

New Salem

Narrator	Elizabeth Graham, Mentor's sister
Abraham Lincoln	Dr. Allen, town doctor
Mrs. Burner, a customer	Joshua Miller, blacksmith
Mentor Graham, the school teacher	

Narrator: When he was 21 years old Abraham moved out of his father's house and moved to New Salem, Illinois. This was around 1830. He worked at a store for about two years and then opened up his own store with a partner named William Berry. While working at the store, he spent every free moment reading. When customers came in the store he loved to talk about the things he was reading and about government.

Abraham is sitting in the store, reading a book. Mrs. Burner comes in to shop.

Mrs. Burner: Hello Abraham. How are you today? I've come to buy some tea.

Abraham: Well. I think we have some tea here somewhere.

Mrs. Burner: Abraham, every time I come in your store, you are reading. It's a wonder you are still in business.

Abraham: Well yes ma'am. I guess I am lucky to be in business. I love to read. I would rather read than do anything else.

Mrs. Burner: Well, if you can put down that book long enough to sell me some tea, I'd like a half a pound.

Abraham: Yes ma'am. Let me weigh you out a half pound of tea. Thank you for shopping here.

Mrs. Burner: Yes, there are several stores in New Salem, but I like to come to yours. You are such an interesting and friendly man. Good day, Abraham.

Narrator: Mrs. Burner leaves the store and in walks Mentor Graham the school teacher with his sister Elizabeth.

Mentor Graham: Hello Abraham. What are you reading today?

Abraham: Well hello Mentor. Hello Miss Elizabeth. I don't have any new books right now. So I am reading an old favorite of mine, The Declaration of Independence. I never get tired of the Declaration. It is the anchor of our democracy.

Elizabeth: I know a sentence from it. "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights - that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Abraham: That's my favorite part! Back in 1776 the Declaration was written to bring about our freedom from Great Britain. That sentence had nothing to do with Great Britain. I think that sentence was placed in the Declaration not for people in 1776 but for us.

Elizabeth: What do you mean Abraham?

Abraham: In America it does not matter whether we are born into a rich family or a poor one. Everyone has an equal chance to rise up to live a better life.

Mentor: Every man can develop his own talents and be the best that he can be.

Elizabeth: You gentlemen do not mention the ladies. Are we not included? Are we created equal? Do we deserve equal rights?

Abraham: Well Miss Elizabeth, I expect that you are included. I think someday you ladies will be able to vote and take part in American government. I believe the slaves too will be free citizens some day.

Mentor: Abraham, many people around here would not like to hear you talk about freeing the slaves.

Abraham: "As I would not want to be a slave, so I would not want to be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy."

Elizabeth: You have wonderful ideas, Mr. Lincoln. I love to hear you talk.

Mentor: You should run for office Abraham. You could get elected to the state legislature.

Abraham: I aim to try just that. And I have another dream too. I hope to be a lawyer. I am studying the law books every chance I get.

Mentor: I'm sure you will succeed.

Abraham: Oh no! I see I have made a terrible mistake. Mrs. Burner was here buying a half pound of tea. I see that I measured the tea using a fourth pound weight. I did not give her as much as she paid for,

Elizabeth: Well, I'm sure you can give her more tea when she comes in here to shop next time.

Abraham: Absolutely not. I will close the store this instant and walk to her house with the rest of her tea.

Elizabeth: She lives many miles away.

Abraham: Then I will walk many miles. I must right this wrong.

Mentor: You are very honest Abe. No wonder folks call you "Honest Abe."

Abraham: Once I gave a lady the wrong change. I didn't realize it until much later. I closed the store and walked miles to give her a few cents. I will not rest until this tea is delivered. It is the honest thing to do.

Elizabeth: Abraham, we haven't had time to shop.

Abraham: Sorry. The store is closed. I have to go.

Narrator: Now it is a few years later. His store has failed and Abraham has ended up owing a lot of money. He has a job as the Postmaster of New Salem. The post office was in a different store. Mail only arrived once a week. If someone did not come to get their mail, Abraham would put the mail in his tall hat and deliver the letters. In this scene Abraham is delivering the mail.

Abraham: Hello to you Dr. Allen. I believe there is some mail for you here. You have a letter and a newspaper from New York City.

Dr. Allen: Thank you Abraham. I was expecting a letter from my sister. I want to hear the news from my family in Vermont.

Abraham: And if you have any fire wood to chop or rails to split I would be happy to do that to. You know I don't make much money as postmaster.

Dr. Allen: Well, I may have some work for you to do. Did you read this newspaper? I know how much you like to read.

Abraham: Yes, I did read it Dr. Allen. People sure are getting angry about slavery and the new states joining the union.

Dr. Allen: Yes, they are angry Abe. I am glad we are way out here in Indiana where there are not so many slave owners.

Abraham: Well, Dr. Allen, I am sure we will have more and more trouble until this issue of slavery is settled.

Dr. Allen: Good day, Abraham.

Abraham: I will see you. I have mail for Joshua Miller, the blacksmith.

Dr. Allen: He is a good friend of yours isn't he?

Abraham: I do count myself rich with friends.

Dr. Allen: Which do you like better, Abe, books or people?

Abraham: Well, I reckon I could not do without either. "The things I want to know are in books; and my best friend is the man who'll get me a book I haven't read."

Narrator: Abraham goes to Joshua's blacksmith shop.

Joshua: Why there's Old Honest Abe!

Abraham: Oh Joshua, just call me Abraham. Why do people call me that?

Joshua: Why it's because you are honest, Abe. When we have races and matches and contests we need "Honest Abe" to be the judge. You are the best judge - everybody's friend; the kindest, gentlest, roughest, strongest, best fellow in all New Salem and the region round about.

Abraham: Yes, many a fight has been stopped when I declare a winner to a close contest.

Joshua: Well, my friend, do you have time to stay and recite Shakespeare together?

Abraham: I would like that very much. Joshua, but first I have a question for you.

Joshua: Is it about a great book?

Abraham: Well, you might say it's a question of arithmetic. How many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg?

Joshua: Well, I reckon that would be five.

Abraham: No Joshua, it's four. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg.

Joshua: Well Abraham, I can't argue with that. That's a good joke.

Abraham: It just wouldn't be honest to call a tail as leg would it?