Frederick Douglass
Born a slave - his mother was black and his father was white
He was taught to read by the wife of his owner
He never knew his father and only saw his mother about 4 times
He escaped to New York and settled in New Bedford, MA
He met William Lloyd Garrison who wrote the abolitionist newspaper The Liberator and he encouraged Douglass to speak
Douglass was initially afraid to speak because he feared the publicity would cause his owner to re-capture him
However, he began lecturing about his experiences as a slave
He wrote his first autobiography which was published in 1845 - Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
He worked with the abolitionist movement
Later in life, he also worked with the feminist movement to promote women's rights as he had worked to promote colored rights.

Douglass's Works to Know
Autobiographies
Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
Life and Times of Frederick Douglass

Abraham Lincoln
Born into humble circumstances - His mother Nancy Hanks died when Lincoln was a boy
His father remarried and his stepmother Sarah had a profound influence on his life and education
Early in his career life, he bought a store in New Salem, IL - not successful
Served as Postmaster of New Salem
Eventually studied law and moved to Springfield where he met Mary Todd - an ambitious social climber
1846-1848 - Served one two-year term in US House of Representatives
1858 - Ran for US Senate seat (as Whig candidate) against Stephen Douglas - Douglas won
  • At the convention when he was nominated he gave his famous "A house divided against itself cannot stand" speech
1860 - Gave his famous Cooper Union speech
1860 - became Republican candidate for President of the US
After he won the election, southern states seceded and the Civil War began
War years were unhappy ones - during his time in office, his son died and his wife was emotionally unstable
Lincoln was the first person to say "The United States is (singular)" as opposed to "The United States are (plural)" indicating a change in perspective from separate self-governing states to one unified federal government
His First Inaugural Address, Gettysburg Address, and Second Inaugural Address are considered masterpieces of oratory!
He gave his Second Inaugural on March 4, 1865
Lee surrendered to Grant on April 9, 1865
He was shot April 14, 1865 by John Wilkes Booth - a well-known actor

Lincoln's Works to Know
Speeches
First Inaugural Address
Gettysburg Address
Second Inaugural Address
Robert E. Lee
A model of Christian service and Christian fatherhood
Son of Harry Lighthorse Lee - good friend of George Washington who said the famous words "First in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen" about Washington as a eulogy.
Son of Anne Carter - of the King Carter Family of Virginia
Married Mary Anna Randolph Custis - granddaughter of George & Martha Washington
When Mary's father did not inherit Mount Vernon because it went to George's brother, the family settled on land on a hill overlooking Washington DC and established Arlington
Mary was an only child, so she inherited Arlington and they raised their seven children there until the war.
Lee was a loyal Virginian.
He attended West Point and distinguished himself - second in his class.
Served in the US Army as an engineer and then in the Mexican War.
He commanded the troops that were sent to quell John Brown during his raid on Harper's Ferry.
When the Civil War was about to begin, Lee was the North's first choice to lead their army as their chief commander.
Lee felt that he could not be a "traitor" to his native state of Virginia, so he refused the command of the Northern Army and served the South instead.
He surrendered at Appomattox Court House, Virginia on April 9, 1865.
He had his citizenship stripped from him
He was asked to serve as the president of Washington College which he did until his death five years later.
That college is now named Washington Lee University located in Lexington, VA
In 1975, Senator William Byrd of Virginia introduced a proposal to reinstate Lee's citizenship - the resolution was passed and signed into law by Pres. Gerald Ford
Lee has many descendants. Helen Keller was a relative on his mother's side.

Robert E. Lee's Works to Know
Huge Collection of Letters