12 The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Our Times

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The educational imperative that accompanied nationhood in the early American republic is among the factors typically associated with an asserted American "uniqueness."[1] The United States is often said to have been born modern, largely because of the existing base of high literacy. The educational historian Lawrence Cremin has argued for an expanding "literacy environment" in the nineteenth century, for "the opportunity to use literacy for liberation," and for the advancement of equality through education. For him, literacy and education led to increasing diversity and choice, and the interaction of the individual with literacy and an expanding environment made possible a change in the quality, usefulness, and quantity of literacy.[2]

However, this transformative influence has not been proven. Literacy had other, nonliberating uses. Its potential for liberation was at best one use among many, and perhaps not the dominant one. Literacy was also used for order, cultural hegemony, work preparation, assimilation and adaptation, and instillation of a pan-Protestant morality; in addition, it contributed to work and wealth. America was not really unique or exceptional. High rates of literacy did not preclude contradictions or inequalities, regardless of rhetoric.

A surge of interest in education followed the advent of nationhood. There was a virtual consensus that education for republican life was among the nation's first requirements.[3] The educational legacy of the late eighteenth century, which congealed in the Enlightenment tradition, comprised the Renaissance ideal of education for developing the scholar-gentleman; the scientific ideal of mastering the environment for human betterment; the ideal of education for moral, ethical, and religious development; and the contemporary ideal of education as a function of and for the state, the training of free citizens for their civic, social, and intellectual duties. The moral and the civic goals were the most important.[4] At this level, agreement was possible among

From *The Legacies of Literacy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. 340–70.

both radicals and conservatives. If people were to improve their society and themselves, they must be educated.

Numerous plans were proposed for state and national educational systems. Although they proved premature (literacy continued to be provided by home, church, and local schools), a postrevolutionary legacy, which sometimes stressed equal, free, public, and uniform schooling, had been planted.[5] A remarkably broad consensus developed by the early nineteenth century about popular education centered on schooling for the goal of transmitting literacy with a common core of morality, patriotism, and knowledge.

In contrast to the English context, there was little opposition to mass schooling for free whites in the United States. The promotion of such schooling for social stability, a minority view in England at the onset of the nineteenth century, was the dominant view in the young republic. Yet, "American urban reformers nonetheless repeated the social justifications for mass education offered by their counterparts." Both emphasized collective goals of education—reduction of crime and disorder and, to a lesser extent, economic productivity—rather than individualistic ends. American reformers eagerly adopted English institutions for educating the poor (Sunday, monitorial, and infant schools). Anglo-American contacts were constant and lively, as "similar institutions mirrored a similar social philosophy."

Conservative opposition was powerful on one issue: the education of slaves. The reform argument concerning schooling for social stability was not accepted by writers on slave education. Early charitable efforts to school slaves for obedience and subordination were actively discouraged, and after 1820, in response to revolts and abolitionist literature, education of slaves was legally prohibited.

The idea of mass education for progress and social stability was quickly accepted. The colonies had a relatively high base of literacy, and a tradition or legacy promoting literacy was more firmly rooted. Literacy on a popular basis was perceived to be conducive to and supportive of a republican revolution; that was taken as part of the new nation's heritage. A further reinforcing factor was that mass schooling was becoming increasingly acculturated with rising levels of immigration.

The use of schools for assimilation and sociocultural cohesion developed rapidly as a social goal in the early nineteenth century.[6] The need for a population trained in literacy controlled by morality was an original goal of the nation. However, many were excluded from the benefits of schooling. In postrevolutionary Philadelphia, for example, the poor began to be viewed as a threat, associated closely with vice and criminality. Reformers initiated educational programs aimed directly at them.

"Optimists" believed in the worthiness of the poor, and urged a secular, free educational system to help the talented to rise, and to enlarge opportunities for political participation. They argued that a proper educational environment could contribute to a more equal society, and that education was an equal right. Their efforts failed.

"Pessimists," the great majority, promoted education for the poor to train them to accept their inferior status—the desire was to control the lower class, not to assist their advancement. They believed that properly religious and moral education could replace vice, idleness, and disorder among the poor with virtue, order, and happiness. Social order and stability, property, and productivity would then benefit.

In response, educational opportunities expanded greatly after 1784, emphasizing religion and morality, including through literacy. A Negro charity school, schools for poor boys, and church and Sunday schools were quickly founded, operated mostly free of charge by voluntary societies. Through them more than 2,000 young persons had received some education by 1800.

Reformers of each stripe supported schooling for social stability. Literacy and its links to morality were emphasized by both sides, regardless of divergences over desired outcomes.[7] Literacy itself, however, did not emerge as the goal of education; herein is one key meaning for its provision in the new nation and for the expected and promoted uses of its skill.

Literacy rates from the late eighteenth century show a lack of consistency. There were sometimes large gaps in literacy between members of different socioeconomic groups; however, a low level or the absence of literacy did not preclude economic or political participation before the nineteenth century. Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens have attempted to shed some light on the confusing rates of literacy in the precensal period (until 1840 and 1850), using such indices as records of American seamen and army enlistment files.

Among their findings was the striking contrast between the literacy levels of whites and nonwhites. The 74 percent illiteracy rate of nonwhite merchant seamen reflected a near-total neglect of schooling. In general, Soltow and Stevens found that the rate of illiteracy declined throughout the period to 7 percent by the end of the nineteenth century. Prior to 1850, nearly 40 percent of army enlistees were illiterate; the school reforms of the 1830s and 1840s had not yet made their impact felt.

Among the enlistees, farmers and laborers, who constituted the largest group, had a higher-than-average rate of illiteracy. Foreign-born enlistees had a higher rate than the native-born until 1850, when their rates became virtually equal. Northerners were considerably more literate on average than Southerners; this gap was rooted in traditions, as well as ongoing social realities. Beginning in the 1830s, however, the South experienced substantial progress. For all enlistees, the rate of illiteracy was halved over the period. The decline affected all occupational groups; however, class differences were *not* erased. Place of birth, ethnicity, place of residence, and occupational level all influenced literacy levels.

By the time of the 1840 census, a strikingly low national level of illiteracy (9 percent) was reported—a probable result of expanding local provision of primary education and the promotion of reading and the press. As the following table shows, regional differences remained; the image of a North-South axis was reinforced.

