

The Significance of Literature after the Revolution

In the book *Inheriting the Revolution*, Jane Appleby is able to incorporate many different and diverse personal accounts of their newfound independence after the revolution.

“Facing a dramatically different challenge from that of their parents, the men and women born between Independence and 1800... took on the self-conscious task of elaborating the meaning of the United States Revolution. Their knowledge of it consisted of passed on tales rather than first hand experience, yet they gave the United States a natural culture replete with purposes, heroes, taboos, prescriptions, symbols, and celebrations” (Appleby, pg. 5).

To write this book, Appleby used many different autobiographical and biographical accounts from such people as Ichabod Washburn, Harriet Newall, Samuel Mills, and more. Literature has become one of our most important forms of communication. We no longer rely on oral history as much as our ancestors once used to, the written word has proven itself to be much more historically accurate than oral history as the generation's progress through time. Literature is exceedingly influential; it has helped shape our society and the way we live. Literature continues to affect our careers, expand our minds, and help us mold into a more advanced civilization.

One of the things you hear fairly often is how unique and revolutionary the Internet is. Not only do they say how it has transformed our world but also how our world will continue to transform. I can agree that electronic communications has the potential to transform our culture, though I think it is extremely important to realize that its revolutionary and transformational nature is not, in itself a new thing. Since the revolution, many new communication and publishing technologies have been come to pass with each changing our society and culture. The web, electronic books, and scanners are all part of a continuing modernization that includes the printing press, typewriters, and good old-fashioned ink and feather quill pen. As the publishing industry became increasingly popular the Standard English Language came about. It was believed that the correct English was often spoken and written by the most educated. The educated class included most clergy and teachers, because of this the Standard was able spread and everyone slowly became familiar with it. Due to the uniformity, more and more people want to do business and communicate with each other.

“Careers in writing, journalism, and publishing flourished because of the heightened awareness of the importance of communication in the United States, a realization that pushed education to the forefront of attention. Viewed as the sinews of national growth, communication relied upon literacy and literacy upon the schooling of America’s burgeoning population of children” (pg 103).

Writing and publishing were not the only two careers to prosper from the public awareness of literacy and communication. “New avenues of employment multiplied in writing, publishing, journalism, school teaching, law politics, medicine, civil engineering, and preaching” (pg 91). Due to this fact, “publishing in the United States was booming” (pg 92).

“James Fenimore Cooper might have been the first novelist to make a living from his pen, but among his contemporaries were dozens of others who ministered to the reading appetites of their generation by translating, editing, copying, or dashing off pieces for newspapers, journals, compendiums of useful knowledge, and volumes devoted to ‘eminent’ poets” (pg. 92).

Other famous people to follow along this surge of employment were Timothy Flint, John Neal, Paul Allen, Robert Walsh, and Henry Marie Brackenridge. The men mentioned above were not only writers but “were typical of the opportunist mix of occupations” as well (pg 95). The publishing business was not limited to only men, this industry opened up a great deal of writing opportunities to women. Appleby quotes the editor of *Memoirs of Eminent Females* by stating, ‘At no period, since the revival of learning in Europe, has the female sex written so much and so well as in the last half century’ (pg 97). Authors wrote such a wide variety of books such as, “ ‘romance, travels, moral philosophy, mineralogy, political and natural geography, poetry, biography, and history’ ” (pg 99).

Reading has become a passion for people. It is no longer read for only religious reasons. People will read anything they can get their hands on, from newspapers and pamphlets to novels that are fiction or non-fiction. Griscom, quoted by Appleby says, “Promiscuous reading although somewhat unfavorable to the acquisition of thorough or profound knowledge, has the advantage of diversifying the talent, improving the taste, and preparing the individual for more enlarging usefulness and influence in society” (pg 92).

Many public leaders have come to agree that reading can help bring the nation together as well as grow as an entire country.

“While the population doubled between 1800 to 1820, the number of miles of post roads grew twenty-one-fold from 1,875 to 44,000, with post offices increasing thirty fold from 75 to 2,300. The sharing of newspapers from town to town stimulated the public’s taste for the latest news and simultaneously created a new information network coterminous with the nation itself. News did more than satisfy curiosity, it delivered food for thought and items for conversation” (pg 91).

“Reading has become a necessity of life. It has also become the principal activity of nation-building” (pg 92). Newspapers have become normal at a families breakfast table, even “teachers used newspapers for lessons about the world, organizing ‘news classes’ in which pupils read and discussed the great events in Europe, Asia, and Africa” (pg. 102).

As shown in this book, it takes many different individual accounts to truly understand history. It can be said that without literature, our country would have never progressed to what it is today. Hopefully technology will continue to expand and transform our literature as it has for so many years.