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Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, led the country through the Civil War, saving the Union and ending slavery. He was born on February 12, 1809 in Kentucky. His family was uneducated and moved frequently because they didn't have much money. Lincoln only had 18 months of formal education, but he read and self-educated. In 1842, Lincoln married Mary Todd; they had four sons but only one reached adulthood.

Lincoln entered politics in 1832 at age 23 as a member of the Whig Party. He became a successful lawyer, protesting for the first time against slavery in 1837. He continued to become more famous for his speeches against slavery.

Lincoln was elected Republican candidate for the 1860 presidential election. His views on slavery were less radical than others of the time, his western origins appealed to the newer western states, and his anti-slavery views appealed to the northern states. He was the first Republican president, and his name wasn't even on the ballot in the south. Almost immediately following the election, the southern states began to leave the Union. What began with South Carolina became the Confederate States of America. Lincoln thought that he could avoid a civil war, but civil war broke out in April 1861 at Fort Sumter. Lincoln did not want to fight, but he had to protect the capital. On September 22, 1862, Lincoln announced the famous Emancipation Proclamation, which freed slaves in territories not already under Union control. It made abolition of slavery in the rebel states an official war goal. After the Union armies defeated those of the Confederacy at the decisive Battle of Gettysburg, Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address, one of the most quoted speeches in US history. He defined the Civil War as a struggle not only for the Union, but for a "new birth of freedom" that would bring equality to its citizens and eliminate state dominance.

He was reelected in 1865 and continued to lead the country through the civil war, already starting the reconstruction and reorganization of war and slavery damaged territories. On April 14, 1865, Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth while watching a play. He was the first American President to be assassinated.

Abraham Lincoln was an important president because he led the country successfully and moderately through a difficult time period and set the foundations for the society we live in today, one based on equality and intolerant of slavery.