Literacy rates grew in Britain and North America in the 19th century, and schoolbooks like this one played a crucial role in educating the young reader. Bible stories and moral tales provided subject matter deemed appropriate for instruction.

School text books became a specialized industry. The publisher and editor William Holmes McGuffey created a series of graded readers with “eclectic” content—stories and poetry by famous writers. The content and tone of the readers changed as the decades to reflect changes in American attitudes, values, and culture.
type specimen books and often elaborate samples of printing.

Figure 3 William Dana Orcutt and Edward E. Bartlett, *The Manual of Linotype Typography*, Brooklyn, NY, 1923
*Z250 .M54m
This elegant manual strives to demonstrate that mechanical typesetting can emulate the finest hand-set type and page design. The careful layout and use of traditional red and black inks succeed in making their argument. The design is far from the gaudy decorative world of advertising and display types, and embodies the early 20th century turn revival of interest in “humanist” designs from the earliest decades of printing, particularly those of the Italian presses in the 15th century.

Figure 2b *Mergenthaler Type Specimen Book*, The Company, Brooklyn, New York, 1915
*Z250 .M49
In the 1880s, the German inventor Ottmar Mergenthaler created a machine capable of composing type with hot metal cast in lines. The invention of this process, known as linotype, transformed hand-composition into keyboard-based production in the printing industry, increasing speed and capacity. Linotype was used for newspapers, book publishing, and mass-circulation magazines well into the late 20th century.

Figure 4 Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, London, Chapman and Hall, 1844 illustrated by John Leech
CBC PR4572 .C46 1844
While the type on the title page is printed in two colors of ink, the illustration is hand-colored, probably using stencils (note the hard edges around the individual areas of color). These are not deluxe editions, but meant for a popular audience. The extra effort in creating color was largely done by women, who could complete the work at home and be paid by the piece.

Figure 5 The Chatterbox, 1878
IS Department collection
Mass circulation magazines targeted specific segments of the population—women, men, children. This serial is typical of the illustrated publications created to amuse and educate the same group as that embodied in the image of the child on the cover. Poems, stories, tales of adventure, abounded in this magazine for young readers. The use of chromolithographic methods allowed color printing to proliferate.

Figure 6 Charles Dickens, Adventures of Oliver Twist, London, Bradbury & Evans 1846 Sadlier 696c
This edition of Oliver Twist was illustrated by the renowned artist, George Cruikshank, with twenty-four engraved plates. Cruikshank’s images helped increase the popularity of Dickens’s works, and the able caricaturist created unforgettable visuals of many of the author’s characters, including young Oliver, the fair-haired boy at the center of this frontispiece.
The title page of this book of photographs hardly suggests the presentation of a radical modern invention. Talbot’s images depict many of the same kinds of subject matter as genre scenes, still lifes, and other conventions of painting and though the art of photography would be used across a wide range of applications and themes, this initial publication shows how much Talbot’s visual sensibility was informed by the art of his age.

This self-published book is an introduction to the art of lithography written by its inventor, the German actor Aloys Senefelder, who invented a way of printing from the surface of a limestone block. This allowed drawings to be done directly on a stone by an artist or craftsman. In addition, the use of soft crayon and ink on the stone’s surface created rich tonal values. Within a few decades the use of color added unprecedented richness, vibrancy, and levels of realism to lithographic imagery.
This elegantly designed and expertly printed book was credited with raising the standard of commercial printing in England. Charles Whittingham, founder of the Chiswick Press, worked with many authors including William Morris. The use of the long “s” in this text is already an anachronism in the 19th century.
This note by William Morris on the founding of his Kelmscott Press was reproduced in the Merganthaler company’s type specimen book. Rather than using one of Morris’s own type designs, which he had refused to license to American foundries, they set the piece in an Old Style that was based on the letters designed by the 15th century Venetian, Nicolas Jenson. Morris had died in 1896, but his influence as a designer was long-lived.

Title page of the Century Guild publication, one of several societies organized by British artists and designers to combine their interests in aesthetics with their commitment to progressive social movements. The editor, Herbert Horne, worked with the famous Chiswick Press to produce the carefully crafted aesthetic periodical published quarterly for just over a decade beginning in 1884.
The page designs of Elbert Hubbard’s homespun American writing in this very popular book, which celebrated the work ethic and perseverance, were clearly borrowed from William Morris, whom Hubbard had visited and admired. Hubbard’s Roycroft Press produced bibles, folksy tracts, and preachings from its site in East Aurora, New York.