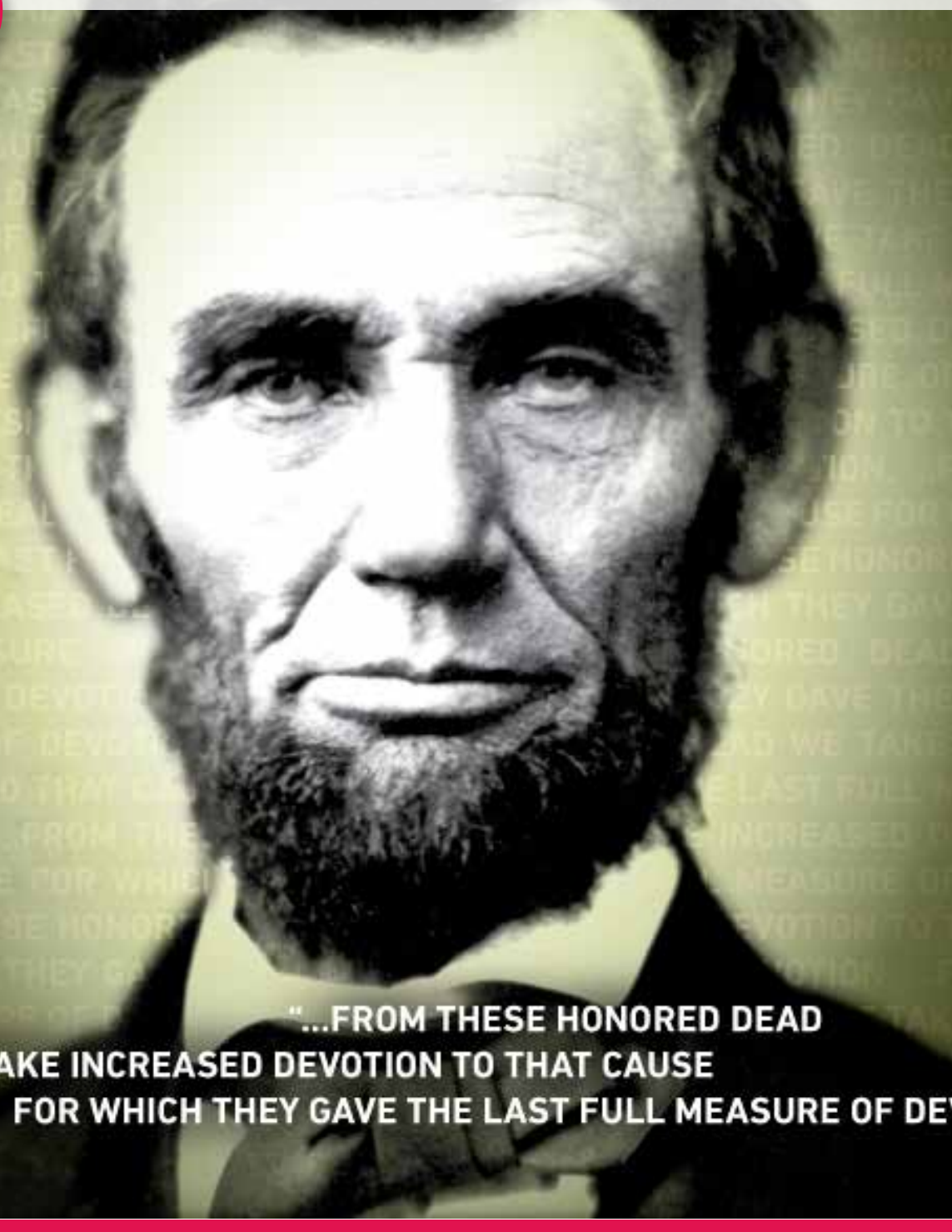


# CIVICS IN LITERATURE

★★ *May Lesson Plan* ★★

GRADES  
K-4

A black and white portrait of Abraham Lincoln, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He has a full beard and is wearing a dark suit with a white shirt and a dark bow tie. The background is a light, textured gray.

“...FROM THESE HONORED DEAD  
WE TAKE INCREASED DEVOTION TO THAT CAUSE  
FOR WHICH THEY GAVE THE LAST FULL MEASURE OF DEVOTION.”

## ABOUT THIS LESSON

This installment of the National Constitution Center's Civics in Literature initiative features suggested books and activities for teaching Memorial Day in the classroom and the importance of honoring our nation's fallen heroes.

