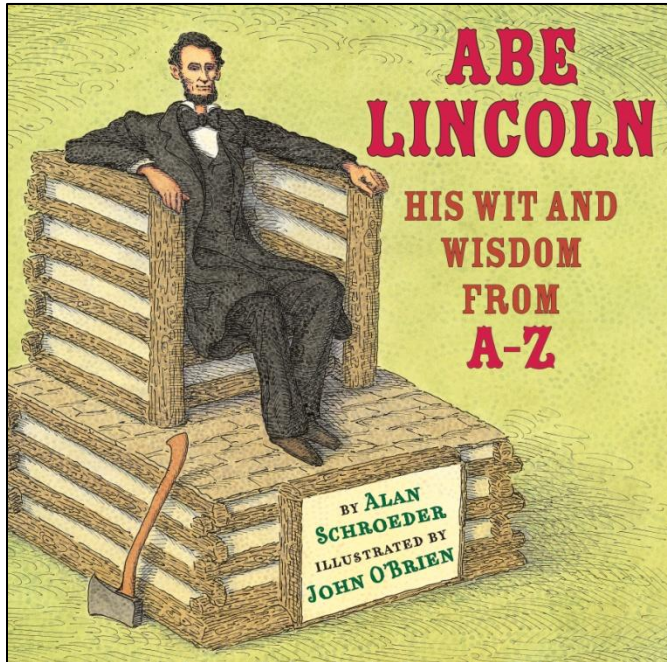


# Abe Lincoln

*His Wit and Wisdom from A-Z*



Ages 6–10 • \$17.95 • 978-0-8234-2420-7 • E-book available

## A conversation with author **Alan Schroeder**

Abe Lincoln is known for his many memorable adages. As the sixteenth president he needed all the wisdom he could muster to guide the country through the Civil War, preserve the union and end slavery. This nontraditional tribute to the president who brought the homespun humor of his humble beginnings to the White House uses the alphabet to organize a wealth of information about his life and accomplishments.

**Alan, tell us about your new book, *ABE LINCOLN: His Wit and Wisdom from A-Z*.**

*ABE LINCOLN: His Wit and Wisdom from A-Z* is a companion book to an earlier title, *BEN FRANKLIN: His Wit and Wisdom from A-Z*. Considering its unusual format – an ABC book devoted to one person – *BEN FRANKLIN* did very well. When Holiday House asked if I'd consider doing a follow-up book, I suggested George Washington, because I was reading a biography of him at the time. But my editor and the marketing department at Holiday House thought that Abraham Lincoln would be a better choice – certainly a more popular one. So Abe it was.

**Similar to *BEN FRANKLIN: His Wit and Wisdom from A-Z*, this book contains a slew of facts about the life of Abraham Lincoln. Tell us about your research process into Lincoln's life.**

The research process was daunting. Abraham Lincoln is the second most written about person in the history of the world (Jesus is first). Nearly 20,000 books about Lincoln have been published. I knew I couldn't possibly read all of them – I couldn't even read 10 percent of them – so that's where librarians came in handy. They were able to steer me in the right direction, suggest the best titles, best web sites and more.

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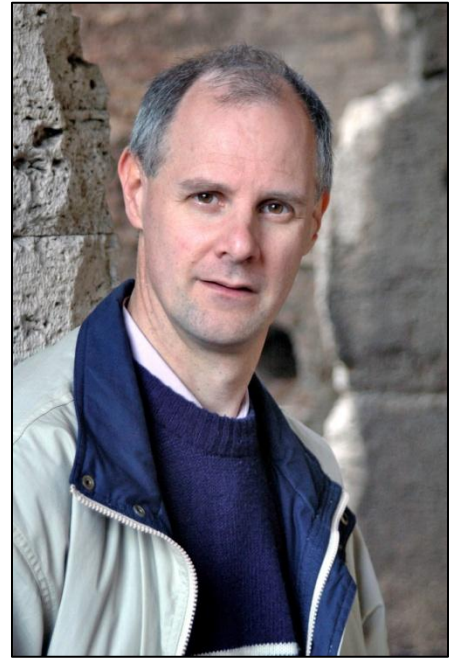


**The book is set up in alphabetical order, with several facts about Lincoln's life attributed to each letter. Which letters were the hardest to attribute facts with?**

The ABC format of these books is fun for me, but it's also a challenge. Some letters, especially *S*, fill up very fast, while others resist you at every turn. For some reason, *Y* was a challenge in both *BEN* and *ABE*. And *X*—yikes! The less said about *X*, the better.

