

LINCOLN TALES TALL AND TRUE

The Life of Abraham Lincoln in Stories Told by Brian "Fox" Ellis



Two things I learned from Abraham Lincoln: If you hear a story you like turn to someone and tell it right away, in your own words, before you forget. The other thing I learned from Lincoln was that he often repeated a joke or story, practicing pacing and wording, until he got it just right. SO, turn

to a partner and retell your favorite story! Tell it several times over the next few days, practice, practice, practice, and you too can be a teller of tales to rival Lincoln!

From the stories you heard today make a list of your favorite five. Organize this list into a time-line, put them into chronological order. Retell one of these stories to a friend. Use your VOICE to make sound effects, express emotion, and change you voice to become the different characters. Use your BODY language to act out the story. Be in the story as you tell it; the better you IMAGINE it, the more real it is for your listener. Take turns telling and listening to stories with your partner.

On the back of this page are a few true stories about Abraham Lincoln's life and times. Read them all and then choose your favorite. Rewrite the story as if you were there. First, decide who is telling the story: are you the teacher, a lawyer, a friend, the old woman or some fictitious character who saw the whole thing? What is your *point of view*? Re-imagine the *setting* to better describe the details. Make a brief outline of the *plot*, beginning, middle and end.

There has long been much debate about Abraham Lincoln and slavery. Some say Lincoln waffled on the issue, doing what was politically expedient. Others argue that although Lincoln did not like the baggage attached to the word 'abolitionist' he worked tirelessly to end s

slavery. What is your opinion? Using a standard persuasive essay format: State your opinion;

Give at least three facts or reasons to support your opinion: Elaborate on these facts; Then restate your opinion in new words. Feel encouraged to quote the stories you heard today. Find a partner who disagrees with you and engage in a friendly debate!



Fill in the bubbles with what you think Douglas and Lincoln might have said in their famous debates.

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is not a box full of stuff; it is a building full of stories. If you visit the museum, (or go on-line: www.alplm.org), look for the stories of Lincoln's life. Maybe it is a Civil War photo that captures your imagination, or the scene of the slave auction. Maybe it is the story of his youth in Kentucky or Indiana, or maybe it is the funeral procession following his assassination. Imagine yourself living in a log cabin or working in the white house kitchen. Put yourself into the story and tell it as if you were there. On the back is a frame to help you outline your story:

Decide on a POINT OF VIEW:

Who's telling the tall?

SETTING: Where and when does the story happen:

BEGINNING: Think about pacing and suspense...

MIDDLE: What is the exciting climax of the story?

END: How will you wrap it up?

You've all heard the saying, "Honest Abe," but do you know how he earned this nickname? Here are two true stories that prove his integrity:



While Abraham was just a boy he attended a one room school house. Though he was one of the younger boys, he was always tall for his age. The teacher mounted the head of a deer with a large rack of antlers above the door. Like many kids today who love to jump, the children would challenge each other to jump up and see if they could touch the deer's antlers. Someone dared Abraham Lincoln. He looked up and laughed. Not only could he touch them, showing off, he jumped up and grabbed both antlers. One antler pulled loose. A hush fell over the class.

When the teacher came back into the room, no one said anything. It took a few minutes before he noticed that one of the antlers was lopsided. The class could see him turn red with anger, but before he could say anything, young Abraham Lincoln stood up and said, "Sir, it was me. I broke the antler off the deer. I'm sorry sir."

The teacher was startled by Lincoln's honesty. "Why Mister Lincoln, thank you for coming forward." Because he admitted his mistake young Abe Lincoln was not punished. It was then that folks began to call him "Honest Abe."

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When Abraham Lincoln was a young man he ran a general store in the town of New Salem. The store lost money. Lincoln was not a good business man. He was a great leader, a great lawyer and a great public speaker, but he was not a good business man. He was working at his store one day but there were not many customers, so he was reading a book. And as he stretched out on the counter reading, maybe he was lost in ancient Greek philosophy or Blackburn's book on the intricacies of law. When an elderly customer came in, he put down the book and got up to help her. Maybe his mind was still lost in ancient Greece; he wasn't paying much attention.

