



Abe's Muddy Footprints

Not all children may relate to Lincoln's love of reading and learning, but I think most of those who can't may well relate to his love of jokes and tricks. Abe and his step-mother, Sarah, liked to trick each other, and one of the famous stories is about the day Abe left muddy footprints on the ceiling of his family's farm house. You can tell the children the story (see below) and then let them make their own "muddy footprints" on the ceiling of your classroom. Leave them up until Open House and your kids can tell a great story to their parents. This may be something they remember about Abraham Lincoln that will make him just a little more real to them.

Abraham Lincoln was the son of Thomas Lincoln and Nancy Hanks Lincoln, but his mother died when Abe was young. His father then married a widow, Sarah Bush Johnston, and brought her and her three children home to his farm. She became Abe's stepmother. Sarah was very good to her stepchildren. She supported Abe in his great desire for reading and learning. Abe grew very close to Sarah.

Sarah was a kind, but firm mother, who loved to laugh. She and Abe liked to play tricks on each other. Abe was a very tall boy—he was six feet and four inches when he was eighteen. His head almost touched the ceiling of their farmhouse! His mother joked, "Abe's so tall he leaves footprints on my ceiling!" One day, Abe had a great idea. While his mother was out shopping, he got his brothers and sisters together and had them stick their bare feet in the mud outside the house. Then he held them upside down and made muddy prints all over the ceiling. He said his step mom took a broom to his head when she saw the mess all over her ceiling, but the twinkle in her eye told him she was amused!

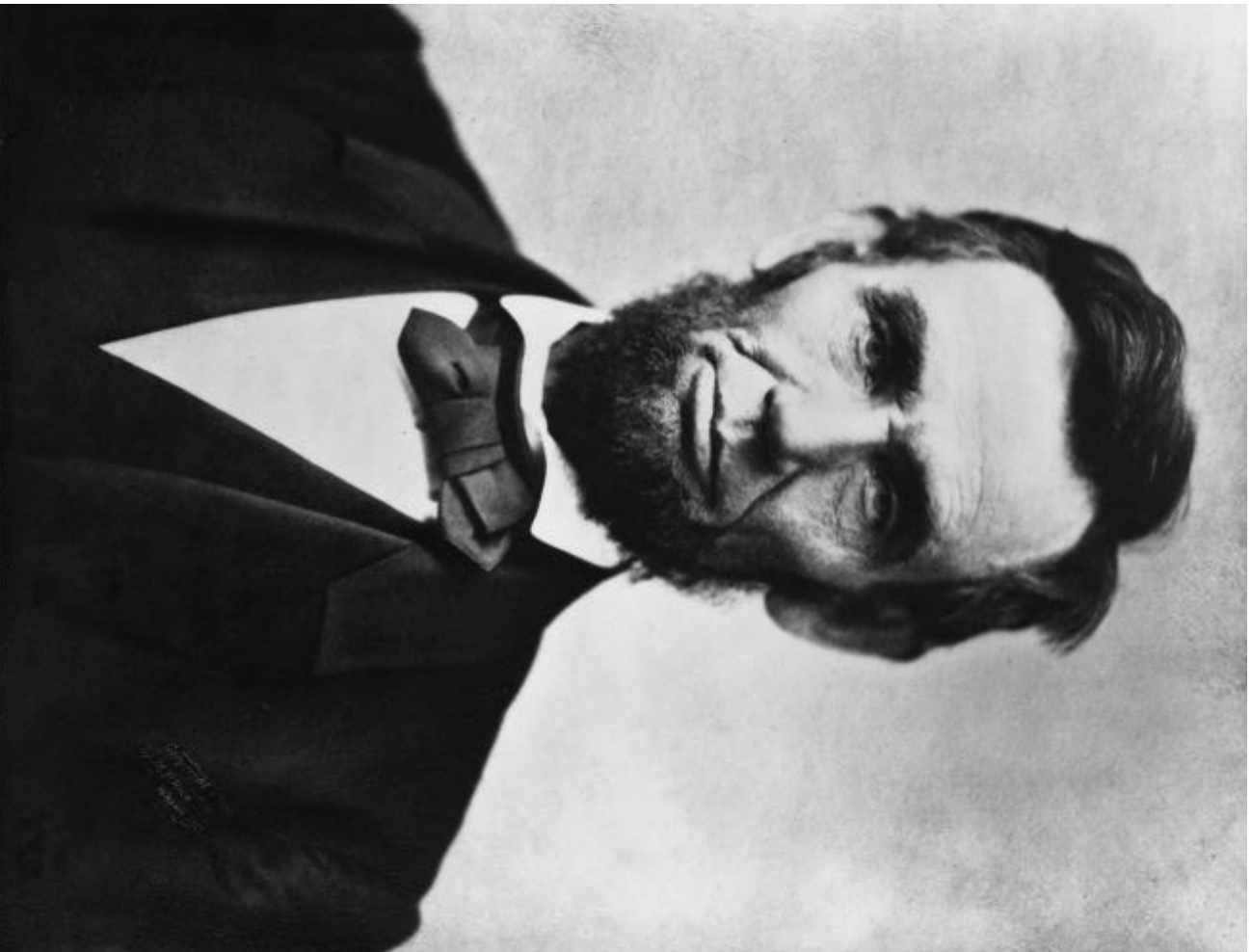
Abraham was very close to Sarah for all of her life. He took care of her and the farm until she died. The last time he saw her was in 1861, just before he moved into the White House.