Percentage Illiterate by States, 1840

North Carolina	28	Indiana	15	New Jersey	4
Tennessee	24	Illinois	14	Rhode Island	3
Arkansas	22	Mississippi	12	Michigan	2
Georgia	20	Florida	10	Vermont	2
South Carolina	19	Maryland	8	Maine	1
Virginia	19	Louisiana	6	Massachusetts	1
Delaware	18	Iowa	6	New Hampshire	.6
Alabama	18	Ohio	6	Connecticut	.3
Kentucky	17	Pennsylvania	5		
Missouri	15	New York	4		

States with high levels of illiteracy at the beginning of the century continued to have high rates; school provision and support also varied in this fashion, although the traditional image of an antieducational South should be revised. With regional differences in economics, settlement patterns, and levels of commercialization, differences in needs and demands for literacy provision also varied.

Schooling and literacy levels corresponded strongly by the mid–nineteenth century, especially in the North. In the South, where there were higher illiteracy rates and a limited development of schools because of a lack of traditions, low tax support, sparse population, lack of commercial development, and family patterns, the growth of literacy was a result more of informal schooling and irregular learning, through church, family, friends, coworkers, and printed materials. . . .

The contribution of literacy to economic welfare is a major question. It was often claimed that literacy and schooling were required for economic survival, but the data prove otherwise.[8] According to the 1860 and 1870 censuses, illiteracy was a handicap, as were the social characteristics most frequently associated with the lack of education: working-class origins, Irish Catholicism, female gender, older age, etc. There was, in other words, some important support for the "literacy myth." At the same time, however, 36.1 percent of the illiterates were above the median wealth line: an indication of the economic achievements possible to those without the skill and potential advantage that literacy was presumed to signify. Furthermore, economic stratification by literacy did not increase over the decade and may, in fact, have weakened.

Literacy *was* valuable in the socioeconomic system of the period. Its importance to individuals and to the commercial-industrial economy was increasing. It was becoming more important for individual economic advancement, especially for older men; progress over the economic life cycle became more limited for the illiterate. The economic contribution of literacy to farmers was also increasing. Of course, just as illiteracy did not preclude all economic gain, the achievement of literacy was no guarantee of either mobility or solid well-being.[9] Its contribution to economic prosperity was sometimes limited and often contradictory.

For example, Thomas Dublin's study of the textile industry of Lowell, Massachusetts, shows that earnings of literate and illiterate pieceworkers were virtually the same. Dublin concluded that the 17 percent wage differential between native-born and immigrant workers was a result *not* of differences in literacy levels but of ethnic and class discrimination (immigrant newcomers were channeled into low-paying work). Literacy did relate to patterns of job placement; mill managers apparently considered the productivity of literate, educated workers to be higher and placed them in the most skilled positions. Thus, they earned higher-than-average wages. Formal, controlled training in literacy presumably produced more punctual, orderly, malleable, and obedient workers, and such workers were rewarded by job placement. . . .[10]

Literacy also helped to bring social and cultural advantages. Access to a rapidly expanding print culture was open to those who could read and write. Education was associated with respectability and advancement; here illiterates surely were disadvantaged. Social and cultural needs for literacy, however, while growing in number and import, continued to compete with the needs of daily life, survival, and popular recreations—for these literacy was not often central.

Although the poor, the immigrant, and the uneducated usually have been associated with a "culture of poverty" and assumed to be disorganized, unstable, irrational, and threatening to the social order, illiterates in the Ontario study proved otherwise. Using their traditions and resources effectively, they strove to protect themselves and their families against the marketplace and poverty—purchasing homes when possible and regulating the size and organization of their families and households.

As in England, literacy was an advantage but not a requirement for life and for learning the ways of society. Oral and visual means of communication were central to daily existence, and experience was a teacher for life and work. Family, religion, the workplace, informal associations, voluntary institutions, schools, and the press were all educational influences. There were many ways to gain skills and information; literacy, while growing in importance, was only one skill among others. . . .[11]

The curriculum and materials of the schools were permeated with pan-Protestant, American norms, values, and attitudes. The message was moral, civic, and social.[12] Even in rural places, teachers considered the main function of education to be the instillation of restraint; they "tied literacy and morality inextricably together." Without restraint, literacy was seen as dangerous. The fact that crime and immorality could coexist with a high level of literacy led schoolmen and reformers to presume a causal linkage. However, trends in literacy and education were not directly related to those in crime; class and racial relationships, prejudice, poverty, social change, and police and judicial development were more important factors.[13]

TABLE 1 Enrollment Rates (SCH) of Northern Children Living in Families in 1860 Related to the Wealth of Their Parents

	SCH by Age of Child		
Wealth Class of Parents ($)	*5–9*	*10–14*	*15–19*
0–99	.66	.65	.25
100–999	.62	.77	.43
1,000–9,999	.70	81	.56
10,000 and up	.69	.88	.58

Source: Lee Soltow and Edward Stevens, *The Rise of Literacy and the Common School* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 128.

Through such teaching, the moral bases of literacy were transmitted, and many young persons were assimilated to the hegemony of the dominant culture.

> For students who learned to read and write in schools, the process of acquiring literacy was not as unequivocally liberating. . . . In both the country and the city, students were required to memorize and declaim, to imitate and reproduce texts, to repeat rather than formulate ideas, to recite rather than criticize a piece. . . . As they learned to read, these urban children were learning to suspend judgment, to obey instantly, to read and write unwittingly, to derive standards of conduct from rules and regulations imposed by teachers. Paradoxically, the opportunity to learn represented an opportunity to engage in a network of restraining regulations and impersonal relationships. . . .[14]

For rural children, distance from the core pan-Protestant morality and training for sociocivic values was less; a different process of socialization was required. Training in literacy advanced the inculcation of morality and values, the process of nation-building, and the transmission of the code of conduct for work and social life, and contributed to the moral bases of the emerging "modern" capitalistic order. Assimilation was one aspect of the larger endeavor. . . .