Lincoln helped her find the things she needed, maybe a few yards of calico, a pound of salt, a few pounds of flour or sugar, needles, thread and thimble. Lincoln rang up her total, took her money, gave her change and then sent her on her way. Abraham went back to his reading.

That night when he closed up shop he went back through the days receipts. He was counting up all of the money and he realized that he had 6 cents more than he should have. He went back and looked at his figures, he looked at his numbers -- Do you double check your math? Always a good idea -- that's what he was doing when he found his mistake. He over charged that old woman 6 cents. He felt bad about cheating this woman. In those days 6 cents was a lot of money.

So "Honest Abe" walked 6 miles into the country to give this woman 6 cents and then he had to walk the 6 miles back home, 12 miles round trip. That's just the sort of man he was.

Choose your favorite story and rewrite it as if you were there when it happened!

These lesson plans are based on the CD and performance "Lincoln Tales Tall and True" by Brian "Fox" Ellis. Call or e-mail to order a CD or book a performance!

When Lincoln was a young lawyer a gentle man approached him about trying a case. He said he wanted Lincoln to sue this man for \$5. Lincoln politely declined, saying, "I'm sorry sir, with court fees and my fees it would cost more than five dollars to get your money."

"I do not care how much it costs," responded the client, "he has owed me this money for a long time and I want to teach him a lesson! I will pay whatever fee you think is fair."

Lincoln thought about it for a moment and agreed to take the case. "Since it is only five dollars, I will only charge you ten."

The gentleman thought this fair and paid Lincoln the ten dollars in advance. Lincoln found the young man, gave him five dollars and told him, "Go pay your debt!"

Lincoln liked to tell jokes about his looks. Here are three stories he often repeated to friends:

As a young lawyer Lincoln was trying a case when his opponent interrupted him, shouting, "Abraham Lincoln is a two faced liar!" Without missing a beat Lincoln turned to the judge and said, "Honestly sir, if I had another face do you think I would wear this one?"

Lincoln was walking down the street when an old woman stopped him to say, "You have the ugliest face I have ever seen!" Lincoln said, "I'm sorry ma'am, but there is nothing I can do about my face."

"Well, yes there is," she said, "you could stay home so I would not have to look at you!"

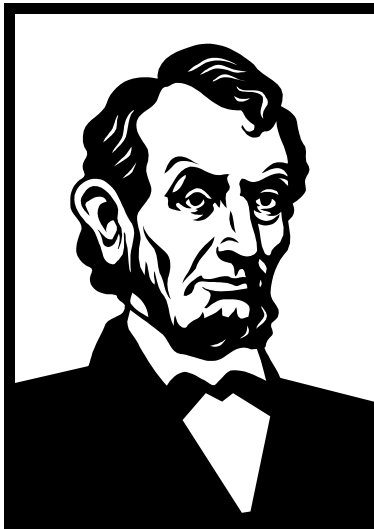
Abraham Lincoln had a beautiful pen knife. (You can see one much like it at the museums both in Springfield and at Lincoln College in Lincoln, Illinois.) It was mother of pearl with fancy silver scroll work. It seemed to

gather any light in the room and reflected beauty. Whenever he pulled it out to sharpen his quill it was almost like he was flashing it around, begging the question, "Where did you get that beautiful knife?"

Lincoln always answered the question with a blunt, "I met some man in the street, a complete stranger and he gave it to me." Lincoln was egging them on.

They often took the bait and said, "You expect us to believe that a complete stranger just walked up to you and gave you that beautiful pen knife?"

"Yup," replied Lincoln, "he gave it to me saying some woman had given it to him, telling him he was the ugliest man she had ever met and he should have something beautiful to balance things out... but... if he ever met some one uglier than him, he should give them the knife. Well, since that gent gave the knife to me, I have not met anyone I should give it too!" ...until today! (Pretend to hand someone your pen knife!)



Here is a frame to help you outline your version of the story:

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