

Can Your Child Read Better Than  
**A HILL O'BEANS: *If Not Why Not?***

*A Book about 'Learning to Read'*



# CAN YOUR CHILD READ BETTER THAN A HILL O'BEANS: IF NOT WHY NOT?

BY  
Patricia H. Huggard  
L.G.S.M., (Teacher's) London

Explaining

The Problem  
Its cause  
and  
The Solution!

Learning to read is easy when you know how!

so

'Learn to read the LARAMAC Way'

Front cover photograph: Great Granddaughter Rumer Meloche, Victoria, B.C.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I am very grateful to my husband, Turner, for his continued help and considerable patience throughout the putting together of this book. Without his expertise, practical advice, and encouragement, this book would most certainly never have seen the light of day.

I wish to thank my friend and colleague, Candy Comeau, M.A., who has expressed her interest and support of this project. Candy and I have worked together for many years, and always in agreement of the need for a viable Language Arts program in the schools. Candy's knowledge and experience in the teaching of Reading to small children has been helpful to me.

It is good to have this opportunity to express my thanks to Dr. Barry Miller. He has been supportive of all my teaching of reading endeavors over a number of years during his superintendency of schools...

Dr. Miller has been good enough to take interest in this book, which is my latest, but by no means my last attempt, to make an impact on the quality of the teaching of reading for the students of New Brunswick.

Lastly, but certainly not least, is my appreciation of the help and encouragement that I have had from Dr. Marilyn Jager Adams. Dr. Adams is one of the foremost authorities in Research and Development of Reading strategies, in the United States.

Dr. Adams came to Fredericton as the key-note speaker at the Language Arts seminar, sponsored by LARAMAC, and the Department of Education. Dr. Adams left a lasting impression, and made a great many friends. I am greatly pleased that Dr. Adams has continued to take a close interest in New Brunswick's literacy standards..

A Special "Thank You" is due to the many parents of students who have attended LARAMAC over the last decade. Their interest and support has been a source of encouragement. I am grateful to those who have expressed the need for change, and acknowledged my efforts to help children to a safe and secure academic future with adequate reading and spelling skills.

Once more, my sincere thanks to you all.

Patricia H. Huggard  
Fredericton, NB  
March, 2001

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

"I BELIEVE HE CAN READ", HE IS READING AND HE HAS IMPROVED!" were such important statements by Mrs. Huggard in 1987 when school teachers, method and resource teachers and psychologists stated, based upon the intervention of the public school, that our son would not learn to read. As parents, we were devastated. How could that be the prognosis for an 8 year old. Fortunately, for us Mrs. Huggard and the LARAMAC Reading School were located in our city. She quietly listened to our situation and met with our son. For us her now famous "I BELIEVE HE CAN READ" was such an important life line. Mrs. Huggard recognized our son's intelligence and the fact that the whole language approach to reading and spelling did not meet his learning needs.

During the next five years, three noon hours per week year round and six weeks each summer, Mrs. Huggard presented phonic reading skills in a sequential approach, making sure that each skill was grasped before going onto the next.

When our son graduated from high school successfully with all his provincial assessments, we were extremely proud of him and his years of hard work. When asked who he felt had made the difference, Mrs. Huggard was at the head of the list. To say as a family we are grateful is to diminish the import of her belief that he, in fact, could learn to read even in the face of so many including ourselves who were not so confident.

Mrs. Huggard's understanding of the phonic code is beyond question. Those students who have the opportunity to meet Mrs. Huggard's phonemic friends will greatly benefit from the experience. Mrs. Huggard has a heartfelt belief that teaching the phonemic code is necessary element to successfully learning to read and spell and we would agree.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Stevens, *President of the Learning Disabilities Association of New Brunswick*  
Geoff Harding

## FORWARD

Cambridge, Mass. U.S. 7.3.'00

As teacher, tutor, and headmistress, Patricia Huggard has spent a lifetime helping children conquer reading difficulties in school, out of school and, too often because their school would not. The lessons offered in this book are much the same as those endorsed by research. Yet, borne of experience, rather than science, they are offered in the most human and caring voice. I loved reading this book.

Marilyn Jager Adams

Author, *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print*

FREDERICTON, NB

Patricia Huggard is an accomplished Reading Specialist who has written a wonderful new book entitled, ***Can Your Child Read Better Than 'A Hill O'Beans'? If Not Why Not?*** This book is a primer - a must read - for teachers who are engaged in teaching children to read.

Patricia Huggard has had a remarkable career teaching literally thousands of children to read. She has the unique gift of being able to have children acknowledge that it is an honour for her to meet them and to teach them to read. Children know they are valued for who they are, and whatever delays or deficiencies they may have experienced soon dissipate. The experience of reading at or above grade level is a powerful affirmation of their self-worth and esteem.

The methodology utilized by Patricia Huggard, while not always accepted by popular opinion, has proven to be most successful. She has been an advocate of teaching children to read within a structured, teacher-directed program. Her methodology is now being embraced by today's educators. This book describes the benefits of the Phonemic Awareness approach to the teaching of reading being introduced in public school classrooms.

The author addresses specific concerns within the public school system, without apology, but is also quick to offer recommendations as to what needs to be done to improve the quality of instruction for children. She is an experienced educator who knows that in order for change to be effective, classroom teachers need adequate in-service training and support. The book also includes a section of practical suggestions for the achievement of Instant Word Recognition.

I have had the opportunity to work with Patricia Huggard and can attest to the success of her approach to reading and her enthusiastic love for children. This book is intended not only for front line educators, but for parents and grandparents who want to be assured that their children or grandchildren will enjoy learning to read. The book is based on the

philosophical premise that all children can, and will, learn to read... "Better Than 'A Hill O'Beans'.

Dr. W. Barry Miller

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## INTRODUCTION 1

It is wonderful how much one learns 'on the job'. I have been learning for a great many years, more years, in fact, than I care to admit to! Even today, in my private practice, I am still learning.

My teaching has not always been confined to one-on-one. In fact, by far the greater part of my professional career as a reading specialist has been spent in classrooms spanning two continents over a period of more than five decades. In the last thirty years my teaching of reading has been in Canada, primarily in British Columbia, and more recently in New Brunswick.

### **THE POST-WAR YEARS:**

During the early years of my career, in a 'Grammar' School in Northern Ireland, I learned a great deal about setting up programs for children who give the appearance of having learning difficulties.

In 1945, at the cessation of World War Two, I was a widow with two small children. My husband, an R.A.F officer, had been killed on active service. With my newly acquired teaching credentials in Reading, Speech, and Drama, from London, it was time to become the bread-winner of the family.

### **THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

I was soon employed in a secondary school which had just been taken over by the government. At that time, in the mid-forties, all the schools in Northern Ireland were coming under government control for the first time. Prior to this the government had not been responsible for paying for the education of children over fifteen.

This secondary school building was situated in a Belfast suburb farming community. Most of the students had a 'farming' background. They anticipated a future in this same life-style. It was apparent that many of the children lacked motivation for academics. Those students who showed little interest were streamed into the 'D' level, as was the custom at that time.

Shortly before taking up my position on the staff of this suburban Grammar School I learned that a new principal had been appointed. I now recognize that he was a man of vision, ahead of his time in Education philosophy. He was determined to eliminate the lowest levels into which disinterested students had been placed.

Mr. Russell decreed that these Junior High School aged children should be kept in school. They must be given the chance to learn, and progress to their potential.

### **A BAPTISM OF FIRE!**

The principal sent for me. He explained his ideas. I was asked if I would take responsibility for Reading, Writing & Spelling with these 'lower' levels, grades 7 & 8 (Canadian equivalent).

It became my task to teach these disinterested students to read, write, and spell. In addition, I was expected to develop their speech arts. A strong local dialect prevailed in the district. This was a difficult assignment for a twenty-four year old beginning teacher. However, my training in the teaching of Speech Arts, Reading, and Drama, enabled me to approach the task with confidence.

To make a long story short, I devoted all my energies and expertise to helping these children. An innovative approach, and the inclusion of Drama in my curriculum, proved a winner. The students became interested, involved, and motivated. Through the implementation of a planned, developmental program, the students in my charge progressed extremely well. Ultimately there was a highly successful promotion rate to higher grades.

It was a great source of pleasure and satisfaction to me, later, to watch many of my former students achieve High School Graduation.

What I, myself, learned from this early valuable experience under Mr. Russell, at Ballyclare High School, has perhaps coloured my own philosophy about the latent potential of many underachieving children. It has certainly influenced me in devising teaching methods and reading programs to meet the needs of all students including those with learning problems, and related reading difficulties.

#### **ACADEMIC SEGREGATION:**

It was about this time, towards the end of the forties, that the Northern Ireland Education Ministry introduced a compulsory written exam for all students between the ages of eleven and twelve. It became known as: The 'Eleven-Plus'. Its purpose was to segregate the learners from the non-learners. In effect, it streamed successful children into an academic program. Those who failed the test were directed into vocational training.

From the moment of its implementation I was appalled at such a strong line drawn between those who passed and those who failed. It appeared to classify a great number of children as failures as a result of a single test. It bothered me so much that I gave up my position at Ballyclare, and devoted all my time and energy to helping children, who had literally been labeled as rejects. There were many intelligent children who desperately needed help.

#### **A PRIVATE SCHOOL**

It was just after the turn of the 50's that I planned to open a private school. I acquired a very large Georgian mansion, on lease, just outside Belfast. Whilst I felt fully capable of organizing and establishing a sound academic program, I knew I needed a Headmaster, as a figurehead, at least, for a boys' residential school. In retrospect I realize that I got more than I bargained for, or rather, *advertised* for. I interviewed many applicants. In retrospect I am grateful that I had the intuition to choose Turner Huggard, a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and an experienced teacher.

It is inappropriate at this time, and therefore not my intent, to dwell on the personal aspects of my life, but my choice of Headmaster was to have a profound and lasting

effect on my life: Turner and I were married a year later. Also, I consider it important to explain how my interest in the teaching of Reading, and the Speech Arts, has evolved over the past half-century.

### **A BOYS' RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL**

Vernon College opened its doors in the Fall of 1954. It had been named after my first husband, Flight Lieutenant Derek Vernon Turnpenney. The initial enrollment was twenty-five students.

Although the school was independent of the Northern Ireland Education system, it was subject to government inspection on a regular basis. The facilities, the program, and the teachers' qualifications, came under close scrutiny. The curriculum, however, remained innovative and stressed language Arts, and, in particular a Remedial Reading Program. It was very successful. The enrollment rapidly increased.

By the end of the decade the Georgian house was filled to capacity. It was more practical to move, rather than build on to the existing building.

With almost a hundred students and a staff of ten, we transferred the school to a castle, standing in a seventy acre estate, just outside Armagh. This ancient cathedral city is just on the border between the North and South of Ireland.

### **THREATENING HOSTILITIES:**

The move itself was a great success. Vernon College settled in and continued to flourish in its new ideal environs. Unfortunately, however; civil unrest threatened between the Protestants and the Catholic minority. The troubles were both religious and political. There appeared to be a likelihood of intervention from the outlawed Irish Republican Army of the South. As a result, Armagh, situated so near to the border; between the North and the South, was on the front line, so to speak. Vernon College was in a vulnerable position. The operation of a Boys' Residential School in the area was no longer a viable option. The school was closed. In 1962 Turner and I emigrated to British Columbia.

### **A NEW BEGINNING: THE YEARS IN CANADA:**

On my arrival in Vancouver; as an exercise in orientation, I attended a year's hands-on Specialist Teachers' Advanced Reading Course, at the University of British Columbia. It became even more apparent to me, during that time, that Drama is an important learning tool.

### **THE PRIVATE SECTOR:**

The introduction to teaching Canadian children began at St. George's School, a renowned independent school on the West Coast. Once again I was fortunate to be employed by a discerning and enlightened Headmaster. My responsibilities were directly related to the organization of a remedial reading program. Mr. Douglas Harker allowed me to use my own initiative. In a short time he extended my sphere of influence when he asked me if I would 'take on' students who were unable to take part in the afternoon games' program.

He was most agreeable when I suggested that I should use 'Drama' as my strategy. The class became immensely popular. The attendance was further augmented when the Headmaster approached me, again, to know if I would be responsible for students unable to have sports on wet afternoons! Since the winter weather in Vancouver is notoriously inclement. I really had my hands full. However; once again, Drama proved to be a winner even with sports-minded grade tens, eleven and twelves!

My time at St. George's was greatly enriched by my experience in dealing with impromptu situations and constantly changing student turn-over.

In 1965, however; I moved to the Okanagan Valley, in the BC Interior. My husband had been offered the Headmastership of an independent boys' school, in *Vernon*, coincidentally.

Once again I had the responsibility of setting up a Remedial Reading class.

It was 1970 when personal and family matters brought us to the East. A year at Rothesay Collegiate, in charge of remediation, filled a gap until we became permanently settled in New Brunswick.

#### **THE PROVINCIAL SCHOOLS' SYSTEM:**

I met with a challenge, as the Reading Specialist for the Provincial Schools' District, in Florenceville, New Brunswick.

Teaching of Reading methods and techniques were undergoing a change. A turn away from the recognized use of phonics was taking place in favour of what later developed into the 'Whole Language' method. I recall a conversation I had with the supervisor. The new approach to reading came up. I mentioned my preference for a form of phonics. The supervisor bristled: "Oh No! Never the twain shall meet!" That conversation has remained with me through the years. I am glad to be able to say that present thinking has proved her wrong! The 'twain' can, and shall meet, and now, does meet!

In the District schools across the countryside I continued to improve the quality of the reading for a great many students, whilst remaining faithful to my beliefs.