The benefits of formal education usually went to those who already had an advantage in occupation or property. It was the "moderately comfortable

TABLE 2 Enrollment Rates (SCH) in the North in 1860 by Nativity of Parents

	SCH by Age of Child and Nativity of Parents					
	5–9		*10–14*		*15–19*	
Wealth Class of Parents ($)	*Native*	*Foreign*	*Native*	*Foreign*	*Native*	*Foreign*
0–99	.64	.55	.71	.59	.37	.10
100–999	.66	.57	.83	.68	.51	.28
1,000 and up	.72	.65	.84	.76	.61	.41

Source: Ibid., p. 130.

but not wholly secure" middle class who most valued education for their children, to ensure the maintenance of their children's social position and grant them an opportunity to succeed. In Poughkeepsie, as in many other places, extended opportunities for schooling, to levels where a chance for some payoff was possible, followed from, rather than preceded, success among the parental generation.[15]

The context for the special American emphasis on mass literacy and rush toward institutional schooling is crucial and needs to be addressed directly. Literacy was maintained under conditions of rapid and confusing social and economic changes, differing institutional arrangements, mass immigration, and needs to integrate and assimilate ever-growing numbers of nonnatives into the population. It was not until well into the nineteenth century that the line between public and private schooling was precisely drawn.[16] The Western faith in and commitment to education as a requirement for cohesion, stability, and progress were being translated into practice; mass public education was created and spread for the systematic and controlled transmission of literacy and the values that accompanied it.[17]

The transformation of society underlay the spread of formal, institutionalized schooling. Central to that change were the development of commercial capitalism, urbanization, industrialization, immigration and migration, the increasing role of the state in social welfare, the acceptance of institutionalization as a solution to social problems, the redefinition of the family, and broadly based middle-class Victorian culture and morality. Educational development was one part of a larger process of change.

As Tyack argues:

> The concept of a competitive capitalist order of a free market and free labor was inextricably bound up with a view of the polity shaped by millenist Protestant thought. And the ideology of public education, in turn, held up that the public school should produce moral, industrious, literate, Christian republicans.[18]

Capitalism had a special relationship to institutional change. Institutions increasingly reflected its drive toward order, discipline, rationality, and specialization, and applied that approach to social problems. The problems of crime and poverty, increasing cultural heterogeneity, and the need to train and discipline the work force related closely to the carefully controlled, institutionalized dissemination of literacy and its moral bases. Such public schooling was considered an appropriate method to establish cultural homogeneity and hegemony.[19]

Public schooling was seen as necessary to help train a work force for the demands of the new economy. Instead of their traditional work routines, rural migrants, urban lower classes, and immigrants faced the starkly different needs of new, larger-scale, mechanized work settings. Habits of regularity, docility, punctuality, orderliness, and respect had to be learned; the

demands of production were now set by the clock and an imposed schedule. The attitudinal and behavioral qualities imparted by education were more important than job skills. The best educated were the most profitable and the best paid—but not as a direct result of literacy's cognitive skills. Many school promoters, political leaders, and large employers grasped these relations.[20]

A new, democratic ideal was proclaimed with the rise of mass schooling: through achievement in institutional terms, such as the acquisition of literacy and schooling, individuals would attain the ability to overcome their origins. This ideal became a plank of democratic ideology. However, the link between mobility and literacy and schooling is not clear. Social ascription—in terms of class, ethnicity, gender, and race—has long remained an important characteristic of North American social stratification and its structures of inequality. Literacy did not overturn those relationships. . . .

Early-nineteenth-century North America witnessed an explosion of print. Competing religious sects, political parties, educational interests, and cultural promoters plumbed the market, seeking sales and influence. Numerous specialized periodicals were created to address particular audiences. Schoolbooks as well as novels, guide and advice literature, and books of opinion dominated the book market; periodicals, especially newspapers and tract and pamphlet literature, were the largest categories of print. To these publications were added the innumerable volumes of "cheap" literature, the most popular fare of all.

Publishing was increasingly becoming concentrated in Eastern cities, and into a small number of large firms. Institutional, transportation, and technological developments all supported print and reading; new presses and other machines and cheaper means of paper and ink manufacture made it possible to mass-produce books. The growth in magazine and newspaper publishing was even larger. This rapid diffusion of print was not a result of major changes in literacy rates; social, cultural, economic, and political factors underlay the trend.[21]

Reading apparently was increasing. Too many developments in types of literature, means of production, cost factors, competition for audiences, and processes of dissemination took place within a relatively short period *not* to have had an impact on cultural and social styles and levels. That does not imply that all were reading or that habits and tastes were becoming homogeneous. Different reading cultures were forming, often in terms of class, region, gender, or even ethnicity. The functions of print were not the same for all readers.

Despite the fact of a population among the most literate in the world, reformers found much to criticize about common reading habits and the commonness of reading as a habit. Many persons were not reading often, and when they did read, their choice frequently was not approved, "proper" material. They preferred fiction, cheap books, and street literature. A great many

TABLE 3 Newspaper Publication: United States, 1790–1840

	1790	*1800*	*1810*	*1820*	*1830*	*1835*	*1840*	*1840/1790*
U.S. population (thousands)	3,929	5,297	7,224	9,618	12,237	15,003	17,120	4.4
Newspapers published	92	235	371	512	861	1,258	1,404	15.3
Newspaper editions per week	147	389	549	759	—	—	2,281	15.5
Daily newspapers	8	24	26	42	49	—	138	17.3
Annual circulation (thousands)	3,975	12–13,000	24,577	50,000	68,118	90,361	147,500	37.1
Annual newspaper copies per capita	1.0	2.4	3.4	5.2	5.6	6.0	8.6	8.6

Source: Allan Pred, *Circulation of Information*, p. 21. See his Table 2.1 for his sources and notes.

people were reading, but it apparently was not the kind of reading for improvement urged by the promoters of literacy and its moral bases.[22]

In the frontier areas of the old Northwest, reading was not particularly common, but some (primarily wealthier) people did own a small number of books. The usual reading fare was largely traditional. Reading was reinforcing, promoting the moral bases of society and its ideology, rather than "liberating." Religious volumes dominated; schoolbooks, dictionaries, histories and geographies, biographies, and law books also were found. The little visible evidence of literary culture—the possession of classics and books by major English authors—tended to be the preserve of the wealthy.[23]

A study by Joseph Kett of three counties and one thriving commercial city in Virginia sheds light on the differences in book possession between urban and rural places. Book ownership in this area of the country was not uncommon, although it was not as common as among New Englanders in the period. Although a higher proportion of book owners was found in a remote, rural county than in the city, county holdings overall were usually small and confined to religious works. In rural regions, the use of literacy was relatively narrow and traditional. In contrast, urban residents tended to possess more volumes and more secular books, a reflection of differential access and choice, larger and more diverse cultural influences, different levels of wealth, consumption of nonnecessities, access to schools, and wider tastes and awareness. Books owned by city dwellers also had higher assessed values.

