

Bill Gates

Highlight Video Transcript



How did software code come to be such a force, not only in business but also in culture?

Computer geeks everywhere can look to Bill Gates as a role model. The phenomenal success of Microsoft, the company he co-founded, helped to turn the software engineer into a new kind of cultural hero. By focusing on software exclusively at a time when many computer companies were still developing software and hardware in tandem, Microsoft, with Gates at the helm, was able to take advantage of the new capabilities that continually smaller and faster processors could offer without having to retool its products. Ultimately, the company's approach helped to move the world toward a widely shared and supported operating system standard.

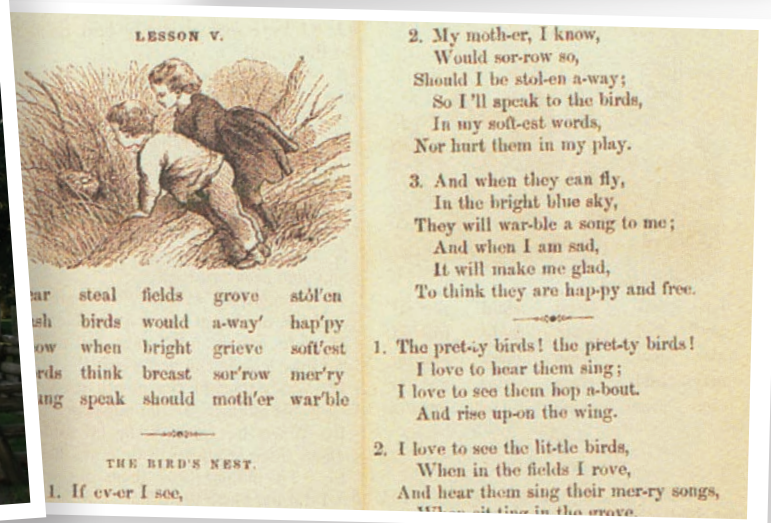
In the early 1800s, William McGuffey grew up and became a teacher on the frontier of western Pennsylvania.

It was then a region of scattered, isolated settlements. Through hands-on experiences, McGuffey realized what tool would most benefit the children who lived there: an easy, standardized method of learning to read and write.

In the 1830s, he began publishing his Readers. They remained an immensely popular educational tool for the rest of the century.

Bill Gates believes, as William McGuffey did, that the right tools can enable the knowledge that is every child's birthright and that learning erases barriers while laying the foundation for breakthroughs.

And breakthroughs are something he knows a thing or two about.



Top: William Holmes McGuffey. Bottom left: McGuffey School in Greenfield Village®. Bottom right: Detail of a McGuffey Reader.

Bill Gates. Co-Founder of Microsoft. Shaper of the software industry. Believer in enriching minds.

01:01:27

... I think scientists and inventors are particularly important, because many of them faced long odds. They had to see the world in a new way. And in fact, if we think, why is our lifestyle so much better, whether it's food or medicine or transportation, it's because of these great innovations. And I think people underestimate how catalytic those things are. People have a hard time even measuring – that incredible change.

Creating Something from Nothing

02:01:59

So I'd look back and, you know, look at the Wright brothers, I'd look at Edison, I'd look at Henry Ford. In the industry I worked in – we have a lot of amazing people. ... There were huge breakthroughs that culminated in a personal computer being possible.

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There was no software industry. Microsoft helped create one. So the number of applications, you know, packages for dentistry and funeral homes, and accounting, and modeling – wind tunnels, you name it – that platform allowed for ideas to be put in the form of software. And so that's flourished even beyond what Paul Allen and I dreamed, and that was because, you know, from a young age we were obsessed with software ...

02:02:51

Being Mildly Fanatical

03:02:56

You know, an innovator is probably a fanatic, somebody who loves what they do, works day and night – may ignore normal things to some degree – and therefore be viewed as a bit imbalanced. Certainly in my teens and twenties, I fit that, that model. You have to be persistent. You know, Edison tried thousands of things before he found carbonized fiber would actually work in the incandescent light bulb. So it's not an overnight type of thing. It's a kind of lifetime mind-set.



Bill Gates

"You know, an innovator is probably a fanatic, somebody who loves what they do, works day and night – may ignore normal things to some degree."

— Bill Gates



An entrance to the Microsoft Corporate Campus, Redmond, Washington.

Improving the Status Quo

04:03:38

... At the very start, you have to have a lot of people who, from a young age, got a great math and science education and got exposed to the idea that new innovations can really fundamentally change things, whether it's a new seed and a new way of generating energy, a new kind of software.

04:04:01

You know, our future will be defined by those innovations, and we have to have all the IQ of our smart, young minds being ambitious and dreaming and understanding that the status quo can be greatly improved.

The Heart of American Innovation

05:04:20

And I think we have a lot of the elements right here in the United States, but we have to rededicate ourselves to the importance of – of quality education and using some of the new tools, the Internet, to do these things better.

05:04:33

I think American innovation comes from having great schools, comes from allowing risk capital to be out there, comes from venerating the cases where somebody does make a breakthrough and allowing them to license their ideas so that they can go on and do more.

Skirting Around Straight-Line Thinking

06:05:01

Well, every challenge, whether it's the environment or medical costs – all of those, you know I think innovation will be what gets us out of the problem. You know – at the turn of the century, around 1900, people were projecting how much horse manure there'd be and that, you know, our cities would just be inundated. Well, of course, the car solved that problem. You know, it introduced some new challenges like, okay, where's the oil going to come from. But it's always innovation that gets us out of just straight-line thinking of what problems look like.



Outdoor seating areas are a feature of Microsoft's new West Campus, Redmond, Washington.

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— Bill Gates



A fountain in the center of the Corporate Campus in Redmond.

You Can

07:05:44

Well, I think every kid starts out with a lot of curiosity and thought that, "Boy, I – maybe I could invent something." If you don't get a chance to play around, experiment, put things together, you know, read a lot of stories, then you probably start to think, "Hmmm, maybe I can't. You know, maybe this is too hard."

07:06:03

So it takes a conscious effort on the part of teachers and parents to kind of imbue somebody with the sense of, no, you can – there's a whole frontier out there . . .

07:06:13

You know, I'm often saying to my son when he asks, you know, "Is there a product that can do this?" I – I say, "No, you – you'll have a chance to invent that."



An entrance to the Microsoft Corporate Campus in Redmond

**Bill Gates has a lot more to say. Visit
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to see his full, unedited interview, read the complete transcript
and connect with other visionaries thinking out loud.



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