#### **THE FEDERAL SCHOOLS' SYSTEM**

My experiences were further broadened and developed during the latter half of the seventies. The Department of Indian Affairs placed me with the Tobique Indian Children at Mah-sos School, on the Reservation. Once again my position was directly related to Remediation, although the scope was somewhat broader. The facilities at Mah-sos were superb, but the library and the resource center needed up-grading.

My husband had been appointed as Director of Education for the Tobique Reserve by the Department of Indian Affairs. This included the administration of Mah-sos. Once again, Turner and I were working together.

### **THE END OF AN ERA**

It was rewarding and gratifying to earn acceptance in the Maliseet Community. After a few profitable and interesting years with the First Nation people, the time came when the Tobique Band decided to take charge of its own education program. My husband and I, together with all the non-native personnel, were replaced with First Nation teachers and administrators.

### **THE FINAL CHAPTER:**

As it happened, this move came at a time when there was an increasing number of children who were underachieving because of reading difficulties. I decided to continue my work by helping students on a one-on-one basis. The LARAMAC Office opened in Fredericton in the early 80's. The title 'LARAMAC' was devised from an acronym on the learning skills that children need for academic success:

Listening; Assimilating knowledge; Reading; Attitude;  
Memory; And; Communication

The rest, as they say, is History!

There has been so much in my life that seems to have been building up to this moment when the concepts which I have forged over half-a-century may be used effectively as a learning tool in the teaching of reading for the students of the new Millennium.

**PATRICIA H. HUGGARD**

Fredericton, N.B.

December, '99

## 'A GRANDFATHER'S CONCERN'

Browsing through a book store one afternoon I watched an elderly gentleman withdraw a slim volume from one of the non-fiction shelves. He carried it to the lady at the cash desk. I could not help overhearing what he was saying in a loud voice, raised in indignation. "If all these folks can write so much about how to learn to read, how come they don't stop *writing*, and start *teaching*?" The sales lady gave a short laugh. The gentleman continued in a more conversational tone, "I have five intelligent grandchildren, all in school. There's not one of 'em that can read better than a 'hill o'beans!'" He took up the bag and left the store. I concluded that he was carrying a book of some kind, on 'Reading'. As I passed the shelf I glanced at the titles. I gave a wry smile as I wondered what he could have found that might possibly be of help to him. Whatever his intentions, the thought of his five bright grandchildren unable to read better than a 'hill o'beans' made a lasting impression on me. 'Here I am,' I was thinking to myself, as the man's words echoed in my mind. 'I'm a successful specialist reading teacher for the past fifty years. I've helped hundreds, no, thousands of kids, and that's only the tip of the iceberg!' I was still thinking of the gentleman and his grandchildren as I left the store.

A thought struck me, 'Maybe I should do the opposite to what he suggested, and stop *teaching*, and start *writing*?' That way I could reach more of the many children that are having difficulties with their reading.

So, here I am, not many weeks later, doing just that!

The gentleman's problems are certainly not unique. In my reading practice I have come across many such problems though not always expressed so graphically. In writing this book I shall discuss the reasons why the grandchildren are unable to read 'better than a hill o'beans.' There are faults that are still evident in the approach to the teaching of reading, in the schools. I shall also put forward what, in my opinion, needs to be done to change some of the current practices, and improve the quality of instruction for all the children.

The teaching of reading has been my life's work. It is time for me to share the experiences I have had over the last fifty years. So, I write this book in the hope that it may help parents and grandparents and benefit those students who are depending upon a satisfactory approach to the teaching of reading in the schools.



## **DIFFICULTIES WITH 'PRINTED' WORDS**

First, and foremost, it is important to address the question: 'In what way is a child's lack of reading skills manifest?' In every case the symptom of a poor reader is obvious. The child is unable to recognize the printed word on paper. The word may however, be familiar in the student's 'spoken' or 'listening' vocabulary. For example, a child may be quite familiar with spoken words such as, 'cup', 'dog', 'bed', etc., and have no difficulty in interpreting their meaning. However, these same words written down may be totally unrecognizable. When a picture of a 'cup', 'dog' or 'bed' is placed alongside the written word it becomes immediately clear what the word is 'saying'. The child will happily say the word correctly.

Parents may believe that, at last, reading is taking place, and indeed, so may the child. But there comes a time when these particular words are not accompanied by their pictures. The 'sight' memory fails. Self confidence is shaken to the point that the student never wants to even attempt to 'read' again! An intense dislike of anything to do with reading develops, once students realize their inability to remember words. They often refuse to even try to read, aloud, or silently. Attempting to read aloud and failing miserably they believe is just asking for ridicule from classmates. Reading silently means nothing and becomes a futile task, so why bother? Many times the cause of lack of progress in school can be attributed to the child's negative attitude, and in particular a dislike of reading.

Most parents will agree, and I have spoken with many, that their child is normally bright and cheerful except when asked to do anything related to reading, writing, or spelling. It is then that the frustrations appear in the guise of stony silence, or tears.

### **LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS:**

'Why is it?' I am asked, 'what is causing this lack of self confidence? What is it about reading that can provoke my child to tears, or bring about such a poor attitude?' I cannot deny that there are many, many children, from primary to high school who suffer miserably from inadequate reading skills. Indeed, some with no reading skills at all!

Why is it that learning to read is such a real problem for so many students, since it is the main objective in the classrooms?

When a child comes to me for help with reading I always ask the same question, "Why do *you* think it is, that you are having a problem with your reading?" I always get the same answer; one way or another. 'It's because I don't know what the words say! 'And it's true! They don't know how to work out the words. This, then, is their basic problem: their inability to work out words. Paradoxically the words they cannot recognize in print may be perfectly familiar to them in their spoken vocabulary.

Students' difficulty in working out words is a problem at all levels of schooling, not only at primary and elementary level. In fact, in the upper grades it is even more of a handicap

to general progress when students encounter more complex words, especially those of a technical or scientific nature.

### ***THE ULTIMATE QUESTION***

Why is it, then, that this situation has become a thorn in the flesh of so many students considering the fact that 'word recognition' is essential to meaningful reading? Children unable to work out words are, in their own terms, 'stuck' over every unfamiliar word they come across in print.

Perhaps the reason for this problem may be found by looking back at the various approaches to the teaching of reading over the last half-century.

### ***THE LOVE OF READING A PRIORITY:***

Throughout the last forty years or so, since the break away from the phonics approach, the main thrust in the reading program has been towards fostering a love of reading from the earliest stage of a child's schooling. Young students have been introduced to attractive books almost from day one.

Students are 'encouraged' to learn to read by looking at these colorful picture books, and by being 'read to' by a method referred to as 'shared reading' The old 'boring' phonic drills were definitely 'out' .The new 'fun' approach was 'in' .The decline of reading standards had begun!

It is difficult to explain all the reasons for the change from the old Phonetic approach. It had been the accepted method of teaching reading for many decades. Continued criticism of the method did, however; herald the beginning of a changing trend in Language Arts programs in the mid fifties. At this time there arose a bitter and long lasting controversy, referred to as 'The Great Debate'.



### ***A BITTER DISPUTE***

A long lasting and bitter dispute arose between the Phonics supporters and those who favored the 'sight' method, and the complete dissolution of phonics. There were educators who believed, implicitly, that new concepts were long overdue which would simplify the learning to read process for all students.

Unfortunately the rancour between the two groups did a great deal of harm to the common goal; to create a viable reading program which would meet the needs of all students, allowing them to read meaningfully, and with enjoyment. Each group held its ground, allowing no room for compromise or discussion. The two opposing philosophies appeared to be carved in stone!

### ***THE DEMISE OF THE PHONICS METHOD:***

There was little doubt that the cumbersome method of teaching reading was ready for a major overhaul, at this time in mid-century.

From the very first, it was impossible for me to escape being caught up in the changes that were taking place, as I was employed in the Ballycare High School, as a Reading, and Speech Arts Specialist. This government school was situated in the outskirts of the City of Belfast, Northern Ireland. I also had a 'Speech Therapy' private practice, in the city. I was, of course, aware of the criticisms that were being levelled at the current approach to the teaching of reading. I was not, and never had been, against the sounds being taught by the phonics method but I was certainly opposed to the way in which they were presented to the students. My reasons for this I will set down, later. In the meantime, it was impossible for me to avoid being involved in the new ideas although I adhered to my belief in the importance of phonics in a reading program. In those early days of my profession, I was generally more involved in the Speech Arts, than in the teaching of reading and spelling, as I had a very busy practice in which Speech Training predominated. I was all the more surprised, therefore, when the trend reversed. I found myself involved with an increasing number of young student-teachers. I became interested in their various opinions and complaints about their training in the teaching of reading. They expressed criticism of the phonic drills. It seemed to them that 'Boh!' 'Bah!' 'Buh!' etc., was the wrong way to present the sounds. The young people's views were so intense that they came to me for help and advice. In their opinion there had to be a better and more enjoyable method of teaching and learning reading.

### ***A CAREER CHANGE***

It was at this point in time, I think, that my career took a turn towards a forty-year long interest in the teaching of reading. So it happened. In the 1950's I became more involved in the 'Learning to Read' change-over; than I had anticipated. I was motivated by the earnest and enthusiastic young student-teachers who wanted to be the best they could be, and do the best they could do, in their chosen profession.

You might say, then, that I embarked on a career at a critical stage in the development of the reading programs. I remained adamant, however; about the need for instruction on 'The Alphabetic Code' in the teaching of reading approach. I have never wavered from the conviction that the letters of the alphabet should be taught so that the 'sound' associated with each letter is learned together and at the same time as 'sight' of the letter. Since the alphabet is a code, children should be taught how to unlock that code at the earliest moment in their schooling.



### ***PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT***

It was surprising how personal my involvement in the reading program was to become. My two children had reached the 'school-going' age. It was only natural, then, that the Reading Programs presented became my concern.

When Colin entered Kindergarten the reading readiness program was phonics oriented. However; by the next year; in grade 1, Colin was instructed in the new 'Look & Say'

method. I was very interested to see how Colin would respond to the new 'Look & Say' approach. With my personal preference for phonics in a reading program I was glad that my son had had at least his first year in school with Phonics. It was a time of change, and I wasn't at all sure how Colin would respond to the new methods. The change seemed to set him back, at first. However; the repetition of key words in the 'sight' method played its part and he continued to make progress. Colin has been an avid reader to this day. I still like to believe that the year he had with phonics set him on the right road, and enabled him to avoid being "stuck!", as they say when confronted with a new word.

I must tell you about my daughter; though, if I am to be completely fair to both sides of the argument. Judith, a really bright little girl, a year younger than her brother; was taught to read without the 'benefit' of phonics. There are children in this world who can learn to read for themselves, by whatever system or method is presented to them. Judith was one of these children lucky enough to possess inherent visual and auditory skills. She had plenty of self-confidence and the ability to remember sight words more easily than her less able counterparts who may not have fully developed the particular skills necessary. I am sure that the overworked, and sometimes abused cliché: 'All Children Learn Differently' is familiar? But, to return to the case in point, my daughter, Judith. She was reading well ahead of her classmates in no time. Judith, too, has been a very prolific reader; and remains so, to this day.

#### ***PHONICS, A CRITICAL ANALYSIS***

The main criticism of the phonetic method was the cumbersome way in which the words had to be 'sounded out'. The resulting Buh's, Dugh's & Guh's distorted the true sounds and made comprehension difficult.

The thrust of the phonics approach was 'auditory perception'. The sounds of all the letters were taught through wearisome drills. This approach did not meet the needs of students who had poor auditory perception. There are many such students who have difficulty in distinguishing the difference between sounds.

The consonants were taught as 'saying' 'B-ugh', 'D-ugh', 'G-ugh', etc. Technically speaking this was in error. Consonants do not have a sound in their own right, they are completely dependent on the vowels. But as far as the students were concerned they were dealing with wearisome drills. When it came to merging vowel sounds with consonants, in words, there was a problem with the 'Bugh's', 'Dugh's' & 'Guh's' which limited comprehension. By the time the students had sounded out one or more unknown words in a sentence they had lost track of what they were reading. The phonics method was considered non-productive in working out the words on paper even though they may have been familiar with those same words in their spoken and listening vocabulary. In short, the critics agreed that lack of potential for word recognition, and the problem with comprehension were key factors in their dissatisfaction with the phonics approach. There were complaints, too, that, although the children were taught to recognize regular word patterns, the irregularities continued to be a problem. These 'unexpected encounters' resulted in a great deal of confusion when things didn't work out as expected. A great deal of reliance was placed on students' auditory perceptual memory. They were expected to pick up and remember all the variables and exceptions in sounds.

This was an impossible task, even through repetition. A great many students have poor perceptual memories for words; there are those who experience difficulty with 'sound' discrimination. These were the children who fell through the cracks in the learning to read process. It was not an enjoyable method of learning to read in those days of 'Round Robin' class participation. The shy and withdrawn child suffered a great deal in attempting to read aloud. This problem intensified in the years that followed the war. The era of the 'Baby-Boomers' saw a dramatic increase in class-size, initially at primary and elementary level. With larger numbers to deal with the Round Robin method became impractical and unsatisfactory.

However, in spite of the fact that the phonics approach of the times did not meet the needs of all students, yet there were a great many children that it did suit. As a matter of fact, in those days, I rarely came across a student who could not read acceptably. Even more surprising, looking back on it, there were remarkably few children whom I could diagnose as having a real reading problem, as such. The students I was involved with didn't appear to have serious learning problems, although they lacked an interest in learning, period!

