

Abraham Lincoln's historical representation in children's literature and young adult trade books

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## Abstract

### Purpose

History-based trade books have an important and expanding role in various curricula. Contemporary education initiatives urge English and language arts educators to spend half their time on non-fiction and history and social studies teachers to include diverse sources starting in the early grades. Diverse professional organizations annually make financial commitments to promote new trade books. Research indicates misrepresentations abound in history-based trade books, yet few empirical studies have been completed. The purpose of this paper is to research examine the historical representation of Abraham Lincoln, arguably the most consequential nineteenth-century American.

### Design/methodology/approach

Data samples included trade books intended for early grades and middle grades students. These grade ranges were selected because these students have the least prior knowledge and are perhaps most dependent on the text. Qualitative content analysis research methods were employed.

### Findings

Misrepresentations emerged regarding Lincoln's poverty, actions, motivations for actions, and implications of his actions as seemingly necessary historical content was minimized, vaguely included, or omitted. Findings are juxtaposed across and between selected grade ranges.

### Practical implications

Discussion focused on the significance of findings for teachers and researchers. Teachers are guided to supplement trade books with primary sources to position students to distinguish historical misrepresentations.

### Originality/value

This research builds on previous scholarship on Lincoln-based trade books by expanding grade range, data samples and research questions.

## Keywords

Historical representation Informational texts Primary sources Young adult literature Abraham Lincoln Children's trade books

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Purpose History-based trade books are an essential classroom option for social studies and English teachers. Professional organizations in history, social studies, English, reading and literature promote these engaging, age-appropriate secondary sources. Research suggests that misrepresentations appear often within history-based curricula, yet the majority of empirical studies have been completed on textbooks. The purpose of this paper is to examine the historical representation of Thomas Jefferson within trade books. Abraham Lincoln's Historical Representation in Children's Literature and Young Adult Trade Books. Article. Aug 2018. John H Bickford. Purpose History-based trade books have an important and expanding role in various curricula. The address given by Abraham Lincoln to the Young Men's Lyceum in Springfield, Illinois in 1838, entitled 'The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions'. Lincoln was 28 years old at the time he gave this speech and had recently moved from a struggling pioneer village to Springfield, Illinois. William Herndon, who would become Lincoln's law partner in 1844, describes the event this way: "we had a society in Springfield, which contained and commanded all the culture and talent of the place. Unlike the other one its meetings were public, and reflected great credit on the community The speech was brought out by the burning in St. Louis a few weeks before, by a mob, of a negro. Lincoln took this incident as a sort of text for his remar