

“To the Good Children of the United States of America”:
Isaiah Thomas’s Use of Children’s Literature to Foster Nationalism in the Early American
Republic

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Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Department of History of Vanderbilt University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For Honors in History

April 2024

Nashville, Tennessee

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Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank the Vanderbilt History Department's support through this process, particularly my advisor Professor Daniel Usner, and the director of the honors program, Professor Marshall Eakin. The attentive feedback and support from them helped to keep my writing moving forward as I crafted my thesis over the past year. I will forever be grateful for the hours they dedicated to this project and for allowing me to dive deeper into my love for history.

I would also like to thank the Vanderbilt Jean and Alexander Heard Libraries for assisting me in finding sources to build a basis of secondary literature on my topic. Similarly, another thanks is due to the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, MA. Founded by Isaiah Thomas, the archive served as my main source of primary materials from Thomas's children's book collection. The aid from the archive helped me to stay organized and track down the best available texts for my project.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support. I appreciate them encouraging me to challenge myself, being there to lend an ear, and offering positive words of support. This project has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my academic career and would not have been possible without a support team alongside me.

Introduction

As concerned citizens, we constantly think about how we impact the next generation of leaders. We look ahead and prioritize the future of our societies, nations, and communities – and that focus turns toward the children of successive generations. Education, family, societal structures, and literature have all been created with future generations in mind and we are conscious of how the present will impact the way children see the world and what they will do with it. Newly emerging nations find this particularly important. When creating a national political system, the United States framers wanted to ensure that the work they put in would be sustainable and continued by those who would take their place. The circumstances of a nation built from 13 different colonies, forced the first years to be devoted to developing the nation as a union and bonding people through a common set of beliefs; they had to hone a viable nationalism to create a nation where none had existed.¹ Instilling new values into a society takes deliberate work to foster emotional attachments among people, ideas, and institutions. The founders needed to construct an identity and the sentiment of nationalism that would bond people to each other and their new nation.

Paul Boyer, a U.S. cultural and intellectual historian, said that the best way to fully understand a society is to examine how it treats its most vulnerable members.² Women were one of these groups who were not directly granted political autonomy during the early years of the Republic. Intellectual historian, Linda Kerber coined the term “Republican Motherhood,” to

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016), 6, <https://hdl-handle-net.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/2027/heb01609.0001.001>.

² Paul S. Boyer, “Foreword,” in *Children and Youth in a New Nation*, ed. James Marten (New York: NYU Press, 2009), ix, <https://search-ebshost-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=1020908&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

describe how a mother's life was dedicated to educating their children in civic service.³ Kerber recognized that Republican Motherhood was used as a device to maintain the domestic female life while socializing them politically; this role gave women the idea that they had a place in politics while reinforcing familiar stereotypes.⁴ Through the assignment of this role to women, there is insight into how it controlled the narrative of the new democratic society of America.⁵ Children, like women, were assigned distinct roles in nationalism. Women were expected to “implant in the tender mind, such sentiments of virtue, propriety and dignity, as are suited to the freedom of our government.”⁶ Children were expected to obediently learn about their obligations to prepare themselves for citizenship. Half of the citizens in the United States in 1820 were under the age of seventeen.⁷ Examining how the children of the post-revolutionary period—a majority of the population—were being taught to develop attachments to the new nation, provides us with insights on early American politics and culture. As the population expected to continue on the nation's beliefs and characteristics, children were the ideal subjects to cultivate nationalism among. Understanding efforts to inculcate a sense of national belonging provides us with a better sense of nation formation during the early decades of the Republic.

Benedict Anderson, a scholar of nationalism, argued for the importance of print-capitalism on a society's creation of nationalism and what he famously labeled an “imagined community.”⁸ Print-capitalism is the idea that as an imagined community or nation is forming, it

³ Linda Kerber, “The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment—An American Perspective,” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976): 187–205, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2712349>.

⁴ Kerber, “The Republican Mother,” 203.

⁵ Kerber, “The Republican Mother,” 187–205.

⁶ Noah Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings: On Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects* (Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1790), 27.

⁷ Boyer, “Foreword,” 4.

⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6. Manu Goswami, “Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (1983),” *Public Culture* 32, no. 2 (2020): 442, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-8090180>.

emerges with a common language that is facilitated through print in a capitalist marketplace.⁹ Printers were able to bring the formation of a nation to the immediate attention of the public through the publication and diffusion of ideas in literature and newspapers.¹⁰ The colonies' production of newspapers makes them unique in print's role in nation-building. These newspapers enabled many local printing establishments to find their footing and begin to create community around local issues.¹¹ The formation of “imagined communities” created conditions for colonists to grow an emotional attachment to the ideas of the nation through the unifying medium of print materials. Once established as a vehicle for revolutionary propaganda, print could be used throughout the Revolution and the early days of the Republic.¹²

Isaiah Thomas (1749–1831) was a printer based in Massachusetts, well-known for his pro-patriot newspaper the *Massachusetts Spy*, and his *History of Printing in America*.¹³ A young adult during the outbreak of the Revolution, Thomas took part in the movement by writing about the rebels' cause against the British. He strived through texts to appeal to the average person, rather than just educated elites.¹⁴ This greatly expanded the field of people who were informed and involved in political matters at the time. Following the Revolution, he also became a pillar of Massachusetts society and became greatly involved in pro-government advocacy during the creation of the nation.¹⁵ Thomas exemplifies Anderson's concept of print-capitalism through his publication of the *Spy*—the most popular newspaper in Boston—by sharing the ideas of the

⁹ Goswami, “Benedict Anderson,” 442.

¹⁰ Goswami, “Benedict Anderson,” 442.

¹¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 61.

¹² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 45 and 65.

¹³ Charles L. Nichols, “Life of Isaiah Thomas,” in *Isaiah Thomas: Printer, Writer, and Collector* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1971), 3; Benjamin Franklin Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” in Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America: with a Biography of Printers* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1964), xx-xxi.

¹⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 48; Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” xlii.

¹⁵ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” lxxvii and lxxiii.

Revolution with all of society.¹⁶ His fame from those works allowed him to pursue other respectable publications. Thomas's work with children's literature, although consumed by many at the time, is not well studied, even though it was as influential in constructing national bonds amongst the population as his newspaper and histories.¹⁷

Publishing books specifically for children was a relatively new concept in the eighteenth century, and there were a few pioneering publishers in England who were influenced by John Locke's research on children.¹⁸ Lockean theory highlighted the power of the book over shaping children's minds encouraging people to begin supporting children's literature as a genre. Similar to most booksellers in the United States following the Revolution, Thomas imported children's texts from England. With the increased prosperity in the new nation, there was a push to develop the U.S.'s resources and to stop importing British-made goods. In a move to help develop an identity for the United States, Thomas stopped importing British titles and began to produce new, Americanized versions of children's books at his publishing firm in Massachusetts.¹⁹ Thomas's work publishing children's literature in the colonies and early Republic is the focus of my thesis.

¹⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 61; Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," liv & xliii.

¹⁷ Sam Pickering, "Children's Literature," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature* (2017), 11, <https://oxfordre-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/literature/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-598>; Daniel Hahn, "Thomas, Isaiah," in *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2015), <https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199695140.001.0001/acref-9780199695140-e-3227>; Kevin Shortsleeve, "Thomas, Isaiah," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (Oxford University Press, 2006) <https://www-oxfordreference-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780195146561.001.0001/acref-9780195146561-e-3181>; Charles L. Nichols, "Some Notes On Isaiah Thomas and His Worcester Imprints," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 13, (1899): 429–447. <http://proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/some-notes-on-isaiah-thomas-his-worcester/docview/1305085649/se-2>; Nichols, "Life of Isaiah Thomas," 3-38; Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," xvii–lxxxvii.

¹⁸ Courtney Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens: The Politics of Childhood and Children's Literature," in *Imaginary Citizens: Child Readers and the Limits of American Independence 1640–1868* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 16, <https://search-ebshost-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=601117&site=ehost-live&scope=site>; Pickering, "Children's Literature," 11.

¹⁹ Pickering, "Children's Literature," 11; Nichols, "Life of Isaiah Thomas," 16.

Thomas was not alone in these endeavors to create new elements of culture for the United States and to cultivate its own literary resources. Thomas's work with children's literature contributed to Noah Webster's development of an American form of English while also paralleling Webster's creation of American culture in his own work. Noah Webster (1758-1843) was an American lexicographer, well known today for his contributions to American English, and the creation of a dictionary that is still operating today.²⁰ Webster spoke on many of the principles that were shaping ideas of education and literature at the same time. Like Thomas, Webster saw the need for the United States to establish its own identity and develop its culture separate from Great Britain. He told Americans to "unshackle your minds, and act like independent beings."²¹ Webster likened the early U.S. citizens to children who had long been "subject to the control, and subservient to the interests of a haughty parent," and encouraged the people that they had "an empire to raise and support by your exertions, and a national character to establish and extend by your wisdom and virtues."²²

Speaking on U.S. independence, Webster stated "This country is independent in government; but totally dependent in manners, which are the basis of government."²³ Webster emphasized the need for a new culture to take shape, in order for people to have an emotional attachment to the political values of the nation. Like Thomas, Webster saw literature as a way to create a national culture. Webster stated that "our honor as an independent nation is concerned in the establishment of literary institutions, adequate to all our own purposes; without sending our youth abroad or depending on other nations for books and instructors."²⁴ Webster wanted to

²⁰ "Spelling Reform," About Us, Merriam-Webster, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/about-us/spelling-reform>.

²¹ Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings*, 36.

²² Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings*, 31 and 36.

²³ V.P. Bynack, "Noah Webster's Linguistic Thought and the Idea of an American National Culture," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45, no.1 (1984): 104.

²⁴ Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings*, 35.

create books that would acquaint Americans with their own country and encourage them to have an attachment to the country through their heart.

At the time of their independence, colonists used *The Royal Standard Dictionary*, created by Englishman William Perry and imported from Great Britain. Webster wrote about being pro-federal government similar to Thomas and also expressed his thoughts about the need to promote a unique American culture and linguistic standard.²⁵ In *A Collective of Fugitive Writings and Essays*, published in 1790, Webster cautioned for American English to keep its distance from British English because “should this imitation continue, we shall be hurried down the stream of corruption, with older nations, and our language, with theirs, be lost in an ocean of perpetual changes.”²⁶

Thomas expressed sentiments regarding print similar to those of Webster. Both men stopped importing texts from Great Britain and worked towards publishing American versions of these texts. Thomas discussed the publication of a new *American Spelling Book*, which he would later take on at his own publishing house collaborating with the author, Noah Webster. Thomas talked about the purpose of the book to act as a resource “kept by persons who have not had the advantage of classical education” and that it would assist children “in the right way of pronunciation, and to spell in a much easier manner than has hitherto been taught.”²⁷ Thomas reflected on how Webster’s book was a much more accessible learning tool for young children to acquire language, and the accessibility of texts is something that Thomas prided himself on in his own publication of his newspaper. Both Thomas and Webster wanted to create culture and

²⁵ Bynack, “Noah Webster’s Linguistic Thought,” 101.

²⁶ Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings*, 80.

²⁷ *Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester, Massachusetts) XV, no. 765, December 1, 1785: [3], *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A10284A66F6BC7768%40EANX-102F3C4C6139DB34%402373353-102F3C4C72099ED9%400>.

language that would unite people and transcend “social, political, and economic antagonisms.”²⁸ Webster is a very well-known figure to this day for his work on standardizing American English and his dictionaries are still widely used. Establishing a language that contributed to forming American culture was a positive tool to form community around a national identity. As I will show in this thesis, Thomas, coming from a very similar ideological background as Webster, was conducting work that paralleled Webster with a focus on children’s literature. This work was also a positive force of nationalism through print.

Most studies of Thomas’s children’s literature have claimed that the changes he made from British editions were small and insignificant.²⁹ In this thesis, I examine these small, but important, changes and attribute a key role to them in laying the foundation of affectionate bonds, the formation of an imagined community, and national identity. I place works about children’s literature, nationalism, and print-capitalism in conversation with a focus on Isaiah Thomas – something that has not been done before. Scholars have demonstrated a connection between literature and the spread of ideas of a nation. However, most of the literature that illustrates this is for adults or are overtly educational texts for children published post-1800 and centered on citizenship characteristics.³⁰ Children are known to share a relationship with books similar to being obedient to their parents.³¹ This gives literature a position of power within a new

²⁸ Bynack, “Noah Webster’s Linguistic Thought,” 105.

²⁹ Shortsleeve, “Thomas, Isaiah”; Pickering, “Children’s Literature,” 11.

