CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

The Autobiography of Calvin Coolidge

Calvin Coolidge · *1929* · *Coolidge's English*

The town of Plymouth lies on the easterly slope of the Green Mountains, about twenty miles west of the Connecticut River, in Vermont. I was born on the 4th day of July, 1872. Later he writes that it is a great advantage to a President, and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know that he is not a great man. The 1929 Cosmopolitan Book Corporation edition, Project Gutenberg #76649, public domain in the United States as of 1 January 2025. For grades 9–12. Quote him, not a later party life.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How should a school read Coolidge's 1929 autobiography as he begins it—from Plymouth, Vermont, on the easterly slope of the Green Mountains, and a birth on the 4th day of July, 1872—and then hear, later, that a President is safer if he knows he is not a great man?

"The town of Plymouth lies on the easterly slope of the Green Mountains, about twenty miles"

Opening

He opens with a town: Plymouth lies on the easterly slope of the Green Mountains, about twenty miles west of the Connecticut River, somewhat south of the central part of Vermont. He was born on the 4th day of July, 1872. Teach that place and that date first, for grades 9–12. Much later he writes that it is a great advantage to a President, and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know that he is not a great man. Keep both the hillside and the later warning. This is the 1929 Cosmopolitan Book Corporation edition, Project Gutenberg #76649, public domain in the United States as of 1 January 2025. Quote him, not a later party life or a film. The book is longer than one map.

KEY CHARACTERS

Calvin Coolidge
Born in Plymouth, Vermont, on the 4th day of July, 1872, who later writes that a President is safer if he knows he is not a great man

Plymouth, and the Green Mountains
The town on the easterly slope, west of the Connecticut, where the book begins

The office of President, as he later describes it
A trust that, in his telling, is safer when the man does not think himself the only one who can lead

HOW TO BEGIN THIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

"The town of Plymouth lies on the easterly slope of the Green Mountains, about twenty miles"

Opening

"It is a great advantage to a President, and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know that he is not a great man. When a man"

Later in the book

Grades 9–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

Plymouth, on the Easterly Slope

OPENING

The town of Plymouth lies on the easterly slope of the Green Mountains. The autobiography begins with a hillside, not with an office.

- Keep "easterly slope," not a remembered "northwesterly."
- 9–12.
- Quote him, not a later life.
- Vermont first.

"The town of Plymouth lies on the easterly slope of the Green Mountains, about twenty miles"

Opening

02

West of the Connecticut

OPENING

About twenty miles west of the Connecticut River and somewhat south of the central part of Vermont. This part of the state is made up of narrow valleys and high hills, some of which rank as mountains. The place is exact.

- Keep the river, and the measure of twenty miles.
- 9–12.
- A local geography before a national office.
- Quote this English.

"about twenty miles west of the Connecticut River and somewhat south of the central part of Vermont. This part"

Opening

03

The 4th Day of July, 1872

THE BIRTH

I was born on the 4th day of July, 1872. Keep this wording; do not silently change it to "the 4th of July" only.

- Keep "4th day of July, 1872."
- 9–12.
- A date in a town, not a slogan.
- The later presidency is not this sentence.

"I was born on the 4th day of July, 1872. My"

The birth

04

Not a Great Man

LATER IN THE BOOK

It is a great advantage to a President, and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know that he is not a great man. When a man begins to feel that he is the only one who can lead in this republic, he is guilty of treason to the spirit of our institutions. Teach this as his, later in the book, not as the opening.

- Keep "not a great man" and "major source of safety."
- Do not move this sentence to the first page as if it opened the book.
- 9–12.
- Humility here is a public trust, as he writes it.

"It is a great advantage to a President, and a major source of safety to the country, for him to know that he is not a great man. When a man"

Later in the book

05

The 1929 Book, Now in the Public Domain

THE EDITION

Project Gutenberg #76649 is the 1929 Cosmopolitan Book Corporation edition. It entered the public domain in the United States on 1 January 2025. Quote this English. For grades 9–12. Start with Plymouth; do not treat the book as a later party pamphlet or a film. One map cannot teach the whole life.

- Name 1929, and the public-domain date if you describe the rights.
- Quote him.
- The hillside first, the later warning in its place.
- Not a complete life in one sitting.

"The town of Plymouth lies on the easterly slope of the Green Mountains, about twenty miles"

Opening

A town on a Vermont slope

A dated beginning

Office as a trust, not a pose

The safety of not being a great man

A 1929 account, in his English

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

1. Plymouth lies on the easterly slope of the Green Mountains, about twenty miles west of the Connecticut River. Keep "easterly."
2. "I was born on the 4th day of July, 1872." Keep that wording.
3. Later, not on the first page: it is a great advantage to a President to know that he is not a great man.
4. The 1929 Cosmopolitan edition, PG #76649, public domain in the United States as of 1 January 2025. For grades 9–12. Quote him, not a later party life.

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