In all the Virginia areas studied by Kett, wealth was the greatest determinant of book possession, but in the city, many more persons of modest means also owned books. Occupation was another influence; in all areas, professionals and merchants were more likely to own books than others, and the greater numbers of such persons in the city contributed to the higher level of book possession.[24]

By mid-century, most North Americans were literate, and many of them were readers. Their reading was not always expansive or wide, however; commonly it was narrow, reinforcing, and traditional.[25]

Reading was widely promoted, for differing reasons, and publications and libraries were growing, but many literates still were not reading very much. The relatively infrequent use of literacy was also supported by a common lack of direct need for reading and writing in the work requirements of many persons, as well as by the orality of the culture. Learning took place in many ways.

Many infrequent readers or nonreaders had access to print through hearing oral reading of the contents of written or print media. Reading was still a social activity; "individuals increasingly read silently and in solitude, but it continued to be widely assumed that at some point they would 'set' what they had gleaned from their reading through discussion and mutual inquiry. . . . The written word and the spoken word remained inseparable."[26]

One of the most common and important uses of literacy was in extending the moral bases of society. Much reading was religious and moral in origin, orientation, and content. From the mid-1820s, religious groups published literally millions of copies of books, tracts, periodicals, and newspapers, and developed means of distributing them widely. Such publications were aimed at women, families, and youths; the field of children's publishing, in particular, was revolutionized. These were the common materials that families shared and from which the young sometimes learned their letters or practiced what skills they acquired in school.[27]

Another common and growing use of literacy was the reading of the new cheap newspapers and novels, especially among the urban middle and lower middle classes. This use of literature was not the proper and approved use that so many commentators sought to promote; nor was it usually a self-educating or self-improving application of an individual's literacy abilities. It was an important use of literacy, however.

The highly disapproved-of new popular fiction, cheap street literature, and the popular press did not always run counter to the morally reinforcing role of literacy and print.[28] Novels celebrated the virtues of the dominant morality and culture.[29] Women, especially middle-class women, read avidly, contributing to the emerging culture as they fueled the demand for periodicals and fiction. Such reading was central to their lives; it was a fashion and a use of leisure time. Yet it was also cultural participation and consumption. It was an expression of their own cultural and social condition, and they were shaped by this use of literacy, just as they helped to shape literary production and its economies. The cultural impacts of this reading included socialization, expectations, identification, roles, models of thought and behavior, and escape and fantasy. Contemporaries approved of the reading habit but were at best ambivalent about the reading of popular fiction.

Diverse commentators agreed that reading was an important activity for women: for education, moral improvement, and nurture. Some fiction, however, was considered potentially dangerous, appealing to emotions and sentiments and undercutting morality. Yet both kinds of reading were integrative, satisfying, and psychologically important. Popular fiction, in its potential for salving the strains of women's roles in the culture, may have contributed more directly and satisfyingly to adaptation, adjustment, psychological maintenance, and emotional release—in a safe, nonthreatening way.[30]

Literacy also had a key functional value for more women in this society. The increase in women's work both outside and inside the home was linked to these cultural developments. Functional use was tied to ideological impulses and moral spheres; trends in literacy and schooling reflected that. Literacy, in the process, achieved a new importance for women, and through them for the larger culture.[31] Women's work was celebrated and remunerated, but with lower status and pay than men's work. Literacy was even less a guarantee of fair and commensurate rewards for women than it was for men. Salaries were geared to gender, rather than education or literacy, training, skill, or physical strength.

By mid-century, North American publishing was firmly on course. The reduced costs of many types of print, development of new genres and classes

of print, growth of schooling, better distribution, and libraries made reading materials more accessible. However, class, ethnic, racial, and regional disparities in literacy, resources, time, tastes, and interest underlay differences in access to and consumption of print. "Serious" reading continued to be cited as an aspect not often practiced; given the people's interest and skills, it is not surprising that popular fiction and mass periodicals continued to be the preferred fare. At the same time, children's and religious publications were also in demand.[32]

"By the 1830s and 1840s, it was commonplace in the United States for newspapers to assert the people's need for knowledge and special role of the press in serving that need." Knowledge, and the ability to gain it through literacy, was one of the promises of the republic itself and of the schools. Since that time, it has been the newspaper to which most individual (and collective) applications of literacy have been made. Influence and manipulation of opinion underlay their popularity.[33]

As population and territory grew, literacy became more and more essential for its integrating and binding roles: within and across classes, ethnic groups, and other divisions. It could not prevent class, ethnocultural, racial, or gender conflicts, however; the level of integration was not all-pervasive.[34] The power of print was more to shape and reinforce opinions and beliefs already present. Reinforcement by reading was most critical to developing and maintaining the culture of Victorian America.

For most of the working class, time and resources for reading were limited. When they did read, it was usually popular, cheap literature rather than improving, scholarly, literary, and political material. Although literacy was occasionally required for work, useful for mobility, and valuable for organizing along class lines, it was neither essential nor seized regularly for those kinds of purposes. . . .

The popular skills obtained from schooling in the nineteenth century were often restricted in quality.[35] Schooling itself was one reason; problems of physical conditions, attendance, teacher ability, and instructional method often militated against effective early learning and the development of proficiency in literacy. School facilities were often inadequate. Uncomfortable temperatures, drafts, lack of ventilation, and overcrowding threatened health and led to an aversion to study, contributing to the problems of low attendance and enrollment. Poor instruction also was an impediment.

Despite improving levels of preparation and requirements for certification, many teachers remained poorly qualified, and the better-qualified (but higher-priced) teachers were not always affordable, especially in nonurban areas. There is also the question of *how* the teachers taught, particularly in circumstances that included inadequate conditions, large classes, and irregular attendance. Family mobility and situations demanding periodic removal of youngsters from school to work or assist the household added to an already severe problem.

Reading instruction was the area in which the schools were regarded as most deficient. Children were reading but not understanding what they read. To many teachers, good reading was reading that *sounded good:* enunciation and pronunciation were stressed. Contradictions and differences in style and diction between the language of the home and street and that of school and books were apparently ignored. Comprehension was neglected. . . .