³⁰ Milton M. Klein, review of *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination*, by Michael Kammen, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 13, no. 2 (1979): 203, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2738144>; Courtney A. Weikle-Mills, “‘Learn to Love Your Book’: The Child Reader and Affectionate Citizenship,” *Early American Literature* 43, no. 1 (2008): 38–44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2505753338-44>; Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 3; Patrick Spero, “The Revolution in Popular Publications: The Almanac and New England Primer, 1750—1800,” *Early American Studies* 8, no. 1 (2010): 43, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23546600>; Gretchen A. Adams, “‘Pictures of the Vicious ultimately overcome by misery and shame:’ The Cultural Work of Early National Schoolbooks,” in *Children and Youth in a New Nation*, ed. James Marten (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 150, <https://search-ebscohost-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=1020908&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

³¹ Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 44–45; Watters, “I Spake as a Child,” 193.

society. Therefore, combining this influence with the ideas of nationalism from Anderson and supporting the analysis with theories of attachment from American scholar Emily Pears, I make connections between Thomas's publication of children's books and the developing national identity in the early American Republic.³²

I address how the changes in Thomas's republishing of children's literature in the United States influenced the creation of a national identity and emotional attachment to the new nation, emphasizing the importance of the role of literature in nation-building. Through a comparative analysis of Thomas's *First* and *Second Worcester Editions* against copies of the same texts published in Great Britain, I argue that Thomas utilized four different strategies to make small, but significant, changes to this children's literature that cultivated attachments to the United States: rebranding the works as *Worcester Editions*, addresses to "the people," newly constructed language, and geographical associations.³³ All *Worcester Editions* of the children's literature came from the archives at the American Antiquarian Society located in Worcester, Massachusetts. This library and archive were founded and funded by Isaiah Thomas, and therefore has a wealth of his material available for public research. The British Editions of these texts were drawn from a variety of online archival sources.

The first chapter explains why Isaiah Thomas's books exemplify the key connections between children's literature and nation-building. With the theoretical background set, chapters two and three discuss the four types of changes made in the editions that I analyze, supported by secondary literature about the impact of these changes. Chapter two details utilitarian means of change such as rebranding and dedication to the people of the U.S. These important logistical

³² Emily Pears, "Chord of Affection: A Theory of National Political Attachments in the American Founding," *American Political Thought* 6, no.1 (Winter 2017): 9, <https://doi.org/10.1086/689854>.

³³ All footnote references for the children's literature sources used in this analysis are provided in Table 1.

changes helped to build a United States identity and make the union visible to its new citizens. Simply making these associations of name and recognition of the people increases the emotional attachment to national identity. Chapter three introduces the early construction of an imagined community in the U.S. through cultural changes in children's literature. Thomas helped create culture through an American language differentiated from British English. This chapter also discusses Thomas's incorporation of place associations in the texts to distinguish the United States from Great Britain geographically and give the American people unique cultural aspects to which they could connect.

All four of these themes align closely with Benedict Anderson's concept of print-capitalism and its influence on forming nationalism through emotional attachment before disseminating political ideas about the republic to the people.³⁴ I conclude that Thomas's texts – despite the changes being seemingly small and ignored by scholars in the past – initiated sentimental bonds to the United States among the public. These changes targeted children specifically so that they would be open to the values of American citizenship. In short, the work of Isaiah Thomas in publishing children's literature played a key role in the formation of nationalism in the early American Republic.

³⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 45 and 65.

Title	British Edition	First Worcester	Second Worcester
<i>A Bag of Nuts Ready Cracked</i>	<i>A Bag of Nuts Ready Cracked or, Instructive Fables, Ingenious Riddles, and Merry Conundrums ... The Ninth Edition</i> (London: E. Newbery, 1790), https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=MF5gAAAACAAJ&pg=GBS.PR3-IA1&hl=en .	<i>A Bag of Nuts, Ready Cracked: Or, Instructive Fables, Ingenious Riddles, and Merry Conundrums. / by the Celebrated and Facetious Thomas Thumb, Esq.; Published for the Benefit of All Little Masters and Misses Who Love Reading as Well as Playing. –The First Worcester Edition,</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1786).	<i>A Bag of Nuts, Ready Cracked: Or, Instructive Fables, Ingenious Riddles, and Merry Conundrums. / by the Celebrated and Facetious Thomas Thumb, Esq.; Published for the Benefit of All Little Masters and Misses Who Love Reading as Well as Playing. – the Second Worcester Edition</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1798).
<i>The Exhibition of Tom Thumb</i>	<i>The Exhibition of Tom Thumb; Being an Account of Many Valuable and Surprising Curiosities Which He Has Collected in the Course of His Travels, for the Instruction and Amusement of the British Youth</i> (London: J. Harris, 1815) https://hockliffe.dmu.ac.uk/items/0239.html .	<i>The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: Being an Account of Many Valuable and Surprising Curiosities Which He Has Collected in the Course of His Travels, for the Instruction and Amusement of the American Youth. – the First Worcester Edition</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1787).	<i>The Exhibition of Tom Thumb; Being an Account of Many Valuable and Surprising Curiosities Which He Has Collected in the Course of His Travels, for the Instruction and Amusement of the American Youth. – the Second Worcester Edition</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1795).
<i>The History of Master Jackey</i>	<i>The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: Who by Their Good Behaviour Became from Tradesmens Children the Richest and Happiest Pair in the Country of Salop</i> (London: John Marshall, 1785) https://archive.org/details/historyofmasterj00londiala/page/n1/mode/2up .	<i>The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: To Which Is Added, a Few Maxims for the Improvement of the Mind: Dedicated to the Good Children of the United States of America: [Four Lines of Verse. – the First Worcester Edition</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1787).	<i>The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: To Which Is Added, a Few Maxims for the Improvement of the Mind: Dedicated to the Good Children of the United States of America: [Four Lines of Verse]. – the Second Worcester Edition</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1798).
<i>A Little Pretty Pocketbook</i>	<i>A Little Pretty Pocket-Book, Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy, and Pretty Miss Polly</i> (London: J. Newbery, 1760) <i>Eighteenth Century Collections Online.</i> https://link-gale-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/apps/doc/CW0116544121/GDCS?u=nash87800&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=bf95aa5a&pg=3 .	<i>A Little Pretty Pocket-Book: Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy, and Pretty Miss Polly</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1787).	

<i>Mother Goose's Melody</i>	<i>Mother Goose's Melody: A Facsimile Reproduction of the Earliest Known Edition</i> (London: A.H. Bullen, 1904).	<i>Mother Goose's Melody: Or Sonnets for the Cradle: In Two Parts. Part I. Contains the Most Celebrated Songs and Lullabies of the Good Old Nurses, Calculated to Amuse Children and to Excite Them to Sleep. Part II. Those of That Sweet Songster and Nurse of Wit and Humour, Master William Shakespeare: Embellished with Cuts, and Illustrated with Notes and Maxims, Historical, Philosophical, and Critical. – the First Worcester Edition</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1785).	<i>Mother Goose's Melody: Or Sonnets for the Cradle: In Two Parts. Part I. Contains the Most Celebrated Songs and Lullabies of the Good Old Nurses, Calculated to Amuse Children and to Excite Them to Sleep. Part II. Those of That Sweet Songster and Nurse of Wit and Humour, Master William Shakespeare: Embellished with Cuts, and Illustrated with Notes and Maxims, Historical, Philosophical, and Critical. – the Second Worcester Edition</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1794).
<i>Tommy Thumb's Song Book</i>	<i>Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book</i> (London: M. Cooper, 1744), https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/tommy-thumbs-pretty-song-book .	<i>Tommy Thumb's Song Book: For All Little Masters and Misses, to Be Sung to Them by Their Nurses, Until They Can Sing Themselves / by Nurse Lovechild.; to Which Is Added, a Letter from a Lady on Nursing. – the First Worcester Edition</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1788).	<i>Tommy Thumb's Song Book: For All Little Masters and Misses, to Be Sung to Them by Their Nurses, Until They Can Sing Themselves. / by Nurse Lovechild; to Which Is Added, a Letter from a Lady on Nursing. – the Second Worcester Edition</i> (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1794).

Table 1. Children's Literature Sources

Chapter 1: A Republican Childhood

Defining Nationalism

Attempts to define nationalism have been plentiful since the Enlightenment. Historically, a nation is a state made up of people who share a common descent and history – they are defined by their differences from other groups.³⁵ A nation-state is a political union governed by shared laws uniting a people with a common set of beliefs.³⁶ U.S. historian Jill Lepore argues that the United States, to a greater degree than other nations, was a collection of states with individual political entities that were able to form a unified nation relying on a common set of political principles.³⁷ This meant that the colonies when they gained independence, had to work to develop the nation as part of their union and develop a common tradition. In order to create the feeling of a shared history and culture in any country, nations must construct a community in which people are emotionally attached to their country. To do this, nationalism serves as a way to create nations when they do not exist.³⁸ Nationalism is studied as a discourse or movement to promote a nation among its citizens.

One of the leading scholars on the modern phenomenon of creating a nation through nationalism is Benedict Anderson. The definition of nation that Anderson offered was an “imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”³⁹ He argued that the idea of nationality and nationalism emerged at the end of the eighteenth century—right as the United States formed—at a spontaneous, complex crossing of many historical forces

³⁵ Jill Lepore, *This America: The Case for the Nation* (New York City: Liveright, 2019), 2.

³⁶ Lepore, *This America*, 26.

³⁷ Lepore, *This America*, 26.

³⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

³⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4.

creating a concept that became transferable to many social terrains.⁴⁰ The key to the transferrable nature of nationality is Anderson's idea that it is imagined. When we reach the point in human society where one lives in a community in which one does not know everyone, people still associate with each other sharing a common, imagined set of beliefs and love for their attachment to these beliefs. This is what Anderson defined as nationalism – an imagined community.⁴¹ He drew many of his ideas from British historian, Hugh Seton-Watson, who wrote that no scientific definition of the nation can be created, but the phenomenon has long existed.⁴² Instead of being able to define nationalism in technical terms, it can be described by the feeling it evokes in members of a national community.

In recent times, nationalism has been seen as a negative sentiment; something that causes war and hatred for others.⁴³ The meaning of the term shifted following World War II which coincided with a change in how American history was studied; no longer studying history as the study of the American nation.⁴⁴ Following this turning point, nationalism was labeled as an anti-globalist perspective and historians of the U.S. began to write histories of those excluded from the narrative of the nation. Historians wrote about nationalism with a focus on the differences that they created to define nations like the U.S.'s own exclusion of groups drawn on racial lines. This work was very important in creating a more holistic understanding of the U.S. and challenging the narrow, white-dominated identity of America. However, Lepore argues this approach created a void in the writing of a national history.⁴⁵ She argues for the importance of nationalism in creating a unified and cohesive nation and that to get there we need to be writing

⁴⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4.

⁴¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

⁴² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 3.

⁴³ Goswami, "Benedict Anderson," 446; Lepore, *This America*, 26; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 3 and 5.

⁴⁴ Lepore, *This America*, 18.

⁴⁵ Lepore, *This America*, 19.

the history of the U.S. as a nation, including the stories of those excluded so that we can all understand and reconcile with the past. Therefore, nationalism should still be studied today for its impact on creating nations and communities rather than its ability to create hatred among nations.

The United States of America is an example of the phenomenon of nationalism occurring across the Americas at the time. Nationalism was developing in various communities when a group of people with a set of political ideals in common attempted to imagine a nation where people had a commitment to the ideas and to other people. The first step towards creating unity in the colonies was the momentary shared experience of frustration brought about by the Revolution.⁴⁶ The common objective across communities shaped the nation's progressive character.⁴⁷ With the end of the Revolution in the 1780s, the differences between the states emerged once again and a new challenge developed. The founding generation had to attempt to create a nation out of differences and have people share the same care for each other and the union they had during the war. Anderson suggested that there are a few strategies that states use to form nationalism and an imagined community. His main argument concentrates on the impact of print-capitalism. It is the relationship between the print-capitalist construction of language and the new understanding of the state of the nation that brought the issues of the nation to the immediate attention of the broad public through its materialization in literature and newspapers.⁴⁸

The colonies were an ideal place for the dissemination of nationalism through print-capitalism. The close distance between all the city market centers made the U.S. population

⁴⁶ Klein, *A Season of Youth*, 202.

⁴⁷ Klein, *A Season of Youth*, 202.

⁴⁸ Goswami, "Benedict Anderson," 442.

easily linked by print and commerce.⁴⁹ Printing became a large industry in the colonies right before the onset of the Revolution with the publication of newspapers. Printers who were opening shops in the colonies always included a newspaper in their catalog of production, creating the North American phenomenon of “the printer-journalist.”⁵⁰ Local newspapers could capture the attention of the public by publishing about issues and people that concerned them directly, making them an important factor in building the imagined communities to which colonists could become attached.⁵¹ Printers had the power to be agents of change. Amidst the struggle of the elites to solidify legal principles in the early Republic, printers played a critical role in developing nationalism in the United States. It was not the ideas alone that made this possible, it had to be cultivated by unifying practices such as printed materials, which could serve as a vehicle for the dissemination of ideas and principles.⁵²

One of the most crucial parts in forming a nation and exciting nationalism is what Anderson emphasized as “the affective force of nations to inspire ordinary people to die for their sake.”⁵³ In order to cultivate this sentiment, the founders saw it as important to prioritize the education of the rising generation to formulate bonds with their nation.⁵⁴ Obedience to authority and the nation was crucial to this effort for citizens to be introduced to the idea of abstract authority. For a nation where everyone does not know each other, there must be an expectation of respect for the social contract and submission to the national narrative.⁵⁵ The role of print in creating these bonds has long been recognized for its effects on adult citizens. However, children were also being impacted by print-capitalism with a coinciding increase in youth literacy and the

⁴⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 63.

⁵⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 61.

⁵¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 61.

⁵² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 45 and 65.

⁵³ Goswami, “Benedict Anderson,” 442.

⁵⁴ Adams, “Pictures of the Vicious,” 149–150.

⁵⁵ Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 35–61.

development of children's literature on a wider scale. These conditions make children an equally important group to understand the impact of print on fostering obedience to love their nation.