The attribution of facts is another challenge, especially in this day and age, when ten different web sites give you ten different answers. In *BEN FRANKLIN*, we had a heck of a time trying to determine what day Ben signed the Declaration of Independence. Every source seemed to have a different date.

With *ABE* I didn't have as much trouble in that respect. Attribution came fairly easily, as his life has been very well researched. The hard part was achieving the right balance to include entries about his childhood, adolescence and adulthood; his work as a lawyer, legislator and president; his wife and children; his humor; his gravity; his attitude toward slavery and the Civil War. Presenting a rounded portrait of such a well-known American in an ABC format is surprisingly difficult.



Alan Schroeder

But the hardest thing of all is how to be both concise *and* accurate. How do you sum up the Emancipation Proclamation, or the Civil War, or the Gettysburg Address in a few sentences? By rewriting and then rewriting some more.

**What facts about Lincoln were most interesting or surprising to you?**

When I started my research, I knew very little about Abraham Lincoln's father, Thomas. He and Abe had a very tense relationship; basically, Thomas resented the amount of time that Abe spent reading and writing and trying to better himself. As a result, the two argued constantly, and when Abe left Indiana for Illinois, he was glad to get away from his father. Separation didn't improve their relationship. Years later, when Thomas lay on his deathbed, Abe did not come to see him; and when Thomas died, Abe skipped the funeral.

As a Californian, I was surprised to learn that it was Abraham Lincoln who set aside the land that became Yosemite National Park. He believed that it was so beautiful, and so special, that it ought to be protected and preserved for the public's enjoyment. That was an unusual point of view to have in 1864; never before had land been set aside for that purpose. In so many ways, Lincoln was a forward-looking man.

### What made you decide to become an author?

Two different writers made me want to become a writer myself. When I was young, I was introduced to the stories of Hans Christian Andersen, and I was swept away into a world of enchantment and imagination. My mother's father was Danish and so was Andersen, so maybe I was predisposed to like his stories. I'll never forget how sad I felt when I finished reading "The Little Match Girl."

The other author who changed my world was Jack London. His stories were so well-written, and so exciting, that I couldn't put them down. I still enjoy reading them, especially the Klondike tales. My teachers were important, too. They gave me a lot of encouragement and kept telling me that I had a way with words. Reading and writing were far and away my favorite subjects in school. (Math was my least favorite.)

### What advice would you give to young authors?

Write, write, write--that's the best advice I can give to young writers.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes, it's part of the learning process. Another important tip is to get your stuff out there. Submit your stories to newspaper and kids' magazines.

Finally, don't let rejection stop you. You've got to keep trying. Success never comes easily for anyone, and the only way to achieve it is to keep working at it, to have a goal. I know so many people with talent who never try to take the next step. Some are lazy, some are afraid of rejection. Ask any published author how they got where they are, and the answer is always the same, they never gave up—and you shouldn't either.

**ALAN SCHROEDER** is the author of acclaimed books such as *Ragtime Tumpie*, which was an ALA Notable Children's Book, a *Booklist* Children's Editors' Choice, and a *Parents' Choice* Award winner; *Smoky Mountain Rose*, winner of the Bluegrass Award, and *Minty*; an ALA Notable Children's Book and a *TIME* Magazine Best Children's Book of the Year. He lives in Alameda, California.

#### Praise for *Abe Lincoln: His Wit and Wisdom from A-Z*

★ "This team goes beyond good; they excel at making history real, enjoyable and memorable."  
— *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"An amusing and educational portrait of Honest Abe." — *Publishers Weekly*

"Each page is brimming with text and drawings, and readers are sure to linger over the details."  
— *School Library Journal*

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