Dissatisfaction among educators with the quality of popular reading skills led to a widespread debate about instructional methods, primarily about whether the alphabet or whole words should be taught first. In addition, the style of reading that usually formed the explicit goal of educators confused oral with cognitive ability.[36]

Detractors of the alphabetic method claimed that with the rote repetition of the letters, the meaning of what was read was neglected. Pupils did not master the sense of their lessons or grasp the ideas or feelings intended by authors. Reading was little more than "a mere utterance of sounds" and "a mere affair of memory." Fluent-sounding reading obscured a lack of comprehension.[37]

Promoters of the "words first" approach argued that being able to combine short, simple, familiar words into sentences would be more pleasing to pupils, and the "form or appearance" of the word would be learned together with its meaning. "Children begin to *talk* with words, and why should they not begin to *read* with words?" The relationship between print and sound, and the connections between sight and speech, as bases for learning to read, were never considered.[38]

Many schoolmen joined in criticisms of the "old method," finding that it produced readers who did not understand what they read. Yet, alphabetic instruction did not disappear swiftly. Some instructors remained convinced of its success and responded that the new method did not train children to read well. "Primary school teachers . . . testify that when children learned a word in one connection, they are unable to recognize it in another." These masters claimed that the word method confused written and spoken language, to the detriment of reading. To them, the teacher provided the meaning in giving the word and its sound, neither teaching children to read for themselves nor providing a source of motivation.[39]

Regardless of the differences in views, the two sides of the debate joined on one central issue: *children were not learning to read well, with regard to either fluency or comprehension.* Failure to achieve good reading—for meaning—was, at the very least, quite possible regardless of the method adopted and the prevailing style of pedagogy. No doubt pupils learned something that could be called reading, for over 90 percent of them considered themselves able to read. But students continued to leave school early with imperfect and deficient skills.[40]

Taught either the words or the letters first, children learned to reproduce what they saw mechanically, whatever their proficiency in articulation or comprehension. According to Daniel Calhoun, however, they had difficulty in talking about what they read: "Whether a pupil understood all the words he could pronounce was doubtful enough, and whether he understood whole passages and ideas was hardly doubtful. He did not." An inability to

read with understanding adversely affected all other attempts at learning, Calhoun reports.[41]

By the 1870s and 1880s, reading instruction centered largely on natural articulation. This emphasis continued until the rise of silent reading in the last decade of the century. Natural, expressive, emotionally committed behavior was elicited from pupils. Good-sounding reading was equated with comprehension. Not only did such instruction err in making that equation, but educators made it even more difficult to judge how well the pupils understood what they articulated.

Failings in instruction did not signify that schools were not achieving many of their aims: in fostering hegemony and socializing pupils. Training in literacy involved more than understanding all that was read. The moral bases could be transmitted and reinforced in a number of ways, symbolically and orally, in conjunction with literacy. Respectability, manners, taste, morality, and speech habits would be inculcated in the process of instruction.[42]

One significant use of literacy training was to homogenize the speech of the pupils. The stress upon proper articulation was an aspect of the socializing function of the school. By proscribing differences in speech under the comprehensive condemnation "school reading," reformers could justifiably move to Americanize or Canadianize the children of the immigrant and the laborer. Schools in nineteenth-century North America were promoting a class society, and one of the ways to ease social tensions was through homogenizing language, erasing some of the visible signs of diversity.[43] In uniting the heterogeneous peoples of new nations and eradicating the *superficial* distinctions that separated classes and cultures, in assimilating the values and manners of one class to those of the others, literacy could be a valuable tool.[44]

The implications for the usefulness of popular literacy are clear: they were limited. More children were exposed to more regular and formal instruction, but learning could also be obtained informally, through daily life, interactions, work, recreation, and institutions, for which literacy was not always central. The apparent increasing emphasis of society and culture on print and reading was sometimes superficial. A literate society statistically, this society was also one in which individuals could read only after a fashion. How well they read and understood must be distinguished from their possession of nominal literacy. . . .

The mass illiteracy of black Americans throughout the nineteenth century, and beyond, was rooted in the social, cultural, economic, and institutional structures of North America. However, the extent of their literacy, when legal and de facto obstacles to schooling are considered, is impressive. The black experience reinforces the value placed in literacy, the way in which a group who desired literacy was able to develop means for acquiring it, and the limits to many that the attainment of literacy represented.[45]

To black Americans, literacy and learning represented liberation, or at least an opportunity for it. Although slaves were usually assumed to be illiterate, at least 5 percent of them apparently could read and write: a result of the efforts of some benevolent planters, exceptional efforts at self-education, schooling of youngsters on a few plantations along with white children, and clandestine education in slave quarters and towns. For free blacks, literacy and education were more accessible. Their literacy rates in no region approximated those of whites, but they regularly followed regional distinctions among white populations. In 1850, 39.7 percent of free black men and 42.8 percent of women were unable to read or write, compared to 7.3 and 12.4 percent of white men and women; a decade later, the percentages for blacks were 36.1 and 28.4, compared to 6.6 and 10.1 percent for whites.

Poverty and social and cultural patterns prevented even free blacks from achieving equality in opportunity for or access to schooling or training in literacy. Even where schooling was free and open to blacks, segregation and unequal facilities were often the result.

> Free blacks sought to establish their own churches, schools, and benevolent associations. And, as the number of such agencies increased, white hostility and fear also increased, locking both groups into a cycle of teaching and counterteaching not dissimilar to the one that existed on the plantation. Thus, free blacks, like their enslaved counterparts, though able to travel, hold property, and go to school, were subjected, on one hand, to white efforts to teach inferiority and, on the other hand, to black efforts to teach pride, resistance, and community solidarity.[46]

Rising levels of literacy did not pay off occupationally or economically. However, in the social context of racism and structural inequality, and the cultural domain that stressed black inferiority and deficiency, the extent of the attainment of literacy by free blacks, regardless of personal or institutional means, must be considered an incredible success.

Slaveholders accepted traditional elite conservative fears of the power of literacy. They considered education and literacy unsettling to the bound underclass, believing that it taught them to despise their condition, unsuited them for menial labor, gave them access to seditious literature, and poisoned their minds and morals. A population of literate bondspersons could only be threatening, regardless of literacy's actual potential for overturning Southern society and power relations. Ironically, withholding literacy only added to slaves' desire for it.

Towns and cities provided the most conducive element for attaining literacy and for opportunities for black initiatives. However, a few literate slaves appeared everywhere; "thus the most restricted and isolated plantation slaves normally had contact with some who could transmit information about the wider world. . . ." Some masters, mistresses, and white children instructed favorite slaves, especially house slaves, who were physically and often emotionally closest to their owners. In time, literacy possibly was extended further as those slaves taught others. Self-education was another method of learning.