Children's Literature

Childhood was a relatively new concept to define and study as a stage in life when the United States was becoming an independent nation. Children had always been a part of society, but they were often forced to grow up fast and assume adult roles, rather than being met where they were at in development. Due to this demand on young people, not much was known about the particulars of this stage of life. At the time of the American Revolution, most of the knowledge about childhood came from John Locke. Lockean theory defined the boundaries of childhood through political terms.⁵⁶ He believed that the child's mind was a *tabula rasa*, or "blank slate," when they were born, and like water, could be easily swayed in different ways.⁵⁷ Locke compared children to travelers arriving in a new country that they knew nothing about.⁵⁸ This translated to a definition of children's freedom in which they had the right to independence, but were too immature to be granted civic rights and responsibilities directly.⁵⁹ Influenced by this way of thinking, American citizens were often described as children in the early days, comparing the development of the United States to a stereotypical coming-of-age story.⁶⁰ Increased discussion surrounding childhood in the English-speaking world came about in tandem with the redefinition of political identity following "the Protestant Reformation, the English Civil War,

⁵⁶ Weikle-Mills, "Learn to Love Your Book," 41; Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens," 1–31; Spero, "The Revolution in Popular Publications," 69.

⁵⁷ Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens," 14 and 51; Weikle-Mills, "Learn to Love Your Book," 3; Gail S. Murray, "Rational Thought and Republican Virtues: Children's Literature, 1789-1820," *Journal of the Early Republic* 8, no. 2 (1988), 162, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3123810>.

⁵⁸ Murray, "Rational Thought and Republican Virtues," 162.

⁵⁹ Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens," 14 and 51; Weikle-Mills, "Learn to Love Your Book," 3; Murray, "Rational Thought and Republican Virtues," 162.

⁶⁰ Klein, *A Season of Youth*, 202; Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens," 2.

and the transatlantic movement.”⁶¹ It was through this definition of a child’s abilities and restrictions developed at the onset of the United States formation, that the child came to represent early citizenship in the United States.⁶² Allowing an avenue for historians to look to children to understand civic goals and how a country treats its constituents.⁶³

With children as the next generation of leaders, it is logical to turn to them for an understanding of the population in general and how the process of growing from child to adult was being cultivated in a culture.⁶⁴ The fluidity and immaturity of children’s minds meant that their brains were molded as a product of their experiences.⁶⁵ Consequently, Lockean theory states that if the experiences of children could be controlled, “then one could shape a child,” and influence their success.⁶⁶ This was compared to the new citizens of the United States who were freed for the first time from Great Britain. The founders saw them as unprepared to be effective democratic citizens, therefore, they needed some limitations similar to those on children from their parents. The metaphorical comparison of adult citizens to children sparked the “simultaneous fantasy and fear that American citizenship might be naive, immature, and juvenile at its heart” which would shape the pedagogical and political moves of the early Republic.⁶⁷

In a developing society, literature is one of the most effective tools for cultivating tradition.⁶⁸ Scholars of the early American Republic, such as Michael Kammen, have examined how novels shaped the American perception of the revolution and the creation of a nation.⁶⁹

⁶¹ Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 11.

⁶² Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 7; Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 57

⁶³ Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 7; Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 57; Boyer, “Foreword,” x.

⁶⁴ Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 7.

⁶⁵ Murray, “Rational Thought and Republican Virtues,” 162.

⁶⁶ Pickering, “Children’s Literature,” 11.

⁶⁷ Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 57.

⁶⁸ Klein, *A Season of Youth*, 203; Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 38–44; Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 3; Spero, “The Revolution in Popular Publications,” 43; Adams, “Pictures of the Vicious,” 150.

⁶⁹ Klein, *A Season of Youth*, 203.

Literature researchers typically first examine sophisticated adult texts when studying their impact on nation-building. However, there is value in analyzing the socialization of children through literature.⁷⁰ Children have been established as a crucial part of understanding early American citizenry as a whole, so their consumption in their formative years is critical to the path from childhood to citizenship. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a sharp increase in texts produced for children influenced heavily by the writings of John Locke.⁷¹ He emphasized the “crucial formative influence of education,” which shaped many educational aspects of early American children’s books.⁷² The political socialization of children in the early days of the Republic relied on books.⁷³ Children’s relationship with reading is a formative experience that begins at a young age. Books become a form of authority in children’s lives. Locke stated in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* that the relationship between children and their books should imitate the “power dynamic between parent and child, citizen and law.”⁷⁴ Books that children were exposed to were deliberate and designed to teach them lessons that they should obey. They were taught at an early age to accept this abstract authority with freedom, pleasure, and love, just as a newly formed nation would want its citizens to accept and love the country.⁷⁵ Children’s books encouraged them to “love their books” and therefore love and adhere to the new democratic ideologies of the nation.⁷⁶ This emotional attachment and almost blind

⁷⁰ Adams, “Pictures of the Vicious,” 149.

⁷¹ Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 16; Pickering, “Children’s Literature,” 11.

⁷² Pickering, “Children’s Literature,” 11.

⁷³ Adams, “Pictures of the Vicious,” 149; Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 17; David H. Watters, “‘I Spake as a Child’: Authority, Metaphor and ‘The New-England Primer,’” *Early American Literature* 20, no. 3 (1985): 206, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25055557>; Rita Koganzon, “‘Producing a Reconciliation of Disinterestedness and Commerce’: The Political Rhetoric of Education in the Early Republic,” *History of Education Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2012): 428, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23251457>.

⁷⁴ Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 44–45; Watters, “I Spake as a Child,” 193.

⁷⁵ Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 46.

⁷⁶ Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 35–57; Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 9.

acceptance of books by children, allowed power dynamics and foundations of the nation to be transmitted to children at an easier rate, according to Locke.

Children were first considered as an audience for books at the beginning of the eighteenth century. A limited number of books were published specifically for children with the majority of the texts being religious stories.⁷⁷ One of the main texts, *The New England Primer*, was published throughout the eighteenth century. The colonists' primer mimicked Great Britain's primer model with religious undertones.⁷⁸ Each publication contained an alphabet book for children to learn their letters through rhymes and pictures. Alphabet books have been recognized by historians as sources of cultural information that reflected the sentiments and ideas of the time.⁷⁹

Pre-revolutionary primers produced in Great Britain used the pictorial alphabets to socialize children to religious principles through heavy religious imagery and religious metaphors that could teach the children about their place in the world while they learned to read.⁸⁰ God was described metaphorically as an avenging father whose children disobeyed him, therefore encouraging all to obey his authority like they do their parents.⁸¹ This educational tool was injected with propagandized messages to promote the values and structures of the time. In the early years, "American verse for children was more moral than playful," though over time the two became more blended due to Locke's encouragement to combine education and play, and nursery rhymes were used to the advantage of moral principles.⁸² The use of religious moral

⁷⁷ Pickering, "Children's Literature," 5.

⁷⁸ Spero, "The Revolution in Popular Publications," 43.

⁷⁹ Spero, "The Revolution in Popular Publications," 43; Laura Wasowicz, "Monkey's, Misrule, and the Birth of an American Identity in Picture Books of the Rising Republic," *Journal of the American Historical Print Collectors Society* 38, no. 2 (Autumn 2013): 19.

⁸⁰ Spero, "The Revolution in Popular Publications," 68; Watters, "I Spake as a Child," 194.

⁸¹ Watters, "I Spake as a Child," 194.

⁸² Pickering, "Children's Literature," 8.

instructions was significant to national culture and evolved into the republican virtues of the new nation.⁸³ When American thinkers were working on determining what values would characterize their citizenry, influences from religious texts were prevalent. American Enlightenment historian D.H. Meyer stated that American thinkers were “determined to tame the Enlightenment, dulling its radical and skeptical edge,” trying to strike a balance between “enlightened thinking and traditional moral and religious values.”⁸⁴ These religiously influenced children’s texts such as the *Primer*, were an initial indication of the control of public interests and values. Influenced by the religious undertones that came before, children’s books in the early Republic utilized the same strategies.

The majority of scholars who have studied the books that children consumed have examined texts that were overtly designed to educate children.⁸⁵ These texts included primers, school textbooks, spelling books, and periodicals. Historian Gillian Brown claimed that revolutionary narratives in books for children had a noticeable impact on children’s lives in early American culture.⁸⁶ Scholars have demonstrated literature’s connection to the spreading of ideas of the nation.⁸⁷ One way this was done was through formalized education; coming later in the early 1800s, curriculum and textbooks in the first public schools were designed to create a curated history of the United States and promote the ideals of democracy and freedom through stories.⁸⁸ Formal education was an opportunity to build unity and a social bond across the

⁸³ Murray, “Rational Thought and Republican Virtues,” 175.

⁸⁴ D. H. Meyer, “The Uniqueness of the American Enlightenment,” *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976): 172, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2712348>.

⁸⁵ Koganzon, “Producing a Reconciliation,” 403–429; Wasowicz, “Monkey’s, Misrule, and the Birth of an American Identity,” 41–74; Watters, “I Spake as a Child,” 193–213; Adams, “Pictures of the Vicious,” 149–169.

⁸⁶ Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 3.

⁸⁷ Klein, *A Season of Youth*, 203; Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 38–44; Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 3; Spero, “The Revolution in Popular Publications,” 43; Adams, “Pictures of the Vicious,” 150.

⁸⁸ Koganzon, “Producing a Reconciliation,” 411–415.

nation.⁸⁹ Benjamin Rush, who was a big proponent of uniform education for youth in America, argued that creating a common curriculum focused on building nationalism would turn youth into “republican machines who could ensure the future security and prosperity of the nation.”⁹⁰ School textbooks beginning in the early 1800s became the “guardians” of revolutionary ideals that the founders fought for, shaping them into the national ideology.⁹¹

The first person to make children’s books a category of literature was John Newbery in the mid-eighteenth century. John Newbery (1713-1767) published *A Little Pretty Pocketbook* in 1744, which marked the start of children’s literature as an industry.⁹² Newbery was based in London when the perfect market for children’s literature was brewing; more people could read, a growing middle class had money to buy books, and families wanted to educate their children after Locke’s publications.⁹³ As a children’s literature publisher, Newbery was the first to put Lockean theory into practice by combining entertainment with education, teaching children practical skills like the alphabet and good morals.⁹⁴

One historian in particular, Courtney Weikle-Mills—an expert on children’s literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—has explored how children’s literature defined citizenship in the new nation from 1640 to 1868.⁹⁵ She coined the term “imaginary citizens” to describe children and other vulnerable populations with limited political franchise: women, non-whites, and the socioeconomically disadvantaged.⁹⁶ These groups could not exercise civic rights but were exposed to and accepted the literary representations of citizenship nonetheless.⁹⁷ They

⁸⁹ Koganzon, “Producing a Reconciliation,” 415.

⁹⁰ Adams, “Pictures of the Vicious,” 150; Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 17.

⁹¹ Adams, “Pictures of the Vicious,” 150.

⁹² Pickering, “Children’s Literature,” 10.

⁹³ Pickering, “Children’s Literature,” 11.

⁹⁴ Pickering, “Children’s Literature,” 11.

⁹⁵ Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 1–31.

⁹⁶ Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 4.

⁹⁷ Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 4.

viewed themselves as citizens despite the harsh reality that they had no citizenship rights.⁹⁸

Reading about independence and freedom shaped children into this imaginary citizenship, filling their minds with what the ideal citizen looked and acted like.⁹⁹ It allowed children to understand their place in the citizenry without playing any legitimate roles yet.¹⁰⁰ Weikle-Mills argued that childhood was a way to explain the constraints and abilities of citizenship in the new nation that contributed to building nationalism.¹⁰¹ The imaginary citizenship was found through children's stories that she examined in different primers and periodicals.¹⁰² Investing the imaginary role in children helped them find their place in society before they were mature enough to do so.

Exposing them to citizenship and its bounds and characteristics was working to prepare the next generation to inherit the new nation.

Literature's purpose is to turn children into good people and citizens. To analyze how this is executed across texts, U.S. citizenship characteristics must be defined. Historian Gail Murray conducted an analysis of schoolbooks and hymns from the early national period to define the essential values in the creation of a republican society.¹⁰³ She explicitly states that she excluded folktales like Tom Thumb or any poetry books. The characteristics Murray attributes to republican citizenry are economic conservatism, honesty, modest hard work, care for others, and obedience.¹⁰⁴ The examples created by children's authors show characters engaging and possessing these values as they interact with others and conduct themselves. The books advised the children of the early Republic to learn "to fear their conscience, to internalize their guilt, and

⁹⁸ Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens," 4.

⁹⁹ Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens," 25.

¹⁰⁰ Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens," 25.

¹⁰¹ Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens," 4.

¹⁰² Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens," 4.

¹⁰³ Murray, "Rational Thought and Republican Virtues," 161.

¹⁰⁴ Murray, "Rational Thought and Republican Virtues," 169.

to understand that the consequences of misbehavior were felt in this life.”¹⁰⁵ The narratives being told were working to control the mindset of children and alter their actions as citizens of the new republic. The most intriguing value is obedience which plays strongly into the author's or editor's potential attempt to promote the new idea of nationalism. By being obedient and having an obligation to one's nation it would make children feel more attached to upholding its principles.

