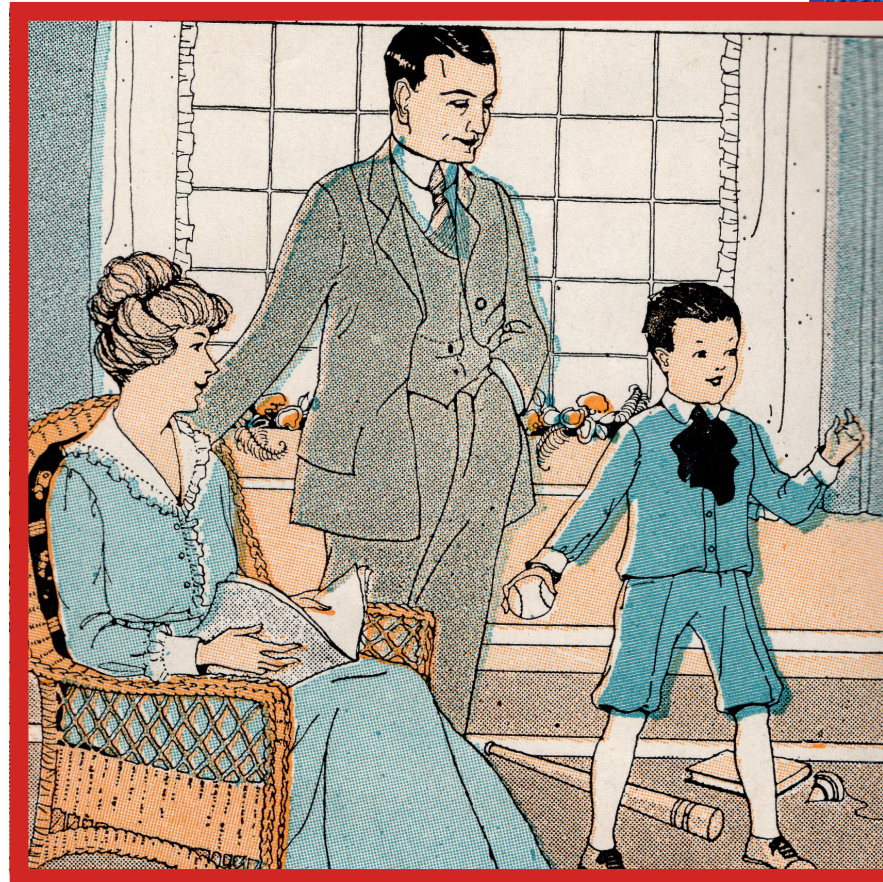


Scott, Foresman & Company and the Birth of the Modern Reader

Elson and Transitions in Pedagogical Style

Educator and future facilitator of the *Dick and Jane* series, William H. Elson created Scott, Foresman & Co.'s first major success, its *Grammar School Readers*. Eventually known simply as *Elson Readers*, they foreshadowed key features of the *Dick and Jane* books and emulated earlier basal readers,



textbooks that stressed phonics instruction before gradually introducing vocabulary and literature. Like the most notable of the basal readers, *The McGuffey Reader*, stories featured in the *Elson Readers* drew from biography, traditional folklore, and celebratory histories. Elson also injected themes reflective of Progressive Era values into the readers, a continuation of the McGuffey's emphasis on cultivating good citizenship. While considerably less overt, the importance of civics, congeniality, and middle-class normality remained an underlying theme in the *Dick and Jane* series. In a notable divergence from the design of most basal readers, Elson introduced two-tone illustrations interspersed throughout the text.