If literacy was rare among the slave population, a deep value in education was not. The roots of black educational faith and enthusiasm were long in the slave past, and led to risk taking under threat of severe penalty by slaves, and exceptional efforts among freed persons. Penalties for literacy included whipping, loss of fingers, branding, and sale or segregation. Black educational struggles stand among the most impressive and moving chapters in modern history.[47]

A literate slave gained status and importance in the quarters. A source of news and information, forger of passes, and reader of the Scriptures, such a person stood as a symbol of black educability and achievement and a symbol of defiance. The benefits of literacy were more than material, more than narrowly functional. Regardless of the threat that it represented to the slave system, it had a powerful meaning to the slaves themselves.

Literacy played only a small part in plantation routines. The culture was essentially oral and was maintained intergenerationally by oral means. Plantation life itself was an educational experience in the broadest sense: for work, behavior, habits, and attitudes. Instruction by white masters was oral and repetitive, backed up by a system of rewards and punishments set in the reciprocal context of bonded paternalism. That by slaves themselves was more sophisticated, nuanced, and elaborated in the context of Afro-American folk culture. Rooted in community and family, theirs was a culture of song and story into which each generation was assimilated. "Their world remained a world of sound in which words were actions." Even communication between plantations was little dependent on literacy; the "grapevine" operated through individuals' passing news and information orally. That was much safer than writing messages.[48]

After emancipation, literacy became one of the chief symbols of the freed peoples' new status. Literacy and schooling represented great promises of progress, as well as symbols of liberation. "The desire for education everywhere exploded. For the freedmen, as for slaves before them, it represented the Keys of the Kingdom." Young and old alike eagerly crammed the schools. In material terms, blacks may have contributed more to the cause of their own education in the South than did whites.[49]

The hunger for education among blacks was rooted in the hope for and perception of personal and collective freedom and liberation. For many, religious motives were important. They longed to learn to read the Bible; reading lessons were considered a religious exercise in themselves.[50] Other, more material concerns and desires also contributed to the struggle: literacy was perceived as necessary for blacks to compare, and compete, favorably with the rest of society. Blacks, too, embraced the "literacy myth." There is no doubt that literacy could be an advantage for them, but it probably brought fewer benefits to them than it did to other groups in the population.

Blacks left slavery with a legacy of illiteracy on a massive scale. The speed of the transition to literacy in the context of mass poverty and obstructions to educational development was remarkable. At the time of emancipation, perhaps 93 percent of adult blacks were illiterate. That proportion had dropped to 80 percent by 1870; 56 percent by 1890; 44 percent by 1900; 30 percent by 1910; 23 percent by 1920; 16 percent by 1930; 11 percent by 1940; and 10 percent by 1950: eight decades of regular progress, often the result of self-help and blacks' own efforts.

Literacy changed black culture and black consciousness.[51] However, it did not lead to occupational or economic gains. Discrimination against black students, particularly in the South, resulted in unequal education for them; but no level of equality in literacy or education could have overcome such factors as racism, assumptions of inferiority, and structural or institutional inequities. Education conferred greater material benefits upon whites. As levels of literacy among blacks rose, race became more important, and literacy less so, in determining occupational levels. The contradiction between the promise of literacy and its reality was stark. Educational efforts had a dramatic impact on literacy, but they could not influence the place of blacks in the social order.[52]

A lack of literacy often proved a greater disadvantage than its possession was an advantage. Blacks were aware of that and took major steps to eradicate their mass illiteracy.[53] The practical value of education seemed clearest after emancipation, as illiterate black laborers learned from hard experience how whites used literacy against them. To some blacks, that was stimulus enough to send their children to schools, regardless of the direct costs of their absence from work.

The mass movement for schooling was based on faith, sacrifice, and struggle. Not all blacks were able to secure much schooling for themselves or their children, no matter how intense their commitment. Not only were there white resistance and a shortage of teachers, funds, and facilities, but some parents simply could not afford the loss of children's labor. Rates of turnover and irregular attendance were high.

The demand for schools increased so quickly that hiring teachers and finding accommodations for classes were a persistent problem. To attract laborers and entice former slaves to stay, planters sometimes offered facilities for education. Blacks more often demanded schools as a condition of employment. The little tax-supported public education that developed for blacks was often limited and short-lived. As public education grew in the South, it was rooted in segregation and inequality. Most Southern black education was instigated and supported by the freedmen themselves and by white and black teachers who migrated from the North and West.

Many teachers perceived massive cultural and intellectual deficiencies in their charges.

> To make the freedmen "all that we desire them to be" was to instruct them not only in the spelling book and the gospel but in every phase of intellectual and personal development—in the virtues of industry, self-reliance, frugality, and sobriety, in family relations and moral responsibility, and, most importantly, in how to conduct themselves as free men and women interacting with those who had only recently held them as slaves.

Duties, relationships, and conduct were as much a part of schooling as were reading and writing lessons. The inculcation of middle-class values was included in the teachers' attack. "Through appropriate readings, songs, and exercises, positive moral and patriotic images would be implanted in the minds of the pupils." The extension of literacy to former slaves was construed in the same manner as the extension of literacy to other "alien" people and races. Literacy's functions were collective, stabilizing, and assimilating.

Many Southern whites feared this instruction. Some hoped that proper schooling would instill deference, respect, industriousness, orderliness, and other values to maintain the labor force and social order. Others, however, were more skeptical. Many of these sentiments were rooted in assumptions of black intellectual inferiority and ineducability. In more and more areas, especially after Reconstruction, mounting opposition closed off opportunities.[54]

Substantial educational efforts did take place, but their limits are revealed in the precariousness of many endeavors, the level of hostility, and the trends in illiteracy. Southern whites feared that Northern teachers were teaching racial equality. The distribution of schools was a further problem; the majority were located in towns, not the rural areas where most of the black population resided. The consequence, revealed in illiteracy as well as school attendance data, was the reinforcement of prior differentials within the context of improvement.

Direct federal support was short-lived, effectively ending by 1870. It did contribute to a legacy of public schooling in the South, however, for blacks and whites. Support for an integrated, equal system was slight. By 1872, every southern state had established a state-financed and state-organized school system with property taxation as the basis for funding. Taxes added to racism as stimuli for white criticism and opposition to public schooling. Numerous persons objected to paying for the education of blacks. Poor whites, fearing economic competition, added their voices and actions to those of the landed class.