Isaiah Thomas

Anderson's concept of print-capitalism incorporates the impact that printers and publishers had on creating a nation and an imagined community. One of these early American printers was Isaiah Thomas. A Boston native born in 1749, Thomas started his career at age six as an apprentice under Zechariah Fowle, a printer of ballads and small books.¹⁰⁶ The young boy worked for Fowle for about 10 years before he attempted and failed twice to make it in England as a printer.¹⁰⁷ During his first trip to England, Thomas took work at the *Halifax Gazette*. The influence of patriotic ideas of representation and freedom on his mind from the colonies would make Thomas's work difficult at the *Gazette*. In Boston at the time, newspapers protested the Stamp Act by writing about it and altering the look of the paper.¹⁰⁸ Thomas wanted to get involved, so he had a column published in the *Gazette* on the Act. The city tried to send officials after him, but they could not prove he wrote it to arrest him.¹⁰⁹ After receiving the nickname in Halifax as the “Printer of Seditious,” Thomas felt his skill and his dedication to the cause were needed in the colonies.

¹⁰⁵ Murray, “Rational Thought and Republican Virtues,” 171–72.

¹⁰⁶ Nichols, “Life of Isaiah Thomas,” 3; Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” xx and xxi.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” xxiii and xxxi.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” xxxiv.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” xxxii.

Characteristic of printers in the colonies, Thomas's fame and influence came from the newspaper he published, *The Massachusetts Spy*, for which he is best known today. The *Spy* was first published in July 1770 in partnership with Fowle.¹¹⁰ In the pattern of many nationalist movements, the paper was designed to appeal to the masses and incorporate lower classes into current affairs.¹¹¹ The intended audience was the working class, not the elites, so the news was concise and in short form so that it would be easily understood.¹¹² Given that most adults in Massachusetts and the New England area were literate at the time, this greatly widened the audience that could read Thomas's newspaper making his influence more expansive.

Later that year, Thomas bought Fowle out and began to reorganize the *Spy*.¹¹³ With its new form, the paper started with less than two hundred subscribers. After the first week, the readership began to rise and by the second year, it was larger than any other newspaper in Boston.¹¹⁴ It was with this new edition of the *Spy* that Thomas "really entered upon his own career of life," aiding in his country's development and putting his name in history.¹¹⁵ Once again, Thomas emphasized appealing to a wide audience not only demographically, but politically as well. He wanted the columns to be "open to both parties equally for a free and impartial discussion of their differences."¹¹⁶ However, the controversy was so divisive that by not picking a side, the British saw it as being against them and labeled the newspaper as seditious. Thomas had written a letter to his father during the years leading up to the Revolution asking him to save him land in Bermuda, to escape with the British. However, shortly after that

¹¹⁰ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," xlii.

¹¹¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 48.

¹¹² Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," xlii.

¹¹³ Nichols, "Life of Isaiah Thomas," 8; Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," xlii.

¹¹⁴ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," xliii.

¹¹⁵ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," xliv.

¹¹⁶ Nichols, "Life of Isaiah Thomas," 10.

correspondence, Thomas committed to the Patriot cause and his newspaper became pro-revolutionary.¹¹⁷

Thomas's experiences during the Revolution greatly affected his career decisions. He was willing to take big risks with the publication of his newspaper, committing fully to the colonists' cause of freedom from the British monarchy.¹¹⁸ Thomas faced many challenges both politically and economically. He received dangerous threats while he was working in Boston, which forced him to move his business in 1775 to Worcester, Massachusetts located in the middle of the state. Materials were scarce to come by while operating during the war with supplies being cut off from England.¹¹⁹ Despite adverse circumstances, Thomas paved the way for ideas of liberty and representation and through the medium of the *Spy*, he was one of the first to disseminate the ideas to people of the colonies. In alignment with Anderson's concept of print-capitalism, he published a paper that appealed to the average person at the time, and while a devotion to each other and the cause was created, he could disseminate the ideas inspiring the Revolution. The *Spy* became a very powerful entity both in Massachusetts and across the colonies.¹²⁰ The newspaper was recognized for its vigor, zeal, and bold-defiant tone that stuck to promoting pro-revolutionary rhetoric and maintained resistance to prosecution from the government.¹²¹ The attempts made to restrict the *Spy* only fueled Thomas's devotion to the cause of the people and his hatred for the British monarchy.¹²² His grandson recalled that Thomas said, "We may next have padlocks on our lips and fetters on our legs, or fight our way to constitute freedom."¹²³

¹¹⁷ Nichols, "Life of Isaiah Thomas," 10.

¹¹⁸ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," lv.

¹¹⁹ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," lxxv; Nichols, "Life of Isaiah Thomas," 13.

¹²⁰ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," liv.

¹²¹ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," xlv.

¹²² Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," lii.

¹²³ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," lii.

With his growing dedication, Thomas also deepened his relationships with the leading figures at the time who respected Thomas greatly. John Hancock addressed a letter on April 4, 1775, “To Mr. Isaiah Thomas, Supporter of the Rights and Liberties of Mankind.”¹²⁴ Thomas was a member of the Sons of Liberty, a group of colonists organized to undermine British rule. As a member, he would frequently hold meetings of patriot leaders at his office and sought out interactions, making trips down to Philadelphia during the war to the Continental Congress. He would return to work after these engagements, “deeply impressed by their wisdom and patriotism more ready and willing than ever to work for the ‘righteous cause’ to which they were devoting themselves.”¹²⁵ Thomas would also receive support from the connections he made and had the backing of the Committee of Safety which saw great importance in Thomas’s ability to print about the war and sent him supplies a few times.¹²⁶

Isaiah Thomas is noted by scholars for his important contribution to the revolutionary cause and his contribution to the writing of early American history. They mainly cite his contribution to the American national identity through the *Massachusetts Spy*, his writing on Lexington and Concord, and his *History of Printing*. In the *Spy*, a reader could see Thomas’s own convictions about the state of the nation and the fulfillment of his role as a printer following the Revolution. In an editorial published in an edition of the *Spy* on October 16, 1783, Thomas talked about the role of the press in the county’s development. He opened by discussing the United States’ emerging influence on the world stage as a nation before asserting that “The *Press* is the great *Palladium of Liberty*, every man may express his sentiments—every man may be acquainted with what his rulers are doing—to what use publick property is put, and guard

¹²⁴ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” lvi.

¹²⁵ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” lxxvii and lxxiii.

¹²⁶ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” lxxvii.

against the encroachments of Tyranny.”¹²⁷ He established, as Anderson emphasizes, that the press is a catalyst for instilling principles of a nation. Thomas recognized that it was his duty—referring to himself as “the Publick’s most faithful Servant”—to keep the citizens informed and unified.¹²⁸ In the same editorial, he continued to elaborate on his duty as a printer stating that he intended to write a “*History of the late War*; together with an account of those matters which occasioned the revolution, to begin and continue the publication of them weekly in the *Spy*.”¹²⁹ This demonstrated Thomas’s commitment to creating a common culture and history for the new union that would give the people something to share in their developing community. He also mentioned at this time, that by publishing about politics and literature, the *Spy* “will be serviceable to their Children, by giving them information of the great things their Fathers have done and suffered.”¹³⁰ Thomas was consciously thinking of the next generation; the importance of creating culture and an identity that they could latch on to and be proud of as they continue to grow the nation.

Patriot leaders asked Thomas to write about Lexington and Concord to present the truth of what happened and he published a series of thirty-six testimonies selected to prove that the British were the aggressors in the attack.¹³¹ The witness excerpts contain strong word choices that imply the aggressive nature of the British, and the innocence and peaceful nature of the

¹²⁷ *Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester, Massachusetts) XIII, no. 651, October 16, 1783: [1], *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.
<https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A10284A66F6BC7768%40EANX-102F3D6A58102504%402372576-102F3D6AF944E315%403>.

¹²⁸ *Massachusetts Spy* XIII no. 651, 1.

¹²⁹ *Massachusetts Spy* XIII no. 651, 1.

¹³⁰ *Massachusetts Spy* XIII no. 651, 1.

¹³¹ Nichols, “Life of Isaiah Thomas,” 19; Isaiah Thomas, “A Narrative, of the excursion and ravages of the King’s troops under the command of General Gage, on the nineteenth of April, 1775. Together with the depositions taken by order of Congress, to support the truth of it,” (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1775; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011), 1–23, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-id?c=evans;cc=evans;rgn=main;view=text;idno=N11279.0001.001>.

colonists wrongly attacked.¹³² One testimony stated that as the colonists were approached by the British troops on the green, they dispersed. The account described the British troops as “seeming to thirst for BLOOD, wantonly rushed on” as they began firing on the colonists.¹³³ This was a crucial early piece of pro-patriot propaganda to rally the public behind the cause and against the British. Later in his life, Thomas’s main project was the *History of Printing* he wrote to preserve America’s early printing history.¹³⁴ Becoming an agent of history through this means he began creating a history for the United States even in its early years. This demonstrates Thomas’s dedication to cultivating American culture and identity by producing literature that established its history.

Isaiah Thomas created 325 books, pamphlets, newspapers, and broadsides throughout his career.¹³⁵ First due to his newspaper, but also later for his almanac, schoolbooks, and Bibles, Isaiah Thomas became a household name throughout the country.¹³⁶ Thomas was a prominent figure in his community and would assist and attend every large public gathering.¹³⁷ His political stance following the war favored a strong national government for the United States. He believed in “liberty regulated by law,” which today could be defined as a filtered democracy.¹³⁸ The elite founders worked to create a democracy that was not direct, and they were cautious about giving citizens too many rights out of fear of mob rule.¹³⁹ Thomas published his support for the Constitution in the *Spy*, despite popular opinion prioritizing state rights and being weary of a federal government.¹⁴⁰

¹³² Thomas, “A Narrative, of the excursion and ravages of the King's troops,” 1–23.

¹³³ Thomas, “A Narrative, of the excursion and ravages of the King's troops,” 4.

¹³⁴ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” lxxii.

¹³⁵ Nichols, “Some Notes,” 440.

¹³⁶ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” lxxvi; Nichols, “Life of Isaiah Thomas,” 23.

¹³⁷ Nichols, “Life of Isaiah Thomas,” 17.

¹³⁸ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” lxxiv.

¹³⁹ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” lxxiv.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas, “Memoir of Isaiah Thomas,” lxxiv.

Thomas is also well known for his collection of children's literature, but this genre does not get the same attention for its influence on creating an American identity and nation as does his other work. However, it is fair to argue that looking at how he published children's books can be more important than adult-facing pieces. With children a part of the imagined citizenship group, it is imperative that they believe they are a part of the narrative of the United States. Following the war, a wave of economic prosperity across the new country allowed Thomas to write to London, asking for a shipment of children's books, mostly ones by John Newbery.¹⁴¹ In October 1783, Thomas wrote about the rise of the United States to the level of other European nations. In publications of the *Spy* from this point forward Thomas included advertisements of books—many of which were children's texts—that he imported from Great Britain and sold at his bookshop in Worcester.¹⁴² This was a practice that was occurring at print shops across the nation.

However, the wave of affluence was disappearing after two years of continual importation of goods and materials from Great Britain. There suddenly was a shift in the attitude of the nation which was strongly reflected in Thomas's own editorials in the *Spy*. On July 28, 1785, Thomas wrote about the "scarcity of money" that was apparent in the nation:¹⁴³ "We have made large importations from Great Britain and elsewhere and have had little besides cash to make payments—all the circulating currency in United America is now thought to be insufficient to pay what we owe for foreign luxuries—mere baubles."¹⁴⁴ Thomas was illustrating the spiral towards debt that the nation was experiencing. He described the current system of commerce as

¹⁴¹ Pickering, "Children's Literature," 11.

¹⁴² *Massachusetts Spy* XIII no. 651, 4.

¹⁴³ *Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester, Massachusetts) XV, no. 747, July 28, 1785: [3], *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A10284A66F6BC7768%40EANX-102F3C0653FC230E%402373227-102F3C06B649830A%402-102F3C07B3B6C736>.

¹⁴⁴ *Massachusetts Spy* XV no. 747, 3.

“old, weak, and every way unfit for the use that is made of it.”¹⁴⁵ Thomas called for the people to get to work and make the nation industrious so that “we can retrieve our characters, and gain that happiness as a people which we boasted we should enjoy.”¹⁴⁶ Thomas ensured that “if we but cultivate our lands, instead of acting the prodigal and the spendthrift, they will afford us all the rich luxuriance we can desire.”¹⁴⁷ Using his position as the press, Thomas appealed to the people for the larger development of the United States’ own resources in order to redeem its economic condition instead of spending too much on imports.¹⁴⁸

This conviction stuck with Thomas, and he set to work halting the imports of British titles and printing American versions instead. In an editorial entry from the *Spy* a few months later on October 27, 1785, Thomas offered an update on the shift towards American-made products: “Last week two vessels arrived at Boston from London. These vessels brought but few goods, which is a circumstance by no means to be regretted by the inhabitants of this Commonwealth.”¹⁴⁹ He pointed out that the transition away from relying on British imports was not something the nation should have regretted and rather should embrace. He justified this by stating that “the fewer foreign debts we contract, the less money will be drawn from us to make payment ; and not only this State, but the United States in general, are sufficiently drained of their circulating cash, which has gone to pay, in great part, for articles of luxury that this country would have done better to have been without.”¹⁵⁰ Therefore, in the long run, the transition would make the nation richer and be a more fruitful endeavor. One of the most captivating statements

¹⁴⁵ *Massachusetts Spy* XV no. 747, 3.

¹⁴⁶ *Massachusetts Spy* XV no. 747, 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Massachusetts Spy* XV no. 747, 3.