Whilst I was aware of the changes that were taking place, I did not approve of the clumsy way of sounding out the letters, but I did see the need for a structured phonics-based program. I heartily disagreed with the 'overboard with all phonics' recommendation that was widespread. I did feel that the phonetic approach should be less drill oriented. I did not go along with the critics who argued that some children cannot learn to discriminate between the vowel sounds. It's true that some children have poor auditory perception, but that doesn't mean that they cannot be *taught*, as the critics implied was the case. To this day I have believed that the sound-values of the letters, especially the vowels, can be learned by students, through oral oriented speech activities, unless they are hearing-impaired. But, this observations is a side issue at this point. I am guilty of digressing from the arguments largely against the phonetic method of teaching reading. In my opinion, the problems were not the fault of the 'sounds', themselves; it was the way in which they were presented to the students that caused the trouble. I think the strongest card in the hands of the phonics critics was the point we just made: 'the belief that some children simply cannot recognize the differences in vowel sounds. However, that may be because these children have not been taught the necessary speech skills. I have countered that argument, but there was not enough support for this theory, and therefore the method was considered unsuitable in meeting the needs of all children.

#### ***THE TWO MAIN REASONS:***

It is sufficient to say, at this time, that the demise of the Phonetic program was engendered by the fact that it was considered too drill-oriented. It was too dependent on auditory perception. There were other issues, including a lack of comprehension following the clumsy sounding out of unknown words. Meaningful reading could not take place. Also, the Round Robin class reading was becoming increasingly unpopular as it destroyed nervous children's self-confidence.

It would seem that the opponents of Phonics made a good case for themselves. In fact it overwhelmed all other considerations.

**PLACING THE BLAME:**

A great deal of the blame for the subsequent and rapid deterioration of standards must be placed equally on the shoulders of the two opposing groups. They left no room for constructive discussion. Thus, the 50's heralded a time of conflict and disagreement during which it was the children who suffered. It has been a long and unproductive period, created by the complete rejection of the letter-sounds in the new Holistic era with its 'Many Strategies' approach to word recognition.

**A CHANGE OF PHILOSOPHY:**

There arose, at this time, three prominent educators: Professors Frank Smith, and the husband and wife team: K.S., and YM. Goodman.

Their views were widely accepted and quickly spread across the United States and into Canada. The works of Smith and the Goodmans influenced program planners and teachers across the continent as the new philosophies took hold.

**WATERED DOWN VERSION:**

The Phonetic approach, as such, was a thing of the past. Many schools, however, were reluctant to relinquish the 'status quo', and adopted a modified version. This was an attempt to satisfy parents who were already blaming the system's new approach for their children's lack of progress.

**'LOOK and SAY'**

Initially, in its early stages, the new approach to the teaching of reading was named the "Look and Say" method. It was based on the recognition of remembered words, by 'sight'. There was a great deal of emphasis placed on the excessive use of FLASH CARDS, to enforce *visual* word-memory. This technique has been frowned upon for creating more problems than it solved. It was too demanding on students who lacked the inherent visual perception and memory skills to enable them to respond rapidly to these 'word displays'. The Look & Say method resulted in frustration and anxiety when long lists of words to be memorized became home-work projects. Parents were expected to drill their children to encourage the development of a 'visual memory' vocabulary.

The 'Memory' system backfired somewhat. Students remembered the 'sound' of the word, but were unable to recall it *visually*. For instance, an 'and' could become 'had' or 'then' could become 'is' with no connection whatsoever between the 'sight' and the 'sound' of the word. Students remembered, in their auditory perception, words from the list they had been previously given to learn and memorize, but they had no means by which they could relate to them 'visually'. This has caused problems and confusion all along the line!

Lack of knowledge of the correct sounds of the vowels can lead to enormous problems with spelling, even to this very day! In my practice, and from what I hear from parents, children of all ages and stages, continually mix up small 'sight' words such as 'what', 'with', 'when', 'were', 'where', etc.

For many years it has been the complaint of parents that their children can remember 'long' words, on paper. They get completely mixed up with the short everyday words such

as the 'that's', 'then's', 'what's', etc. Even older students suffer from this syndrome engendered by the 'sight' only method of their early learning experience.

The 'sight' and 'memory' method was in contradiction of the students' need to utilize the sounds of words they used in their 'spoken' vocabulary, to help them with their sight

memory. 

### **THE DICK AND JANE ERA**

Some good evolved from the Look & Say method. An approach arose which developed strong 'word recognition' skills. It presented words which combined both 'sight' and 'sound', in constant repetition. This was the time of a series entitled: 'Dick & Jane'. The thrust of these immensely popular books was built, primarily, around the very effective development of word recognition skills. The constant repetition in the simplified vocabulary led to recognition of word 'groups' or word 'patterns'. In the books' text, which was largely 'dialogue', these words became familiar in the children's *sight* and *sound*, vocabulary. With emphasis on the 'sight' **and** 'sound'. In this indirect way great strides were made in the learning to read process, due to the sequential presentation of these constantly repeated word patterns, interspersed with sight words.

The children loved it. Adults, parents and grandparents, today tell me how much they enjoyed learning to read by means of Dick & Jane, and their dog, Spot. It's true! The readers of today owe a great deal to that famous pair, and their dog.

The repetition of the word-groups, and the short dialogue throughout the series, enabled students to pick up hundreds of similar words from recognized word-patterns. Dick & Jane reigned supreme for some years. Like the adage, 'A Prophet is not without honour save in his own country', the true value of Dick & Jane was not fully appreciated in its own day. That came later, from adults who had used it, when learning to read, as

children. 

### **UNDERESTIMATED VALUES**

Unfortunately, educators and program planners, on both sides, phonics and non-phonics, failed to realize the positive impact that the Dick and Jane series was having on the learning to read process. They were too busy indulging in criticisms of the stilted vocabulary, the uninteresting story-line, and, indeed, the endless repetitions! They failed to recognize the value of these repetitious word patterns in word recognition, and that this 'recognition of word patterns' enabled students to read literally hundreds of words made up from the same word-patterns. It certainly augmented their reading vocabulary. They also missed the fact that the 'stilted' vocabulary they referred to, was an invaluable tool for practice in **phrase** reading, a key factor in the reading process. So it was that the Dick & Jane program was allowed to lapse into obscurity, saved in the minds of today's parents and grandparents. They produce their tattered dog-eared copies hoping to help

their children, or grandchildren, with their reading problems. And it does! 

### **THE HOLISTIC APPROACH:**

With the demise of Dick & Jane, their 'Look & Say' designation also disappeared. It was replaced by the 'Holistic' method of teaching reading and spelling. This came under the Language Arts umbrella as the 'Whole Word' approach. It became the accepted program. The emphasis lay on the need to promote a love of reading in all students. To this end all forms of 'structure' were abolished as a negative influence on the new philosophy. The wide open approach to learning to read depended on the individual child's abilities. Students who were weak in auditory strengths could utilize their visual skills to help them recognize unfamiliar words. This led to guessing techniques, or picture-reading, for clues. On the other hand, the children with poor visual skills could depend on their auditory strengths to work out words. However, this was not a fail-safe method, considering that the students did not have the knowledge of the sounds of the letters. It was not part of the Holistic philosophy to teach students the sounds of letters and their relationship to words. This was considered to be a form of 'structure' and therefore detrimental to the real thrust of the approach, namely to instill enjoyment in reading, without hassle.

### **STRATEGIES DEVISED:**

Children were given various strategies to help them work out unfamiliar words, or to substitute the nearest meaning that would make sense of the text. In order to perform this task the student, coming to an unknown word, had to guess a word that might fit in, or temporarily delete the word until the reading of the whole sentence was completed. Finally, the student must replace the unknown word, with a word that made sense in the text. This method played havoc with meaningful reading. Comprehension became a difficulty with many children.

Another option offered to the students having difficulty with word recognition, was to look for clues from a picture associated with the text, if there was one. This method, in itself, became largely a matter of guesswork, and, in any case, the process of studying a picture broke the train of thought, and interfered with comprehension.

There was yet another strategy that was considered helpful in finding an unknown word: looking for small words within a long word. But this method was flawed in cases like '**father**' which could be constructed as **fat-her**, etc. This particular strategy was really not suited to the learning to read process if the students had not been given the rudiments of the alphabetic code, and an understanding of the sounds of the letters. Technically speaking, many words are made up of 'consonant-vowel-digraphs', that is, words that contain two letters that, together, represent one sound, as, for example, in '**oil**'. This particular strategy would be even more unreliable in multi-syllable words.

### **STRATEGIES, THE RATIONALE:**

It must be made clear that these strategies were devised to provide a method of word-recognition for students in a situation where the lack of knowledge of the alphabetic code precluded any other viable alternative for 'working out' unknown words. Students had no way of knowing what the words 'said'.

The learning to recognize unfamiliar words approach, named: 'The Many Strategies', was so called because it was supposed to offer a number of alternatives to meet different

needs. Educators were applying the axiom that 'All Children Learn Differently'. There was felt to be a need to offer all children several alternatives in their approach to word recognition, in the absence of the knowledge of the alphabetic code. The many strategies were intended as a substitute for the merging of 'sight' and 'sound' in the learning to read process.

**WORD RECOGNITION:**

In her book, 'BEGINNING TO READ', Dr. Marilyn Jager Adams had this to say about the difficulties involved with comprehension where the method used for the recognition of words is inappropriate, or inadequate:

"The Greater the time and effort that a reader must invest in each individual word, the slimmer the likelihood that preceding words of the phrase will be remembered when it is time to put them all together".

It would seem, therefore, that the emphasis on the unsuccessful 'Many Strategies' for word recognition is an integral part of today's reading difficulties, including those of the concerned gentleman's grandchildren, unable to read 'better than a hill o'beans'!

**THE IMPACT OF AN AMERICAN EDUCATOR.**

Forty years ago an American Educator; and author of the best seller; 'Why Johnnie Can't Read', Rudolph Flesch, stirred up the controversy about the reading programs. He vehemently criticized the 'Look & Say' approach. Flesch predicted doom and gloom for the Education System if the method were allowed to continue. Twenty years later he produced a second book, 'Why Johnnie Still Can't Read'! In it he confirmed his prediction for the decline of literacy standards. He encouraged parents to make sure that the methods of teaching reading were changed.

Rudolph Flesch created a great deal of bad feelings with educators and publishers. He was the first person to speak out so strongly, and in no uncertain terms, against the new methods. He did succeed in attracting the attention of a great many dissatisfied parents. In hindsight we can truthfully say that Flesch was responsible for bringing the academic problems of the times out into the open but in his way of doing so he certainly did nothing to lessen the intense bitterness that prevailed between the opposing factions.

**A LEARNING NEED OVERLOOKED**

In spite of all the changes, and advanced technology, in all the schools, that have taken place over the last hundred years, we have now reached the new millennium still showing a need for a viable Language Arts Program for today's students.

New concepts are now available but there is a serious need for a comprehensive, well planned sequentially organized program to be put together; in book form, and put into circulation in the schools. Such a move would re-establish parents' confidence in the

system and the teaching of reading.



# READING PRACTICE THROUGH READING TEXTS

Most important in the field of 'Learning to Read' is the matter of standardized materials, in the form of Reading Texts.

During the last forty years books have gradually become obsolete, in the presentation of reading programs to students. The rationale behind the demise of reading books was the lack of interesting material; the disappearance of text books was due to the 'busy-work' syndrome associated with work-books.

These criticisms held some validity, as far as many of the programs of the times were concerned, but the short-comings of the past should not preclude better judgment for the future. However, it has become an entrenched factor in Holistic psychology that text books should not be used.

The onus has been placed on teachers to find suitable materials - poems, short stories, etc., and to make copies for distribution. There has arisen a dependence on classroom collections of stories, poems, and chapter books, for silent, and shared reading purposes. Since there has been no standardized format, and the reading programs have been entirely unstructured, this method of providing materials to the students has served a purpose. For those students who could read words from memory the unstructured approach sufficed. For students unable to read it was 'academic'! Children unable to read would day-dream away their reading time, anyway.

## ***AN OMISSION OF CONSEQUENCE:***

The absence of a standardized program is a serious omission for students who have failed to learn certain skills. They do not have the opportunity for study and review.

A comprehensive, sequentially arranged program should be presented so that mastery of each skill could be attained before proceeding to the next. A written, printed, standardized text book is the only way in which all the skills in the reading process can be taught, assessed, and mastered.

## ***THE IMPORTANCE OF TEXT-BOOKS:***

The importance of a text book program for the teaching of reading cannot be over-stated.

-  A text book allows for the review of the skills that some children may have found difficult, the first time around.
-  A text book will facilitate students who have transferred from other schools.
-  A text book will help M&R teachers to co-ordinate with the classroom teacher, and provide the student with the requisite help.
-  A text book would help parents to work more closely with the teacher, and have a better understanding of their child's progress.
-  A text book would free up the teacher from time consuming research for materials,

and allow for more teaching time.

The lack of text books is one of the many flaws in the present system of teaching reading. Children should be taught how to handle books for learning, and for pleasure, from an early age in their schooling.

The 'Hill O'Beans' Grandfather would not have found it necessary to search through a book store to find help for his grandchildren, unable to read. He would have welcomed a carefully put together text book, brought home from school, for practice reading, and review. All parents would be better able to work with their children, in understanding their learning needs.

Reading text books are indeed a necessary addition to the classrooms where learning to read is expected to take place. We have been too long without them!



***A 'LEARNING NEED' OVERLOOKED:***

In all walks of life the ability to read, and understand the written word, is the prerequisite to success. Conversely, illiteracy is the hall mark of failure. Reading is the main source of assimilating knowledge from all sources: books, television, or computers. Illiteracy is the greatest handicap to progress and achievement.

It is the responsibility of every government to provide an education system that will afford every man, woman, and child, the opportunity to learn to read to their potential.

Psychologically, the advent of a new century gives us pause for thought, to look back, and to look forward; to relinquish our hold on the status quo, and embrace new concepts.



