

Learning with Living Books

Characteristics of a Living Book

1.

2.

3.

4.

For example . . .

- A. The man who is often called America's greatest president was born on February 12, 1809, in a crude log cabin in Kentucky. Eighteen feet long and sixteen feet wide, it had a dirt floor and no windows. (from *Who Was Abraham Lincoln?* by Janet Pascal)
- B. Abe was born in Kentucky in 1809. He lived in a log cabin. (from *Abraham Lincoln: A Great President, A Great American* by Violet Findley)
- C. Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, on a farm near Hodgenville, in Hardin County, Kentucky. (from *Abraham Lincoln: America's 16th president* by Steven Otfinoski)
- D. Deep in the wilderness down in Kentucky there stood a cabin built of roughly hewn logs. It was a poor little cabin of only one room. The February wind tore at the clumsy door and made it rattle on its leather hinges. Just a glimmer of daylight sifted in through the oiled deer hide stretched across the single window frame. But the flames flickered gaily on the hearth. In this cabin lived a man named Thomas Lincoln with his wife and little daughter, Sally. And here it was that his son, Abraham Lincoln, first saw the world on a Sunday morning. It wasn't much of a house in which he was born, but it was just as good as most people had in Kentucky in 1809. (from *Abraham Lincoln* by Ingri & Edgar Parin d'Aulaire)

Finding Living Books

CM Bookfinder (SimplyCharlotteMason.com)

Greenleaf Press (GreenleafPress.com)

Beautiful Feet (BFBooks.com)

Queen Homeschool Supply (QueenHomeschool.com)

Yesterday's Classics (YesterdaysClassics.com)

TruthQuest History (TruthquestHistory.com)

Your local library!

Using a Living Book

"Require the child to narrate a paragraph or chapter after a single attentive reading."

The Boy Telegraph Operator

from *The Story of Thomas A. Edison*
by Frances M. Perry

Edison worked faithfully in his new position. He did extra work and did it well. But he waited in vain for the extra pay that had been promised him for taking long reports and working out of hours. When he found that the man who employed him did not keep his word, he gave up his position. Mr. Mackenzie soon got him a situation as night operator at Stratford, in Canada.

So far as ability to send and receive messages went, Edison was perfectly capable of filling the place. But he was by no means the slow, faithful, unquestioning, obedient agent to leave in charge of a telegraph office at night. He was a mere boy, only fifteen years of age, and had had no training in working under orders. He could not obey regulations which seemed to him useless, and he sometimes thought he could improve on the directions given him. There was no danger of his neglecting his duty through idleness, but he might neglect it while working out some pet notion of his own.

The manager of the circuit realized that the night operators might be tempted to shirk their work, and so he required them to telegraph a signal to him every half hour in order that he might be sure they were awake and at their posts. Edison's signal was six.

This was a wise regulation, but Edison did not appreciate the necessity for it. He found it a great bother to keep his eye on the clock and leave his reading or some experiment that he was

working out in the quiet hours of night, to report that stupid "six" every thirty minutes. He wondered if he couldn't make a machine attached to the clock that would save him the trouble. After a good deal of thinking and experimenting, he fitted up an instrument that could telegraph "six" as well as he could.

This was a great relief to him, and he felt free to do what he liked with his time without much fear of discovery. He even left the office and made expeditions about town.

One night while he was away, the manager tried to call him up but could get no response. He thought this odd as Edison was more punctual with his signals than any other operator on the line. He waited, then tried again and again, with no better success, though the signals came with their accustomed regularity. He made an investigation, and the young inventor received a severe reprimand for his clever contrivance.

His next offense came near having serious results. He had orders to deliver messages to trains before reporting them back to the dispatcher. One evening, because it seemed easier to do so, he reversed the order and returned the message before delivering it. Then he heard the engine bell ring for the train to start. He jumped up in a hurry, but when he got to the platform, the train was well in motion. The message was an order for the train to wait at the switch until a special had passed. He ran frantically after the train hoping he might catch it at the freight depot, but he could not overtake it.

