Unit 4

Title: *A Backwoods Boy*

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RI.6.1, RI.6.3, RI.6.4, RI.6.6; W.6.2, W.6.4, W.6.7, W.6.8, W.6.9; SL.6.1, SL.6.5; L.6.1, L.6.2, L6.4

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Success depends on inner drive, strength of character, support networks, and circumstances.

Synopsis

Lincoln’s life was filled with many relationships, events, challenges and decisions that shaped him from boy to politician. Abraham Lincoln’s early life and young adult hood is marked with events and people in places such as Kentucky, Indiana and Louisiana. As an adult, he continued to read, make relationships, and explore politics. His social interactions and self-education played critical roles in his development from a backwoods boy to a prominent leader of our nation.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire selection independently.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to read the full text or a passage aloud. For a particularly complex text, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| Using information from the text, describe Lincoln’s mother, Nancy. What did Lincoln’s mother teach him through her actions? | Nancy Lincoln was a self-less woman. At her deathbed, Dennis Hanks, recalls that she told her children to "be good and kind to their father, to one another, and to the world." |
| Why did Abraham Lincoln hesitate to speak of his early life? What did he learn from those experiences in his early life? | It was a rough childhood. He considered himself, "a poor backwoods farm boy, swinging an ax on frontier homesteads..." He demonstrated resiliency and learned early on that hard work was a part of everyday life. |
| It was stated that Lincoln “handed the money over to his father, according to law and custom.” What does this phrase show about Lincoln’s character? | This phrase implies that Lincoln had integrity and did the right thing. It must have been difficult to earn money by taking a long boat trip and then be faced with the decision to give the money to his father or spend it. His choice to give the money to his father shows that doing the right thing was more important to him than spending or having money for himself. |
| Why did Lincoln have a limited education as a child? How did he continue his learning? What do Lincoln’s actions continuing his learning tell us about him? | Lincoln’s education was limited due to several reasons: transiency, illiterate parents, and lack of formal instruction. The story explains that his schooling, “did not amount to one year.” Lincoln would read books as he was plowing the fields with his horse and used his free time to read stories like Robinson Crusoe and Shakespeare. Even taking time to read while he ate shows that he went to great lengths to read new books that he had borrowed because he didn’t have money for books.  Another example of his continued learning was how he practiced public speaking in front of his friends and used his experiences of watching politicians and preachers as role models to learn from. Lincoln’s inner drive was responsible for him finding resources like books and educated people to learn from.  His willingness to travel and get away from the backwoods showed his inner drive to learn new things. |
| Lincoln described himself as “friendless, uneducated, penniless boy” when he arrived in New Salem in July 1831. What evidence does the author include to counter Abraham’s quote about himself? | The author counters Lincoln’s description of himself with the evidence that by the time Lincoln arrived at New Salem, he “had a reputation as a comic and storyteller.” Moreover, there were people who liked Lincoln. Even though Lincoln didn’t attend proper schooling, he did read books and there are accounts that people never saw him without a book in his hand. Just shortly before he went to New Salem, he was earning money, so he really wasn’t penniless. |
| After trying his luck as a frontier merchant, in what ways did Lincoln’s life change in New Salem? Support your answer with evidence from the text. | Lincoln’s life changed in New Salem in many different ways. For instance, “he worked at all sorts of odd jobs. He split fences, rails, hired himself out as a farmhand, helped at the local gristmill.” He also built a reputation for himself and ran again for state legislature. |
| List one obstacle that Lincoln faced while in New Salem, and how he approached that situation. What does that say about his character? | One of the obstacles that Lincoln faced in New Salem was that he took a huge debt when he partnered up with someone and tried “his luck as a frontier merchant.” He spent the next fifteen years paying it back. The fact that Lincoln committed himself to pay back the debt, even if it took him a considerable amount of time (15 years), showed that he was very determined as human being. |
| What circumstances helped Lincoln land a political career after leaving New Salem? | The events that followed after Lincoln left New Salem was that “one of four men to be elected to the Illinois House of Representatives” and that one of his friends, John Todd Stuart, urges him to study law. Even though Lincoln didn’t have the tools, and hesitated in the beginning, he nonetheless decided to study by himself for “nearly three years before passing his exams and being admitted to practice on March 1, 1837, demonstrating his desire to succeed. |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