**At this time, when there is an awareness of the need for change in the Language Arts Program, and since change is already taking place, this text seems to be appropriate.**

*O God, give us the*

**SERENITY**

*To accept what cannot be changed;*

**COURAGE**

*To change what should be changed,*

**WISDOM**

*To distinguish one from the other.*

Reinhold Niebuhr



***FURTHER CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY:***

In recent years the need for change in the Language Arts Program has become apparent. Intensive tests and research, in the United States, have shown, unequivocally, that children who are taught reading through the medium of the 'Alphabetic Code' have a much higher success rate than their counterparts who are not. California is one of the first states to have embraced the new phonics concepts, with great success. The acceptance of the new ideas has rapidly become more widespread, reaching Canada, within the last months of the century. Changes in Education philosophy have swept across the nation. Program planners have instigated changes in the approach to the teaching of reading in the primary and elementary schools. The need for the introduction of the Alphabetic Code is recognized. The new concept, the Phonemic Awareness approach, is developmental, and ideally suited to the enhancement of auditory and visual perception in all children, beginning at kindergarten level.

***THE NEW CHANGES:***

The change in philosophy and the new concepts in the Language Arts Program have arrived a little late for students already in the mid-years of their schooling. There are a great many students in Middle School and High School, who are not reading and spelling at an acceptable level. These students, one might say, have 'fallen through the cracks' in the erst-while unproductive program. However, the skills needed for confident, meaningful reading, are basically the same at all levels of learning. The new approach may equally well benefit all students, including those who have failed to acquire reading competence in their early years. The Phonemic Awareness approach meets the needs of all students throughout the system. Its implementation may have far reaching effects on Literacy standards in the new millennium.

***PHONEMIC AWARENESS:***

What then, is Phonemic Awareness, and how does it work? Phonemic Awareness, as the term implies, is a Phonics based approach to the teaching of reading. It begins with the introduction of the alphabetic code, as early as possible in the child's schooling. This means that students will be taught the alphabet not only by the 'sight' of the symbols, or letters, but also together with the 'sounds' which are associated with each of the letters. The teaching of reading through the Phonemic Awareness approach, depends entirely on the children's knowledge of the alphabetic code, although it has a much wider application, in a structured sequential approach to the teaching of Visual and Auditory skills.

# PHONEMIC AWARENESS

and

## **RELEVANT DEFINITIONS RE 'THE ALPHABETIC CODE'**

There is a great deal of similarity between the terms relating to Phonemic Awareness and the Alphabetic Code. Indeed it is difficult to come by a definition of Phonemic Awareness.

To that end I telephoned Dr. Marilyn Jager Adams, who is, in my opinion, one of the greatest exponents of the Learning to Read process. Dr. Adams responded without hesitation. Her definition of Phonemic Awareness is concise:

"Phonemic Awareness is an awareness that every single spoken word can be conceived as a sequence of phonemes".

For other definitions I consulted Canadian dictionaries, with the following results, each of which is a direct quote:

### **PHONEMIC AWARENESS**

Phonemic Awareness is an awareness of the sounds of the individual letters that represent them and their particular utterances, singly, or in groups, in word patterns or in deviations from the norm.

### **NOTE:**

The fact that every single spoken word can be conceived as a sequence of phonemes means that every single written word can also be conceived as a sequence of phonemes which must be recognized on paper through the knowledge of the particular sounds made by the letters representing the phonemes.

P.H.H.

### **PHONIC:**

'of having to do with sound - acoustic - of sounds made in speech - of having to do with phonics.'

### **PHONICS:**

'method of teaching people to read or pronounce words by learning the relationship between the sounds of the language and the letters or groups of letters used to represent them.'

### **PHONOLOGY:**

'The study of sound made in speech.'

**PHONETIC:**

'having to do with sounds made in the voice - representing the sounds of speech.'

**PHONETICS:**

'the scientific study & classification of sounds made in speech - the system of speech sounds of a language or group of languages.'

**PHONEMES:**

'Speech sounds which distinguish utterances one from another - the sound of the individual letter that represents it.'



In my opinion, 'Phonemic Awareness' which is involved directly, and indirectly, in the presentation of so many of the basic skills in the learning to read process, is here to stay!

Marilyn Adams has expressed it as: 'The buzz word of the century!'

**PHONEMIC AWARENESS:**

Much attention has been paid to the 'auditory' aspects of learning to read. Visual skills are also an integral part of the Phonemic Awareness approach. The 'visual' awareness of word patterns must occur simultaneously with 'auditory' awareness. It is the instant merging of sight and sound that enables meaningful reading to take place.

All these skills, auditory, visual, and basic linguistics, are essential components of the **Phonemic Awareness concept.**

**AN INTEGRATED APPROACH**

Phonemic Awareness is an integral facet in the learning process, beginning in infancy. Babies quickly discover that making vocal 'noises' attracts instant attention. As the young child develops perceptual skills he learns how to use specific sounds to express specific needs, including pleasure or discomfort. It is not long before he can exercise considerable control over his immediate environment.

The process of perceptual development doesn't end with childhood. Learning, through phonemic awareness, is an on-going procedure through school days into adulthood. It is a well accepted cliché that 'one never stops learning!'



**SWEEPING CHANGES:**

While new ideas were changing the lace of Education across the United States in recent years, these changes have only recently reached Canada. Educators are now instigating new ideas in the Language Arts Programs in the primary and elementary schools.

The Maritime provinces are working to establish a greater sense of uniformity in the approach to the teaching of reading based on 'Phonemic Awareness.' This new concept is oriented towards the 'Alphabetic Code' and its inclusion in the reading and spelling programs in the classroom.

### ***THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE***

The Phonemic Awareness approach to the teaching of reading is indeed an excellent one. It depends for its success, however, on the quality of its presentation to the students. Like any other program involving new concepts, the training of the teachers is of paramount importance. Teachers will undoubtedly need a great deal of inservicing, to become familiar and comfortable with the changes in the approach to the teaching of reading. There is indeed a psychological barrier to be overcome. During the last forty years, one might say the total professional life span of today's teachers, they have been teaching reading with total avoidance of all forms of phonics. It is going to be difficult to make a 'U'-turn into what has been previously regarded as a prohibited area.

Teachers are already attempting this turn-around, but it cannot be without some trepidation as to the best method of using phonics. In the absence of positive direction in the meantime, there is the danger of a resurgence of the phonics methods of the 'old days': sounding out letters. It is essential, therefore, that, in order to get the new concepts, in the phonics approach, into the classrooms as soon as possible, the teachers must be given the opportunity to study and understand the implications involved in its presentation. There is no doubt it will be readily accepted by teachers, thus obviating the Holistic method which has caused so many problems with so many students.



### ***NEW PHILOSOPHIES:***

Although Phonemic Awareness is gradually being introduced into the reading program, there are still many aspects of it that are not yet fully integrated. It will be some time before the connection between the letters, and their sounds, is applied appropriately since 'Old Habits Die Hard!'

The presentation of the phonemes, and the part they play, together with their arrangement in words, which is so vital to the reading process, has yet to be fully implemented. Knowing the sounds of the letters is, in itself, not enough. The connection between the sounds, and their place in the printed word, which depends absolutely on 'visual recognition', has yet to be established at the outset. Word recognition skills are essential before reading can take place.

### ***IN THE MEANTIME...***

Although the importance of phonics in the reading process has been finally recognized and accepted, it is difficult for the teachers to make a complete 'turn around' from the methods they have used for so long. 'When driving, before making a 'U' -turn, the

practice is to stop and assess the situation, and only then move in the new direction when feeling confident in doing so.'

### ***A QUESTIONABLE PRACTICE***

The Holistic method of teaching beginners to read by 'reading' was seriously flawed for a number of reasons. The most obvious of which is the fact that a student who can't read shouldn't be presented with a book which he, or she, *can't* read! What actually happens in this situation is, that the child will aimlessly turn the pages and look at the pictures, in order to get some sense from what they are 'reading'. This is a very harmful practice. It may create a lasting mis-association. For example, if a student looks at a picture with a woman holding a large pair of scissors, the student may conjure up the word 'cut' or 'sew' or 'mother' or 'mend' and for ever after mix up the word scissors with any number of words. If the word appears in the caption it is even more likely to create problems with spelling 'cut' for 'scissors'.



# IN REVIEW

## **THE HEART OF THE MATTER:**

We have now reached the stage for a critical analysis of the difficulties and problems facing all poor readers, and non-readers, in the learning to read process. We must examine the reason why so many students *hate* reading; why so many primary-school children lose confidence in their ability to learn. If you ask any number of children what the problem is, the answers you get are invariably based on a long list of 'Don't Know How's'! They go more or less as follows, in random order:

"I don't know how to work out the words."

"I don't know the big words and I get stuck!"

"I don't know what the letters say."

"I don't remember words I've seen before."

Or; you might even hear something like:

"I don't like reading, and I don't like school! I guess I'm stupid!"

It would be my guess that our friend the grandfather would accept any or all of the above, as the reasons why his grandchildren can't read better than a 'hill o'beans'!

The problem would appear to be related to one straight forward fact: Students who are unable to *recognize words*, in print, are unable to read meaningfully. Period!

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF WORD RECOGNITION**

Meaningful reading depends on 'word recognition'. Its importance cannot be overstated. The term may be used and repeated many times in this text, but repetition is the key to recognition, as we have already mentioned in the case of 'Dick & Jane'.

The actual process of recognizing words becomes automatic and instinctive with constant use and lots of practice. The wonderful computer-like workings of the brain can perform a number of tasks almost instantaneously if we can provide it with the right information. In the case of word recognition the brain's visual perception must 'see' the word, and recognize a familiar pattern. The 'sounds' of the letters must also be pre-recorded, thanks to a thorough knowledge of the alphabetic code, and basic instruction in linguistics. Without any apparent effort on the part of the reader these factors of sight and sound are instinctively translated together into a meaningful word. Instant word recognition takes place! The brain is an instant processor of information. Sometimes it needs a 'prompt' however. In cases where the reader has just recognized the first syllable of a word, a mere glance at the second syllable may awaken immediate recognition, in the brain.

## **THE PROCESS OF WORD RECOGNITION**

If the reader has a knowledge of the integrated facets of the Phonemic Awareness approach to the reading process, he, or she, will be conversant with the necessary linguistic skills. The prefixes, or suffixes, or knowing the 'root' word may be all the

computer-mind needs to fill in the gaps. Students will find that the recognition of unfamiliar 'hard' words takes place immediately.

**OUT-DATED METHODS:**

If a case for 'instant word recognition' has been made, through an understanding of the Phonemic Awareness concepts, there should be no need to carry a lot of 'excess baggage' into the learning to read process. For instance, 'sounding out' of the letters, reminiscent of a bygone era, is no longer necessary, given the new concepts of word recognition. As a matter of fact, to pursue the old-fashioned sounding out of letters is not only unnecessary, it will be a handicap to progress in meaningful reading. The ugly and misleading 'Boh!', 'Bah!', 'Buh's!' must become an unwanted relic of the past! "No More Bah's!" (a slight mis-quote from a Television commercial!)

If we are to provide the prevalent 'Hill O'Beans' symptoms with an effective antidote we must get rid of the 'sounding-out' letter-by-letter syndrome along with excess baggage carried over from the Holistic era. Some of these are, unfortunately, are the well-established modus operandi in the teaching of reading methods.

Next to the old-fashioned phonics, in line for permanent retirement, must be the 'Many Strategies' approach to the 'working out', or 'decoding' unfamiliar words, which were assumed to be an improvement on the 'working out' of words letter-by-letter, but they still are unsatisfactory as a tool for instant word recognition. Guessing; predicting; picture reading; etc., are poor substitutes for the Phonemic Awareness method of achieving word recognition. Certainly they have no place as an alternative, or 'back-up' system. It would be best suited to the needs of the students if the many strategies would join the Old Phonics, in obscurity! All students will be better served by the Phonemic Awareness approach which engenders Instant Word Recognition. This is, without question, the single, most important factor in the learning to read process.

Whilst the Phonemic Awareness concepts, applied in a Language Arts Program, contain all the intrinsically necessary 'ingredients' for building a sure 'reading' foundation for all students, yet, the success of a Phonemic Awareness Program depends entirely on the quality of its presentation by the teachers. The teachers should deliver the phonemic awareness program containing the necessary perceptual and linguistic skills in a manner that will stimulate interest and enthusiasm, in their students. Therefore, the teachers themselves should be comfortable with the Phonemic awareness approach and be fully conversant with the new concepts, the most important of which is 'Word Recognition'. This negates many of the methods they have been accustomed to using. Teachers will need to conform to a new set of ideas which do not include sounding out letters, or the use of the Many Strategies. If I may use an analogy: If one has been driving a 'stick-shift' car for many years, the change over to 'automatic' can be quite confusing, at first. However, instant, automatic gear changes provide for a much smoother operation, especially for the passengers! Selecting gears is like using the Many Strategies to find the word, instead of something that becomes entirely automatic for instant word recognition. This analogy may be superfluous, really, as the case for the Phonemic awareness approach is unequivocal. There is nothing more important to the reading process than a well-explained program taught by well-informed teachers. This opinion is expressed by

Mary Burkhart, in her forward to Rudolph Flesche's book, 'Why Johnnie Still Can't Read':

"I am convinced, without doubt, that a superior program taught by well-trained teachers enables all children to learn to read."

This observation was made in 1955, when Mary Burkhart was the Director of the Department of Reading in the City of Rochester, U.S., School District. I include it here since it is relevant to the present situation.

**MARILYN JAGER ADAMS**

It is not my intention to rely on 'back-up' material in this book to support my theories, but when Dr. Adams, a renowned educator and author in the field of reading, makes a statement that so closely parallels my own beliefs, I feel obliged to include it, as an endorsement, if only to give the readers another point of view

Before I quote her I would like to digress, for a moment or two.

Dr. Adams has played a very significant role in my on-going endeavors in helping children with reading difficulties. I had become familiar with her philosophy and the in-depth knowledge contained in her book, 'Beginning to Read'. It occurred to me that Dr. Adams, a commanding advocate of the new concepts, would be an authoritative speaker to introduce to Fredericton's parents and educators.

