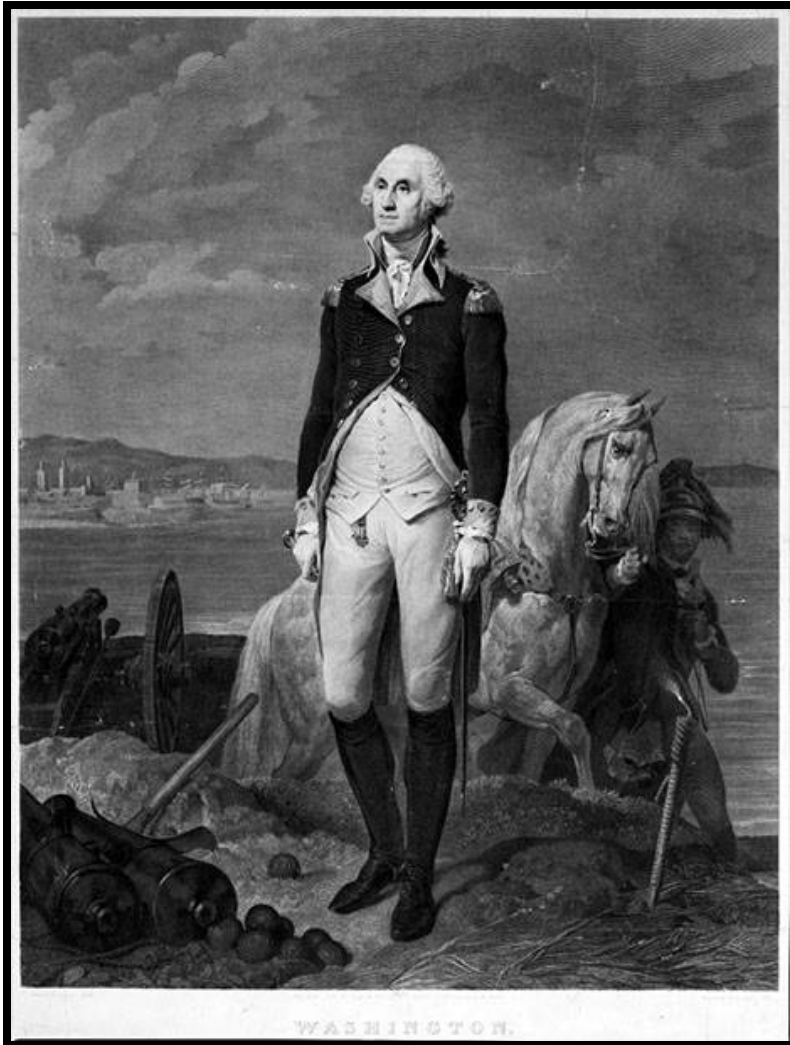
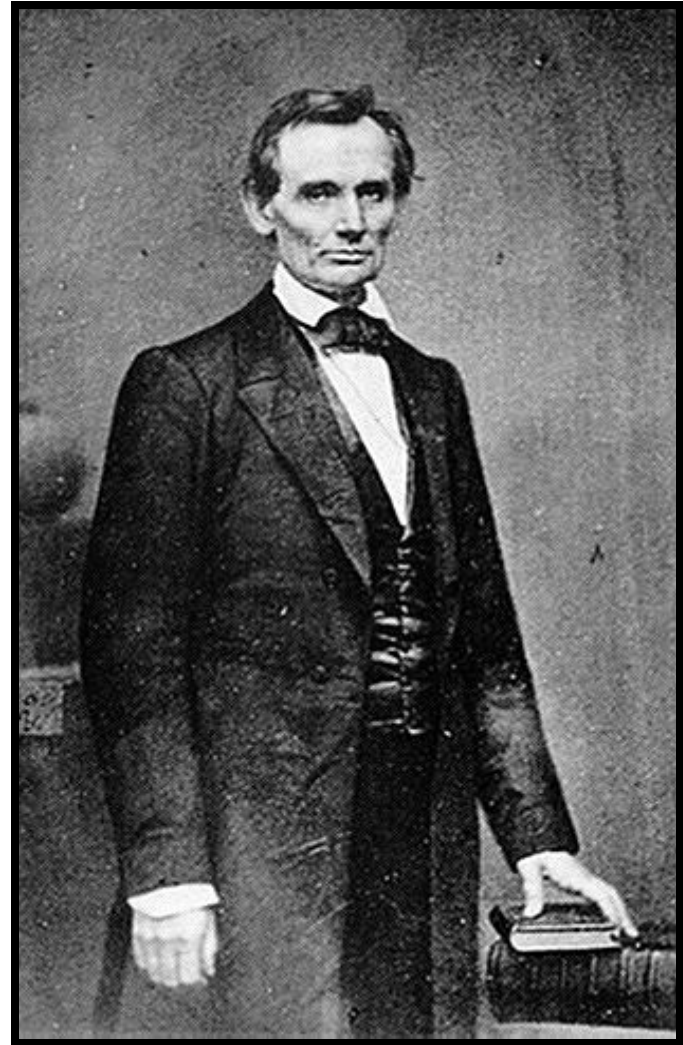


## Lincoln's Heroes and his own Self-Confidence



[http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/nation/jb\\_nation\\_washingt\\_1\\_e.html](http://www.americaslibrary.gov/jb/nation/jb_nation_washingt_1_e.html)



<http://www.historyplace.com/lincoln/lincpix/linc-2.jpg>

## Lincoln's Heroes and his own Self-Confidence

Born in 1809, Abraham Lincoln was a young man as the “founding fathers” of the United States were becoming old men. Several of them were already dead; Benjamin Franklin had died in 1790, George Washington in 1799. Incredibly, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on the same day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1824. Lincoln was well aware of, and greatly admired, the heroes of the American Revolutionary War and their struggle for independence.

Nicknamed the “father of our country,” George Washington was Lincoln’s personal favorite. As a young boy, living in Indiana, Lincoln borrowed a copy of Mason Locke Weems’ sometimes fictitious biography, *The Life of Washington*. Originally published in 1800, the one-time Episcopalian minister turned author and book seller, probably concocted the well-known story of George Washington cutting down the cherry tree. Factual or not, young Abraham Lincoln read that book many times. The book was damaged during a rain storm and Lincoln worked for his friend’s father until his debt was paid. Lincoln kept the book and referred to it from time to time.

Just before his first inauguration as president, Lincoln mentioned the book and compared the task of Washington securing our independence from Britain to his task of protecting the Union from dissolution. Lincoln knew that to

preserve the country was akin to perpetuating the original ideas and hopes of the American Revolution.

By all accounts, Lincoln was a melancholy, sometimes depressed, person. But Lincoln possessed a significant degree of self-confidence. Consider the many hardships that shaped his life. His mother died at an early age; his fiancée died before they were to be married. He grew up in the frontier “wilderness” of Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois. He received relatively little formal education. He failed more than once in an attempt to start his own business and he was defeated in more elections than he won. Tragically, only one of his three children with Mary Todd grew to adult age. As president he presided over a country torn asunder by civil war.

Yet, through it all, Lincoln had an abundant faith in the “Divine Being” (God) and in his own ability to prevail. He did not go to church but frequently read the *Bible*. He used humor and told stories to diffuse tension and make friends. He studied law, developed a successful legal practice, was elected to the Illinois legislature (four times) and the United States House of Representatives (one time). He helped start the Republican Party, and against all odds, he secured the nomination of his party to run for president in 1860. He never held high political office, and without any significant military training, he successfully led the country through its most traumatic time.