, and now I want to make it right with you. What shall I do to make it good?"

"Why, what happened to it, Abe?" asked the rich farmer, as he took the copy of Weems's "Life of Washington," which he had lent young Lincoln, and looked at the stained leaves and warped binding. "It looks as if it had been out through all last night's storm. How came you to forget, and leave it out to soak?"

"It was this way, Mr. Crawford," replied Abe. "I sat up late to read it, and when I went to bed, I put it away carefully in my bookcase, as I call it, a little opening between two logs in the wall of our cabin. I dreamed about General Washington all night. When I woke up I took it out to read a page or two before I did the chores, and you can't imagine how I felt when I found it in this shape. It seems that the mud-daubing had got out of the weather side of that crack, and the rain must have dripped on it three or four hours before I took it out. I'm sorry, Mr. Crawford, and want to fix it up with you, if you can tell me how, for I have not got money to pay for it."

"Well," said Mr. Crawford, "come and shuck corn three days, and the book is yours."

Had Mr. Crawford told young Abraham Lincoln that he had fallen heir to a fortune the boy could hardly have felt more relief. Shuck corn only three days, and earn the book that told all about his greatest hero!

"I don't intend to shuck corn, split rails, and the like always," he told Mr. Crawford's wife, after he had read the volume. "I'm going to fit myself for a leadership profession."

"Why, what do you want to be, now?" asked Mrs. Crawford in surprise.

"Oh, I'll be President!" said Abe with a smile. "I will lead the nation."

"You'd make a pretty President with all your tricks and jokes, now, wouldn't you?" said the farmer's wife.

"Oh, I'll study and get ready," replied the boy, "and then maybe the chance will come."

That was how it all started. You may not believe this story, but it is like what happened. Abe Lincoln was a truly remarkable person. He is the President who really changed our country.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question.

1. Why do you think the writer wrote this story?

- a. to help people understand Abe Lincoln
- b. to tell a story
- c. to make up history
- d. to show that Lincoln was silly

2. How does the writer feel about Abe Lincoln?

- a. He thinks he was silly.
- b. He thinks he was too proud.
- c. He thinks he was smart.
- d. He thinks he read a lot.

3. The writer could have made up a story about any part of Lincoln's life. He could have put any parts into it because it is fiction. Why do you think he put books in it?

- a. Books are important.
- b. Lincoln read books and learned from them.
- c. Children should study books.
- d. People can learn from books.

4. Why do you think the writer wrote the last paragraph?

- a. to end it with a note about the story
- b. to make sure people knew he made it up
- c. to make his view clear
- d. to tell why he wrote it

5. *Write your own answer to this question.*

What is one part of the story that shows how Lincoln overcame challenges?

Why would the writer include that?

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.*

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| Item | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Answer | a | c | b | c |

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

5. He was able to get earn the book. The writer included it to show how important books were to him and that he was poor.