

+ What is there in the Lincoln story that speaks to young adults?

(1) In his teens and twenties, Lincoln experiences major identity issues.

>As he comes to New Salem (age 22), he has no direction in his life.

--"I was on my own at last, but I was little more than a piece of floating driftwood."

--"How would the people of New Salem see me? For the strange, uneducated, friendless, penniless boy that I was?"

(2) Lincoln experiences a deepening conflict with his father.

>They are very different people.

>His father is a man who uses his hands for his vocation: carpenter/farmer. That life was good enough for him, and it should be good enough for Abe.

>He doesn't see value in reading.

>He distrusts "education."

>He senses that Abe, by trying to better himself, is starting to look down on him.

[*Young Lincoln* pages 12-13: explanation--the soldier coming back from Battle of New Orleans]

(3) Lincoln experiences depression

>Loss may have been a factor

[*Young Lincoln* pages 8-9]

(4) Lincoln has religious doubts

>During the New Salem years, Lincoln is a skeptic, if not “a scoffer”... Lincoln and religion is not easy to fathom

(5) Lincoln finds mentors in New Salem...Bowling Green’s courtroom... He begins to find his way... but it will take hard work (reading Blackstone) and there will be setbacks...

[Young Lincoln pages 158-164]

(6) The inner Lincoln... children have rich inner lives....

[Gardner: intrapersonal intelligence]

>the gregarious side/the side that seeks solitude (time for reflection)

>paragraph from PD article

+ Questions and Discussion

+ What is there in the Washington story that speaks to young adults?

What is there in the story of George Washington that speaks to young adults?

---With GW I am nowhere near where I am with AL... but after having presented the story of the American Revolution to 7th graders for six years, I am convinced

Washington is someone with whom adolescents can identify.

1) Washington experienced strong/turbulent emotions all his life and struggled to tame them and direct them.

> Chernow quotes

Gouverneur Morris “[he] had the tumultuous passions which accompany greatness and frequently tarnish its luster. With them was his first contest, and his first victory was over himself... yet those who have seen him strongly moved will bear witness that his wrath was terrible. They have seen, boiling in his bosom, passion almost too mighty for man.” xix

“Washington’s lifelong struggle to control his emotions speaks to the issue of how he exercised leadership as a politician, a soldier, a planter, and even a slaveholder. People felt the inner force of his nature, even if they didn’t exactly hear it or see it; they sensed his moods without being told. In studying his life, one is struck not only by his colossal temper but by his softer emotions: this man of deep feelings was sensitive to the delicate nuances of relationships and prone to tears as well as temper.”

2) Washington was the ultimate networker, particularly in his young adulthood.

- >Role of mentors in his life
- >A mentor for younger men [History Channel DVD]

3)Washington's relationship to power--stepping away from it....maybe they will make \$, and step away from it and become teachers and public servants.

>Rhodehamel quote:

Thomas Jefferson: "...the moderation and virtue of a single character has probably prevented this revolution from being closed as most others have been, by a subversion of that liberty it was intended to establish." p.6

4)Loyalty as one of Washington's supreme virtues

>[History Channel DVD: Washington's divided loyalty]... with his officers after the war

5) Questions and Discussion

Case Study: A Frontier Prank (1825)

“We were in the habit of catching Turrapins---a kind of turtle and put fire on their back and Lincoln would Chide us---and tell us it was wrong---would write against it.... He wrote a good Composition against Cruelty to animals whilst going to Dorsy and Swany.”

Nathaniel Grigsby (WHH interview): Gentryville, Indiana, Sept. 12, 1865

“He told me of an incident; that he was crossing a prairie one day, and saw before him a hog mired down, to use his own language; he was rather fixed up and he resolved that he would pass on without looking towards the shoat, after he had gone by, he said, the feeling was eresistable and he had to look back, and the poor thing seemed to say so wistfully--- *There now! my last hope is gone*; that he deliberately got down and relieved it from its difficulty.”

Mary Owens Vineyard (letter to WHH): Weston, Mo. July 22, 1866

“Was fond of cats---would take one & turn it on its back & talk to it for half an hour at a time.”

N.W Branson (letter to WHH): Petersburg, Ill, Aug. 3, 1865

“Abe preached against Cruelty to animals, Contending that an ants life was to it, as sweet as ours to us---”

Matilda Johnston Moore (WHH interview): at Sarah Bush Lincoln’s House---Sept. 8, 1865

“Oh,” said he, “when I saw him last (there had been a severe wind storm), “he had caught two little birds in his hand, which the wind had blown from their nest, and he was hunting for the nest.” Hardin left him before he found it. He finally found the nest, and placed the birds, to use his own words, “in the home provided for them by their mother”. When he came up with the party they laughed at him. Said he earnestly, “I could not have slept tonight if I had not given those two little birds to their mother.”

