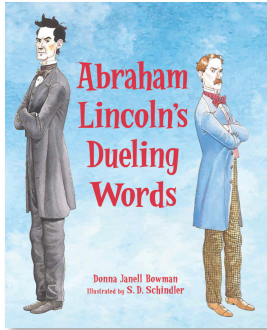


TEACHER'S GUIDE



Abraham Lincoln's Dueling Words

Written by Donna Janell Bowman | Illustrated by S. D. Schindler

HC: 978-1-56145-852-3

Ages 6–10 | Nonfiction / History
Lexile • F&P • GRL S; Gr 4

ABOUT THE BOOK

Abraham Lincoln was known for his sense of humor. But early in his adult life, it nearly got him into trouble. He had to use his imagination to save his career—and maybe even his life.

When Abraham Lincoln became frustrated with the actions of James Shields, a political rival, he came up with a plan. It was silly. It was clever. And it was a great big mistake! Lincoln, his future wife, and a friend of hers wrote a series of pseudonymous letters to the editor of a newspaper, complaining about Shields. But when Shields took offense, he challenged Lincoln to a duel. How would our future president straighten things out and save the lives and careers of both himself and his rival?

THEMES

Honor | Integrity | Slander | Character education
Conflict resolution

BEFORE YOU READ

Discuss the following questions as a pre-reading activity:

- Who was Abraham Lincoln? How do you feel about him? Do you consider Lincoln to be a hero? Have you ever heard anything bad about him? What

characteristics do you think of when you think of Lincoln?

- What is a duel? What do you think would lead Lincoln to have a duel?
- On the title page is a quote by Abraham Lincoln: “It has been my experience that folks who have no vices have very few virtues.” What is a vice? What is a virtue? What does this quote mean? Do you agree with it?
- The title is *Abraham Lincoln's Dueling Words*. Is it possible to duel with words? Can there be a winner?

AFTER YOU READ

Discuss the following questions:

Character Education

- Lincoln is described as “Springfield’s favorite joke-telling, story-spinning, honest-to-the-bone lawyer.” Are these character traits/qualities good for a friend to have? For a president?
- Lincoln said, “If I did not laugh, I would die.” Why would he say this? Why is laughter important?
- Lincoln wrestled with “his own stubborn streak.”

MEETING THE STANDARDS

The activities in this guide directly address a variety of standards across the curriculum. For a complete list of the English Language Arts Standards addressed, please see page 4.

What is a stubborn streak and how would you go about wrestling it? Does the fact that Lincoln wrestled with his suggest that he thought it was bad?

- Shields was “mad as a badger.” What are the characteristics of a badger? Lincoln was “strong as a mule.” What are the characteristics of a mule?
- Shields had “a knack for arguing.” What does it mean to have a knack for something? Can you acquire it or are you born with it? Give examples.
- Shields was only fifteen years old when he was challenged to his first duel. How do you think this shaped his character and outlook on life? How would it affect yours?
- Some people didn't think there was “a joke-telling, story-spinning bone in Shields's body.” What do you think that means? Do you think he was popular? Would you want him as a friend?
- Are you more like Lincoln or Shields?
- Shields was so mad about the letters that he wanted to find out who wrote them—and then he challenged that person to a duel. Have you ever been that mad?
- “Shields accused Lincoln of damaging his character, his reputation, and his honor.” Do you think Lincoln considered this before he wrote the letter? Does this affect your opinion of Lincoln?
- Shields wanted a public apology from Lincoln. Why did it matter if the apology was public or private?
- In a letter to Shields, Lincoln said, “You have made assumptions without stopping to inquire whether I really am the author.” Was it reasonable for Lincoln to be offended? Does this seem like a presidential trait?
- Lincoln's and Shields's seconds were able to stop the duel by telling a lie. Is it okay to lie if it protects somebody from harm?
- Lincoln ultimately apologized to Shields, but he never revealed who wrote the other letters and poem. Would you have told?
- Do you think it was hard for Lincoln and Shields to work together after their almost-duel? Would you have been able to do so, or would you hold a grudge?
- This was a life-altering event for Lincoln. He regretted what he wrote and vowed not to say anything bad about anyone again. How do you think this affected his presidency? Do you think he spent more time thinking about consequences of his words?
- Lincoln chose not to speak of the letters or duel. Is a secret ever really a secret if more than one person knows about it? Do you think Lincoln would be disappointed that we know? How do you feel about him, now that you know?

- Many people idolize Lincoln because of his character and presidency. What does it mean to idolize someone? When we idolize a person, do we see the whole person? Is anybody all good or all bad?
- Lincoln was ashamed of his actions that led to the almost-duel, so he did not want to speak about it. What do you think about that choice? Does it affect your opinion of someone if they choose to hide their mistakes? If you were Lincoln, would you have talked about your mistakes?
- There is a saying: “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” What does this saying mean? Do you agree with it? Which will affect you more significantly: words or physical hurt?
- The duel was a life-altering event for Lincoln. Have you had a life-altering event? If so, how has it changed the way you think or act?
- What did Lincoln do as president that has changed our lives?