You can visit the house at the [Lincoln Log Cabin Historic Site](#), in Illinois.

(The images on the next pages are of Lincoln's birth place, NOT the cabin he shared with Sarah.)

Make your own muddy footprints:

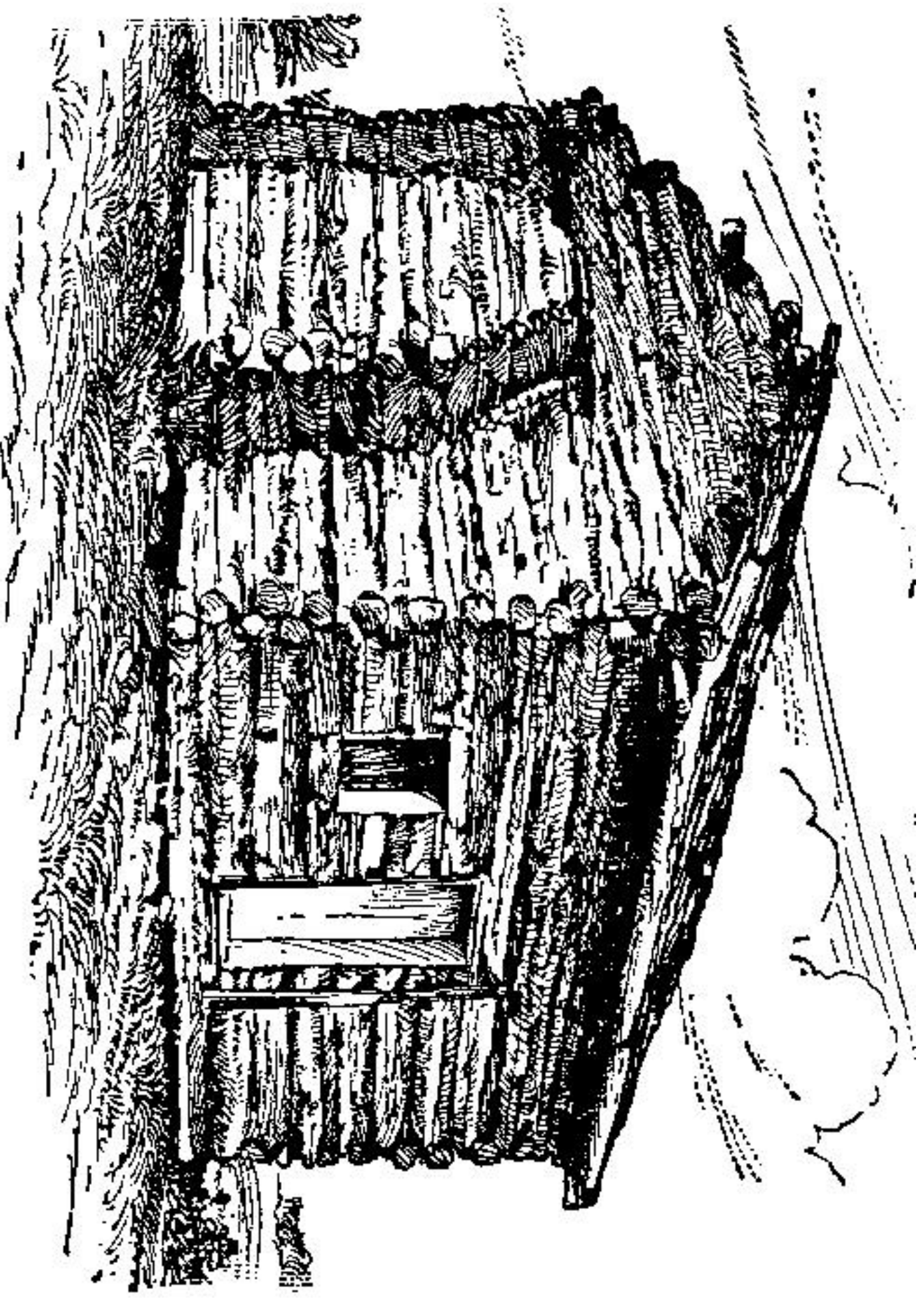
Have each student take off one shoe and sock. Maybe have boys take off their right shoe and girls their left—some way that ensures you get some of each foot. Dip the foot in mud (or brown tempera paint) and make a footprint on a piece of 9x12 drawing paper. After the print dries, have each child cut it out and then you can staple them on your ceiling so it looks like someone walked across it.



Abraham Lincoln: public domain photo from the United States of America Library of Congress, via Wikimedia Commons.



Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln, aged 76: Photo via US History Images.com.



Drawing of log cabin in which President of the United States Abraham Lincoln was born: Drawing from *The New Student's Reference Work*, v. 3, 1914, p. 1074, via [Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lincoln_Cabin.jpg).



Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site: Photo by the US National Park Service, via Wikimedia Commons.com.



The first of four designs for the reverse of the 2009 Lincoln cent in celebration of the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth: Designed by Richard Masters, Sculpted by Jim Licaretz: Photo by the US Mint, via Wikimedia Commons.com.