Joshua F. Speed (statement for WHH): [by 1882]

[All the above entries come from *Herndon’s Informants*, edited by Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998.]

Part 1

On May 25, 1825, when he was sixteen years old and living in Gentryville, Indiana, Abe Lincoln and John D. Johnston, his step-brother, tried to sneak out of the family's cabin at 2:00 a.m. They planned to go on a coon hunt with their friends Allen Gentry and Nathaniel Grigsby. Abe and John D. were to meet the others at the edge of the forest just past the last cabin in the small village. Nathaniel would bring his family's coon hound and Allen his rifle in case they should track down a coon. Abe did not like to hunt, but he wanted to be in on the fun.

John D. woke up first, crawled quietly up the ladder to the loft where Abe was still sleeping. John D. had to be careful because the ladder steps creaked with his weight. Both John D. and Abe dressed in woolen shirts and blue jean pants with foxing to cover the holes, and well-worn leather boots. They were on their way out the door when Joe, their father's dog, started to bark. John D. grabbed the dog and clamped one of his large hands over the dog's muzzle. Joe, who was used to rough handling, did not struggle when John D. picked him up and carried him out the door.

When they were clear of the cabins, but not yet to the forest, Abe said to John D., "Let's free up Joe so he can run along home."

"Nope," said John D. "we are going to teach this boy a lesson."

“What’s that?” asked Abe.
“You’ll see,” replied John D.

Processing question (first write and then discuss):

What might Abe be feeling at this point in the story?

Part 2

John D. did not free up the dog. He tied him up with a rope for a leash and called to him kindly, “Here, boy... Here, Joe...Come on, boy....Come along with us...” If Joe felt an impulse to bark or protest, he didn’t show it, and he willingly followed John D. to the spot where they were to meet the others. Shortly thereafter they were joined by Allen and Nathaniel.

It was a cool May night, but the boys didn’t mind. They were up for the excitement of the coon hunt. It was dark, but they could see just enough through the trees for them

to follow where Nathaniel's dog led them. Joe seemed to want to join in, so John D. let him off his leash. Pretty soon the dogs scented a coon and began to holler.

They all bounded through the woods and finally came to a tree stump where the dogs had trapped the coon. Allen was the first one there and he shot it quick and simple. Although there was blood dripping from the holes in its head and neck, most of the rest of it had no blood on it.

"Hey," said John D., "I got an idea. We'll skin this critter, and then we'll take the hide and tie it over old Joe. Maybe that will keep him from telling on our coon hunts."

"How are we going to do that?" asked Allen.

"Simple," said John D. "Nathaniel will skin this critter. Abe can hold Joe down because Joe won't fight him. Allen can tie the hide around him, and I can sew it up. We'll use a lace I've got in my pocket."

Processing question (first write and then discuss):

What choices does Abe have when the boys kill the coon and John D. wants to teach Joe a lesson?

Part 3

The boys eagerly carried out John D.'s plan. It was a bit bloodier than they had expected. Nathaniel did skin the coon, but he didn't have time to prepare the hide, and he slapped it onto Joe who squealed with fright. Allen threw him to the ground and turned him over, and Abe held him down. Joe growled, barked, and tried to bite Abe, but Abe had overpowered him and held his jaw to the ground upside down. Nathaniel had to wrestle his hindquarters down. Allen was able to draw the coon's skin tightly around Joe, and although it was not easy to sew the hide onto the writhing, struggling Joe, John D. did it.

When the boys finished, they released Joe who tore off through the woods toward the village. After the terrified Joe had rushed away from them, the boys collapsed on the ground in laughter. Lengthening each of the details, they retold the story several times. Abe, who was a superb mimic, imitated what each of the others had said and done. The laughter was contagious and continued on into the night. The boys were so consumed with the success of their prank that they barely heard the shrill barking that came from the village.

Processing question:

What do you suppose Abe is thinking and feeling right now?

Part 4

The boys fell asleep in the forest, but they awoke just before first light and trotted back to the village hoping it wasn't too late to sneak back into their cabins. When they reached the Lincoln cabin, they beheld a gruesome scene. Thomas Lincoln, Abe's father, was sitting on the front doorstep with his head in his hands. In front of him were bloody pieces of animal flesh mixed together with torn bits of coon hide.

Thomas glared up at the boys. He looked tired and angry.

"I kin think of what I done as a boy," he said, "but none of it ain't close to this."

He paused and look down at the ground and then back up at them.

"So you thought it was funny," he continued. "That's what you thought. I know you did. When Joe run back

here, all afright from what you done to him, you didn't reckon what the other dogs would do. Here was a coon running right into them, not away from them. Well they done what you must have wanted. You was just thinking how much fun you was having and couldn't be bothered when you heard the ruckus. They tore him to these bits that is all around here. Git around back, Abe and John D. I don't like starting the day with a licking, but I got to learn you for this."

Processing question:

What is Abe thinking and feeling now?