How to Write an Article

By: Ms. Grey’s Class

A clear introduction makes your feature article more **focused**, **interesting**, and **easier** to understand.

In the introduction, you need …

1. Hook / Lead: Grab your reader with a startling fact, challenging question, dramatic description, or interesting story.

2. Background**:** Give the reader any background information they need.

3. “Thesis statement”: A sentence that says what the article will describe or explain.

Example:

*Abraham Lincoln worked his way up from humble beginnings to the* **1***highest office in the land,* **2***preserved the Union despite a frighteningly massive Civil War,***3** *freed slaves, and* **4***promised a more perfect union,* **5***before having his life ended by an assassin's bullet. He is remembered for all of these things and so much more.* ***His name is synonymous with greatness. Lincoln is consistently considered one of the greatest, if not the greatest, of the American Presidents.***

(The introductory paragraph above has 5 separate events that can be discussed in the following body paragraphs, each marked with a superscript number 1-5)

**Heading 1**

The body paragraph describes each idea presented in the introductory paragraph. This section consists of two paragraphs that talk about only one main idea.

A new heading is not needed between each paragraph. Notice how the first body paragraph introduces the childhood of Lincoln and ties into the introductory paragraph topic sentence.

Remember, each paragraph should consist of a topic sentence and 3 detail sentences, concluding with a transitional sentence into the next paragraph.

*The Son of a Farmer*

*Born on Feb. 12, 1809, he started life the son of two illiterate farmers living in a one-room log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky. Abraham's father, Thomas, moved the family to Indiana in 1817, to live on public land where his father farmed and hunted game. In 1818, Abraham's mother, Nancy, died of what at the time was commonly called "milk sickness," which is unheard of today but was quite common in the American frontier in the 19th Century. Thomas Lincoln married Sarah Johnston a few months after Nancy's death, and Abraham had siblings again after losing his older sister Sarah and his younger brother Thomas.*

*Abraham's new mother, Sarah, encouraged the youth to read. Young Abe would walk miles to borrow books from friends and neighbors. He read the Bible and other popular books of the time. He attended an area school off and on for the next few years, while also doing manual labor for friends and neighbors.*

**Heading 2**

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**(We will refer back to our opening paragraph)**

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***A Store Owner***

*When Abe was 21, his father moved the family again, this time to Macon County, in Illinois, 200 miles away. They settled on un-cleared land along the Sangamon River, near Decatur, Ill. The following year, Thomas Lincoln moved the family again but Abraham didn't go along, instead choosing to strike out on his own. He went west, to New Salem, and secured a job as a clerk in the village store. He started out sleeping in the back of the store and eventually became part-owner of the store.*

*In 1832, Lincoln got two chances to prove his leadership skills. During the Black Hawk War, a brief series of skirmishes between American militia and Native Americans in and around Illinois, Lincoln was named a captain in the militia. He saw no combat but gained experience with military units all the same. Also that year, he ran for the Illinois General Assembly. He didn't win but gained political experience.*

**Becoming a Lawyer**

*All this time, Lincoln had been reading and talking to people and listening to their concerns. He taught himself mathematics. He read great books. All of these things put him in good stead for another run for political office, and he did just that in 1834, winning a seat in the Illinois General Assembly, as a member of the relatively new Whig Party. He also began studying the law, in part by reading Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England. Amid his studies, he was re-elected to the Assembly, in 1836. The following year, after winning admittance to the state bar, he moved to Springfield, where he began practicing law, in the office of John T. Stuart.*

*Lincoln proved an adept lawyer and politician, winning acquittal for a defendant in a famous murder case and also winning re-election yet again, becoming Whig Floor Leader in the process. He traveled the eastern and central parts of the state, on the 8th Judicial Circuit, and then won a spot on the U.S. Circuit Court, eventually arguing cases before the state supreme court. In 1839, he met Mary Todd. The two saw a lot of each other that year and the next, and they became engaged in 1840. They broke off their engagement but then got back together, eventually marrying on Nov. 4, 1842.*

**Heading 3**

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**The Presidency**

*In 1860, Lincoln took his political career one step further and out of a divided vote, Lincoln emerged the winner. Even though he received less than 40 percent of the popular vote, he won 180 of the available 303 electoral votes. The 16th President, he was the first to represent the Republican Party in the highest office in the land.*

*His victory was short-lived, however, as South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20, 1860. Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas followed in the next few weeks. These seven states formed their own Confederacy and chose their own capital, Montgomery, Ala. They eventually named their own legislature and executive, Jefferson Davis.*

Civil War Leader

*Meanwhile, Lincoln made his way to Washington, D.C., for his inauguration. Warned of a possible assassination attempt, he traveled by train at night a few weeks early. On March 4, 1861, he took the Oath of Office. Less than two months later, the Civil War had begun, with shots fired on Fort Sumter, S.C. Four more states seceded in 1861: Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas. The first major battle of the war was in Virginia, at Bull Run (Manassas Creek) on July 21.*

Gettysburg Address

*A few months after the battle at Gettysburg, Lincoln attended a dedication ceremony at a cemetery near the battlefield. At this ceremony, Lincoln delivered a short speech that has come to be called the* [*Gettysburg Address*](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/articles/ushistory/gettysburgaddress-story.htm)*. In less than two minutes, Lincoln exonerated large ideas, like the ideals on which the country was founded and why the struggle to preserve the Union was so important and more mundane concerns, like how best to remember the soldiers who gave their lives for a cause. It remains one of the most famous speeches in American history.*

**Conclusion**

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**Death at Ford’s Theater**

*Lincoln was inaugurated on March 4, 1865. Three weeks later, Lee surrendered to Grant at* [*Appomattox Court House*](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/wwww/us/appomattoxdef.htm)*, ending the war. Lincoln didn't get to enjoy much of it, however. On April 14, he was killed while watching a play at Ford's Theater, in Washington. The assassin was* [*John Wilkes Booth*](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/wwww/us/johnwilkesboothdef.htm)*, who escaped but was later hunted down. Lincoln's death was part of a larger plot, but no other high-ranking public officials were harmed in the end. Lincoln, shot in the head, lay in a coma most of the night and then died the next morning. Abraham Lincoln is remembered for his determination to preserve the Union, his well-known speeches and political campaigns, and his tenacity in the face of prolonged depression, both personal and national. His steely resolve gave the Union and its armies the impetus to remain in the fight until the tide had returned, and his actions to improve the lives and prospects of former slaves are remembered to this day for their importance and their vision.*

**Resources…**

Sullivan, G. (2000). Abraham Lincoln. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

Frey, M. and Davis, T. (2000). The New Big Book of U.S. Presidents. Philadelphia, PA: Courage Books.

<http://www.biography.com/people/abraham-lincoln-9382540>

<http://mrnussbaum.com/abraham_lincoln/>

<http://www.ducksters.com/biography/uspresidents/abrahamlincoln.php>