He ran swiftly back to telegraph his error to the dispatcher, only to learn that it was too late to warn the other train. Now because of his disobedience two great trains were rushing towards each other on the same track. That was a terrible hour for the poor boy. There were chances that the engineers would see each other's engines in time to prevent a wreck; but there were chances that they would not. It was frightful to think of the misery and loss he might be responsible for.

The watchfulness of the engineers prevented a collision. When the special came thundering up the track safe and sound, Edison knew that the danger was over. His disobedience had brought no harm to others, but he felt sure that he would hear more of it.

Nor was he mistaken. The superintendent called him to his office and frightened him with threats of imprisonment. He left town on the next train without even collecting the money due him for his services.

His experience at Stratford had been unfortunate perhaps, but he was a better operator because of it. He had not only gained in skill, but had learned the importance of obedience in little things.

He spent a few weeks at home out of work. One day when he was down by the St. Clair river, watching the ice which was breaking and piling up across the stream, word came that the electric cable between Port Huron and Sarnia, the Canadian city on the opposite side of the river, had been broken by the ice jam. There was no bridge; the ferryboat could not run on the ice-blocked river; with the cable broken all communication between the places was stopped.

Edison saw a locomotive standing on a track near by, and a thought struck him. He jumped aboard her and whistled a greeting to Sarnia, making short toots for the dots and long toots for the dashes. He repeated his message several times. At last the trained ear of the old operator in Sarnia recognized the familiar signals of the Morse alphabet, and with the help of an engine whistle, sent a reply across the impassable river.

This little incident was very much talked about. People began to say that Thomas Edison was most ingenious.

Good telegraph operators were hard to get, and Edison was not long without a position.



34 Narration Ideas

Speaking

1. Tell back the story in your own words.
2. Tell all you know about . . . (for example, the habits of a bluejay or the founding of Rome).
3. Name three things the person you read about is remembered for.
4. Explain what this story tells you about the character of the person you read about.
5. Describe our . . . (for example, trip to the ocean or lighthouse experience).
6. Tell five things you learned from what you read.
7. Ask five questions covering the material you read.
8. Describe your favorite scene in the story you read.
9. Tell how the scene reminds you of another story.
10. Tell me anything new you learned from the passage.
11. Tell what may happen next and why.
12. Describe the problem and how it was solved or how it could be solved.
13. Compare how people did things back in those days to how we do them today.
14. Describe a character's worldview. Compare it to a Christian worldview.

Writing

Any of the Speaking ideas listed above, done in written form, plus . . .

15. Create a newspaper article about the event or person read. Put the article in a time-appropriate newspaper that you create; just the front page will do. Include ads, weather, and any other elements that would give the feel of the time period.
16. Write journal or diary entries from the person's point of view whom you read about.
17. Write a letter to a younger sibling, explaining what you learned.
18. Write a poem that retells the story you read about.
19. Write five interview questions you'd like to ask the person you read about.
20. Make a fill-in-the-blank quiz (oral or written) about the story for someone.
21. Write a letter from one character to another.
22. Write an imaginary conversation between two characters from two different books.
23. Write a review of the book for Amazon.com.

Drawing

24. Draw a diagram of a machine or series of events you read about and explain it.
25. Draw a picture of the event or one particular scene in the event you read about.
26. Draw a map of the place you just read about.
27. Describe and/or draw a theme park based upon this book (adventure stories).

Drama

28. Write and perform a play that depicts the event read about.
29. Dramatize and videotape a news broadcast that summarizes the events read about.
30. Spend 10 minutes planning a short skit based on what you read.
31. Describe special features for a DVD made from this book.

Building

32. Make a model of a machine you read about and explain how it works (for example, the Trojan horse or Archimedes' stone-throwing machine).
33. Set up the scene you just read about with blocks, toys, Legos, etc.
34. Model something from the scene with clay.