It was a very rewarding experience to make telephone contact with Dr. Adams, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She readily agreed to accept a two-day speaking engagement in Fredericton, as my guest, co-hosted by the Department of Education.

In April, '97 Dr. Marilyn Jager Adams was the key-speaker at the Language Arts Seminar. She spoke at length to parents, teachers, and Departmental personnel, on the need to include the teaching of the alphabetic code in the reading programs. Dr. Adams provided graphic statistics in support of the phonics concepts, as evidenced in the United States. Dr. Adams was articulate and convincing on the subject of Phonemic Awareness and its role in word recognition. I feel that since Dr. Adams has been 'introduced' to Fredericton, in a manner of speaking, what she has to say will be more 'personal'. Here then, are her words from 'Beginning to Read' on Word Recognition, the key to meaningful reading.

"Before you take up this book you should understand fully that the topic at issue is that of reading words and before you put this book down you should understand fully that the ability to read words quickly, accurately, and effortlessly is critical to skillful reading comprehension. Skillful reading is not a unitary skill. It is a whole, complex system of skills and knowledge. Unless the processes involved in individual word recognition skills operate properly, nothing else in the system will."

Jager Adams went on to say...'If students' word recognition skills are not properly operative, students will likely choose not to read at all.'

### ***A MINE OF INFORMATION***

For those of you who want to study the learning to read process in-depth, I recommend Jager Adams' book, "Beginning to Read". I add a 'caveat': It's an erudite study of considerable scholarship, and not the stuff of bedtime reading! I was introduced to Adams' work by Dr. James Downey in 1993, when the Government's mandate for a treatise on 'Excellence in Education' was in preparation. I regard it as a fortuitous occurrence, leading as it did, later, to Adam's visit to Fredericton.

This digression has been more than 'a moment or two' but I consider that any mention of an educator and scholar of such calibre as Jager Adams, is worth more than a couple of moments of anybody's time?

### ***PHRASE READING:***

There is so much more to be said about the importance of word recognition in the reading process. It may be considered as the 'key' factor, but, of course, not the only factor in such a complex process. It is a statement of fact that no reading can take place without the recognition of the words, and, having said that, we've said it all! So, we must keep that in mind as we discuss how written words must be dealt with, to the best advantage, in learning to read.

Words recognized in isolation are just that, words in isolation! There is a common problem with 'beginning to read' children. They see one word at a time. Their oral reading reflects this by a slow word-by-word monotone utterance. It is largely devoid of meaning and comprehension. Every parent and every teacher is familiar with this syndrome known as 'Word Calling'. However, it may be symptomatic of poor comprehension skills, but it is not incurable. It's not easy to lay out the skills needed for reading in preferential order, as each is dependent on another, and another. However, if I am to state my choice of the first two necessary skills in meaningful reading, I would say, 'First, Word Recognition;' 'Second Phrase Reading'. In other words, I give phrase reading a high priority in the elimination of 'word calling.'

If students are to assimilate meaning from the printed words, they must learn to see words in 'meaningful' groups. That is not to say, 'phrases' as in linguistics, but 'groups' of words that make sense, irrespective of formal sentence construction. For example: 'The black cat sat on the red mat wearing a red hat with a feather!' In the reader's 'mind's eye' this could be seen as: 'The black cat...sat on the red mat...wearing a red hat...with a feather!'

Once 'word recognition' has been established, the next step is reading in phrases, or 'sense groups' so that these sequential sense-groups merge together in sentences, presenting the ultimate in comprehension of the author's intent. There is nothing complicated about this process. All it needs is practice in the forward-looking development of eye movement, at first just two or three words at a time. The most effective way of teaching this technique is to encourage the child to (1) Look, before speaking; (2) When a group of words has been 'taken in' at a glance, the oral reader should look up, before saying the words.

It is easy to teach, and easy to monitor progress. The length of the grouped words can be gradually extended.

In my Reading Practice, on a one-on-one, I usually do two things to overcome the 'word-calling.' I use a pencil to 'overscore' a suitable group of words on the text; I explain to my student that the portrait of my cat, on the far wall, is interested to hear those printed words. Most children respond well to anything to do with cats, so I get a good re-action. This process is the beginning of understanding full sentences. The comprehension of the sentences leads, with practice, to the comprehension of paragraphs. The student can read!

# 'WORD RECOGNITION' - PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Any innovation which is helpful to students should be tried, and, if successful, it should be adopted. Different age-groups demand different techniques. Children in primary and elementary grades take pleasure and interest in their work when using coloured pencils. This method is, however, useful in building perceptual skills at all grade levels.

For the following exercise three coloured pencils are required: blue, green, and red, for emphasizing vowel - sounds in word patters, as follows:

- BLUE:**      **lōng; shōrt; SPECIAL ie ea**  
**GREEN:**     Underscoring sound values  
**RED:**        Building 'walls' between syllables

Used correctly by the students they can be very helpful in the development of visual and auditory perception skills. For example: In the **CVC** format: **'rat'**

1. Using **BLUE** pencil, overscore the short 'a' with the **˘** symbol: **r<sup>˘</sup>at**. Say the word 'r<sup>˘</sup>at'
2. Using **GREEN**, underline the vowel, from the vowel to the end of the syllable: **rat**. Say 'at'
3. Using **GREEN**, do a complete underscoring of the entire word, **r<sup>˘</sup>at**. Say the whole word, 'RAT'

NOTE: In multi-syllable words always deal with the one syllable at a time. This allows for the build up of the whole word, one syllable at a time.

This technique can be used in all word-pattern sound formats, including: **CVCe: māte**. The silent 'e' at the end of the word may be crossed out lightly, in blue pencil. Note: the **e** makes the vowel-sound long. The exercise can be continued with the **ai ea oa ie**.

This is an enjoyable and interesting method of improving the student's word recognition skills.

When working with multi-syllabic words a line | should be placed, in red, between the syllables: **splēn | did; gen | er | al**. This is excellent for improving children's awareness of syllables in words. It also allows for recognition of word-patterns within words. This method is a powerful tool when it come to multi-syllable words recognition skills will become automatic very quickly.

When presenting the concept of syllables to young children it is helpful to start with known word-endings, for example: make, mak-ing; slip, slipp-ing.

There is much to be said for this innovative and creative approach. The ideas presented here are not difficult to implement, and, without doubt, the end results readily justify the means!

It is almost impossible to create and present a work of this kind without repetition. The skills in the reading process are so inter-active. Sometimes a point is worth repeating for emphasis. Certainly, in setting down thoughts in writing this book, one thought inevitably leads to another. It is difficult to separate them into isolated units. In this section, which is a summing up of the whole learning to read scenario, I make no excuse for repetition.

#### ***THE CORNER-STONE OF THE READING PROCESS:***

It is to be hoped that the importance of the presentation of the various word patterns has been made clear. It is the basic foundation for the skills leading to word recognition. When students can interpret the vowel sounds in word patterns word recognition will follow and meaningful reading will take place. Reading skills are developmental. If the reading programs are carefully planned all children should enjoy the 'learning-to-read' experience from the start.

It can be seen that since there is such emphasis on the learning to read process, it must be assumed that children should not be expected to be able to read before the various integral skills have been presented. When children are asked to read, either orally, or silently, during the learning process, it should be made abundantly clear that reading sessions are practice reading sessions. Students will understand the connotation of the term 'practice' means that perfection is not an expectation.

#### ***MISCONCEPTIONS STILL IN EVIDENCE***

In many ways I have misjudged the rate of progress in the acceptance of new concepts. There appears to be a 'loosening of the strings' that have bonded administrators and teachers to the 'status quo.' As a result I cannot put my pen to rest until, once again, I attempt to dispel the myth that still alleges a connection between 'working out words' and lack of comprehension. True, forty years ago, this was a factor in the criticism of the way phonics was presented. However, it is unfortunate that 'Phonemic Awareness' has not yet been fully accepted as an entirely new concept in the presentation of phonics in the Language Arts programs of today.

Phonemic Awareness is not a 'watered down' version of the 'old' phonics approach. Correctly applied it is a self-fulfilling method that meets the needs of students learning to read. Its single common denominator with the previous phonics approach is the importance of the knowledge of the Alphabetic Code. This knowledge has been proven to be an essential ingredient in the learning to read process. There is no other similarity; or connection, between the 'old' and the 'new'. It is important, therefore, that any such assumptions still existing should be eradicated. As I mentioned before, there should be no 'carry over' from a previously discarded approach. It must be said that there is still a tendency to hold on to some of the strategies from the Holistic method, and the very real danger of a resurgence of the former way of working out words by sounding out the letters with emphasis on the consonants. A memo is in order: This does preclude satisfactory comprehension!

***AN EVER-PRESENT FEAR:***

I realize, of course, that there lurks a fear in the minds of educators that the Phonemic Awareness approach may lead to too much drill and too much 'structure'. My answer to that is, 'not to worry!' If the concepts are thoroughly understood by those who present them, sequentially, to the students, for slow and step by step mastery, children accept the challenge. Children are eager to go to school, to **learn!** In point of fact, clearly, and in retrospect, the **play-based** approach must be deemed a disaster! The coined phrase: "It will all come together in Grade Three" now has a hollow ring to it as we hear of students struggling through the intermediate grades.

***ANOTHER OPTION:***

If Phonemic Awareness, and its place in the reading and spelling process, was thoroughly understood by all educators, there would be little doubt of its success. It is vital, therefore, as I have said before, that all teachers should be given the chance to evaluate the concept, and assess its merits. In a letter I received from Dr. James Downey, he said, with reference to a phonemic approach, and I quote: "**All teachers should be given this string to their bow!**"

It is only by embracing the Phonemic Awareness concepts that unsuccessful methods can be discarded. The search for truth cannot be suppressed. Research has shown, and statistics have proven, across the continent, that a form of phonics must be included in the Language Arts Programs. Since the old way has been condemned and discarded as non-productive, the alternative must be accepted.

Finally, before adhering to the strategies of any previous approaches which have been tried, and discarded, one should pause to examine their track record!



***KNOWLEDGE MUST INCLUDE 'IRREGULARITIES'***

If the skills needed for Word Recognition are taught to students at an early level word recognition cannot fail to take place. The necessary knowledge of word patterns must include all the vowel-sound deviations that can occur at times. Whilst vowel sounds in word patterns usually oblige by doing the expected, the 'irregulars' can throw students off base very easily. Students must know how to handle all word patterns, regular, and irregular, or their ability to read will be seriously impaired. It is imperative, therefore, that every deviation from the normal arrangement of the vowel-sounds in words, must be immediately recognizable, so that the necessary changes can be made when visual awareness is taking place.

***THE ADVANTAGE OF 'PHRASE' READING:***

It will be seen that using the technique of learning to read by looking ahead, and grouping words together in sense-units, gives the eye and the brain, time to deal with any potential problems with irregular word patterns, etc. With practice it becomes a split-second process to assimilate, for instance, that **ea** in a word can say either '**ē**' or '**ē**'. The brain is

instantly capable of producing the correct interpretation of the vowel sound, by the meaning of the word, from the context.

For example, if we take the phrase, '**he ate his bread and butter**' the brain, provided it has been programmed correctly, will immediately recognize the long 'ā' in ate, because of the silent 'e'. It will also quickly deal with the familiar sight word 'bread' with the short 'ĕ' in the 'ea' word pattern. The student will read the phrase: '**he āte his brĕad and butter...**'

The success of this operation is entirely contingent upon previous knowledge in the brain that the 'e' could be long, or short, in 'ea' depending on the word in which this pattern occurs. In 'bead', for example, the 'e' would read 'ē': **bĕad**. The brain is always ready to translate the visual letters into the right word, and phrase-reading gives it time to make the decision before utterance takes place.

This may sound convoluted, but with developmental skills, through knowledge and repetition, it becomes the natural ability of the reader in the process of perceptual awareness. For emphasis, the brain performs this instant task if it has been trained to do so. An analogy: "If a child has never been shown how to correctly tie a shoe-lace, the shoe-lace is useless and ineffective, and may become a 'trip-over'!"

In Review: It is important that all arrangements of letters which do not 'conform with the norm' must be taught and mastered.

Whilst the Phonemic Awareness concepts applied to a Language Arts Program contain all the intrinsically necessary ingredients for building a sure reading foundation for all students, yet, the success of a phonemic awareness program depends largely on the enthusiasm and knowledge of those who teach it.



### **REPETITION: A 'LEARNING' TOOL**

I'm a firm believer in repetition as a powerful memory trainer, and learning tool. Children seldom hear you the first time; they may hear you the second time, but they remember, the third time, in most cases! There are many children, unfortunately, who live in a dream world. They come to school with their own brand of battery-powered 'remote control'. They turn their teacher 'On' or 'Off' at will!

So, as I was saying, mastery of the ability to read in 'phrases' cannot take place unless the word recognition skills are performing properly. Mastery of word recognition leads, with practice, to 'instant' word recognition. Instant word recognition is essential to phrase reading. The necessary skills for successful reading really are inter-dependent. If we look back, over our shoulder, we can more easily understand the problems that have faced beginning readers who had to 'stop' at each unfamiliar word, and work it out, by any number of prescribed ways, before proceeding further. This really affected comprehension whether the reading was silent, or oral.

Repeating, for emphasis: It is apparent that the approach to the teaching of reading should be geared to the development of the necessary sequential skills that allow for word recognition, and ultimately instant word recognition to take place. Reading skills can then be 'improved' by practice in phrase reading, which immediately benefits total comprehension in both oral, and silent, reading. It is only then that learning to read is a mission accomplished!