White violence further reduced opportunities. Fewer schools and teachers, inferior schooling, higher concentrations of children per school, lower enrollments, unequal expenditures, lower teachers' salaries, and inadequate materials all helped to restrict the educational advancement of blacks. Black enthusiasm was not extinguished, however, and literacy levels rose during the last two decades of the century.[55]

A dramatic example of the disadvantages of illiteracy and the possibilities for blacks without education is found in Edgefield County, South Carolina, during Reconstruction. In the struggle for political and economic power "between an oral Afro-American culture and a literate white culture," the whites' superior communication system gave them a distinct organizational advantage. While blacks relied on personal contact for communications, whites were able to "organize, persuade, propagandize, and mobilize their membership through printed media."

However, blacks were capable of organizing and challenging white dominance without literacy—through organizational skills and leadership in religious, military, and political affairs, and through organizations such as the church, schools, and militia. In spite of violence and intimidation, the whites' economic and communications power were not enough to stop black political activity.

The reestablishment of white hegemony by the late 1870s was accomplished without the use of literacy and print as a primary instrument. Land and labor control were central to the struggle; intimidation, fraud, and physical force were more important than leadership and ability to organize among blacks. Rather than being central to this program and its victory, literacy and the media symbolized more the depth of white power and reflected its social base. Even as black illiteracy began to decline, it was impossible for black leaders to encourage militancy or agitate for equality.

Ironically, even contradictorily, it was after the restoration of white hegemony that the development of black community and institutions began. After 1876, the freedmen organized primarily through the churches and schools. They included women and children, and promoted the values of education and literacy. Through their churches and the closely related schools, Edgefield blacks transformed themselves from an oral to a literate culture.[56]

Literacy was directly important in its relationship to migration and physical mobility. In the South, the strong desire of blacks for education for their children (as well as for survival and protection) led many to cities and towns. There they did all in their power to see that schooling was possible: establishing schools, paying for them, building them, and sacrificing to keep their children attending.[57] Literacy often related to longer-distance migration. Postbellum migration of blacks from the South to the North and Midwest was in all likelihood a selective process, and literacy was one element in that selectivity.

Southern blacks who migrated to Boston, for example, as a study by Elizabeth Pleck shows, tended to be "city-bred" and to have above-average literacy. Literacy was both preparation and influence: former slaves from urban areas were better informed about the North than illiterate slaves from rural plantations, partly because of their having had better chances for learning to read. But despite their levels of literacy and preparation, Boston blacks fared poorly economically. No other ethnic or racial group was as concentrated at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy. This situation was not the result of a lack of literacy or schooling; "the one overriding disadvantage blacks faced was the deeply rooted racial prejudice of their fellow Bostonians."[58]

For blacks, the legacies of literacy were often meager in confronting the massive obstacles to advancement and integration. In facing those barriers, rooted in prejudice, discrimination, and racism, black literacy and educational levels did suffer. Nevertheless, the black literacy achievement remains impressive. What is not impressive are the advantages that followed from that level of skills. Although the rewards of their literacy are clearly not those its promoters have imbedded deeply into Western culture and ideology, the case of black Americans is exceptional.

On one level, it has been argued that black inequality of access to and opportunity for schooling is the cause of their lack of social and economic

advancement. However, the fact that blacks have been limited in schooling is more an effect than a cause of their position. That so many black parents, and youngsters, too, continue to maintain their faith in education attests to the depth of their commitment to the ideology of improvement and advancement in American society.[59]

The "new immigration" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries raises numerous questions about the roles of literacy and illiteracy. Contrary to the popular view, nearly three-quarters of all immigrants entering the United States between 1899 and 1910 were literate, at least in comparison to their fellow countrymen: opportunities for elementary schooling were expanding in Southern and Eastern Europe at the time, and levels of literacy were an important element in the selectivity of long-distance immigration. The actual extent of literacy (in either native tongues or English) is impressive.[60]

As twentieth-century literacy and school enrollment data show, the new immigrants were willing and able to obtain basic literacy for their children. Economic needs, a desire to maintain cultural identity in the face of alien values and challenges to tradition, acceptance of the dominant society's educational ideology, and group strivings for success combined in the desire to maintain or secure high levels of literacy. That does not signify that all immigrants embraced the ideology of success or assimilation through education or that they shared equally in accepting the importance of education. Many did not consider schooling a high priority or were not able to put plans into practice. In addition, those who did not plan to settle permanently in the New World, and many who found homes in large urban ethnic enclaves, were less often stimulated to acquire literacy in English.[61]

Literacy was often viewed instrumentally, especially at first, and should be understood as part of the strategy of migration, settlement, and adaptation to new environments. It was an undoubted advantage, economically (higher levels of literacy were associated with higher earnings), socially, and culturally. However, it was not a requirement for or a guarantee of success.[62]

Slavic immigrants, rejecting challenges of conformity and Americanization, regarded the purpose of schooling to be conservative and preservative: it was to be used to maintain their cultural, linguistic, and religious values. Only a minority of second-generation children spoke in favor of education for social mobility. Schooling was limited for Slavic children, although most attained basic literacy. Work was valued more highly, as an alternative ethic to the "literary myth" developed. Child labor was emphasized; family survival took first place. When Slavic immigrants did insist on education, ethnic culture and religious vocations were accorded most importance.

Many immigrants were opposed to the materialism of American society and to the place of public schooling in transmitting that attitude. That was one reason for the development of separate, parochial schooling. A distinct morality permeated the Poles' and Slovaks' opposition to the evils of Ameri-

TABLE 4 Characteristics of Adult, Male, Foreign-Born Workers in Mining and Manufacturing Occupations, 1909

