

## **Handout 1: Introduction**

President Lincoln's role as commander in chief during the Civil War defined his presidency. From the beginning of his presidency, Lincoln was consumed with the war effort. He took office on March 4, 1861, and just 39 days later Confederate forces opened fire on Fort Sumter in South Carolina. The war did not end until five days before Lincoln's death in April of 1865. Lincoln was a wartime president for 1,458 of the 1,503 days he was in office, so obviously the war occupied a lot of his time and energy. You probably already knew that Lincoln was president during the Civil War, but might not have known that the war took up 97% of the time he was president.

Another thing you might not know about President Lincoln is that he was very interested in new technologies. In fact, Lincoln is the only U.S. president to hold a patent. Lincoln lived at a time when many influential technologies were invented. These new technologies brought big changes for people in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, just like new technologies do today. For us, technologies such as the computer and cell phone have improved our quality of life. New technologies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century such as the steam engine and telegraph likewise improved the quality of life for people living back then.

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