

## Persistence

In 1954, *Life* magazine published a critical exposé of American education which captured the public's attention. It focused on how grade-school students were falling further and further behind previous generations. The shortcomings of our schools justifiably frightened Americans.

Part of the solution was to come from a most unlikely source; a skinny egghead cartoonist and author named Theo, whose first book had been rejected 27 times. Even after it was published, sales were only mediocre. Though the brilliant author had attended Dartmouth and Oxford he was discouraged realizing he might never achieve his dream of becoming a successful author.

After *Life's* blistering exposé on education, a concerned publishing house challenged this creative genius to write an imaginative, fun book for six-year-olds by using only 225 of the 348 words in a standard first-grader's vocabulary list. It took Theo nine months to meet the publisher's challenge. His efforts were rewarded as children fell in love with his books. Bennett Cerf, the founder of Random House, once bet Theo he could not author a book using only 50 words. He not only authored the book, but it also became a best seller and is still available today 62 years after it was released.

Theo did more than his fair share to help America's children fall in love with reading. His books represented a radical departure from the typical children's books of the time; they were much more entertaining and imaginative.

Today, nearly all of Theo's books are considered classics. *Horton Hears a Who!* was published in 1955. *The Cat in the Hat* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*

appeared in 1957. In 1960, it was *Green Eggs and Ham*, and *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*.

Theo wrote most of his more than 60 books under the pen name, Dr. Seuss. His books have been turned into 11 television specials, five feature films, a Broadway musical and four television series. He produced five of the top 100 best selling children's books of all time and his works have sold over 600 million copies in 20 languages.

Today it is hard to imagine children's literature without Dr. Seuss, but for the author who published his first book in 1937 after having it rejected nearly 30 times and who did not achieve real success for nearly another 20 years, success was probably even more difficult to imagine. While Dr. Seuss may not have written specifically about perseverance, he did persevere.

The Apostle Paul wrote about perseverance when he penned, "...*dear brothers and sisters, never get tired of doing good.*" (2 Thessalonians 3:13, NLT) Calvin Coolidge wrote about it as well saying, "*Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent...*" All three writers are correct, neither talent nor hard work is enough if you quit before you finish. I want to encourage those who are thinking about quitting to remember this valuable principle; if you know you are doing the right thing... it is always too soon to quit.