Social Studies

- The boat Lincoln and Shields is on is headed to Bloody Island, “where nothing good ever happens.” What imagery does the name Bloody Island bring to mind? How do you think Bloody Island got its name? Make up a story about how it got its name. Is there a place with a gruesome or unusual name where you live? How did it get its name?
- If you knew about a place where nothing good ever happens, would you still go there? Why? What would you expect to happen? How does our imagination help or hinder us?
- Lincoln was an attorney. He was quite the storyteller in court. Sometimes his humorous stories would sway the jury to vote his way. Should a jury vote on personality or the facts?
- Shields was a state auditor. What skills do you need to be an auditor? Look up career information on being an auditor.
- What are banks and why do we use them? What is a banking crisis and how does it happen? How would you prevent one?
- Compare the banking crisis in Lincoln's time with the Great Depression and/or the 2007–08 recession. Do we still have financial crises today? What would you do if you lost all your savings?
- What are taxes and how are they used to help communities?
- When the value of state bank money dropped, Shields, and the Illinois governor, and treasurer required people to pay their taxes with gold or silver.

How would that affect poor people?

- Could you get away with using the name of a fake place like the Lost Townships today? Why or why not? Why could they in Lincoln's time?
- What is the difference between a political jab and a personal attack? Is it okay to make a political jab? A personal attack? When our politicians make a personal attack, we call it mudslinging. Can mudslinging sway votes? Give an example from today in politics.
- Lincoln didn't admit what he had and hadn't done because he felt Shields was not following the rules of gentlemanly conduct. What rules are we talking about?
- Do countries get into conflicts as a result of their leaders' words?

Language

- The author could have said Lincoln had an idea, made a plan, and wrote a letter. Instead she said, "A rascally idea needled its way into Lincoln's mind and he stitched a political plan.... [he] scratched out a letter." Do these word choices change the meaning? Do they affect how you feel about Lincoln's actions?
- What does a newspaper editor do?
- Why do you think Lincoln chose to write under a fake name?
- In his letter, Lincoln used backwoods language from his childhood, such as "spose," "reckon," and "finickin about." Why do you think he did this? What words or expressions are specific to the region where you live?
- Lincoln's letter is described as silly and clever. Is it possible to be silly and clever at the same time?
- Lincoln called Shields "a fool, a liar, and a conceity dunce." Which of these insults is the worst? Which would you fight over?
- Lincoln's letters were published under a pseudonym. This was a common strategy at the time. Is this something newspapers do today? Websites? Should a publication have to use the real name of anyone who writes a letter to the editor or posts a comment? Would knowing this policy affect your decision about what to write?
- Lincoln told the editor to give Shields only his name. Why? If you were Lincoln, would you have given the other names? What if you were the editor?

Dueling

- Why do you think Shields is "fuming over those long, shiny, razor-sharp swords"? Do you think it would be easier if they were out of sight?
- Shields was "a crack shot." What does that mean? Where did the term come from? What were the benefits of learning to shoot in Lincoln's day? Which would be more useful to learn, sword fighting or shooting a gun?
- Who was more responsible for the duel, Lincoln or Shields? Why?
- Because Lincoln wouldn't apologize, Shields challenged him to a duel. Is this a good reason to hurt or possibly kill someone? Is it better to defend your honor or walk away from a fight?
- Dueling was illegal in Illinois. How do you feel about Shields and Lincoln breaking the law? Are there laws that are okay to break? Or circumstances in which it is acceptable to break the law? Is there anything that is so important to you that you would give up your job, family, and life for it?
- Why do you think Lincoln chose broadswords as the weapons for the duel? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this choice? Of the pistol? What weapon would you have chosen and why?
- If you were challenged to a duel today, what weapon would you choose? Would it be a challenge of words, video games, etc.? Is it still considered a duel if your life is not at risk?
- Folks crowded the banks of the river to watch the duel. Why would some people want to watch public acts of cruelty like duels? Is this different from watching dog fights, boxing, or MMA? Would you watch a duel? Would you try to stop it?
- A second is a person who oversees the duel, and tries to prevent the fight. If you were challenged to a duel, who would you choose for your second? What characteristics would you look for? Would you want someone who would try to stop the duel or let it happen?
- Lincoln was tall, so he could reach Shields with his broadsword, but Shields couldn't reach Lincoln. Was this fair? Why didn't Shields complain about Lincoln's terms? Why do you think Lincoln made this arrangement?
- The space where the duel took place was called the field of honor. Where did it get its name? Though duels are no longer practiced, do we have places today where people settle differences?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

SOCIAL STUDIES

- Research the time period of 1842. Look at clothing, customs, jobs, etc.
- Why was the Black Hawk War fought? Who took part? What were the results and consequences?
- What is the purpose of a political party? Can members of opposing parties work together? Does this happen today?
- Research the Whigs and Democrats. When and why was each party formed? What were the main differences in their platforms? Did they share any common policies?
- If you were to create a new political party, what would you call it? What issues and policies would be included in your party's platform? Defend your platform.
- How would America be different today if Lincoln had died in the duel? Would we have still had a Civil War? Would we still have slavery? Would the South still be largely agricultural?

