

## Chapter 68c -- We The People In 1820: Education



**Dates:**  
1820

**Sections:**

- Formal Education Remains A Hit Or Miss Proposition
- Newspapers Advance Literacy Along With Political Awareness

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Time: 1820

### Formal Education Remains A Hit Or Miss Proposition



Education remains important to most Americans, but little progress occurs between 1790 and 1820 in making it broadly available to all children.

Those lucky enough to be born into well off families – across regions – still benefit from personal tutors, prep schools and the higher-ed universities.

For others, formal education remains a hit or miss proposition.

The bastion of childhood education is New England, based on its staunchly Puritan heritage. It becomes the model for “grammar schools,” open to the public, albeit with optional, not mandatory, attendance. These facilities are all privately owned until 1821, when the first government run “public school” appears in Boston.

The odds of accessing formal education also go up for children clustered in towns and cities, where “one room schoolhouses” become more commonplace.

A University Graduate in Formal Garb

However, in 1820, the majority of America's children still reside on farms, outside of New England, and lack the family wealth required to hire tutors or go off to school full time.

For them, and for their parents, learning is probably an aspiration, although hard to come by, and likely relegated to second place, behind farm duties and household chores.

Despite all this, the trend lines on literacy and general education are tilting upward by 1820 -- with more children getting more years of formal education, on average.

This traces in part to the greater availability of teachers, as university attendance and graduation rates grow. While the vast majority of graduates are men, the teaching career is already beginning to attract women in search of options to traditional housewifery.

Literacy is also advanced by the fact that reading materials are becoming more prevalent, including children's "readers and spellers," which facilitate in-home schooling.

Parents too are more likely than ever to be reading, with local newspapers growing in popularity.

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Time: 1820

### **Newspapers Advance Literacy Along With Political Awareness**



Time Out to Absorb the Daily New

Between 1800 and 1820, the number of local newspapers in circulation more than doubles, from around 200 to over 500. They exist across all states, with New York alone offering roughly 75 different publications.

Their content includes coverage of current events, especially the political arena, public announcements, and advertising for local merchants.

But the vast majority of these newspapers survive for only a few years. Some build a reliable base of paid subscribers, but most cannot generate enough to cover their costs. Their revenue is also hurt by the fact that, once bought, papers are "passed around for free."

The ones that do manage to survive typically supplement their income by other printing work done for businesses or state governments. To secure the latter, newspapers often align with political parties, who return the favor in the form of patronage.

### Early Newspapers That Survive Over Time

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Location</b>
1704	The Boston News-Letter	Boston, Mass
1721	The New England Courant	Boston, Mass
1756	The New Hampshire Gazette	New Hampshire
1764	The Hartford Courant	Hartford, Conn
1785	The Augusta Chronicle	Augusta, Georgia
1785	The Poughkeepsie Journal	Poughkeepsie, NY
1786	The Boston Chronicle	Boston, Mass
1786	Daily Hampshire Gazette	Northampton, Mass
1786	Pittsburgh Post Gazette	Pittsburgh, Pa
1789	The Berkshire Eagle	Pittsfield, Mass
1792	The Recorder	Greenfield, Mass
1794	The Rutland Herald	Rutland, Vermont
1796	Norwich Bulletin	Norwich, Conn
1801	New York Post	New York, NY
1803	The Post and Courier	Charleston, SC