



# American Legends: The Life of Jim Henson

*Charles River Editors*

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“When I was young, my ambition was to be one of the people who made a difference in this world. My hope is to leave the world a little better for having been there.” – Jim Henson

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history’s most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors’ American Legends series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of America’s most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

When people discuss the great television characters of all time, names such as Lucille Ball, Andy Griffith, and Jerry Seinfeld are frequently mentioned, but so are fictional characters like Kermit the Frog. What makes Kermit an interesting choice is the fact that he’s a Muppet, and just one of Jim Henson’s many iconic Muppets at that. Millions of people are instantly familiar with Muppets like Kermit, Oscar the Grouch, Yorick, and Miss Piggy, and while the Muppets may lack the physical dimensions of the human television characters listed above, there is no denying the influence they have exerted on America’s youth and popular culture more broadly. Their popularity remains undiminished even several decades following their inception.

If the Muppets are among the most famous of all television characters, their significance also stems from the way in which their purpose was always about more than simply entertainment. Put simply, the Muppets have played an instrumental role in the education of America’s youth, and there existed an educational imperative behind much of what Jim Henson created. For many children, learning to count, learning to read, and, on a broader level, learning to make sense of the world have all involved the Muppets, either on Sesame Street (1969-) or the many other movies and shows that have featured Jim Henson’s characters. Of course, Henson’s genius was also on display in the way he was able to captivate not just young children but also adults as well. As his career evolved, Henson began exploring more adults themes, and it is not for nothing that children and adults alike mourned his premature death in 1990.

Henson’s early passing leaves many questions unanswered regarding the direction that his future work would have taken, but even so, he left behind a broad and diverse body of work, even if existing loosely within the domain of puppetry. He began his career at an early age and for someone who died so young, his career was quite robust and balanced innovation with the repetition of salient themes. Indeed, Henson’s works emphasized morality and the value of dreams, desires, education, and cooperation.

American Legends: The Life of Jim Henson looks at the life and work of Jim Henson, from his childhood in Mississippi and Maryland to his young death in 1990 at the age of 53. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Jim Henson like never before, in no time at all.

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