**Horace Mann** (1796–1859). Perhaps the most critical factor in shaping the life of Horace Mann was not what he was given but what he was denied. Although he proved to be an able and gifted student, he was not afforded very much in the way of formal schooling. Forced to learn on his own, he acquired an education and was eventually admitted to Brown University. Before him was a career in law as well as a career in politics, but neither influenced his life as much as his struggle to gain an education. He worked to ensure that others would not be denied educational opportunities. That struggle directed his life and altered the history of U.S. education.
      As an educator and a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, he worked to improve the quality of education. Corporal punishment, floggings, and unsafe and unsanitary school buildings were all denounced by Mann in speeches, letters, and his lobbying efforts before the state legislature and the U.S. Congress. Of the numerous challenges Mann confronted, he was probably most violently denounced for his efforts to remove religious instruction from schools. He also worked to lengthen the school term; to increase teacher salaries; and, by establishing the first public normal school in 1839, to prepare better teachers. He organized school libraries and encouraged the writing of textbooks that included practical social problems. Mann's efforts resulted in the establishment of the Massachusetts Board of Education, and he became the board's first secretary of education, a position equivalent to a state superintendent of schools.
      Of the many achievements attributed to Mann, he is probably best remembered for his leadership in the common school movement, the movement to establish free, publicly supported schools for all Americans. He viewed ignorance as bondage and education as a passport to a promising future. Through education, the disadvantaged could lift themselves out of poverty, blacks could achieve freedom, and children with disabilities could learn to be productive members of society. Mann's credo was that social mobility and the improvement of society could be attained through a free education for all.
      However, Mann's fervor was not confined to establishing quality public education. As a member of Congress, he denounced slavery, child labor, worker exploitation, workplace hazards, and the dangers of slum life. Later, as president of Antioch College, he provoked further controversy by admitting women and minority members as students. In the 1850s, this was not only a radical move; for many, it suggested the imminent collapse of higher education. Mann did more than verbalize the importance of freedom and education; his life and actions were a commitment to these principles. The fruits of Mann's efforts are found in our public school system; the education of minorities, the poor, and women; and efforts to provide well-trained teachers working in well-equipped classrooms.

Famous Quotes:

“Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity.”

“Let us not be content to wait and see what will happen, but give us the determination to make the right things happen.”

“Jails and prisons are the complement of schools; so many less as you have of the latter, so many more must you have of the former.”

**Horace Mann Hall of Fame Speech Assignment Directions**: Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Horace Mann is an all-time great in the world of education. As such, he belongs in the Education Hall of Fame. Based on the information provided, and any additional research, you will be preparing a speech to induct him into the first-annual Education Hall of Fame.

Your speech should:

* Include important details in the life of Horace Mann (3 or more)
* Summarize his significant contributions to the education reform movement (2 or more)
* Include a brief quotation and a 1-2 sentence interpretation of what you think the quote means
* Explain how his actions have affected the world today
* Connect it to your favorite teacher
* Extra Credit available for giving the speech to our class

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