

# **WILLIAM MCGUFFEY**

**SEPTEMBER 23, 1800 – MAY 5, 1873**

**A PIONEER IN CHARACTER EDUCATION**

**EDGR 502: DEVELOPING CHARACTER THROUGH CURRICULUM**

**6/30/2013**

# ADMIRABLE QUALITIES

❖ **Perseverance:** “McGuffey, while only fourteen years of age, had been well prepared to take a position as teacher,” and he signed a contract to teach forty-five students in a one room school house in Ohio (Skrabec, 2009, p. 45).

## ❖ **Pioneering**

❖ McGuffey impacted education during the 1830s by encouraging schools to be equipped with free textbooks, maps, globes, and visual aids (p. 144).

❖ “McGuffey had started to pioneer new approaches to rhetorical education in that [one room] schoolhouse” (p. 57).

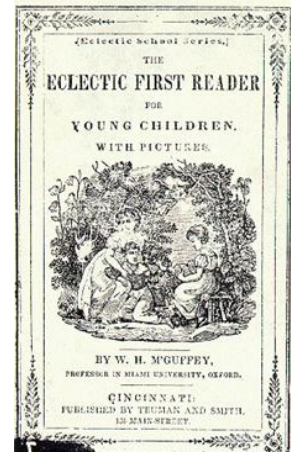
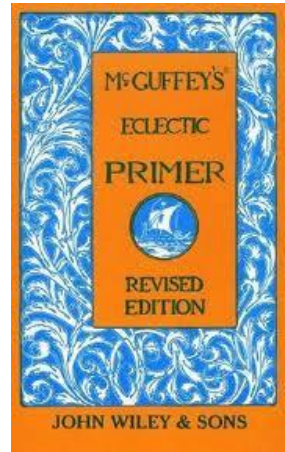
❖ McGuffey built “the first experimental school in the United States” where he used log benches for grading purposes, developed new reading and writing strategies, and he used positive reinforcement for academic progress” (p. 63).

❖ Pioneering the development of textbooks, “the *McGuffey Readers* were truly not revolutionary, but evolutionary” (p. 149).

❖ “McGuffey pioneered the idea of parents visiting the school and being present at examinations” (p. 185).

❖ **Passionate:** McGuffey’s “real passion was teaching moral philosophy and literature” (p. 61).

❖ **Brilliant:** “The real brilliance of William McGuffey was his ability to teach both moral philosophy and the basics of intellectual development” (p. 175).



# CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

## ❖ Discipline

- ❖ “McGuffey was a strict disciplinarian, which probably was from his grammar-school teacher background and his own conservative college background at Washington College” (Skrabec, 2009, p. 67).
- ❖ His view of discipline caused some negative teaching experiences in the northern states (p. 123); however, he received redemption when he “was appointed a ‘chair’ and professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Virginia” on July 28, 1845 (p. 119) where he found that the students were disciplined and comparable to his pedagogy methods.
- ❖ The “bureaucracy” style of leadership originally put in place by Thomas Jefferson was advantageous to McGuffey’s “teaching and administrative styles” giving him “autonomy as head of Moral Philosophy” (p. 120).



## ❖ Slavery

- ❖ During McGuffey’s beloved time at University of Virginia, he “opposed the idea of owning slaves;” however, he did rent slaves to help maintain household duties (p. 121).
  - ❖ After the death of his wife Harriet, McGuffey was remarried to Miss Laura Howard who was the daughter of the Dean of the Medical College who accepted slavery (p. 124 – 125).
  - ❖ On a positive note, McGuffey continued to support the “acceptance of blacks in Virginia” and he made financial donations to assist the building of a black church in Charlottesville and “encouraged the education of blacks” (p. 131).
  - ❖ McGuffey’s daughters were so disgusted at the South’s use of slavery that they returned to the North.
  - ❖ McGuffey learned to be tolerant of Virginian’s viewpoints; although, within his own home, he “treated his servants with respect and dignity” (p. 131).
- ❖ **Inequality:** “McGuffey could tolerate inequality, if everyone had the equal opportunity to improve” (p. 198).

# CHARACTER VALUE LENS - LOYALTY

- ❖ William McGuffey was *loyal* in his dedication to improve the quality of education for all people
- ❖ “McGuffey was well aware that any system could be corrupted, and his goal was always to educate on morals, rights, and virtues believing the rest would fall in place” (Skrabec, 2009, p. 204).
- ❖ McGuffey spent his personal time outside of work campaigning for common schools.
- ❖ “McGuffey’s legacy is his giving family values to a struggling nation. McGuffey taught more than just obedience of parents; the *Readers* promoted marriage, temperance, thrift, honest, and fidelity” (p. 232).

**A second valuable lens this pioneer character educator exemplifies is.....**

## HONESTY

- ❖ McGuffey used stories in the McGuffey Reader series that taught “simple moral virtues-honesty, kindness, faithfulness, courage in a simple and memorable way” (Lickona, 1991, p. 234).
- ❖ McGuffey wanted students to learn right from wrong in hopes that they would make honest decisions throughout their lives.
- ❖ “...starting children on the road to virtue, McGuffey reasoned, we first need to get them hooked on goodness” (Lickona, 1991, p. 234).
- ❖ “Honesty is the best policy, possessing a good character an advantage in life, and being good the surest way to be happy” (Lickona, 1991, p. 234).
- ❖ He believed that parents should be aware and honest in regards to students’ true ability levels, and he advised parents that “the development of moral character is the responsibility of both the parent and teacher” (Skrabec, 2009, p. 185).