LANGUAGE ARTS

- This website lists today's rules for writing a letter to the editor. Read and discuss these rules: www.dallasnews.com/opinion/opinion/2016/12/20/tips-letters-editor-op-ed-submissions
 - Write a letter to the editor about a topic of your choice that has been in the news lately.
 - Play the devil's advocate by taking the opposing side in your letter.
 - Rewrite the letter pretending to be someone else and use local or regional language to disguise your identity.
 - Rewrite your letter to the editor as a poem.
- Libel is the legal term for when someone's written words harm you in some way. What sort of words would make you feel libeled? What would you do if you believed you had been libeled?

MATH

- Shields was from Ireland. Find Ireland on a world map. How far is it from Illinois? How long would it take to get from Ireland to America on a ship?
- Find Bloody Island on a map. (It is located within Lincoln-Shields Recreation Area in Illinois.) How far is Bloody Island from Springfield, Illinois? How long

would the journey take?

- Pair up with a partner. Measure your heights. Who is the tallest? What is the difference in your heights? If you and your partner were to fight a duel under Lincoln's terms, who would have the advantage? What are the dimensions of the field of honor that would give the taller person the advantage?

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

The activities in this guide directly address the following standards:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.3
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.8
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.2.10
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.3
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.8
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.10
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.5
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.8
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.10
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.10

REVIEWS

“Lively, engaging... Bowman’s conversational, folksy reader-directed paragraphs incorporate droll, dramatic, and suspenseful touches that will likely hold readers’ interest...Schindler’s intricate, expressive watercolor-and-ink illustrations lend further vibrancy.”

—*Booklist*

“Bowman’s upbeat telling is infused with folksy humor, and Schindler's superb watercolor-and-ink illustrations effectively capture the time period”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“A rollicking story, well told with all the original color.”

—**James M. Cornelius, PhD, Curator,
Lincoln Collection and Abraham Lincoln
Presidential Library & Museum**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Donna Janell Bowman is the author of a number of children’s books, including the award-winning *Step Right Up: How Doc and Jim Key Taught the World About Kindness*. She holds an MFA in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. She lives in Texas.

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

S. D. Schindler is the popular illustrator of many bestselling children’s picture books, including *Ben Franklin’s Big Splash: The Mostly True Story of His First Invention* and *Brother Hugo and the Bear*. He lives in Pennsylvania.

www.sdschindlerbooks.com

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Peachtree Teacher’s Guide for
ABRAHAM LINCOLN’S DUELING WORDS

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VOCABULARY MATCH**NAME:** _____**DIRECTIONS:** Find the correct definition in the right-hand column. Write the letter of the correct definition in the blank next to each vocabulary word.

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------|---|
| 1. Auditor | _____ | A. A business where money is kept for saving, investing, or loaning |
| 2. Bank | _____ | B. An honorable man |
| 3. Crack shot | _____ | C. Money taken from citizens to run the government |
| 4. Duel | _____ | D. To tell a lie damaging one's reputation |
| 5. Editor | _____ | E. A bad habit or weakness of character |
| 6. Gentleman | _____ | F. One who is good with a gun |
| 7. Libel | _____ | G. An accountant who reviews money accounts |
| 8. Political party | _____ | H. An organization with the same political views that tries to put candidates in office |
| 9. Slander | _____ | I. A contest with deadly weapons between two people in order to settle a point of honor |
| 10. Tax | _____ | J. Person in charge who determines the content of a newspaper |
| 11. Vice | _____ | K. An untrue statement about a person that is in print |

VOCABULARY MATCH ANSWER KEY**NAME:** _____**DIRECTIONS:** Find the correct definition in the right-hand column. Write the letter of the correct definition in the blank next to each vocabulary word.

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------|---|
| 1. Auditor | <u> G </u> | A. A business where money is kept for saving, investing, or loaning |
| 2. Bank | <u> A </u> | B. An honorable man |
| 3. Crack shot | <u> F </u> | C. Money taken from citizens to run the government |
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COMPARE AND CONTRAST

character traits of Lincoln and Shields

NAME: _____

DIRECTIONS:

- On the back of this sheet of paper, create a Venn Diagram for Lincoln and Shields. Place each of the following words and phrases on the Venn Diagram under Lincoln, Shields, or both.
- Circle each word or phrase you think would be an asset for a president to have.
- Underline each word or phrase you think would be a detriment for a president to have. Be prepared to defend your answers.

Joke-telling
Story-spinning
Honest-to-the-bone
Friendly
Head full of smarts
A timber of a man
Strong as a mule
Stubborn streak
Springfield lawyer
Soldier
Illinois legislature
Hot-tempered
Well-educated
Knack for arguing
Crack shot
Whiz at sword fighting
Arrogant
Serious
Stubborn