

The Common Schools

By,
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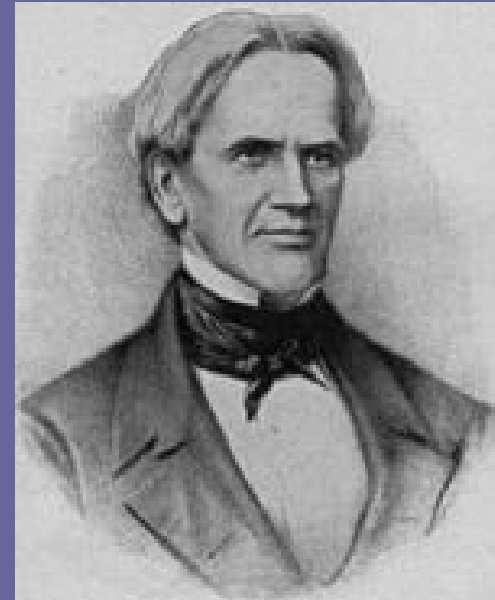
Report by,
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Horace Mann

➤ Background Information:

- Born in 1796 in Franklin, Massachusetts
- His youth was spent in poverty
- Graduated from Brown University after only three years
- Was a member of the House of Representatives and later, the Senate
- In 1837, he became the first Secretary of the State Board of Education in Massachusetts.



Horace Mann

➤ Background Information (continued)

- He loathed extremes of wealth and poverty
- Stressed points of equal conditions (for the rich and poor)
- Claimed that education was needed all children in order to diffuse useful knowledge because as Schultz (2001) said; “Every generation had an obligation to improve its inheritance and to pass it on to the next” (p.143).
- He also thought education was needed for all because it will do away with negative aspects of society including crime and poverty.

Horace Mann

➤ Accomplishments:

- Helped to establish common schools; rejected the European model of schooling
- Helped abolish child labor
- Made school attendance mandatory
- Enforced separation between church and school
- Realized teachers needed to be formally trained and deserved higher pay; encouraged the opening of normal schools
- Encouraged separating children of different educational levels
- Widened the curriculum to include lessons in health, music and other subjects that helped to form character

Horace Mann

➤ Beliefs (on history):

- He believed that the history children were normally exposed to had examples of right and wrong that could easily be confused one another.
 - Mann wanted history to be rewritten. He wanted the stories to have simple examples of right and wrong
- He wanted children to learn about the world through a qualified educator, who can choose what is proper for the children to know. He did not want children to learn about the world through oral or written stories that were not specifically prepared for children.
- Mann wanted to restrict children's "unsupervised play of young imaginations" because he believed that this (along with books written for amusement) would distract them from reflecting on real experience.

Horace Mann

➤ Beliefs (on politics):

- Although Mann was a politician, he thought that the public wasted too much energy on politics, and should instead focused on getting children educated
- Mann thought that politics caused too much controversy which in his mind was a complete waste of time.
 - For these reasons, Mann kept politics out of his proposed curriculum.

(Schultz, 2001).

Horace Mann

➤ Beliefs (on the church):

- Mann was very firm on the need to banish religious education based on any of the tenets in any particular denomination of the Christian religion.
- Sectarianism, in his mind, brought with it religious controversy which he considered to be just as bad as political controversy.
- Mann believed that the church should stay out of all forms of public life altogether, or it would otherwise bring “the return of Babel”.
- While Mann thought that all religious denominations should be kept out of school, he did think that the Bible should be read in school
- (Schultz, 2001).

Orestes Brownson

- Lasch describes Brownson to be “the most perceptive of Mann’s contemporary critics” (p. 149)
- Brownson also hated the “widening gap between wealth and poverty and saw popular education as a means of overcoming these divisions” (p.149)
 - However, Brownson thought that true education did not occur in schools, but rather in real life.
 - Mann believed that education could only take place “in institutions deliberately contrived for that purpose” (p. 150)

Education Today and Mann

- Lasch believes that “we have incorporated into our schools the worst of Mann and somehow managed to lose sight of the best” by:
 - Setting up elaborate requirements for teacher certification, yet teaching is not yet considered an “honorable calling”
 - Organizing an educational bureaucracy, but this is now “undermining the teachers’ autonomy ... and incidentally discouraging people with a gift for teaching from entering the profession at all” (with our class as an exception)
 - Following “Mann’s advice to de-emphasize purely academic subjects, but the resulting loss of intellectual rigor has not been balanced by an improvement in the school’s capacity to nourish the character traits Mann considered so important: self-reliance, courteousness, and the capacity for deferred gratification”

References:

- Johnson, J. A., Musial, D, Hall, G.E., Gollnick, D. M., & Dupuis, V. L. (2005). *Introduction to the foundations of American education*. 14th ed. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Schultz, F. (2000). *SOURCES: Notable selections in education*. New York: McGraw-Hill Dushkin.