# MEMORABLE QUOTE & VIEW OF ETHICS

## ❖ Quote 1:

❖ “Most prominent post-Civil War and turn-of-the-century American figures credited their initial success in learning to the *Readers*, which provided a guide to what was occurring in the public school movement and in American culture during the nineteenth century” (William Holmes McGuffey, 2008).

❖ **Quote 2:** McGuffey passed away on May 5, 1873 (p. 136). The faculty at University of Virginia loved McGuffey so much that they formally requested that the family allow him to be buried there.

❖ “...but it seems to be peculiarly fitting that he should sleep here, where his living presence was most felt, and his greatest work best understood, where his example will be a perpetual power, and his loss an unceasing sorrow, and the faculty hope that the institution, which he did so much to adorn and to advance, may be permitted to have the honor of guarding his remains as it will always cherish and revere his memory” (Skrabec, 2009, pp. 136-137).

## Ethics

### Summary Sentence

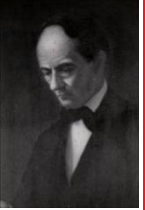
McGuffey’s greatest donation is character education; he combined teaching academics with lessons in morals and values allowing students to make scholarly connections and learn how to be virtuous human beings.

by...

Tammy Hoak



# THREE CHARACTER TRAITS



## ➤ Innovative:

- The one room schoolhouse inspired the *McGuffey Reader* series due to the intensive need for differentiation as a result of various ages, reading levels, writing skills, and math skills which “helped give order to the chaotic one room school” (Skrabec, 2009, p. 139).

## ➤ Accepting:

- “For Daniel Drake, William McGuffey, and most of the ‘College of Teachers,’ common schools were to be all inclusive in Ohio, and that would mean blacks, Catholics, and Germans” (p. 81).

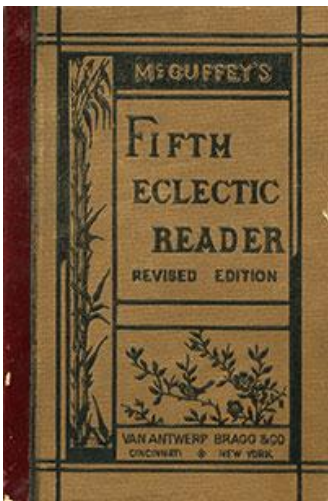
## ➤ Contributor:

- McGuffey started his *Readers* for elementary children in 1833. They drew from a variety of sources including the New England Primer and Webster’s Blue Back Speller with stories, illustrations, and comprehension questions which captivated the youth and taught morals accepted by many Christian religions (p. 149).
  - 1834 – “Besides the simple beginning readings lessons about dogs and cats, McGuffey introduced many moral lessons” in the *First Reader* which drew much discussion about the word “eclectic” suggested by the editor and owner of the McGuffey series (p. 97).
    - The word was described as “a magic word whose judicious mixture of mystery and meaning served to captivate local school boards” and it was understood to mean “taking the best of all theories” and “fine points of philosophy” (p. 97 – 98).

1838 – The *Third* and *Fourth Readers* designed for students in today’s sixth to eighth grade were a better representation of McGuffey’s “rhetorical style” containing short stories, poetry, and compositions with comprehension questions (p. 98).

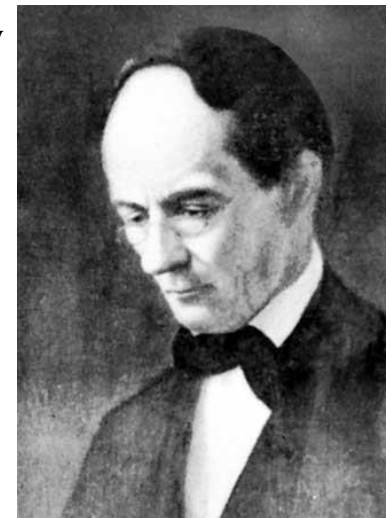
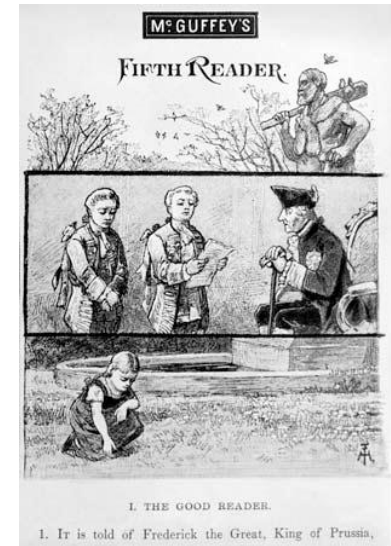
1844 - The *Fifth Reader* focused on literature including poetry (p. 114).

1857 - The *Sixth Reader* was considered a “major breakthrough” (p. 127) increasing McGuffey’s admirable reputation because “it was this text that introduced students to the world of literature” which included writings from: Milton, Bacon, Dryden, Irving, Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, Addison and six selections of Shakespeare” and it also included famous speeches by “Patrick Henry, Daniel Webster, John Marshall, and Thomas Jefferson” (127).



# CHARITY

- ❖ It is difficult to attribute one single value to William McGuffey, but out of respect for him, I will honor his own preferred value of “charity.”
- ❖ McGuffey was partial to the virtues of charity which was a common theme in the first four *Readers* (Skrabec, 2009, p. 210).
- ❖ His ideas whether positive or negative led to American capitalism that allow others to view our country as “charitable to society” (p. 212).
- ❖ McGuffey was charitable in his time, contributions, and his support for quality education despite low compensation and adversity due to ranges in social and economic factors including prejudices, massive immigration, and the horrors of war.
- ❖ “McGuffey’s legacy is his giving family values to a struggling nation. McGuffey taught more than just obedience of parents; the *Readers* promoted marriage, temperance, thrift, honest, and fidelity” (p. 232).



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