

I hurried to the new Milton Mechanic's Institute, the town's brand-new library that just opened in 1855. It felt like such a modern place for our little town, and everyone had been talking about it for weeks. I tucked my shiny new library card into my pocket as I stepped inside. The room was incredible! The windows were taller than anything I'd ever seen, and the sunlight streaming in made the whole space feel warm and welcoming.

I wandered around, amazed at all the books lined up neatly on the shelves. I finally spotted the one I wanted—something I'd been dying to read. Excited, I ran over to grab it, but before I could leave, an older man came up to me. He looked friendly, with a kind smile.

I pulled out my library card to show him the book. He smiled and wrote my name down in a big ledger. Then he explained that I needed to bring the book back in four weeks, or I'd have to pay a fine of 2 cents for every day it was late. Two cents doesn't seem like much, but in 1855, that could add up quickly!

I couldn't wait to start reading, so I ran home, clutching my new book like it was a treasure. When I got home, I showed it to my mom and told her all about the new library. I was so amazed—there must have been at least a hundred books in that place! For a small town in 1855, having a library like this felt like a big deal. Since then, I've gone back every single week.