¹⁴⁸ Nichols, “Life of Isaiah Thomas,” 16.

¹⁴⁹ *Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester, Massachusetts) XV, no. 760, October 27, 1785: [3], *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A10284A66F6BC7768%40EANX-102F3C3742C01283%402373318-102F3C374E7335FF%400>.

¹⁵⁰ *Massachusetts Spy* XV no. 760, 3.

made by Thomas in this editorial is “That people whose imports exceed their exports cannot grow rich, they must look for poverty and ruin, which will inevitably be the consequence.”¹⁵¹ This was a clear call to flip the balance of imports and exports to favor products coming out of the United States and being sold to other nations of the world. At this same time in the *Spy*, Thomas stopped advertising the British imported books and likewise, it would be possible to assume he slowed down selling them in his shop as well. Rather this edition includes an advertisement for an almanack that he had published at his print shop for the upcoming year, 1786.¹⁵²

Thomas became the pioneer of the made-in-America literature that would give citizens a piece of text that was designed and addressed for their nation, pulling them away from supporting British culture. Two months later, Thomas was continuing a push to cultivate America’s own lands. In his editorial, he stated, “We have now time for reflection, and should the inhabitants of these States wisely determine to pursue agriculture with assiduity, and manufacture more for themselves, certainly we should very shortly find ourselves more happy and richer than ever.”¹⁵³ He continued to dangle this promise of happiness and prosperity for the people if they turned away from foreign imports and towards the land of their nation. In the same publication as this editorial from December 1, 1785, it is the first demonstration of evidence of Thomas practicing what he called on the people to do. An advertisement on the final page of the *Spy* stated that, “Isaiah Thomas hath just received in the ship *Neptune*, from London, and has for sale a further supply of Books and Stationary, and a number of Printed Materials.”¹⁵⁴ He

¹⁵¹ *Massachusetts Spy* XV no. 760, 3.

¹⁵² *Massachusetts Spy* XV no. 760, 4.

¹⁵³ *Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester, Massachusetts) XV, no. 765, December 1, 1785: [3], *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A10284A66F6BC7768%40EANX-102F3C4C6139DB34%402373353-102F3C4C72099ED9%400>.

¹⁵⁴ *Massachusetts Spy* XV no. 765, 4.

included a list of the materials he has received for printing and this same advertisement appeared in all the *Spy* publications through the end of 1785. This is a hint at his effort and progress towards creating literature for the United States in his own print office.

The first announcement of children's literature being published by Thomas came in the first edition of the *Spy* for the year on January 5, 1786. The advertisement on page four reads:

CHILDREN'S BOOKS. A GREAT variety of little Books, for Masters and Misses from two to twelve years of age, calculated to allure them into a love for learning, and to rival each other in the pursuit of knowledge, very proper for parents, etc. to present to their children as New Year's Gifts, To be SOLD by ISAIAH THOMAS.¹⁵⁵

This indicated that Thomas's publication of children's books was in the works. They would be sold shortly, and the timeline of this advertisement aligns closely with the sources used in the thesis. This announcement continued in publications of the *Spy* in early 1786 and became more detailed when he added a line saying "Who has likewise — A large assortment of — BOOKS & STATIONARY. Which he will sell as cheap as can be had at any Book-store in the Commonwealth."¹⁵⁶ This showed that his publication of children's literature stayed in line with his goal for his newspapers to reach a wide audience: he also planned on making his children's text cheap and accessible for people from all classes to read and learn from.

Thomas reprinted about forty-five children's books into what are known as the *Worcester Editions* and the differences between the texts are modest and brushed off by most scholars as unimportant.¹⁵⁷ However, returning to the notion that the printer shapes the identity of a nation in

¹⁵⁵ *Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester, Massachusetts) XV, no. 770, January 5, 1786: [4], *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A10284A66F6BC7768%40EANX-102F3C5F0BDA1E1B%402373388-102F3C5FAA4FBB53%402>.

¹⁵⁶ *Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester, Massachusetts) XV, no. 771, January 12, 1786: [4]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*, <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/readex/doc?p=EANX&docref=image/v2%3A10284A66F6BC7768%40EANX-102F3C6293AEC9ED%402373395-102F3C634D0C4172%403>.

¹⁵⁷ Shortsleeve, "Thomas, Isaiah"; Pickering, "Children's Literature," 11.

print-capitalism, these changes were executed intentionally in order to create the texts into American literature and have a lasting impact.

Chapter 2: Establishing a Name

Building Legitimacy

With any rebranding, changing the name is extremely important to get people to believe in an entity's legitimacy. When the colonies defeated Great Britain in the Revolutionary War, they became a union of thirteen states named the United States of America. Prior to the creation of the nation, the colonists were conditioned to recognize their allegiance to the colony or state in which they resided—whether its name be New York, South Carolina, or some other state. Following the war, they now belonged to a larger political body that would try to assert its dominance over states' power. The leaders of the United States needed to have the people recognize the United States as their home and become citizens of the country rather than just their individual state. In Isaiah Thomas's children's literature, I have found two different strategies that he used to create an American national identity through name recognition. First, he simply republished the texts he was importing from London by printing them in America. Second, Thomas altered to whom the texts were being addressed by acknowledging the readers as citizens of the United States and specifying that the books were for them. Including these terms and acknowledgments on the page puts these words in the ears and eyes of children reading or being read to, giving the new nation credibility and fostering emotional attachments.

The first chapter introduced the vital need for a nation to build nationalism and national identity by instilling in its people attachment and admiration of their nation.¹⁵⁸ Anderson and other scholars stated the important role literature plays in establishing these bonds through its

¹⁵⁸ Weikle-Mills, "Learn to Love Your Book," 35–61; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1–9.

cultural salience.¹⁵⁹ This chapter discusses how Thomas altered his publications very early on to establish those bonds and it will highlight the importance of textual changes in creating identity. Emily Pears, a scholar of American politics, writes about theories that explain how affectionate bonds are created toward a nation. One of Pears' theories of bond formation is by way of "utilitarian means" which is when "attachments are essentially loyalties to governmental entities that are bartered in exchange for personal benefits incurred."¹⁶⁰ Creating bonds that are based on government loyalty could strengthen the Union with appreciation and trust for its power.¹⁶¹ Pears argues that utilitarian means require the visibility of the governmental entity; the name and body of the government must be visible and known so that people can become attached to it.¹⁶² In the case of the United States at the time Thomas was publishing, the national government needed to become more visible than its state counterparts, hence, Thomas's initiative to make keywords like "America" and "United States" visible.¹⁶³ When visibility and name recognition are high, loyalties and supportive attitudes toward the national government could begin to form because people are familiar with the institutions present around them.¹⁶⁴

As a proponent of federal government influence in the new nation, Thomas prioritized the need for people to support the government for it to function. Thomas published in the *Spy* his support for the adoption of the Constitution based on George Washington's opinion of it, despite popular opinion in the country being against it.¹⁶⁵ With this political leaning at the time, Thomas

¹⁵⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 47–65 and 37–46; Klein, *A Season of Youth*, 202.

¹⁶⁰ Pears, "Chord of Affection," 9.

¹⁶¹ Pears, "Chord of Affection," 11.

¹⁶² Pears, "Chord of Affection," 11.

¹⁶³ Pears, "Chord of Affection," 11; *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: The second Worcester edition*, 4; *A Little Pretty Pocket-book: The first Worcester edition*, 6. *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The first Worcester edition*, v.

¹⁶⁴ Pears, "Chord of Affection," 11.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," lxxiv.

would have urgently wanted to build the United States' image and support emotional attachments. Thomas's own influence was translated into his choice to republish the children's texts and to readdress them to the citizens of the new nation. He was known for trying to create a history of the nation through his newspaper and history of printing, but he was also trying to increase the visibility and identity of the new nation. This started by simply giving the public something that belonged to them. Thomas engaged in the nation branding of the United States by promoting the nation's image and differentiating the country from others to encourage the U.S.'s economic and social competitiveness.¹⁶⁶ By printing original American editions, Thomas decreased the importation of similar foreign products and contributed to the American economy by producing texts that were made in America for Americans. Nation branding helps build a sense of national pride, motivating citizens to feel confident in their homeland by promoting a national identity.¹⁶⁷ Thomas's background and passions influenced him to nurture attachments to the national government by increasing the visibility of the nation's brand.

“First Worcester Edition”

In 1785, two years following the end of the American Revolution, Thomas halted the importation of children's literature from Great Britain and began to print his editions. He saw the need to cultivate America's resources and that an American identity was not going to be formed if the people were not producing a culture of their own.¹⁶⁸ For this study, I have looked at six different pieces of children's literature published by Isaiah Thomas as *First Worcester Editions*

¹⁶⁶ Jose I. Rojas-Méndez and Mozhde Khoshnevis, "Conceptualizing Nation Branding: The Systematic Literature Review," *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 32, no. 1 (2023): 114, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-04-2021-3444>.

¹⁶⁷ Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis, 111.

¹⁶⁸ Nichols, "Life of Isaiah Thomas," 16.

between 1785 to 1788.¹⁶⁹ Upon opening the books, the title page first has the name of the book, and then underneath it in large bold letters is “THE FIRST *WORCESTER* EDITION.”¹⁷⁰ As seen in Figure 2.1, the text is written in all caps, between two thick black lines that draw the reader's attention to this spot on the page. The word “Worcester” is italicized which emphasizes the location. Underneath this line is more detail about the printing: “Printed at Worcester, Massachusetts, By ISAIAH THOMAS, And sold, Wholesale and Retail, at his Bookstore.” This line further establishes its publication as a piece of *American* literature. Before beginning any of the stories in the books, these changes were crucial to the development of the visibility and name recognition of the nation. By publishing these texts as the first of their kind in the U.S., Thomas encouraged readers as citizens of the United States to be proud of their country for producing its own children’s literature. He strongly encouraged the cultivation of the nation’s resources promising that the people would be “more happy and richer than ever.”¹⁷¹ This sentiment could then translate into trust and allegiance to the new union.

¹⁶⁹ *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The first Worcester edition*, iv; *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *A Little Pretty Pocket-book: The first Worcester Edition*, iv; *Mother Goose's melody: or Sonnets for the cradle: The first Worcester*, iv; *Tommy Thumb's song book: The first Worcester edition*, 4.

¹⁷⁰ *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The first Worcester edition*, iv; *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *A Little Pretty Pocket-book: The first Worcester Edition*, iv; *Mother Goose's melody: or Sonnets for the cradle: The first Worcester edition*, iv; *Tommy Thumb's song book: The first Worcester edition*, 4.

¹⁷¹ *Massachusetts Spy* XV no. 765, 3.

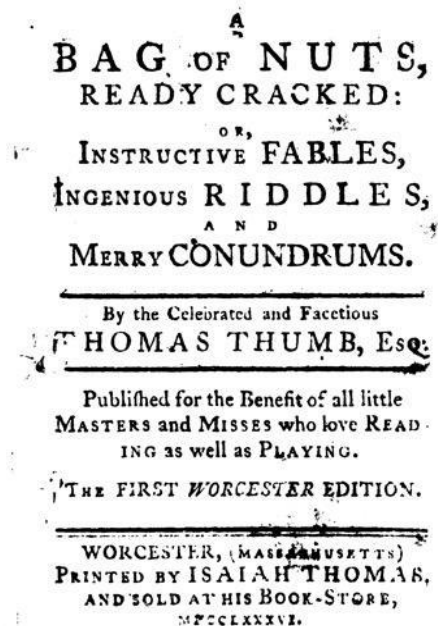


Figure 2.1 *A Bag of Nuts Ready Cracked First Worcester Edition Cover Page*¹⁷²

Each *First Worcester Edition* that I examined has a British counterpart that I used for comparison.¹⁷³ These publications set the model and structure that many of the American originals followed. The British editions' type settings would be recreated almost identically to reproduce the books in the United States. The changes made, like publishing the series as a *Worcester Edition* were very deliberate. The publication description in the British versions were different from the one produced in the United States, in that they do not indicate the location of the publication in the edition heading. The books published in London, rather than including

¹⁷² *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The first Worcester edition*, iv.

¹⁷³ *A Bag of nuts Ready cracked The ninth edition; The Exhibition of Tom Thumb for the instruction and amusement of the British youth; The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot; A Little Pretty Pocket-book; Mother Goose's Melody: A Facsimile Reproduction; Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book*

location, would indicate what number publication they were, such as “The Tenth Edition” of *A Little Pretty Pocketbook* and “The Ninth Edition” of *A Bag of Nuts, Ready Cracked*.¹⁷⁴ The ones Isaiah Thomas published labeled the Edition as Worcester, giving the United States ownership over the publication. Figure 2.2 demonstrates a British version, in which the location of publication is not included in the title of the text, but instead in smaller print lower on the page with the publisher’s name. By including the location in the edition heading, it established an association with parts of the United States and gave them a product that visibly belonged to the people of that country.

