

# Lincoln Memorial

Washington, D.C.  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## Lincoln: The Person

Abraham Lincoln was born February 12, 1809, in a log cabin near Hodgenville, Kentucky, and became the 16th President of the United States, leading his country through its greatest trial, the Civil War. His life was full of personal tragedy and disappointment, but his belief in the principles of the Declaration of Independence and his experience gained as a state legislator, a lawyer, and as a Congressman, along with a whimsical sense of humor, gave him the strength to endure. Throughout his political career Lincoln strove to maintain

the ideals of the Nation's founders. He saw slavery as hypocritical for a Nation founded on the principle that "all men are created equal." In an 1854 speech he said: "I hate it [slavery] because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites." As President he used the power of the office to preserve the Union. In freeing the slaves, Lincoln left a legacy to freedom that is one of the most enduring birthrights Americans possess.



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## Lincoln: The President

By condemning slavery's expansion and maintaining that he would not interfere with it where it already existed, Lincoln won the presidential nomination of the Republican party in 1860. Upon his electoral victory, seven states of the lower South seceded and formed the Confederate States of America. At his inauguration in March 1861 Lincoln implored the South to show restraint and tried to dispel its mistrust, but he also pledged to do whatever was necessary to preserve the Union. The South responded by firing on Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, April 12, 1861. Lincoln, in turn, issued the call for troops to put down the rebellion, and four more states in the Upper South—Virginia, Arkansas, North Caro-

lina, and Tennessee—seceded. The result was four years of bloody conflict. In January 1863 Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation to free slaves within the states in rebellion, thus raising the war to a higher moral plane. In January 1865 he secured Congressional approval of the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery in the United States. In his Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865, Lincoln offered peace and reconciliation to the South. He was shot by an assassin on April 14, 1865, and died the next day, six days after the surrender of Gen. Robert E. Lee and his troops at Appomattox Court House, Virginia.