Group	*Number Reporting Earnings*	*Avg. Weekly Earnings in Dollars*	*Percentage Speaking English*	*Percentage Literate*[a]	*Percentage Residing in U.S. 5 Years or More*
Armenian	594	9.73	54.9	92.1	54.6
Bohemian, Moravian	1,353	13.07	66.0	96.8	71.2
Bulgarian	403	10.31	20.3	78.2	8.5
Canadian, French	8,164	10.62	79.4	84.1	86.7
Canadian, Other	1,323	14.15	100.0	99.0	90.8
Croatian	4,890	11.37	50.9	70.7	38.9
Danish	377	14.32	96.5	99.2	85.4
Dutch	1,026	12.04	86.1	97.9	81.9
English	9,408	14.13	100.0	98.9	80.6
Finnish	3,334	13.27	50.3	99.1	53.6
Flemish	125	11.07	45.6	92.1	32.9
French	896	12.92	68.6	94.3	70.1
German	11,380	13.63	87.5	98.0	86.4
Greek	4,154	8.41	33.5	84.2	18.0
Hebrew, Russian	3,177	12.71	74.7	93.3	57.1
Hebrew, Other	1,158	14.37	79.5	92.8	73.8
Irish	7,596	13.01	100.0	96.0	90.6
Italian, North	5,343	11.28	58.8	85.0	55.2
Italian, South	7,821	9.61	48.7	69.3	47.8
Lithuanian	4,661	11.03	51.3	78.5	53.8
Macedonian	479	8.95	21.1	69.4	2.0
Magyar	5,331	11.65	46.4	90.9	44.1
Norwegian	420	15.28	96.9	99.7	79.3
Polish	24,223	11.06	43.5	80.1	54.1
Portuguese	3,125	8.10	45.2	47.8	57.5
Roumanian	1,026	10.90	33.3	83.3	12.0
Russian	3,311	11.01	43.6	74.6	38.0
Ruthenian	385	9.92	36.8	65.9	39.6
Scotch	1,711	15.24	100.0	99.6	83.6
Servian	1,016	10.75	41.2	71.5	31.4
Slovak	10,775	11.95	55.6	84.5	60.0
Slovenian	2,334	12.15	51.7	87.3	49.9
Swedish	3,984	15.36	94.7	99.8	87.4
Syrian	812	8.12	54.6	75.1	45.3
Turkish	240	7.65	22.5	56.5	10.0

[a]Able to read.

Source: Robert Higgs, "Race, Skills, and Earnings: American Immigrants in 1909," *Journal of Economic History:* 31 (1971), p. 424.

can life; they enunciated their own moral bases of literacy and schooling, a stricter, more explicitly moral and religious ethic. They differed, however, in their perceptions of the kind of education needed. Their conception of the promise of schooling was opposed consciously to the "literary myth."

School attendance rates reflect this skepticism toward public schooling. A 1911 study found that Poles and Slovaks ranked lowest in attendance among ethnic groups in large urban places. Few children attended beyond the primary years; virtually none went on to high school. Literacy could be attained in this way, but little more.

Slavs did not immediately embrace the idea of advancement through education. On the one hand, unskilled industrial work offered few opportunities for occupational mobility. "Public education simply did not offer skills that were useful to blast furnaces, open hearths, mines, or textile mills."[63] On the other hand, members of this ethnic group were strongly concerned with survival, limited visions of the future, and spiritual, rather than material, aims. Without a stereotypical expectation of mobility into the dominant society, these immigrants were not so disappointed with their lack of schooling or of occupational and economic progress. The adaptive goals of continuing residence, security, and community formation were more important than those offered by the dominant culture's "literacy myth" and ideology of advancement through education. . . .[64]

There was also a basic, deep cultural conflict among immigrant groups about the impact of education on ethnic solidarity and cultural survival. The Slavs and Jews in Chicago were characterized by high rates of child labor and home ownership and low levels of school attendance; these parents believed that early, steady work was the path to survival and security. However, they did see a need for education to maintain ethnic identities and communities against the threat of American society and Americanization. Consequently, they valued literacy highly, but their conception differed from that of the dominant culture and the public schools; their notions included traditional moral bases, native language, sectarian religious education, and ethnic culture, in addition to English. Gradually, however, Slavic children began to stay longer in school. With the rising educational requirements of the labor market, they were learning to secure work and to survive. Extended schooling was an accommodation to their class position, and a major change in educational behavior.[65]

Jews emigrated to North America with a different educational tradition. Yet, in their social relationship to the economics of survival, they, too, were forced to adopt an instrumental approach to education: they viewed it as one key to progress. The desire to preserve their culture overlapped with such economic motives.

Jews were among the most literate of immigrants, but the notion of a cultural linkage is too simplistic. In a study of New York Jews, Selma Berrol noted that the extent to which Eastern European Jews used the public schools varied with their dates of arrival; both educational requirements and opportunities changed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because of familial needs and a lack of school space, many children had only a short stay in school; few gained postprimary education. Schooling may have had less impact on economic mobility than is typically assumed.

Most first-generation Jews were employed in manual work, which did not require much schooling. However, a shift among the second generation from manual labor to better-paid, higher-status occupations was under way. Literacy was a prerequisite for this shift, but prolonged schooling was not. "Educational achievements could not have been the prime cause of status improvements for the first few generations. . . . the community did so well because so many of the newcomers brought skills and experiences which were exactly right for the needs of the city at the time they arrived." Prior skills, urban life, commercial background, and comparably high levels of literacy were more essential at first than much schooling in the new land. Education, as for others, may well have *followed* occupational and economic gains, rather than preceded and caused them. Here is one recent version of the "literacy myth."[66]

Jewish immigrants also experienced cultural conflict and parental dilemmas. The traditional Jewish equation of education with learning, especially in the Talmudic tradition, was not synonymous with literacy learning for work preparation, either in Eastern Europe or in North America. The choice between educational strategies became a painful dilemma for many parents. For this group, more so for the poorer Polish and Russian Jews, schooling was also assessed in terms of the daily struggle for familial subsistence and survival.

In accommodation, Jews developed a more instrumental and pragmatic approach to schooling; but education in their culture, tradition, and heritage was also stressed. "The traditional Jewish emphasis and pride in academic achievement was valued because it contributed to the economic value of the Jews and bound them together as a cohesive cultural and religious group." Many attempts were made to preserve cultural continuity and identity. Yet, Jews tended to assimilate more quickly and in greater numbers than other groups. Education and mobility contributed there. Cultural contradictions and their relationship to schooling generated strains, as the traditional educational imperative, when transformed into education for economic necessity and progress in accommodation with American society and political economy, led to a challenge and some undermining of that culture itself.[67] Progress had its costs.

In their educational strategies, immigrant groups responded differently, and in the process they shaped their own accommodations to the dominant culture. The ideology of education, promoted by the dominant culture and its system of schooling—which expanded rapidly during the period of massive immigration—was perhaps challenged but not contradicted. On the whole, it was elaborated, and with new certification requirements was reinforced. That was a developing legacy of literacy from the nineteenth century.