

Skill: Identify and infer stated and implied character traits

7th Grade Nonfiction: Honest Abe

Public Domain Text; Questions by Center for Urban Education

This history tells about what happened while Abe Lincoln had a job working in a store in a small town. Every day people came and bought things they needed there. It was a frontier community. People did not have any extra money to spare. This story tells you about his character. As you read, think about the traits he shows by what he does.

Abe Lincoln could not endure the thought of cheating any one, even though it had been done unintentionally. He took great care of the money at the store. But some days there were mistakes. He always made sure to correct them.

One day a woman bought goods in Offutt's store amounting to something over two dollars. She paid Abe the money and went away satisfied. That night, on going over the sales of the day, Abe found that he had charged the woman six and one-fourth cents too much. After closing the store, though it was late, he could not go home to supper or to bed till he had restored that sixpence to its proper owner. She lived more than two miles away, but that did not matter to Abe Lincoln. He walked all the way there—and back.

Another evening, as he was closing the store, a woman came in for a half-pound of tea. He weighed it out for her and took the pay. But early next morning, when he came to "open up," he found the four-ounce weight instead of the eight-ounce on the scales, and inferred that he had given that woman only half as much tea as he had taken the money for. Of course, the woman would never know the difference, and it meant walking several miles and back, but the honest clerk weighed out another quarter pound of tea, locked the store and took that long walk before breakfast.

J. G. Holland wrote, in his "Life of Abraham Lincoln," of the young man's progress during his first year in New Salem:

"The year that Lincoln was in Denton Offutt's store was one of great advance. He had made new and valuable acquaintances, read many books, won multitudes of friends, and become ready for a step further in advance. Those who could appreciate brains respected him, and those whose ideas of a man related to his muscles were devoted to him. It was while he was performing the work of the store that he acquired the nickname, 'Honest Abe'—a characterization that he never dishonored, that he never outgrew.

He was everybody's friend, the best-natured, the most sensible, the best-informed, the most modest and unassuming, the kindest, gentlest, roughest, strongest, best fellow in all New Salem and the region round about."

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

1. Which of these character traits of Abraham Lincoln is stated literally in the history?

- a. leadership
- b. intelligent
- c. strong
- d. honest

2. Which of these character traits of Lincoln can you infer from the history?

- a. dedicated
- b. honest
- c. family
- d. modest

3. Which of these traits does the walking miles to return the money show?

- a. intelligent
- b. responsible
- c. careless
- d. forgetful

4. Which of these character traits was important to becoming President?

- a. rough
- b. kind
- c. unassuming
- d. intelligent

5. Write your own answer to this question. How do you infer character traits of a person when you read a history?

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	d	a	b	d

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

5. By thinking about what the person does and what others report.

Skill: Identify and infer stated and implied character traits

7th Grade Historical Fiction

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The Nominee

I was in Chicago when the country took a giant step. I saw history in the making.

I was at the Wigwam, that's what they called it. It is the Sauganash Hotel. There at the corner of Lake Street and Wacker Drive the Republicans met and fought. Most of them wanted William Seward. His manager Thurwood Weed said, "Who is this man Lincoln? A nobody from nowhere."

It looked like Seward had it locked up.

I met Thurwood Weed, who was there to get the votes for Seward. I have rarely met a man who was so devious. He would promise one thing to one person. Then another promise to a different person. And none of them would he keep. He lied all day long.

"I'm going to offer Lincoln the Vice Presidency," Weed told me. Of course he has the Illinois votes. But who else would vote for him. He is not really ready to be president. Look at my man. Seward is a leader. He is smart. He knows how to make decisions. He will not let other people tell him what to do."

I thought that Weed was a good name for him. He was not a decent man. He was buying votes. He was going to make sure his man got the nomination. He did not care about being honest.

I saw Lincoln's team leader, David Davis, at the convention. I asked him what he would do to make sure Lincoln got the nomination. He just smiled. Later I learned he had gotten more of their supporters into the hall by giving them extra tickets. They printed those tickets themselves. "Abe would not have liked this at all," said Davis, but we were not bribing people like Weed. And the Lincoln team gave them whistles. When Lincoln was nominated, there was so much noise that everyone thought this is our man.

Later after he was elected, Lincoln did something surprising. He made Seward his Secretary of State. I always thought this man is different. He knows how to get elected. He knows how to work with others. He knows how to lead our country.

I'm not sure what is next for our country. It is 1862 and we are at war. I don't think that Seward would have been able to lead us through this war. I believe Abraham Lincoln can.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question

6. What is a literally stated character trait of Thurwood Weed?

- a. lies
- b. devious
- c. smart
- d. decent

7. What is a character trait you infer about Thurwood Weed?

- a. dishonest
- b. courageous
- c. clever
- d. careful

8. What is a character trait you infer about David Davis?

- a. clever
- b. careful
- c. different
- d. decent

9. What is a character trait you infer about Lincoln based on the story?

- a. honest
- b. open-minded
- c. cautious
- d. popular

10. *Write your own answer to this question.*

What trait do you think Lincoln's choice of Seward as secretary of state shows about him?

Why do you think so?

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Answers: *You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.*

Item	6	7	8	9
Answer	b	a	a	b

Question 10 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

10. Lincoln was fair; Lincoln was brave. He appointed his competitor to get him to help him.