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|  | **These words require less time to learn**  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/  process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | **These words require more time to learn**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part  of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| **Meaning can be learned from context** | hostile  labored  crude  epidemic  forlorn  verse  stirring  spruced  wiling to oblige  auctioned  intellectuals  precinct  enlisted  ambitious | barrel-chested  fortunate  spindly  losing himself  reputation  navigate  tended  appointed  impassioned |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | blab school  chums  flourishing |  |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt

*The author of this selection wrote a historical account of a person he admired. Use what you have learned to write about Abraham Lincoln in another form to demonstrate how Abraham Lincoln overcame challenges to become a successful individual. Other forms could be a poem, essay, letter, video or comic. Use evidence (direct quotations, paraphrase, etc) from the text within your writing.*

* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should guide students in gathering and using any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions earlier. Some students will need a good deal of help gathering this evidence, especially when this process is new and/or the text is challenging!

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| “Abraham Lincoln never liked to talk much about his early life. A poor backwoods boy, he grew up swinging an ax on frontier homesteads in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois.” | Lincoln must have always felt that people would view him differently based on the lack of opportunities that he had growing up in frontier lands. |
| He attended a “blab school” with his sister where he learned how to count to ten and was introduced to reading and writing. | He did not have an opportunity to really learn all that he could have when he attended school. He used what he was taught. |
| “Mostly, he educated himself by borrowing books and newspapers. There are many stories about Lincoln’s efforts to find enough books to satisfy him in that backwoods country.” | He was creative in finding ways to learn more even when he could not go to school. |
| “At the age of seventeen, Abraham had a chance to get away from the backwoods and see something of the world.” | Living in the backwoods kept Lincoln sheltered from what was going on outside of that setting. |
| “Lincoln was self-conscious about his meager education, and ambitious to improve himself.” | He was aware that there was so much to learn and he wanted to absorb as much as he could. |
| “To support himself, he worked at all sorts of odd jobs.” | He knew how to survive and was extremely resourceful and willing to work in any opportunity presented to him. |
| “Lincoln decided to study entirely on his own…He studied for nearly three years before passing his exams and being admitted into practice on March 1, 1837.” | He realized that if he dedicated his time and energy into learning the law, he could become a lawyer. He self-taught and began to practice law without having gone to law school. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
3. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Answer (Responses will vary depending on the format students select.)

Poem: I Am Template

I am a backwoods boy

I wonder if I will ever know enough about the world to make a difference

I hear my mother’s voice encouraging me

I want to accomplish so much more than I have

I am a backwoods boy

I pretend that I am a person of knowledge and power

I feel the weight of my family’s needs

I touch an uncertain future ahead

I worry that I am forever trapped in these woods

I cry that I hunger for more

I am a backwoods boy

I understand that opportunities bring challenges

I say that hard work and honesty always pay off

I dream that one day I will be a lawyer

I try to learn as much as I can from everyone and every situation I encounter

I hope that my parents are proud

I am a backwoods boy that became more than I ever imagined

Additional Tasks

* *Research images that depict the grit, ingenuity and tenacious spirit that embodies this biographical account of Abraham Lincoln’s early life and young adulthood. Construct a digital collage. You may either select a song to complement the spirit of the piece or construct a 200-word speech that is embedded in the presentation.* 
  + Responses will vary. See example through the following link: [http://animoto.com/play/m7QiEMtmSy7vlxQ7UCSB3Q](http://animoto.com/play/m7QiEMtmSy7vlxQ7UCSB3Q%20)
* *Compose a comparison to a contemporary public figure that demonstrates the same character qualities.*
  + *Students might individually, or as a group, and write about political figures like Barack Obama, Sonia Sotomayor, or Daniel Inouye.*
  + *Responses should include character traits/qualities, supporting evidence, and citations of sources.*