Lest I be accused of over-simplification of a complex situation, I feel I ought to concede that the road to successful reading is strewn with difficulties, not in the learning to read process itself, but in the thinking of those presenting the reading process to the students. However, I stand by my conviction that an improvement in literacy is attainable and achievable given the right circumstances, and the will to change much of what had become deeply entrenched in our teaching practices, over the years. It is a difficult situation. If we attempt to embrace the new concepts unprepared and unrehearsed, we may fall between the 'old' and the 'new'.

In my opinion, the solving of the reading problems does not depend solely on the arrival of a new set of concepts on the academic scene. It becomes the responsibility of the Education hierarchy; the program planners; Departmental personnel; principals and teachers, all working together, to assess the new ideas objectively, and implement the necessary changes. Politically motivated intervention should not become an impediment to progress. Admittedly, the teachers have been instructed in methods which new concepts render obsolete. In the new order, teachers must first be encouraged to accept new philosophies and new concepts. Then they must be trained, or re-trained if necessary, in their implementation in the classroom. To use a well-worn cliché: 'United we Stand! Divided we Fail!'

It has been made abundantly clear by prominent educators of our time, in the U.S., and Canada, that the way to proceed, without further delay, is by the introduction of the Phonemic Awareness approach, through the medium of the Alphabetic Code. The orders must come from the top, but it is the teachers who are on the front line. They should be given the help and instruction they need in presenting the programs to the students. The teachers have had to bear the brunt of criticism for over forty years! They have been nothing more than loyal to the program planners and departmental officials by teaching what has been prescribed for them. No doubt they are ready and willing to continue to act professionally, in a time of change.

**MARY BURKHART**

If any enlightened educators remain unconvinced that a further change in philosophy has been necessary, I would like to take the opportunity to quote something said by Mary Burkhardt, many years ago:

"If we are determined to improve student performance we must stop asking, 'What is wrong with our students?' and judging what they can't do, and learn. Instead, we must have the courage to organize for change, first, by believing that all children can, and will, learn to read; second, by taking an educational stand through selecting the best reaching tools (programs) for teacher and student use, even if it means incurring initial criticism. Third, by sticking with the task of using programs for a length of time, since the

substantial correction of a problem does not happen overnight. Finally, everyone must work extremely hard."

Burkhart concluded by adding: "The alternative to the above approach is 'dismal and unacceptable!'" She further implied that 'when better programs are used by teachers, fewer children fall behind in reading performance. Instead, all students are better able to progress and achieve rather than stumbling, guessing, and meeting with less and less reading success.' All this was said forty years ago, with prophetic accuracy.



## A CASE OF 'THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE!'

It has been repeated in this book many times, perhaps too many times, that reading and spelling must be taught. The skills must be presented sequentially. There must be mastery of each step before proceeding to the next.

Many students are under the impression that they are expected to be able to read from the first moment the printed word is placed before them, for silent reading. When they realize that they cannot understand the words they become anxious and frustrated. For children who cannot read, their fragile self-confidence is eroded very quickly. They feel that they should be able to read, if some of their peers are able to do so.

If students were told about vowel sounds, and word patterns, and were given the means to recognize words before being presented with books to read, they would enjoy a much more productive silent reading class. If students are expected to read the book they have chosen, before they have been shown how, it really is a case of 'The Cart before the Horse'. To quote Barbara Bateman, an eminent U.S. Reading Specialist, of the 40's, "it is an exercise in futility"?

Giving books to children without the knowledge of how to work out the words gives rise to all sorts of problems, including a lasting dislike of anything to do with reading; the development of restless habits during reading time; a lack of self-confidence, and a poor self-image.

Students, when asked how they got on with their reading in school, will say that 'they do not have reading classes, just silent reading time'. This practice is a left-over from the Holistic era, and it should be addressed, forthwith!

### ***LEARNING TO READ:***

Almost all young children enter school eager and anxious to learn. Most of all, they can hardly wait to be able to read, for themselves, and to their parents. Teaching beginning reading should be the top priority of every teacher in every primary classroom, and parents should be encouraged to see that their child is given this opportunity.

### ***READING SHOULD BE TAUGHT***

The language Arts Program should be geared to meeting the needs of as many students as possible by developing their auditory and visual perceptual skills, which are necessary in the reading process. At all events, reading should be 'taught' beginning as early as possible in the child's schooling. I am sure that teachers prefer to use their skills acquired by years of post secondary study and years of experience, as teachers rather than be considered facilitators? A structured well organized language Arts Program, based on the new concepts would be welcomed. It would enable teachers to cater for the needs of all their students, including those children who are restless, or the few that may be A.D.D.

Included in the program there should be opportunities for the 'overt' children to express themselves in an organized and structured situation: Mime, Drama, and Choral Speaking are ideal media for improving the attention span of all the students. These activities also work wonders for the child who has been 'sitting back' hoping not to be noticed, and just wishing it was time to go home!

There is so much that can be done if only those who would like to see it happen make it happen!

### ***THE TEXT-BOOK FACTOR***

Many grandparents, and indeed many great-grandparents of the students in my private practice have remarked: 'I don't know how I learned to read when I was in school. I just did! Or, just as many times I have been asked the question: 'Do you remember how you learned to read?' My answer has been 'Yes! I do remember.' I remember not only how I learned to read but I can still clearly recall the series of reading text books that we used at school in Northern Ireland in those days. We had books from Kindergarten through to Grade 6. Yes, we had books in our hands from the moment we went to school.

### ***INTRODUCTION TO WORD PATTERNS***

The stories in our 'Readers' were always short with repetitive word patterns. These were set out apart from the story-text, for study before practice reading. In this way we learned the sounds, and how they related to various arrangement of letters in words. We learned by studying these lists of words printed at the beginning of each story.

These words also became our lists of 'spelling' words. In this way we were able to read aloud in front of our peers without fear of failure - the great problems with today's children. We never had a problem with 'Round Robin' reading.

I remember, also, that my primary teacher was Montessori trained!

Yes, we had books. We used them in school; we brought them home and had help from our parents at home-work time. I remember, all that time ago, that learning to read was fun.

### ***THE NEED FOR THE RIGHT PROGRAM:***

There is no doubt that many of the problems and frustrations endured by parents, and grandparents, would be resolved and eliminated if the 'right' Reading Program were to be given to well informed and well rehearsed teachers.

The alternative is unthinkable! Within recent years the system has deteriorated so dramatically that a 'laissez-faire' attitude is no longer acceptable. All the reading textbooks have disappeared. Teachers are struggling to do the best they can with their own ideas. There is a lack of a sense of direction.

It is time that the students were provided with a comprehensive reading program with practical related materials, and a standard of uniformity. There should be interesting stories with a connection to the skills taught. Once parents could see the development of this trend they would become interested, involved, and supportive. They would be able to help their children with their reading from the texts they brought home. There would be a greater understanding of how their children were progressing if programs and books were standardized. However, it would be well to remember the mistakes of the past and avoid the return of the 'work books' and the 'busy-work' syndrome, so utterly unproductive.

There is a real need for standardized printed materials and a unified approach to the teaching of reading.



# SPELLING

The decline of reading skills also affected students' ability to spell correctly. Spelling standards have suffered very seriously through the lack of a structured program. It has been the policy over the last several decades to allow students freedom of expression in written communications, as far as spelling is concerned. It was felt that students would become discouraged by note-books festooned with red-circled spelling errors, and be 'turned off' from any attempt at written self-expression. Children have been encouraged to make up their own spelling. This has become known, and accepted, as 'Inventive' spelling.

The concept had merit, as far as very young, pre-school children were concerned, as the natural first step in the growth of spelling development. This creative, inventive spelling is the only way that pre-school children can express their thoughts on paper. However, at school-going age it should not be allowed to persist. Instruction should begin with the learning of the alphabet, and the sounds of the letters, particularly the vowel-sounds.

It is ironic that in the absence of phonics instruction, children have been expected to spell the words they write according to how they, themselves, 'hear' the sounds of the letters. Since it has been claimed that 'all children learn differently' it must follow that all children *spell* differently, in the absence of guidance. The one common denominator in the inventive spelling approach has been the complete disregard for vowels, and their sounds. The results were totally dependent on how the speller 'heard' the consonants, never minding the vowels. The result is mind-boggling when words like '**elephant**' have been expressed as: l f n t, even at elementary level and into Middle School.

Without knowledge of the alphabetic code, and the vowel-sounds, the inclusion of the vowels in the words is often incorrect. This has been the state of Spelling, in general, through the schools, and even into the work-place. How many times have we heard post-secondary educators complain that their students' written assignments are not up to standard?

The re-emergence of phonics, in the Language Arts Program will not only improve the quality of reading instruction, but the spelling standards will improve, also.

Sometimes parents, looking into their children's lack of progress, heard such cliches as: 'Children learn Differently;' 'Children learn at their own rate;' 'It will all come together in Grade Three; and 'Good spellers are born, not made!' These are statements that were conjured up during the 'Holistic' era in an attempt to explain the various problems that parents raised about their children's 'difficulties' in the area of learning to read and spell. Some of these axioms are, in themselves, based on fact, but there is no acceptable reason why all children cannot be taught to use the essential skills in the reading and spelling process. If a child's 'different' learning approach is the result of a weakness in either visual or auditory awareness, that skill must be developed and strengthened, to enable him to reach his potential.

All children can be taught to improve their spelling. It is true that many students have well-developed visual perception, and good memories. However, even these students need to have knowledge of the spelling rules. Their counterparts who lack perceptual awareness have to work harder but, with knowledge of the necessary linguistic skills, poor spellers can become good spellers.

Students coming home with a list of words to 'study' is not the answer!

Children who are having problems with their reading also have problems with their spelling. The fact remains that these students do not have any idea of what is expected of them when it come to 'studying' a list of words. Mostly the onus falls on the shoulders of the parents who endure frustration at home-work time, when 'hearing' their child's spelling words for the next day's test. If the students do not have inherent ability to 'visualize' and 'remember,' then, in the long term, the words they spend hours 'studying' will be forgotten! Their parents may not be fully aware that passing the test is really not the criteria for 'learning to spell.'

Spelling, like reading, does not depend on the acquisition of a unitary all pervasive skill.



# CALLIGRAPHY

Printing & Writing needs a combination of 'motor' control and perceptual ability. Both of these are sequentially developed from early childhood in the normal maturation process, by the time the child is in primary or elementary grade. Learning to print, or write, needs skills which can be taught, but they need practice, for mastery. Students begin by learning to print, in the Primary grades. By the time they reach elementary level 'cursive' writing replaces the printing. Students must be encouraged to make this transition. Instruction in forming the letters is part of the classroom routine but I have found that children have the most difficulty with cursive writing in joining the individual letters together, in words. The teaching of writing should be given greater priority. There are too many students who are reluctant to 'write' simply because they have not learned how to join their letters together.

Students' writing ability is dependent on inherent skills, and some find writing easier than others. The only answer is practice, and the unacceptability of slipshod work. Students will usually give only as much as is demanded of them! Written Communication does not depend on memory. It is interdependent on much the same basic skills necessary for the reading process. Knowledge of word structure is a key factor in putting words together in sentences. When we talk about the 'Language Arts Umbrella,' we are dealing with the integration of Reading, Writing, and Spelling. Literacy can only be achieved with proficiency in all three!

It is safe to assume that the great majority of students are really anxious to be able to read, write, and spell, acceptably. It is the inability to do so that is the root cause of students' loss of self-esteem, and eventual 'attitude' problems. No student should be expected to pass through the system unable to read, write, and spell at an acceptable level. Parents should recognize that something is definitely 'wrong' when 'Home-Word' time is disruptive to harmony in the house-hold! Children who can 'manage' their assignments seldom cause a problem.

It follows, therefore, that all children should be given comprehensive instruction in the necessary important fundamentals. They may gain confidence in their ability to learn, and achieve their potential in all academic subjects.



## MUSGRAVE HORNER, A SPECIAL TRIBUTE:

Professor Homer played a very important role in the development of my professional career at the London Guildhall. Professor Musgrave Homer was my tutor, and my mentor, in the course of instruction in Speech Pathology, an integral facet of my training.

Professor Homer was not only a great teacher and a gifted lecturer, he was also entirely dedicated to his work in the field of correct articulation in speech.

Looking back, and remembering him, as I do very often, I would say he was a man 'ahead of his time.' Professor Homer invented and made an ingenious machine. Encased in a baby's war-time gas mask was a cleverly created larynx, complete with vocal chords, etc. These were 'powered' by attached bellows. It was an excellent hands-on method of demonstrating how sounds are uttered. The various vowel-sounds were clearly discernible, and how they were formed. It provided the opportunity to study the origins of speech at first hand. I was very lucky to have been a participant in this program.

In those long ago days there was very little attention focussed on Reading, Spelling, and the Speech Arts. It was somehow taken for granted that all children learned to read, write, and spell, to an acceptable standard, during the course of their schooling. Musgrave Homer, was one of the forerunners that challenged this assumption.

I learned a great deal from this very innovative teacher. I have, ever since, been an advocate of the need for clear speech in children, especially during their early development years.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF ARTICULATE SPEECH

More attention must be given to the students in kindergarten, or at primary level, who demonstrate problems with their articulation. These speech abnormalities may have originated as 'baby-talk' and become a habit. They should not go untreated into school going years. The most common, and easily recognizable problems occur with the consonants: 'L' 'R' 'W' and 'V' when substitutions for these letters often occur. In many cases these can be corrected by explaining and demonstrating the way the tongue, the teeth and the lips are used in the formation of the various sounds. The rest is only a matter of practice. Bad habits can be overcome, with patience and perseverance. Unclear speech should never be condoned, or ignored.

If speech difficulty persists it should be brought to the attention of a therapist as early as possible. A student's academic and social career can be seriously affected by a speech problem which is left untreated.

