

**MODERN AMERICANS, A  
BIOGRAPHICAL  
SCHOOL READER FOR  
THE UPPER GRADES**

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Modern Americans, a biographical school reader for the upper grades by Chester M. Sanford & Grace A. Owen

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**MODERN  
AMERICANS**



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# Modern Americans

A Biographical School Reader  
for the Upper Grades

By

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## INTRODUCTION

"Tell us about real folks." This is the request that comes to us again and again from children in the upper grades. In response to this appeal, the authors, in preparing "Modern Americans," have attempted to give the pupils the worth-while things they like to read rather than the things adults think they ought to like.

Those who have taught reading very long agree that the old-time hero stories have always had a peculiar charm for pupils. But all the heroes did not live in olden times; they are with us today. Why, then, isn't it well to acquaint the children with present-day heroes? Young people in the upper grades are especially interested in the men and women who are actually doing things. They desire to study in school the persons they read about in the daily papers. Elihu Root recently said: "It seems sometimes as if our people were interested in nothing but personalities."

To bridge the gap between our schools and practical everyday life has become one of the chief concerns of the wide-awake teacher. Accordingly, in geography we are studying the industries about us. In English, civics, and history we are devoting an increasing amount of time to a consideration of "Current Events." All this is in the right direction; for, to create an interest in the men and women of the hour and the social activities of the day makes for an intelligent citizenship. "Acquaint the people with the great men of any period and you have taught them the history of the period," says Carlyle. Know the *past*, if possible; know the *present* by all means.

At first thought the reader may disagree with the authors in the list of characters chosen. He may think that many of America's greatest men and women have been omitted while others of less importance have been given a place. In reply permit us to say that greatness of achievement has not been the only consideration in choosing the character studies. Not all great men and women



have life stories that appeal to children, and unless the stories do appeal, it is better to omit them until the children are older. Then, too, it seemed desirable to select persons in various fields of human activity, thus broadening the scope of the child's knowledge.

The reader will observe that we have placed much stress upon the childhood experiences of the men and women studied, for the reason that children are to read the stories; and since they are sure to interpret what they read in terms of their own experiences, we must, as far as possible, record experiences that are common to all, namely, childhood experiences.

It is hoped that these stories have been so brought within the experiences of the pupils that they will be led to discuss them. Many of the stories were tried out with children in the University Training School and the enthusiastic discussions that followed were both interesting and helpful.

Lastly, and most important, the authors have attempted to inspire the pupils with a purpose to make the most of themselves. The lives of great men and women are sure to be an inspiration to the young. Since great men stand for great things they are sure to embody the latest and best in science, art, government, religion, and education. By studying the lives of these representative men and women it is hoped that the pupils will be stimulated to lofty purposes.

Acknowledgement is hereby made to The Bobbs-Merrill Co., publishers of Mr. Riley's poems, for kind permission to republish "The Old Swimmia'-Hole"; and also, to the publishers of "The Story of a Pioneer"—*Jordan*; "The Story of My Life"—*Keller*; and the magazine "Success" for additional source material.

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