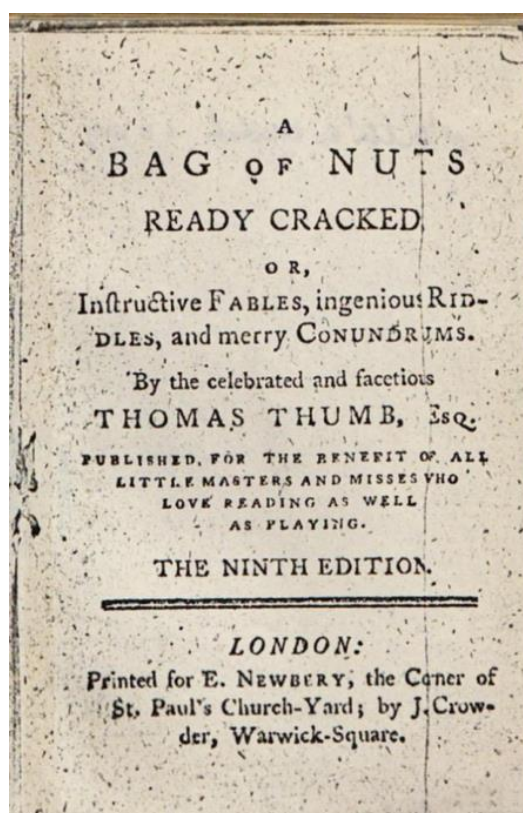


Figure 2.2 *A Bag of Nuts Ready Cracked The Ninth Edition* Cover Page¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ *Little Pretty Pocket-book*, 3; *A Bag of nuts Ready cracked The ninth edition*, 1.

¹⁷⁵ *A Bag of nuts Ready cracked, The ninth edition*, 1.

Each edition of the books published in the United States after the First Edition were also labeled as a *Worcester Edition* with the number in front. From the six texts I selected to examine, the *Second Worcester Editions* were published about 10 years later between 1794 and 1798.¹⁷⁶ The continuation of publishing and labeling of *Worcester Editions* promoted the establishment and growth of the United States as a nation. Giving the books an American identity, by stating that they are published in the U.S., was in turn building an American identity for the consumer. Citizens had in their hands a product that was produced with the nation in mind and could guide them to support their country and therefore, any of the ideas presented within the texts. Although these texts are considered playful and not overtly educational, the name recognition of *Worcester Edition* subtly created national attachments through their visibility.

To the Good Children of America

On top of rebranding the edition of the text, Thomas altered to whom the text was addressed. Most children's texts had a page at the beginning of the book that addressed the story to the reading audience. It would mention mostly children, but also their parents or caretakers who might be reading the book with them. The address tells us who the intended audience was for the book, and when those targeted audiences were reading the text, they felt acknowledged by the message. The specifics of how the address was altered differed from text to text, each with its own nuances.

In the *First Worcester Edition* of *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot*, the source included a dedication to "the good children of the United States of America."¹⁷⁷ A British

¹⁷⁶ *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The second Worcester edition*, iv; *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: The second Worcester edition*, 4; *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The second Worcester edition*, 4; *Mother Goose's melody: The second Worcester edition*, iv; *Tommy Thumb's song book: The second Worcester edition*, 4.

¹⁷⁷ *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The first Worcester edition*, 4.

edition of the same book was published around 1785 in London by John Marshall, another publisher who specialized in children's literature. This text, unlike the U.S. edition, was "dedicated to the good children of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America."¹⁷⁸ The British edition had a broad audience of the entire world, whereas the *Worcester Edition* narrowed down to specifically the children of the U.S. A similar alteration was made in the *First* and *Second Worcester Edition of The Exhibition of Tom Thumb*.¹⁷⁹ The British edition stated in the title, "Being an account of many valuable and surprising curiosities which he has collected in the course of his travels, for the instruction and amusement of the British Youth."¹⁸⁰ In the *Worcester Editions*, "American Youth" replaced "British Youth."¹⁸¹ With both examples of *Worcester Editions* singling out the U.S., it prioritized building a national identity for the new nation rather than just designating the story for children around the world. This change actively created the imagined American identity that Thomas was helping to develop, allowing young Americans to view themselves as their own group. It indicates that these were lessons and stories that children of the U.S should read and obey. The changing of the dedications to focus on the United States of America, isolated the nation from others around the world to prioritize and build attachments to the U.S.

¹⁷⁸ *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot*, 3.

¹⁷⁹ *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: The second Worcester edition*, 4.

¹⁸⁰ *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb for the instruction and amusement of the British youth*, 1.

¹⁸¹ *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: The second Worcester edition*, 4.

TO THE
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THE HISTORY OF
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 B Y I S A I A H T H O M A S ,
 A N D S O L D , W h o l e s a l e a n d R e t a i l , a t h i s B o o k -
 S t o r e . M D C C L X X V I I .
 1787

Figure 2.3 Dedication page of *A Little Pretty Pocketbook* and cover page of *History of Master Jackey*¹⁸²

Another text in which this alteration can be seen is in the *First Worcester Edition* of *A Little Pretty Pocketbook* from 1787. The text contains many little rhymes and songs with a lesson attached to them, as well as fables and poems. These more playful genres have been avoided by previous scholars, so there is a wide range of new texts to explore. In the *First Worcester Edition*, the first page stated that the book was intended for “the parents, guardians, and nurses, in the United States of America, this little Pocket-book is humbly inscribed by their most obedient servant the editor.”¹⁸³ To use as a comparison, a British version of the text was

¹⁸² *A Little Pretty Pocket-book: The first Worcester edition*, 6; *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The first Worcester edition*, 4.

¹⁸³ *A Little Pretty Pocket-book: The first Worcester edition*, 6.

published by Newbery in 1760 as the Tenth Edition of the book in which the text is addressed to the parents and guardians of “Great Britain and Ireland.”¹⁸⁴

Two things emerge from this textual comparison. First, the identification of the editor as responsible for the messages in the text solidifies their role as an agent of cultivating society at the time—an idea that Anderson emphasized played a role in influencing nation-building.¹⁸⁵ Second, the printer, Isaiah Thomas, altered to whom the text was being addressed to. By addressing the children and their caregivers as citizens of the United States four years after the Revolution ended, the text worked towards establishing nationalistic fervor amongst future generations. Civic participation is another way to cultivate affective bonds to a nation, and by recognizing children and parents as citizens it instills in them the idea that they are important members of society who can make an impact.¹⁸⁶ The address also contributes to the ideas presented by Wilkes-Mills of the imaginary citizen. These textual changes laid the groundwork for the illusion to be disseminated amongst children that they were full citizens of the nation despite their disenfranchised position.¹⁸⁷ By recognizing them through these addresses, they started to be recognized as members of society and therefore could begin to feel that they have an obligation to the country.

A final example of the texts that were altered for name recognition and acknowledgment of citizenship is the *First Worcester Edition of A Bag of Nuts Ready Cracked*. This source similarly contains “instructive fables, ingenious riddles, and merry conundrums,” which indicate some lightheartedness about the stories and categories of texts that have been overlooked by

¹⁸⁴ *A Little Pretty Pocket-book*, 4.

¹⁸⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 45 and 65.

¹⁸⁶ Pears, “Chord of Affection,” 19.

¹⁸⁷ Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 4.

previous scholars.¹⁸⁸ This story originated in England as a John Newbery publication, and I have identified a copy of the Ninth Edition published out of London in 1790. It was published by John Newbery's wife, Elizabeth Newbery, who took over his publishing firm after he died in 1767. The British edition addresses all the "good little boys and girls in England," whereas the *First Worcester Edition* has altered the text to address those in "America." The word America may have been written in italics to potentially highlight its importance and draw readers' attention to the word and its associations.¹⁸⁹ The italicizing of America continued each time the text used America in place of England. This style choice draws attention to the name recognition and visibility of the country itself, working to build affectionate bonds with its citizens.

The introduction was signed by the fabled Thomas Thumb, a fictional character used in early children's literature since the publication of *The History of Tom Thumb* in 1612.¹⁹⁰ The introduction states that Thomas Thumb "cannot do a more essential piece of service to the good Masters and Misses in *America*, than by composing a few diverting little books."¹⁹¹ This indicates that the book was designed and addressed to American children and was something that they could follow and in turn be proud of. Therefore, children were encouraged to be obedient to the text and grow in their appreciation of their nation and the ideas it presented that are designed to "improve the mind, as well as amuse the fancy."¹⁹² The dedication page was set up so it seemed the author had written this text for the children of the United States, even though the body of the text is mostly the same as the one in England. Thomas worked with little resources early on and would not have been able to alter large parts of the text.¹⁹³ Therefore, making a

¹⁸⁸ *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The first Worcester edition*, iv.

¹⁸⁹ *A Bag of nuts Ready cracked The ninth edition*, 3; *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The first Worcester edition*, v.

¹⁹⁰ John Golby Rusher, *The History of Tom Thumb* (Banbury: J.G. Rusher, 1820), <https://jstor.org/stable/community.32830945>.

¹⁹¹ *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The first Worcester edition*, x.

¹⁹² *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The first Worcester edition*, xi.

¹⁹³ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," lxxv; Nichols, "Life of Isaiah Thomas," 13.

change in the identity of its readers could convince the children and parents of the U.S. of their importance as a part of the nation, and lift the power and influence of the new nation as a whole.

A Credible Nation

Isaiah Thomas's interest in the health of the nation's identity and sentiment is apparent in his early publications of children's literature. Although the changes he made in terms of the editions and the dedication pages were modest, they laid the grounds for American literature to have more cultural impact by increasing sentimental bonds. Often taken for granted for its effects, Thomas's use of visibility and citizenship acknowledgment were strategies that had cumulative effects on those who were holding, seeing, and reading the texts. By forming affectionate bonds in this way, Thomas built a brand and identity for the United States. These strategies honed by him demonstrate the importance of print culture on nation-building in the early republic. The textual changes examined here were found just in the first two pages of many of these editions of children's literature. As the books progress, the focus remains on building those initial bonds by making changes to cultivate cultural construction through language and landmark associations that would continue to develop the narrative of creating national identity and attachments.

Chapter 3: Creating American Culture

Creating a National Culture

The union of the United States was built out of separate political and cultural entities brought together by their desire for political independence from Great Britain, rather than being unified by similar cultural priorities. Culture in nation-building is used to bond people together so that they have an emotional dedication to one another and are willing to fight for their shared ideals. The United States was missing the emotional attachment that could be created through a unifying culture in order for their national principles to become shared by the citizenry. The previous chapter explored the impact of name recognition on establishing a national identity and a sentimental bond with the newly independent nation. American political science scholar, Emily Pears, provides a few different theories of nation bond formation that I utilize to help support my analysis of children's literature. With naming, I discussed the theory of utilitarian means and the idea of instilling loyalty to the governmental body through visibility and recognition.¹⁹⁴

For this chapter, I utilize another one of Pears's theories for creating affectionate bonds: cultural means. The theory manifests in the creation and alterations of many aspects of culture: music, language, tradition, food, and literature.¹⁹⁵ For the argument at hand, print acts as the vehicle for encouraging nationalism or nationalist sentiment in early American culture. Benedict Anderson stated that nationality is a "cultural artifact" of a society.¹⁹⁶ He believed that a shared cultural language and heritage are required for a community to remain credible and for political

¹⁹⁴ Pears, "Chord of Affection," 9.

¹⁹⁵ Pears, "Chord of Affection," 13.

¹⁹⁶ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4.

leaders to create a reasonable basis for shared political ideas amongst its citizens.¹⁹⁷ This supports the idea of starting with name recognition as well as culture for citizens to embrace the institutions of a nation. The emotional piece is very important to get the buy-in from the citizenry that is necessary to connect individuals to the ideas of government.¹⁹⁸ Pear discusses how the use of “storytelling” and “shared historical narratives” can be used as tools to make governmental institutions seem worthy of affection.¹⁹⁹

Outside of his children’s books, Isaiah Thomas is noted for engaging in these practices: the *Spy* told the stories of the evolving colonies and *History of Printing* contributed to a shared history of the United States early on. Many political elites, whom Thomas worked alongside, pushed to standardize American English, wrote national histories, and helped shape a cohesive culture that they felt was necessary for democratic ideals to succeed.²⁰⁰ Thomas’s storytelling continued with the publication of children’s books. They gave American children something to engage with that was common across the country and that after initial alterations seemingly belonged to them.

With any examination of cultural history, there are always nuances that may come up. In the case of the colonies, there was a competing attachment between state and national allegiances. Pro-central government advocates, like Thomas, had to understand that despite their efforts to construct political attachments to the nation, there had to be a shift in the cultural identity from state to nation for the union to survive.²⁰¹ Early projects of nationalism, like that of Thomas, were priming Americans for affection and buy-in, but there was continual competition

¹⁹⁷ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 37–46 and 47–65; Pears, “Chord of Affection,” 14.

¹⁹⁸ Pears, “Chord of Affection,” 2.

¹⁹⁹ Pears, “Chord of Affection,” 13.

²⁰⁰ Pears, “Chord of Affection,” 17.

²⁰¹ Pears, “Chord of Affection,” 2.

with other loyalties.²⁰² Pears suggests that as the later outbreak of the Civil War would demonstrate, cultural unity was never enough to prevent all conflict. Indicating the possibility that Thomas's efforts may have been only a temporary solution. His work can be argued to have initiated those bonds but not able to fully complete them culturally across the United States. Thomas's books were published out of locations all along the East Coast, however, they did still have a New England focus early on which may hurt the uniformity of attachments being formed. This draws attention to the complexity of cultural history within the colonies during the formation of the union.

