In the first part of the 18th century, when George Washington was growing up, it was still pretty expensive to print books. Rather than printing ABC books, like we might use today, kids used hornbooks to learn their letters! Hornbooks were usually made of wood, but sometimes other materials such as ivory, silver, and even gingerbread were used!

Hornbooks usually had the alphabet printed on them, along with simple sayings or prayers that everyone would learn. Hornbooks were designed to be reusable, and something that could be shared.

By the end of the 18th century, people didn’t really use hornbooks anymore. Printers began making cards with the alphabet printed on them. George Washington’s step-grandchildren were even able to enjoy something that he had not had while he was growing up- books written just for kids!