## ***ADVERSE SIDE-EFFECTS OF UNCLEAR SPEECH.***

In a learning situation a speech difficulty can become a serious handicap. Children can quickly lose self-confidence in peer relationships, and will be unwilling to speak for fear of ridicule. The learning to read process will be adversely affected, especially when it comes to reading aloud. There will be a great deal of anxiety and frustration, and very often, a misinterpretation of the child's attitude, and academic potential.

It becomes a matter of importance, therefore, for parents to discourage the 'babytalk' of infancy from continuing into childhood. Teachers who recognize a speech difficulty should discuss it as soon as possible with the parent.

The well-being of the child depends on early diagnosis and immediate therapy at whatever level is necessary.



### **THE USE OF MEDICATION**

The line drawn between students with a 'Learning Disability' and those who are 'Learning Disabled' is not always clearly defined. Students who are diagnosed by specialists in the field of medicine and psychiatry as 'Learning Disabled' are in need of specialized help, and, of course, a different approach to meet their learning needs. On the other hand, many students labeled A.D.D., do not need segregation. It is sometimes difficult to make an accurate diagnosis in distinguishing between children who are just normally restless and impatient, and those who are in need of medication. The prescription, 'Ritalin' appears to be widely used. I do not have the medical training to venture an opinion on the use of this drug, but I am very surprised at the large number of children who appear to need this medication on a regular basis. If I were a parent of a child who exhibited symptoms of A.D.D., I would proceed carefully before becoming involved with Ritalin. In my opinion the prevalent use of Ritalin would appear to exceed the number of children in serious need of medical help in a learning situation.

"The child who is truly disabled is rare. When children are taught to read in a structured teacher directed program, they Read."

Mary Burkhart

### **A SUMMATION:**

It has been my intention, throughout this book, to answer the unexpressed question of the Grandfather with five grandchildren unable to read 'better than a hill o'beans!' He didn't ask *why* it was that his grandchildren couldn't read, but, from his overheard comments, he obviously assumed that they needed to be taught how! I have taken up the issue on his behalf, and addressed his concerns in an analysis of the Language Arts Programs at the heart of the problem.

The decline in literacy standards can be traced back to the abolition of a structured reading program. This came about several decades ago when Phonetics, the approach to the teaching of reading and spelling for many years, was due for an overhaul.

I have pointed out the harm created by the controversy which erupted between the two factions, the supporters of phonics, and those who opposed it. A hard line was drawn between the two groups which left no room for mediation or discussion. The most celebrated educators of the time could not find common ground for the establishment of a composite Language Arts Program to meet the needs of the students. The wall between the two opposing groups hindered further progress in the development of new concepts in a satisfactory Language Arts Program.

As predicted by Rudolph Flesch, literacy standards deteriorated. Something had to be done!

In the early nineties Dr. Marilyn Jager Adams was commissioned to undertake an in-depth study on reading methods, by the Massachusetts Government. Her findings were conclusive. Supported by extensive testing, it became clear that a Phonemic Approach to the teaching of reading should be implemented.

The barriers between opposing ideas came down. The new concepts are rapidly gaining acceptance. In the meantime, however, until the Phonemic Awareness approach is fully understood, there is some reluctance to relinquish the concepts of the Holistic era. It is very evident that Language Arts Programs based on Phonemic Awareness cannot thrive and survive encumbered by flawed strategies from the holistic approach. It is important that parents who have young school-going children should be made aware that in the best interests of progress and reform, the old strategies should not be included in the teaching of reading programs.

One of the 'goals' of the Holistic approach was to foster a love of reading with all students. Regrettably, the approach failed in its objective with a great many children. There are, of course, children that possess inherent talent for reading. They will enjoy reading irrespective of circumstances. But we must concern ourselves with the many young school-goers who do not like to read, simply because they do not know how!

Jager Adams has an interesting statement to make on the subject, in her book, 'Beginning to Read.'

"If students are to enjoy reading they must enjoy learning to read. They must feel that they have both the ability and the means at their disposal, to learn how to read. Confidence is an essential prerequisite in the early stages of the 'learning-to-read' process. Confidence is engendered by the knowledge of how to carry out the task of translating the letters into meaningful words, phrases, and sentences. Further, self-confidence is established when the students can read aloud, meaningfully, to their parents, or their peers."

Perhaps this statement from Jager Adams meets the questions and the needs of many 'Hill O'Beans' parents and grandparents, whose children, or grandchildren are unable to read at an acceptable level.

I cannot finish this book, however, without providing useful information for those who are concerned with their children's progress.

#### ***THE 'HILL O'BEANS' SYNDROME IN A NUT SHELL!***

The answer to the Grandfather's query can be traced to the fact that the cart has been put before the horse for a great number of years.

The philosophy developed that all children learn to read, by reading! This is in contradiction to the axiom: 'All Children Learn Differently.' The only children that develop their reading skills by reading, are those that have strong visual and auditory perception from an early age. These well developed faculties give them the ability to memorize what they 'see' and 'hear' when confronted with the printed word. But, once again, we must be concerned with children who are less well-developed in these areas.

Here, then, lies the problem: Children have been given books to 'read' before being presented with the necessary sequential skills that would enable them to silent read for enjoyment. This is indeed an exercise in futility. 'Reading' and 'Learning to Read' must be

dealt with as separate issues, and should be treated as such. 'Learning to read' comes before 'reading.'

For too long this issue has been ignored. It was feared that 'learning' to read would be considered a drudgery by the children, and be in contradiction to the philosophy that 'all children must *love* reading' from the beginning of their schooling. But that philosophy is faulty. Children want to learn to read; they are impatient to learn to read. They *want* to be taught to read. They take great pride in each small accomplishment in the process. To deny them this, is to stifle their enthusiasm for learning, generally. Students feel self-important, and good about themselves, when they achieve mastery of the various skills. They take pride in recognizing the letters of the alphabet together with the sounds associated with them. The unlocking of the Alphabetic Code is no drudgery to the eager child. From there, there is the excitement of recognizing words, and putting them together.

Suddenly, meaningful reading begins to take place when a book is placed before them in a 'Reading for Practice' class. From that point on, reading for pleasure develops into the ability to read for information. Sitting mindlessly becomes a thing of the past.

Reading meaningfully is the end result of the mastery of the necessary sequential skills, through teaching, and practice. Practice is certainly an integral factor in successful reading. The adage: 'Practice Makes Perfect' is not without merit. I have yet to hear of a pianist who has learned to play, from music, without being taught what the notes 'say' and without being told 'to practice.' Teaching and practice go together in the learning process.

This applies to Reading, also.



# FINALLY...

## SEVEN IMPORTANT STEPS FOR LEARNING TO READ

1. The letters (of the alphabet) must be learned.
2. What the letters 'say' must be learned.
3. How to put the 'letters & sounds' together must be learned.
4. How to recognize the 'sounds' & the 'letters' together, must be learned.
5. How to put words together in phrases, must be learned.
6. How to put the phrases together, in sentences, must be learned.
7. What the words are telling us, in the sentences, must be understood.

When students can place a ✓ check-mark against all seven of these steps, it follows that they have mastered the skills in the three major components of the reading process: (1) Visual perception of the letters and word patterns; (2) Auditory awareness of the letters and the diverse vowel sounds; (3) The necessary linguistics that correlate all three into meaningful reading. Through continuous reading practice, silently, and oral, this all takes place automatically, and almost without the students being aware of the intricacies of the process. From this point on Academic Potential is assured.

**Reading is 'Cool!'**



**Notes:**

PART 2  
Supplementary Material  
&  
Practical Application

**CONCEPTS  
and  
TEACHING STRATEGIES**

**FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF  
INSTANT WORD RECOGNITION**

*To be useful, any given individual letter-sound, correspondence, or phonic generalization, must not merely be **learned**, but **over-learned**. It is then instantly, and effortlessly available to the Reader:*

*Over-learning requires lots of exercises, and review, and therefore lots of time.*

*If we could find effective ways of instructing the 'low-readiness' student readers, wouldn't it also be effective with those who come better prepared?*

MARILYN JAGER ADAMS

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- ['A' & 'E'; 'I' & 'O'; 'U' & Recap](#)

and

**"THE MAD BEAST OF ANT HILL"**

**"MARK & SANDY MEET A WHALE"**

**"THE BEAR THAT WANTED MORE"**

**PART ONE**

[- Index for Part One](#)

## **WHERE DO WE BEGIN?**

To begin teaching reading the students must be presented with the two family concept. The alphabet is divided into two separate families: vowels & consonants.. Each family carries out a different job in words. The vowel sounds are responsible for the sounds in words, the consonant family, for the meaning.

By introducing these two families in their groups according to their sound value, and usage, students are more able to assimilate the names and the sounds of the letters in each separate family. They are ready to put them together as such and lose the feeling of 26 different written signs to be remembered.

It has long caused much concern by teachers and educational planners as to how to approach the teaching of reading to primary students. Should it be the consonants first, and if so, how to differentiate them for memory purposes? Should it be upper or lower case letters first, in a 'consonant' presentation? Should the 'names' and the 'sounds' be taught together? Should the presentation of vowels be first upper or lower case, long or short or 'special' (vowel digraphs: au & aw; oi & oy; ow & ou and etc.

Should both vowels and consonants be taught together?

In answer to these many queries and uncertainties I would like to suggest one initial thought: Talk about the alphabets' two families. Get the children interested in a background where the vowels and consonants are in their own living quarters. I don't suggest little human beings being brought to mind with flaxen curls and pretty dresses, etc., I suggest the letters themselves, introduced in their separate groups: vowels & consonants, and their job in 'making words.'

Once they have been established as letter 'people' the matter can be dropped. 'He' or 'She' when talking about them seems to get an excellent response.

They must become 'alive' to young children, like busy little beavers, but always working to help people read.

I believe the presentation of short vowels with the long vowels immediately following, to be the best method. When the word patterns are presented children can recognize the words that do not end with an 'e' as usually 'shört' vowels: **CVC** (consonant-vowel-consonant) **rät**.

The words that do have an 'e' at the end, **c̣vce** usually have the lōng vowel sound. Showing both groups in their patterns together allows for comparisons which impinge on the memory. It's the same with 'ai' 'ea' 'oa' & 'ie' patterns.

Consonants should be introduced as needed when these patterns are being presented. Students are on their way to recognizing sound/symbol association in words.

Therefore, reading can begin.

### **MORE ABOUT VOWELS**

The arrangement of the vowel-sounds in words seem to bring the vowels to 'life.' They might even come alive and shout out to the children: "*Hey there! Look at me, I'm short! I have a Consonant-person on each side of me. Come on! Say the word 'rat.'*"

This little make-believe is just an example to show you the sort of creative and innovative ways there are for capturing, and holding, the attention of young children.

The concept is to make the sounds into group figures, ideal for the assimilation of word patterns.



### **METHODS & INITIATIVES**

Students should approach the problems associated with 'working-out' unknown words with confidence and a positive attitude. If this aspect of learning to read has already proved a 'turn-off' students must now realize that it hasn't been a case of their 'stupidity.' The method of working out words just hasn't met their needs.

Methods and initiatives are provided here which will end the fear associated with dealing with unknown words. The 'Stop Please!' approach is always a popular way of overcoming the inhibitions created by stumbling over new words. The fear of unfamiliar words disappears after just a few times of calling out 'Stop Please!' The children I use this method with find it fun! It is an excellent 'exercise' and obviates the dread of looking foolish when unable to deal with a word. The 'Stop Please' method becomes easy, and enjoyable, with practice. Eventually the brain re-acts to the 'Stop Pleases!' automatically. The most effective stage to develop the 'Stop-Please!' syndrome is when dealing with word patterns.

### **THE VOWELS-FIRST CONCEPT:**

It has been previously explained that the most efficient, and the easiest way, to 'work-out' unknown words is from the *vowels*-first! It has been shown to be the best method of learning and recognizing word patterns, which, in turn, leads to word recognition.

### **THE SUPER-IMPOSING OF SYMBOLS**

During the 'learning to read' process symbols should be added where-ever necessary. These will help to differentiate between vowel sounds, aid in recognizing word patterns, and emphasize 'special' sounds. Added symbols will assist the students with their word recognition skills until instant word recognition has been achieved.

### **STANDARDIZED USE OF SYMBOLS:**

Super-impose the symbol: **~** to indicate the short vowel sound: **ă ē ũ** etc.

Super-impose the symbol: – to indicate the long vowel sound: ā ē ō etc.

Place a 'bracket' or 'umbrella' sign over merged 'vowel & consonant' sounds:

ar er ir or ur, etc.

Circle Digraphs, (Special Sounds)

sh oi ch aw ph, etc.



### ***VOWELS, THE MAIN THRUST:***

The emphasis, in teaching vowels, must be the focus on presenting them in their different groups, for instance, the short; the long; the specials (digraphs); the 'irregulars', each with their particular characteristics.

### ***THE CONSONANTS:***

The consonants should be taught simultaneously with the vowel groups. This is important in the working with words. The emphasis should be placed on the various vowel-sound patterns, in words.

The introduction to the consonants can, also, be made more interesting through personalization. Stories can be made up about them. Even in the early stages, children should be made aware of how the consonants are formed by the correct positioning of the tongue, relative to the teeth, and the palate. This is important in preventing the mispronunciation of certain letters from becoming a habit.

When introducing the consonants in words, the vowels have to be 'included' for, without them the consonants have no sound. The consonant can only 'speak' when it has a vowel beside it, to 'merge' into. There is a very important 'caveat' here, that needs to be dealt with in more detail. In this instance however, suffice it to say, 'when dealing with the consonants, and their 'appropriated' sounds, do not regress by getting involved with the 'B-ugh! D'ugh! G-ugh! syndrome!' More on the subject, elsewhere.

Be sure, in the presentation of consonants and vowels, in words, that the vowel sounds in those words are together in their recognizable groups. This leads to better focus and memory retention, and mastery of word patterns. This happens very quickly.