Language

As has been established, printers were agents of change in early America including influencing the creation of an American language.²⁰³ Printers were a social force responsible for determining the standard American English spelling by creating popular literature that spread throughout the colonies.²⁰⁴ Nationalism is defined by a peoples' shared characteristics, an important one being a common language.²⁰⁵ An Americanized form of English was already being developed and shaped well before the American Revolution occurred. Therefore, the "nation builders focused on continuing to standardize the speech that had developed during the colonial era."²⁰⁶ Moreover, the colonists had already established their own shared language before they belonged to the United States. Socialization was key in the linguistic evolution of colonial

²⁰² Pears, "Chord of Affection," 14.

²⁰³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 45 and 65; Goswami 442.

²⁰⁴ Edna Lue Furness, "Spelling: Illogical and Inconsistent," *The Clearing House* 33, no. 6 (1959): 331, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30190874>.

²⁰⁵ Paul K. Longmore, "'Good English without Idiom or Tone': The Colonial Origins of American Speech," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 37, no. 4 (2007): 513, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4139476>.

²⁰⁶ Longmore, "Good English without Idiom or Tone," 513.

English.²⁰⁷ Over about three generations, a long, unconscious process of leveling and simplification occurred where “marked differences [were] eliminated, irregularities [were] reduced, and a compromise common usage [was] established.”²⁰⁸ The language became stabilized and nativized, encouraging new immigrants to imitate the speech to assimilate into the colonies.²⁰⁹ This new hybrid dialect that emerges is called a koine.²¹⁰

British English was diverse across the country, with many dialects being spoken and lacking any uniformity. Colonial American English that emerged was more homogenous in comparison. When the dialects of the different colonists coming over merged, they created a koine, which simplified elements of the varying dialects while maintaining the structural characteristics of the original system.²¹¹ The process of language creation in North America is a very common pattern of this phenomenon. Before the United States gained independence, three generations of fairly isolated people allowed for the production and solidification of their own variety of English deriving from several English dialects.²¹² Koineziation of language occurs in the third generation, where a mostly unified and unique dialect is established.²¹³ Mobility within the colonies was also key to the increasing socialization of language in the generations before the Revolution. By the fourth generation, there was increased mobility both geographically and socially which increased interaction and accelerated language leveling and simplifying.²¹⁴ More internal migration occurred within the colonies than in England which contributed to the mixing of dialects.

²⁰⁷ Longmore, “Good English without Idiom or Tone,” 513.

²⁰⁸ Longmore, “Good English without Idiom or Tone,” 522.

²⁰⁹ Longmore, “Good English without Idiom or Tone,” 522.

²¹⁰ Longmore, “Good English without Idiom or Tone,” 517.

²¹¹ Longmore, “Good English without Idiom or Tone,” 519.

²¹² Longmore, “Good English without Idiom or Tone,” 524.

²¹³ Longmore, “Good English without Idiom or Tone,” 527.

²¹⁴ Longmore, “Good English without Idiom or Tone,” 528.

Speech-accommodation theory argues that individuals are motivated to unify language to achieve three goals: “efficiency in communication, social approval, and positive social identity.”²¹⁵ Although local variations still existed throughout the eighteenth century, across the colonies and amongst various classes at the time, there was a move towards uniformity in speech. This was both influenced by print and social interactions and in return influenced what was being printed in literature.²¹⁶ Printing was a chance to standardize the language that had developed prior to the Revolution by publishing it on pages of popular texts.

Noah Webster is the man credited with the solidification of American English spelling.²¹⁷ Approaching language from an educational standpoint, he was frustrated by the inconsistencies of English spelling and the obstacles that these inconsistencies presented to learners. Webster published his first dictionary in 1806, about 20 years after Isaiah Thomas began publishing children’s literature in the U.S. Webster had similar goals to those of Thomas to establish a new and uniquely American culture, making them intellectual parallels during this time.²¹⁸ Webster disliked that American children were being taught with British textbooks and wanted to establish literary institutions in the United States. In a similar fashion to Thomas, Webster halted the importation of British children’s book for younger children.²¹⁹ Webster made small changes to the orthography of words in his *American Spelling Book*. He made many of the noticeable differences in spelling between British and American English that are utilized today: changed -ce endings in words to -se; eliminated the “u” from words like humour; and took off the “k” from words like public.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Longmore, “Good English without Idiom or Tone,” 530.

²¹⁶ Longmore, “Good English without Idiom or Tone,” 537; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 76.

²¹⁷ “Spelling Reform.”

²¹⁸ Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings*, 31 and 36.

²¹⁹ Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings*, 35; Nichols, “Life of Isaiah Thomas,” 16.

²²⁰ “Spelling Reform.”

Webster's publication of standardized American English came post-1800, however, all the texts by Isaiah Thomas being examined in this thesis were published before 1800. When focusing on this snapshot of time immediately following the Revolution, I am not looking for an exact correlation to Webster's changes that would emerge. Instead, my goal is to identify that change was happening and that attempts were occurring to differentiate American English from British English. Previous literature has already established that American English was long in the works before the Revolution came about, so by looking at Thomas's children's texts I searched for how he applied this differentiation to his new editions published in America. When examining the various children's books, I looked at how words were spelled or what words were changed between editions. Although these changes were not always consistent text to text or edition to edition, the fact that changes were being made from the original British editions demonstrates an attempt to differentiate. The changes may seem small, but they deserve credit for laying the groundwork for bigger movements in the solidification of American English that would contribute to crucial cultural development and emotional attachment.

Working with this comparison, I paid attention to words that changed in spelling across multiple texts, looking at dates of editions, and comparing across British, *First Worcester*, and *Second Worcester* editions. One word that changed in spelling was "inquiry." I compared a London edition of *A Little Pretty Pocketbook* published in 1760 to the *First Worcester Edition* published in 1787. From the British text, "inquiries" was changed to "enquiries" for the *Worcester Edition*.²²¹ This word also appeared in *The History of Master Jackey*, however, the spelling was changed the other way. In the British Edition from 1785, "enquired" was used, and in both the *First* and *Second Worcester Editions*, "inquired" was the chosen spelling of the

²²¹ *A Little Pretty Pocket-book First Worcester Edition*, 10; *A Little Pretty Pocket-book*, 8

word.²²² Although the change in spelling for this word is not consistent from the British to American editions of the text, Thomas still made the effort to change how this word was spelled. In both cases, he changed how it was spelled from the original British version when publishing his *Worcester Editions*. When dealing with limited resources it is even more important that Thomas chose to change these words specifically. His decision to make an effort to alter spelling demonstrates his desire to create a unique American language and culture, even when it was not easy to do so. The *Second Worcester Edition* of *The History of Master Jackey* was published in 1798, a much closer date to the publication of Webster's dictionary. In Webster's, *enquire* is defined as the British spelling of the word, and *inquire* becomes strictly American. Therefore, Thomas's use of the word spelled in this way in the later edition lined up with Webster's work as well.

Other changes make more obvious connections to the language distinction that Webster would publish in the early 1800s. In *A Bag of Nuts Ready Cracked*, as the editions progress the "u" dropped in "behaviour." In the British edition from 1790 "behaviour" is used and this continues in the *First Worcester Edition* (1786) with the spelling of "behaviour" with the "u."²²³ By the *Second Worcester Edition* in 1798, the "u" had been dropped to spell "behavior."²²⁴ This is the common American spelling of the word today and one of the changes that Webster made across many words that contained the "ou" combination.²²⁵ This strongly demonstrates Thomas's contribution and lasting impact in the present day, to the alterations being made to solidify a common American language.

²²² *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot*, 12; *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The first Worcester edition*, 12; *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The second Worcester edition*, 12.

²²³ *A Bag of nuts Ready cracked The ninth edition*, vii; *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The first Worcester edition*, vii.

²²⁴ *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The second Worcester edition*, 7.

²²⁵ "Spelling Reform."

Thomas also made language changes other than spelling. In *A Little Pretty Pocketbook*, there are little rhymes each with a moral to go along with it. A moral of one of the rhymes was to be present in every moment and take advantage of it because time moves very fast. In the British Edition from 1760, the moral says to “husband each moment, before ‘tis too late.”²²⁶ Whereas in the *First Worcester Edition* from 1787, it says to “improve each moment, before ‘tis too late.”²²⁷ To “husband each moment” is not a phrase used in America to describe seizing time, improve is a word used more often in our lexicon. Again here, this was not a change that Thomas had to make, but he chose to alter the phrase to distinguish the British edition from the new one he was publishing and potentially connect to the already evolving American English. In *Mother Goose’s Melody*, there is another noticeable change in how words are used. Old English utilized a hyphen in the words “to-day” and “to-morrow” and in the original British Edition of this text that is the version of those words used.²²⁸ In Thomas’s *First* (1785) and *Second Worcester Editions* (1794) of the text, the hyphen is no longer used, and he printed the common use of the word in America today, “today” and “tomorrow” as one word.²²⁹ The phrasing of words was another way for Thomas to make slight changes that created an obvious difference between the British versions and the new American editions.

Geographic Association

Returning to Pears’ theories of attachment through cultural means, she discussed how those who have written about the concept agree that the most natural and common attachments

²²⁶ *A Little Pretty Pocket-book*, 24.

²²⁷ *A Little Pretty Pocket-book First Worcester Edition*, 27.

²²⁸ *Mother Goose’s Melody: A Facsimile Reproduction*, 59.

²²⁹ *Mother Goose’s melody: The first Worcester edition*, 59; *Mother Goose’s melody: The second Worcester edition*, 59.

are those that develop “to what is close and familiar.”²³⁰ Using what is nearby to build emotional attachments to a nation can help build upon a national identity by emulating locations within the United States and recognizing it as its own entity. Geographic associations encourage people to get to know their nation and to be proud of the place. Alexis de Tocqueville, a French political philosopher and historian, studied American democracy during an extensive trip to the nation during the early 1800s. He discussed place not just in the geographical sense but also all the things that come to mind when “we think of a particular place—the customs, climate, memories, religious sentiments, and familiar connections.”²³¹ It is the characteristics of a place that connect a person to their native land. In the *Federalist Papers*—a series of essays promoting the ratification of the Constitution—John Jay suggested that American people were united by their sympathies or attachments, based on both geographic space and cultural heritage.²³² Therefore, place can be used as a strategy to create natural attachments because just as language, it carries cultural implications.

Isaiah Thomas was already working on geographic associations by labeling his books as *Worcester Editions* and addressing the American people, recognizing the new country. However, many of the children’s texts were focused heavily on Britain; either taking place there or containing landmarks within the country. To incorporate more landmarks within the U.S. and change the setting of a story was a more complicated change to make than a title page or spelling. Thomas was limited in his abilities to take on this strategy at a large scale because few landmarks were known in common across all of the original states and his scarce resources

²³⁰ Pears, “Chord of Affection,” 16.

²³¹ As quoted in Pears, “Chord of Affection,” 16.

²³² Pears, “Chord of Affection,” 17.

before 1800 created obstacles to major changes in the prints. However, working within the constraints of the period examined, he was able to make a few initial geographic changes.

In *The History of Master Jackey*, the British edition varies from the *Worcester Editions* in where the story takes place. The British edition was published in 1785 and the *First* and *Second Worcester Editions* in 1787 and 1798, respectively. The three texts I looked at were therefore all published relatively close in date to one another. In the *Worcester Editions*, the story about Jackey takes place “in a county of England,” but it is not specified. However, in the edition published in London, the story is set in Salop, an inland county of England, today known as Shropshire.²³³ This is an interesting comparison in that England is portrayed as a sort of “far-off land” for the audience of American children in this fictional story. American children in the post-Revolutionary War era would most likely not be familiar with England’s geography. Therefore, they would not know where Salop is so it would hold no importance to them. However, they would have been familiar with England as a whole country and where it was located. The London Edition chooses to focus on a smaller, more specific region that its audience would be familiar with.²³⁴ For the British children, that was a place they could associate with. Thomas may have made the change here to a more generalized place of England so that American children would be familiar with the place. However, the alteration was small enough to be attainable with the resources available to him at the time.

The biggest breakthrough change discovered in the set of texts examined was found in *Tommy Thumb's Song Book*. Stories concerning Tom Thumb have been some of those excluded by children’s literature historians of this period for their lack of perceived educational value. An

²³³ *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The first Worcester edition*, 5; *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The second Worcester edition*, 7.

²³⁴ *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot*, 3; *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The first Worcester edition*, 4.

Oxford Research Encyclopedia entry stated that the *Song Book* was not reprinted in the United States in the eighteenth century.²³⁵ However, reproductions exist by Isaiah Thomas from both 1788 and 1794.²³⁶ Therefore, these texts excluded from current research are crucial to the contribution of this thesis. The British Edition from 1744, contains the popular nursery rhyme “London Bridge” with an accompanying picture of the bridge.²³⁷ In the *First* and *Second Worcester Editions*, the contents of the rhyme are the same however, the subject of it has been changed to the “Charlestown Bridge” over the Charles River in Boston.²³⁸ The picture included with the rhyme has also been changed, to reflect the appearance of the bridge in Boston, as shown in Figure 3.1.

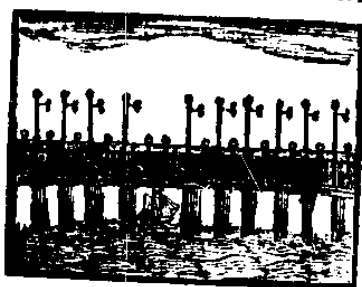
²³⁵ Pickering, “Children’s Literature,” 7.

²³⁶ Tommy Thumb's song book: *The first Worcester edition*; Tommy Thumb's song book: *The second Worcester edition*.

