

# Abe's Whiskers!

Abraham Lincoln probably has one of the most familiar faces in American history. If asked to describe him, most people will mention his beard. The story behind Lincoln's famous beard came from the suggestion of an eleven-year-old girl. Here is part of the letter she wrote President Lincoln on October 10, 1860.



Dear Sir,

My father just returned from the fair and brought your picture and Mrs. Lincoln's. I am a little girl only eleven years old but want you to be president very much--so I hope you won't think me very bold to write to such a great man as you are. I have four brothers and part of them will vote for you any way--and if you let your whiskers grow I will try and get the rest of them to vote for you. And you would look a great deal better for your face is so thin...

I must not write any more. Answer this letter right off. Good-bye.  
Grace Bedell

President Lincoln responded to Grace's request. She received the following letter a few days later:

My Dear Little Miss,

Your very agreeable letter...is received. I regret the necessity of saying I have no daughters. I have three sons. They, with their mother, constitute my whole family.

As to the whiskers, having never worn any, do you not think people would call it a piece of silly affectation if I were to begin it now?

Your very sincere well wisher,  
A. Lincoln

Grace may have been a little disappointed in her letter from Lincoln, but she was delighted when he visited her in person a few months later. To her surprise, Mr. Lincoln had grown whiskers just as she had suggested.

It could be said that Grace Bedell was a young girl that changed the face of American history!

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Have your students discuss the correspondence of Grace Bedell and President Lincoln. What other questions could Grace have asked the President?

Encourage your pupils to write to the current President of the United States, one of their state's senators or their local member of the House of Representatives. They may wish to ask about his or her stand on a certain issue or simply wish them well. Mail the letters to The President of the United States, 1600 Pennsylvania Blvd. N.W., Washington D.C. 20500 or find the local congressperson's address in your neighborhood newspaper.