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1776-1976: Looking Back

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1776-1976: LOOKING BACK

At the beginning of this Bicentennial Year, it is fitting that we repeat to ourselves and to anyone within earshot the important reasons we teach effective reading to the young. We teach children to read so that they will be able:

- to learn to become understanding participants in the cooperative efforts of a humane society;

- to learn what great minds of all places and times have to teach us about the experience of living;

- to free themselves from the gnawing fears of physical mysteries that have plagued the ignorant for countless ages;

- to discern beauty in literary expression and add the dimension of this art form to the rest of their lives;

- to use the skills of reading as a means of finding true fulfillment in both vocation and avocation;

- to recognize reading as the wonderful source of amusement and diversion it is, in times of leisure; and,

- to realize that reading can be a gentle therapy in times of stress.

Also at the beginning of the Bicentennial Year, we should think about the importance of reading, and the part it played in the story of our land. The men who helped organize a nation out of several hostile factions and many sectional partisans recognized the importance of the printed word as a cohesive factor over two hundred years ago. Surely, if only a few people had been able to read the words of Thomas Paine, Samuel Adams and others, the decision to declare our independence might have taken many more years. However, there is plenty of evidence that responsible and mature people saw the power inherent in "writing for all men to read." Even a series of essays entitled "Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies," written by John Dickinson, did much to solidify opinion for resistance in the New World, indicating how very many people read, and read thoroughly, everything within reach.

It is most significant that our nation includes elements of every culture, and without our continuing efforts to teach effective reading to all, this aggregation of societies might still disintegrate and become the misunderstood and the misunderstanding. This nation owes much to the teachers who teach her children to read.

Kenneth Vandermeulen
Editor