

Heroes of

INVENTION

Stories of Bravery and Courage

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Introduction

Of the many things that the upcoming generation of students need, it is important that they have heroes—people that they can look up to, learn from, admire and identify with—we all need heroes! I have always loved stories about heroes and their brave acts, and years ago, I came across a wonderful antique children’s book, *Heroes and Martyrs of Invention*.

Originally published in 1890, this book captured my attention and my imagination. I found myself wishing that I had been able to read this book as a child. I have always enjoyed understanding how things worked, and using my own imagination to dream up new ideas. Space travel was in its prime when I was a child, and oh, how I wanted to help make new ways to travel in space! Yes, people thought that I was a bit “different,” and I was always busy reading and dreaming.

This book is based on the book, *Heroes and Martyrs of Invention*, by George M. Towle. I have rewritten it into today’s language. The stories tell the about the lives of many key inventors from history, beginning with Archimedes and following inventions all the way up through the invention of the sewing machine. You will read about the inventors—their great accomplishments along with the character traits that helped them survive the many trials and obstacles that arose around them. These inventors were heroes on missions—and the missions involved ideas that would better the lives of mankind.

Enjoy the book, the lessons and the learning, and have fun!

Amanda

Johann Gutenberg

Inventor of the Printing Press

The sturdy young German, with his knapsack and walking stick in hand, knocking at Laurence Coster's door was no ordinary youth. Although just twenty years old, he had already seen a great deal of life, and even some of its rougher aspects.

Johann Gutenberg was from a wealthy family, but he did not allow luxurious living to make him lazy or unambitious. He was an ardent student, and had received the best training which the learned monks could give him. When he was a boy, he could be found poring over the manuscripts that he found in the monasteries where he was educated. He was also very religious in thought and act. Many times he would say that it was a pity that the Bible was a closed book to the most of the people. Since it was written by hand on parchment, copies of it were very expensive, and were owned either by the churches and monasteries or by very rich people. Gutenberg wanted to change this so that everyone could read the Bible.



Gutenberg's home was at Strasburg, on the banks of the Rhine River. He had often dreamed of foreign countries, and imagined what they and their people were like. One day, being strong and active, he packed his knapsack and set off on foot to see other lands.

It was while on this journey that he heard of Laurence Coster and his discovery, and hurried to present himself at the humble churchwarden's door. He was anxious to see just what Coster had discovered.

You can imagine the eagerness that Coster felt as he led his young guest in, and how excited he was to show him just how the printing of his letters worked. With his crude lead letters, the old man pressed letter after letter on the parchment while Gutenberg stood by, rapt in attention. Already he imagined what great use this discovery could be used for, and he couldn't wait to get started on this idea.

"And see here!" exclaimed Coster, holding up some pages of parchment awkwardly sewn together, "here is my first book in print."

It was a Latin grammar book. Old Coster had slowly printed it, letter by letter, and was proud of this first triumph of his patient work.

"But we can do better than this," said Gutenberg. "Your printing is even slower than the writing of the monks. From now on, I will work on this problem, and not rest until I have solved it."

Warmly shaking Coster's hand, and thanking him for showing him his discovery, Gutenberg picked up his knapsack and headed out of Haarlem. He no longer had any thought of continuing his journey to new places. His fondness for seeing strange lands had vanished. His only thought was to get back to Strasburg as soon as possible, and set to work upon the this new idea.

Gutenberg lived in an age of dense superstition and ignorance. Everything that was new and unfamiliar seemed to the ignorant people of that time to be the work of sorcery. Anyone who dared to do things which appeared marvelous in their eyes, was persecuted and pursued as if he dealt in evil magic. No one knew this better than the young Strasburg scholar.

So, on his arrival at Strasburg, he told others that he was at work making jewelry. Then, he locked himself up in his room, and barely taking time to eat or sleep, devoted himself to the problem—how to make Coster's discovery useful to the world.

But he found that he was watched and interrupted, and that his staying in his room constantly was causing dark suspicions among his neighbors. So he moved to an old