

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

The Godfather of Dick and Jane

During the interwar years, an explosion of pedagogical theories toward reading prompted further revisions of the *Elson Readers*. Under editor William S. Gray, the company shifted the retitled *Elson-Gray Basic Readers* away from earlier basal models, deemphasizing phonics, fables, and historical figures. Gray was a noted reading psychologist, professor of education at the University of Chicago, and director of Scott, Foresman & Co.'s *Curriculum Foundation Series*.

Gray introduced simple text that facilitated the “look-say” reading method in which young readers were taught to recognize basic words prior to learning the alphabet and sounding words out phonetically. Moreover, these new readers introduced American schoolchildren to the iconic characters Dick and Jane.



William Scott Gray

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