Civics in Literature is designed to meet the common core standards for students from kindergarten through fourth grade. These materials strengthen foundational skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Civics in Literature allows younger students to access complex topics and issues by meeting them at their level and guiding them to a higher level of understanding.

## READING LIST

*The Wall* by Eve Bunting\*

*The Lotus Seed* by Sherry Garland\*

*The Memory Coat* by Elvira Woodruff



## AUTHOR

**Anne Spector**

Anne Spector is an educator whose career has taken her into classrooms from first grade to 3rd year law students. She has taught in both the School District of Philadelphia and the School District of Cheltenham Township where she also served as a Central Office Administrator. Mrs. Spector holds an undergraduate degree in psychology, a teaching degree in Secondary English, a graduate degree in Reading, and Elementary and Secondary Principal Certification.

Throughout Mrs. Spector's career she has dedicated much of her time to developing and implementing programs that promote student voice and citizenship education through a marriage of literacy and civic literacy. With a team of educators that includes her writing partner Elaine Scarpino, Anne is helping to create the **We the Civic Kids** program for elementary students, grades K to 5. Her work in this field began over twenty years ago when she collaborated with Temple University's LEAP program (Law Education and Participation) to help in the development of law-related education material. She continued her work in elementary civic education by creating a K to 4 program known as **Let's Take Two...Two Steps Back, Two Minutes to Think, Two People to Solve a Problem.**

After retiring from Cheltenham, Anne joined the staff at the National Constitution Center as the Director of PennCORD, First Lady Marjorie O. Rendell's Pennsylvania Coalition for Representative Democracy. Through her work with PennCORD Mrs. Spector created S.T.A.R. Force (Students Thinking and Acting Responsibly), a K to 6 program that married literacy and civic literacy as a way to teach basic civic knowledge, promote public action between and among our youngest citizens, and provide practice in democratic deliberation.

Mrs. Spector embraces the notion that...**reading is our first freedom**. She is thrilled to be able to bring this philosophy to children and their teachers across the country through materials that highlight children's literature with lessons that connect young minds to complex concepts and build student voice.

## FEATURED BOOK AND ACTIVITIES

*The Wall* by Eve Bunting

In the book *The Wall*, a father and his young son visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. to search for the name of the boy's grandfather whom he never knew. Both father and son take great pride in finding his name on the wall. They also feel sadness that he could not be there to share their lives today.

### Activity #1:

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is described as black and shiny like a mirror. When the memorial was being built, there was much discussion about how it should look. Some suggested it should be filled with bright colors. Others wanted a dark surface on which names would be written. If you were designing a memorial to honor soldiers who sacrificed their lives for our country, what would it look like and why?

### Activity #2:

In the book, a teacher who has brought her class to the memorial says, "The names are the names of the dead. But the wall is for all of us?" What do you think she means? Be prepared to share your answer.

### Activity #3:

Make a list of questions you would like to ask a soldier who went to war to protect our country. Then, try to identify a soldier in your community and invite them into your classroom to share their experience or write to them with your questions.

## FEATURED BOOK AND ACTIVITIES

*The Lotus Seed* by Sherry Garland

For centuries emperors ruled the country of Vietnam. The Lotus Seed tells how a young Vietnamese girl saves a lotus seed from the Emperor's garden and carries it with her as a way to remember and honor both the Emperor and the homeland she had to leave.

### Activity #1:

In the Lotus Seed, the narrator's grandmother saw the Emperor cry on the day he had to give up his throne. Her grandmother decided to remember that day by going into the Imperial Garden and picking a seed from the Emperor's beautiful lotus pods. Think about a special event you would like to remember. What object might you choose to keep that would constantly remind you of that moment or event? Be prepared to share your idea.

### Activity #2:

Heroes can be found in every community. Police, firefighters, teachers, students, parents—can all do something to make a community stronger. Design a memorial that your community might build to honor community heroes. Your memorial can be a living thing like the lotus plant, a structure like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, or something creative that you design.

*Whether planning a field trip, looking for innovative ways to enhance classroom instruction or seeking a deeper understanding of American history and active citizenship, the National Constitution Center is an educator's ultimate civic learning resource.*

*Learn more at*  
**CONSTITUTIONCENTER.ORG/EDUCATION**



**THE MUSEUM OF** *We the People*

Independence Mall | 525 Arch Street | Philadelphia, PA 19106