

Exemplar Read-Aloud Informational Texts – Lincoln: A Photobiography

**Freedman, Russell. *Lincoln: A Photobiography*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1989. (1987)
From Chapter One: “The Mysterious Mr. Lincoln”**

Abraham Lincoln wasn’t the sort of man who could lose himself in a crowd. After all, he stood six feet four inches tall. And to top it off, he wore a high silk hat.

His height was mostly in his long bony legs. When he sat in a chair, he seemed no taller than anyone else. I was only when he stood up that he towered over other men.

At first glance, most people thought he was homely. Lincoln thought so too, once referring to his “poor, lean, lank face.” As a young man he was sensitive about his gawky looks, but in time, he learned to laugh at himself. When a rival called him “two-faced” during a political debate, Lincoln replied: “I leave it to my audience. If I had another face, do you think I’d wear this one?”

According to those who knew him, Lincoln was a man of many faces. In repose, he often seemed sad and gloomy. But when he began to speak, his expression changed. “The dull, listless features dropped like a mask,” said a Chicago newspaperman. “The eyes began to sparkle, the mouth to smile, the whole countenance was wreathed in animation, so that a stranger would have said, ‘Why, this man, so angular and solemn a moment ago, is really handsome.’”

Lincoln was the most photographed man of his time, but his friends insisted that no photo ever did him justice. It’s no wonder. Back then cameras required long exposures. The person being photographed had to “freeze” as the seconds ticked by. If he blinked an eye, the picture would be blurred. That’s why Lincoln looks so stiff and formal in his photos. We never see him laughing or joking.