²³⁷ Tommy Thumb's *Pretty Song Book*, 25.

²³⁸ Tommy Thumb's song book: *The first Worcester edition*, 28; Tommy Thumb's song book: *The second Worcester edition*, 28.

28 TOMMY THUMB'S
CHARLESTOWN BRIDGE.



CHARLESTOWN Bridge
Is broken down,
Dance over my Lady Lee :
Charlestown Bridge
Is broken down,
With a gay Lady.
How shall we build
It up again,
Dance over my Lady Lee :
How shall we build
It up again,
With a gay Lady.

Build

25

LONDON BRIDGE



London bridge
Is broken down,
Dance over my Lady Lee ;
London bridge
Is broken down,
With a gay lady.
How shall we build
It up again,
With a gay lady ?
Build it up with
Gravel and stone,
Dance over my Lady Lee ;

Figure 3.1 *Tommy Thumb's Song Book* bridge poems in *First Worcester Edition* and British Edition.²³⁹

By changing what bridge was used as the focus of the rhyme, a promotional impact was made on those natural attachments to places “close and familiar” within the United States.²⁴⁰ To see a location in the U.S. reflected in the texts read by children, helped grow nationalistic attachments, obedience, and devotion to the newly formed country. These geographic changes were not being made in every rhyme within this text. For example, the entry right before “London Bridge” is another rhyme called “London Bells.” Throughout all three editions, the poem is titled “London Bells.”²⁴¹ Thomas’s selective changes led to a lot of his early work being

²³⁹ *Tommy Thumb's song book: The first Worcester edition*, 28; *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book*, 25.

²⁴⁰ Pears, “Chord of Affection,” 16.

²⁴¹ *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book* (London: M. Cooper, 1744), 23; *Tommy Thumb's song book: The first Worcester edition* 26; *Tommy Thumb's song book: The second Worcester edition*, 26.

overlooked for his efforts to create an American identity. The changes that he made within these constraints should not be discounted and were valuable in the creation of a national identity.

Planting the Seeds

Isaiah Thomas engaged in the creation of an American culture, by helping shape the attachments people held toward their nation through language and place. The changes he made in his reproduction of children's books in the U.S. were modest working with the resources he had. Thomas was beginning to create distinctions between the U.S. and Britain and develop products that belonged to Americans by incorporating their developing language and dialect as well as places familiar to them. Thomas engaged in a form of print-capitalism by contributing to the creation of a common language through the print marketplace.²⁴² This brought his attempt to the attention of the public and acted as a unifying method of creating sentimental bonds. The emotional bonds Thomas was interacting with, and shaping were developed by the tools of printing and laying the groundwork for the dissemination of the new ideas of the nation before the country was 20 years old.

²⁴² Goswami, "Benedict Anderson," 442.

Conclusion:

To the Unattached Children of the United States of America

What does the American national identity look like today? Ask people to give a single definition for this concept, and there is very little agreement. Traditionally, in history classes or stereotypically in conversations around the world, it has always been claimed that America is a nation built on ideas shared by the people. The patriotic ideals of freedom and equality make up the core of the American identity that supports the nation. In 1967, American sociologist, Robert Bellah, labeled this concept a civil religion. The American civic religion stemmed from the early years of the republic as “a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity.”²⁴³ However, in our polarized society today, there are becoming fewer instances where people feel community based on these principles, let alone even agree on how and for whom the principles should apply. Without the ability of the nation to stabilize the characteristics of a national identity in the present day, it will prove impossible to unite future generations to have an emotional attachment to the United States and their identity within it.

The emotional or ethos piece of the civil religion is found in the building of community through nationalism that is discussed in this thesis. Civil religion acts as a bond like any religion does, uniting people “under the same laws and rules and provides a sense of inclusion, belonging, identity, unity and structure, worth, confidence, transcendence, and purpose.”²⁴⁴ These factors foster the emotional attachment to a state that may enable “citizens to sacrifice

²⁴³ Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 134, no. 4 (2005): 46, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20028013>.

²⁴⁴ Stefano Fait, “Civil Religion,” *Free Speech Center MTSU*, February 18, 2024, <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/civil-religion/#:~:text=Declaration%20of%20Independence-,The%20distinctive%20features%20of%20the%20American%20civil%20religion%20include%20presidential,his%20definition%20of%20the%20United>.

their lives for the common good.”²⁴⁵ When the founding generation established an imagined community for the United States, their focus was creating a nation. Today, the focus is on sustaining a national identity. The country the founders lived in looked very different from the geographically and demographically diverse nation present today. How do you bind people living in New York City to those in rural Iowa? Today, “the strength and binding power of America’s civil religion is clearly being put to a test.”²⁴⁶

The current political climate of the United States is not conducive to creating community and national identity that will unify future generations. The country the children of the United States will inherit is characterized by polarized politics, banned books, quarreling communities, and contested educational curricula. This is a dangerous list of attributes that threaten the health of the nation and its identity. The American citizenry today is divided along the lines of “social, political, and economic antagonisms.”²⁴⁷ In order to ensure the vitality of the nation as a national community, nationalism and literature must be looked at as a tool of community building, not a force meant to divide. Looking to the past at the work of people like Isaiah Thomas, can help to build our future in the right direction and shift perspectives on these topics.

Isaiah Thomas and Noah Webster looked for answers in literature that would help create a common language for all Americans. The energy with which Webster called upon the people to “raise and support” the nation and to have a “national character to establish and extend by your wisdom and virtues,” is missing from the United States today.²⁴⁸ Thomas stated that using literature to cultivate this emotional attachment would put a guard up “against the encroachments

²⁴⁵ Fait, “Civil Religion.”

²⁴⁶ Tom Gjelten, “Can America’s ‘Civil Religion’ Still Unite The Country?” *NPR*, April 12, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/12/985036148/can-americas-civil-religion-still-unite-the-country>.

²⁴⁷ Bynack, “Noah Webster’s Linguistic Thought,” 105.

²⁴⁸ Webster, *A Collection of Essays and Fugitive Writings*, 31 and 36.

of Tyranny.”²⁴⁹ Today, that guard has been let down. Literature and nationalism are seen as ideological weapons and dangers to community, when Thomas and his peers demonstrated that they are tools necessary for the health of a nation.

This thesis looked at the work of Thomas to identify his strategies that can be analyzed and utilized to inform our attitudes and actions today and in the future. I argue that Isaiah Thomas utilized four different strategies to make small changes to children’s literature that cultivated attachments to the United States. The changes he made ranged from rebranding the titles and for whom the works were addressed, to changes in creating American English and introducing geographical associations. Thomas came from a very similar ideological background as Webster and conducted work that paralleled him with a focus on children’s literature. Both men used print as a positive force of nationalism to create identities and cultivate emotional attachments. This analysis led to the conclusion that Thomas’s children’s literature despite having changes that are seemingly small, initiated sentimental bonds to the U.S. amongst the public and helped to build a national identity. These changes were used in children’s literature to create the emotional attachment necessary to open the next generations up to a set of values of American citizenship.

By placing works on children’s literature, nationalism, and print-capitalism in conversation with one another about Isaiah Thomas for the first time, it opens an avenue for similar analyses to be done on other works of children’s literature at this time.²⁵⁰ Scholars demonstrated the connection between literature and the spread of ideas of a nation at mostly the

²⁴⁹ *Massachusetts Spy*, XIII no. 651, 1.

²⁵⁰ Klein, *A Season of Youth*, 203; Weikle-Mills, “Learn to Love Your Book,” 38–44; Weikle-Mills, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 3; Spero, “The Revolution in Popular Publications,” 43; Adams, “Pictures of the Vicious,” 150.

adult level and in post-1800 overtly educational texts for children.²⁵¹ The current literature focuses mostly on how citizenship characteristics were being disseminated. Thomas, Webster, and the interaction of these different schools of thought have demonstrated in this thesis the importance of creating a community through national identity and emotional attachment to the nation before one can build the principles that it wants to characterize its citizens.²⁵² A democratic government needs support from its citizens to establish legitimacy and trust from the citizenry—which society lacks today.

Further Research

The approach of this thesis could be applied to other works of children's literature published in other parts of the country. Isaiah Thomas has been likened to the "father of children's literature" from Great Britain, John Newbery, which influenced his own nickname as "The American John Newbery."²⁵³ Therefore, Thomas is attached to the majority of children's literature published in the U.S. during this time period. Thomas's work examined for this analysis was published in his main publishing house in Worcester. This was made explicit in the rebranding of the publications as *Worcester Editions* and the main geographic association that was altered in the text referenced a place in Boston.²⁵⁴ These specific mentions could point towards the texts being more influential in the New England area where people were more familiar with the attachments. Conversely, Thomas was a household name throughout the states

²⁵¹ Klein, *A Season of Youth*, 203; Weikle-Mills, "Learn to Love Your Book," 38–44; Weikle-Mills, "From Subjects to Citizens," 3; Spero, "The Revolution in Popular Publications," 43; Adams, "Pictures of the Vicious," 150.

²⁵² Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 45 and 65.

²⁵³ Shortsleeve, "Thomas, Isaiah."

²⁵⁴ *A Bag of nuts, ready cracked: The first Worcester edition*, iv; *The Exhibition of Tom Thumb: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *The History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *A Little Pretty Pocket-book: The first Worcester Edition*, iv; *Mother Goose's melody: or Sonnets for the cradle: The first Worcester*, iv; *Tommy Thumb's song book: The first Worcester edition*, 4; *Tommy Thumb's song book: The first Worcester edition*, 28; *Tommy Thumb's song book: The second Worcester edition*, 28.

and the change of addresses and language were strategies with more universal impact.²⁵⁵ These factors would have allowed for Thomas's texts to have a more widespread impact.

Thomas's publishing influence stretched to every part of the union. He controlled sixteen presses under his control at one time and had bookshops in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Maryland.²⁵⁶ With all his work in publishing, Isaiah Thomas became a household name across the country.²⁵⁷ These shops, were selling the publications that he was making at his headquarters in Worcester. The findings in this thesis could be replicated looking at the selling of his texts out of these various locations and examining the impact locally. With the other shops being under the direction of Isaiah Thomas, the information about his background defining his purpose for the print he produces would seamlessly apply to analyses in local areas, making the connections between creating a national identity through children's literature clearer. Placing children's literature in conversation with building a national identity at this early stage in U.S. history has not been examined very closely, so looking into other publications at this time would help fill in this scholarly gap and give more insight to the role of children's literature.

Working with any cultural history it is important to acknowledge that there is not a certain measurement of how the literature truly impacted children's attachment to their colonies. Making assumptions about the impact that these texts had on the younger population is done carefully with supporting literature to back the connections made and fits seamlessly with current studies on early children's literature. I attempt to weave together thoughts on nationalism, creating emotional bonds, and theory on children's literature to replicate how this may have impacted children at the time and support this conclusion.

²⁵⁵ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," lxxvi; Nichols, "Life of Isaiah Thomas," 23.

²⁵⁶ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," lxxv.

²⁵⁷ Thomas, "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas," lxxvi.

This text serves as a starting point that can be used to bridge the gap between modest changes in literature to the more deliberate ones post-1800. Whether it is publications from Thomas himself, or other publishers who start up their business later, this methodology connects the creation of emotional attachment to a national identity before the characteristics of that identity can be disseminated. Encouraging emotional support of identity before becoming attached to principles, is the pattern that literature supports as the most effective but has not been examined closely in this period of children's literature. The thesis provides a jumping-off point for current work on early children's literature to define how the emotional bonds to the communal identity of the United States were formed through print.

Future Generations of America

Is it possible today to create community for America's future generations? The average person the nation is trying to convince of the community's legitimacy and trust is vastly different from the average person that Isaiah Thomas was appealing to. Is America too diverse today in our values and priorities to have an emotional attachment to the nation and to agree upon our basic principles? I do not think we have the answer on how to fix the fraction in our nation yet, but the analysis done here can provide hope for moving forward and prioritizing our future generations. A shift needs to occur in the way we view our imagined community to make a better place for future generations.

Viewing nationalism and print for their unifying abilities is a good place to start in shifting our national mindset. The strategies that Thomas used in literature were not divisive in anyway and were instead designed to invigorate emotional attachments amongst the citizens instead. Print-capitalism and its influence on the creation of a national identity through emotional

attachments is important in helping establish and disseminate ideas about the republic to the people.²⁵⁸ Currently the attachment has faded and the understanding of the political ideals of the nation are at risk. Isaiah Thomas's work initiated sentimental bonds amongst the people of the newly emerging United States. His publishing of children's literature played an important role in the formation of nationalism in the early American Republic and provided important lessons for our current political climate. Literature and print are not the only solution but can be utilized as tools to move the nation forward.

American sociologist, Philip Gorski examined the American civil religion closely. He stated, "I think about the American civil religion as an evolving tradition. I sometimes liken it to a river whose banks grow wider over time and which is changed by the landscape that it flows through, instead of thinking about it as some kind of pristine spring that we have to return to again and again."²⁵⁹ Just as the founding generation, had to evolve their own traditions to separate the United States from Great Britain, our generations of today and tomorrow must evolve how we define the national identity by adapting to our conditions today. The landscape of the United States is changing and therefore how we imagine our community must respond to the change of our people.

²⁵⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 45 and 65.

²⁵⁹ Gjelten, "Can America's 'Civil Religion' Still Unite The Country?"

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