The materials used for reading practice should be sequentially oriented so that the repetition of the patterns become imprinted on the brain. In this, we are taking a leaf out of a Dick & Jane text.

***CANNOT BE OVER-LEARNED!***

The presentation of the consonants & vowels in their particular letter/sound groups, or patterns, is a vital tool for Word Recognition. It cannot be 'over taught' or 'over learned.' When dealing with the word/spelling patterns there are various means of firmly fixing them in students' visual/auditory perception memory banks.

***KNOWLEDGE MUST INCLUDE 'IRREGULARITIES':***

If the skills needed for Word Recognition are taught to students at an early level word recognition cannot fail to take place. The necessary knowledge of word patterns must include all the vowel-sound deviations that can occur at times. Whilst vowel sounds in word patterns usually oblige by doing the expected, the 'irregulars' can throw a student off base very easily. Students must know how to handle all word patterns, regular, and irregular, or their ability to read will be seriously impaired. It is imperative, therefore, that every deviation from the normal arrangement of the vowel-sounds in words, must be immediately recognizable, so that the necessary changes can be made when visual awareness is taking place.

***THE ADVANTAGE OF "PHRASE" READING:***

(this item is more appropriate in Section 2. It is therefore repeated here, for emphasis and review)

It will be seen that using the technique of learning to read by looking ahead, and grouping words together in sense-units, gives the eye and the brain, time to deal with any potential problems with irregular word patterns, etc. With practice it becomes a splitsecond process to assimilate, for instance, that ea in a word can say either 'e' or 'e'. The brain is instantly capable of the producing the correct interpretation of the vowel sound, by the meaning of the word, from the context.

For example, if we take the phrase, '**he ate his bread and butter**' the brain, provided it has been programmed correctly, will immediately recognize the long 'ā' in ate, because of the silent 'e'. It will also quickly deal with the familiar sight word 'bread' with the short 'ē' in the 'ea' word pattern. The student will read the phrase: '**he āte his brēad and butter....**'

The success of this operation is entirely contingent upon previous knowledge in the brain that the 'e' could be long, or short, in 'ea' depending on the word in which this pattern occurs. In 'bead', for example, the 'e' would read 'ē': bēad. The brain is always ready to translate the visual letters into the right word, and phrase-reading gives it time to make the decision before utterance takes place.

This may sound convoluted, but with developmental skills, through knowledge and repetition, it becomes the natural ability of the reader in the process of perceptual awareness. For emphasis, the brain performs this instant task if it has been trained to do so. An analogy: "If a child has never been shown how to correctly tie a shoe-lace, the shoe-lace is useless and ineffective, and may become a 'trip-over!'"

In Review: It is important that all arrangement of letters which do not 'conform with the norm' must be taught and mastered.



***THE PROBLEMATIC DEVIATIONS & VARIABLES:***

The principle deviations and variables which can cause problems with students occur in the vowel-sounds. These 'non-conformists' should be included in the students' visual and auditory awareness knowledge. The irregularities, which occur most often in word patterns, must be immediately recognizable to the reader.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

THE MATERIAL IN THIS SECTION SHOULD BE PRESENTED TO STUDENTS

### 'a'

The letter-sound 'a' has two main variants:

1. When 'a' is followed by '-ll' it has a special sound, neither long, nor short, but as in the word ball, and call, tall, fall, etc.
2. When 'a' follows a 'w' and/or a 'wh-' it once more resembles the special sound previously described in the -ll category: 'ball, call, tall & fall, etc. For example: 'war'

This sound is not generally recognized, nor is it clearly defined in Canadian spoken language, therefore it is difficult to explain in print. It closely resembles the sound of a lion roaring. Children quite readily grasp this analogy, as it can be further demonstrated by the opening of the mouth in the same way as a lion roaring, to reproduce this special 'a' sound.

At all events, the 'a' sound, as explained, cannot assume its normal sound-value when followed by a double 'l', or in words beginning with 'w' or 'wh.' This leads to a different sound-interpretation of the short ă in 'thăt' and the 'a' sound in what.

Examples: want; watch; water; wall, etc.

To avoid recurring problems with word-recognition of 'wa-' words this special word-pattern should be dealt with in the early stages of instruction.

At the same time it should be noted that if the 'a' occurs in the digraph 'ai' the pattern remains normal and regular, with the long 'ā' sound, in 'w-' words, such as, wāit, wāil, wāif, etc.

Similarly, the 'a' sound remains long when 'a' is followed by 'y': wāy

## 'ea'

There are three forms which the 'ea' sound can take:

1. The long 'ē' as in rēad.
2. The short 'ĕ' as in hĕad.

These are readily discernible from context.

The third is more difficult and more complex.

When 'ea' is followed by - 'r' it has variables which should be dealt with: For instance, when ear is followed by a consonant, the sound changes to -er, as in heard, earth, etc. But, once again contextual clues may come to the rescue of well-informed students.

### ***MORE ABOUT PROBLEM VARIABLES:***

## 'o'

The letter 'o' has a number of different sounds. The Vowel 'o' not only has the short 'ŏ' sound, and the long sound, 'ō' sometimes even in the wrong places, but it 'adopts' the 'ū' short-sound on occasions.

The 'o's short 'ū' sound is found in words like:

above, done; some; come, from(?), love, etc.

These words, normally short, become long, in: pōst, ghōst, mōst, etc.

'O' should be treated with caution, and respect. It can be the unexpected, though normally it tries to conform.

### ***MORE ABOUT PROBLEM VARIABLES:***

## 'u'

One of the worst offenders, in departing from the normal, is the vowel-sound 'u'. The regular short 'ū' sound is heard in words like cūt; bŭt; hŭt, etc.

'U' behaves very oddly, for no accountable reason, in words like: put; push; bull, which take on an 'oo' sound.

***SPECIAL SOUND 'OU'*** can really be a major problem! It has 5, repeat five, variables! As shown below:

- 1) 'ōō' as in through;
- 2) 'ō' as in thought;
- 3) 'ū' as in tough;
- 4) 'ō' as in though;
- 5) 'ow!' as in Ouch! This one is known as the 'You're standing on my foot sound!

**MORE ABOUT PROBLEM VARIABLES:**

**'Y'**

The letter 'y' is a consonant. It acts, at the end of a word, as a substitute for the vowels 'i' and 'e.' This substitution does not mean that 'y' becomes a vowel. It is misleading to teach: 'The Vowels are a e i o u and sometimes y.'

Y's function is to act as a 'helper' for 'i' or 'e' because 'e' does not 'speak' at the end of a word, and 'i' never ends a word.

'Y' stands in for 'e' at the end of any word of more than three letters and containing another vowel-sound. For example: story, happy, pleasantly.

'Y' usually stands in for 'i' in a syllable of two, or three, letters which does not contain another vowel. For example: spy, cry, fry, re/ply.

**RECAP:**

'Y' is never a vowel, in its own right. It merely acts as a 'baby-sitter' for 'i' or 'e' because they do not usually speak at the end of words. Students, when phrase reading, will readily

absorb the substitution, appropriately.



**MORE ABOUT VOWEL-SOUNDS**

**'EW'**

A brief note on the slight vowel-sound difference in words containing ' -ew': it can make a long 'ū' sound in certain words, news, few, etc.

But, in other cases, -ew- becomes a double 'o' sound, 'oo', as in 'flew.'

**A GENERALIZATION:**

In the case of the -ew- variables, as in all the other interchangeable vowel-sounds, which come under the heading of 'irregularities', when the facts are known they pose no problem. When the student is phrase reading, the brain will pick out the anomalies in the text. Therefore, the vowel sounds and their variants warrant attention. The brain must be 'told' what to expect in the letter-sounds, particularly as far as the vowels are concerned.

***A MISLEADING STATEMENT:***

The quote that says: "When two vowels go out walking, the first one does the talking," is applicable only in words containing the vowel-combination: 'ai' as in train; 'ea' as in mçat; 'ea' as in br ad; 'ie' as in tied; 'oa' as in soap.



# CONSONANT DIGRAPHS

## **DIGRAPHS DEFINED:**

There are two kinds: Vowel-digraphs and Consonant-digraphs. A digraph represents two letters sounding as one. Examples: **oi** as in **oil**; and **ph** as in **pharmacy**, (Vowel digraph & Consonant digraph, respectively)

The Consonant family members of the alphabet are much less trouble and have fewer deviations than the vowels. They must be known, and recognized, however. The following consonant digraphs are in common use:

**ph; gh; ch; th; wh-; -ng; -nk**

It must be remembered that digraphs do not sound out their own letter-sounds, each has its own distinctive sound which must be known.

## **SOME CONSONANT CHARACTERISTICS:**

- **'-gh-'**: When 'gh' is in the middle of a word it never speaks.
- **'-igh'**: When 'i' comes before 'gh' the 'i' says its own name.
- **'kn-'**: in front of a word the 'k' never speaks, as in knot, knew, knit, etc.
- **'wr-'**: 'w' in front of 'r': the 'w' never speaks, as in wrong, wrote, write, etc.
- **'qu-'**: 'q' is always followed by 'u' making: **'kw-'**
- **'c-'**: When 'c-' comes before an 'i' 'e' or 'y' it says the 's' sound: city, nice, circus, centre, cycle. At all other times 'c' uses the 'k' sound: circus, cloak, etc.
- **'-g'**: When 'g' comes before 'e' or 'i' it sometimes says the 'j' sound, as in: giant, judge, gentle. Other times: get, give, etc.

## **OTHER SPELLING-ASSISTS WORTH REMEMBERING:**

- The vowel-sound before a 'double-consonant' is usually short, as in **tünnel; räbbit; pëpper; böttele**
- When 'n' follows 'm' at the end of the word the 'n' is **silent** as in **autumm & condemm.**
- In words ending in '-t' or '-d' the suffix (ending) - '-ed' takes the short 'ě' sound; as in: **strand, stranděd, & start, startěd**

**In other cases, when adding the suffix '-ed', the 'e' is not articulated, as in: stop, stoppěd & help, helpěd.**

# SPECIAL CONSONANT SOUNDS

## CONSONANT DIGRAPHS TWO-LETTERS REPRESENTED BY ONE SOUND

THESE MUST NOT BE 'DIVIDED-UP' or SEGMENTED IN SYLLABICATION  
For Example: Father → Fat-her

**wh**  
whĭch  
whĕn  
whăt  
why  
whĕre

**ch**  
chŭrch  
chōse  
chĭme  
chĭll

**sh**  
shĭne  
shĕēt  
shĕll  
shĭne

**th**  
thăt  
thĕn  
thōse  
thĕse  
thĕ  
thĭnk

**ph = f**  
phōne  
phōtō

**SOMETIMES: gh**  
rĭght  
nĭght  
slĭght  
thoug~~h~~

# SPELLING

Say the Word  
Listen for the *Vowel*-Sounds  
Listen for the *Consonant*-Sounds  
Say the 'Word-Parts' (syllables)  
Write Down the Word  
*Read* the Word

## REMEMBER

The **Vowels** make the Word - **Sounds**.  
The **Consonants** turn the sounds into meaningful **Words**.  
The **Consonants** and the **Vowels** work together.  
Together they Make **Words**.  
You know about what happens in Words.

Use what you know about words to help you spell them.



# THIS IS THE WAY WORDS ARE BUILT

BEGINNINGS OF WORDS	BASE, or ROOT WORD	ENDINGS OF WORDS
(PREFIXES)		(SUFFIXES)
un-	sing	-ing
a-	present	-ness
ad-	hop	-es
mis-	smile	-s
dis-	spell	-tion
pre-	read	-ly
re-	part	-ed
AND MORE	walk	AND MORE
	hope	
	final	
	carry	
	happy	
	turn	
	invite	
	attend	

# WORD RECOGNITION

## BUILDING WORDS

### SYLLABICATION

### WORD STRUCTURE

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. affectionate | 13. carry       |
| 2. seemed       | 14. carried     |
| 3. shingle      | 15. carrying    |
| 4. human        |                 |
|                 | 16. perform     |
| 5. spell        | 17. singing     |
| 6. misspelled   | 18. hammering   |
|                 | 19. shopping    |
| 7. fortune      | 20. Loaded      |
| 8. passage      | 21. warning     |
| 9. pretending   | 22. punctuation |
| 10. electricity |                 |
| 11. understood  | 23. satisfy     |
| 12. sympathetic | 24. satisfied   |
|                 | 25. stranded    |
|                 | 26. started     |
|                 |                 |
|                 | 27. rewarding   |
- THE 'SCHWA' SOUND**  
Method  
Service  
Lemon

It is difficult to provide anything more than the bare necessities in a book which is not intended as a Reading Text book. It is also difficult to present the material in an uncomplicated and non-technical format. In taking a middle road I am hoping that parents will understand it.

Children who are not making good progress with their reading may be slow developers, in the areas of Visual and Auditory awareness. These pages are specifically intended to encourage the development of these faculties upon which learning to read depends so much.

Teaching of reading **MUST** be a sequential process. This section is arranged so that each step may be mastered, before proceeding to the next. This is not a teacher's manual, and should not be regarded as such. The information presented will certainly enable the child to take a more active interest in the 'Silent Reading' sessions at school.

The search for materials can be a problem, especially for the beginning reader, but for the middle school age group, or older, the Daily Newspaper is ideal resource material.



**PROGRAM MATERIALS:**

The materials provided in this section are necessarily limited in scope. It has not been my intention to write a text book on the subject of reading, but rather to provide interesting and helpful information on the subject. However, what is contained here is adequate for understanding, and achieving mastery of each essential step in the learning to read process. The rationale in providing the materials in this section is to provide a follow-up for those who wish to put what they have read, so far, to practical use. Working with what you have learned about the pitfalls of previous programs, and a more positive approach to the new concepts, and using the steps outlined, for practice, should provide the opportunity for a successful and creative approach to the teaching of reading, either as a home-school project, or in the classroom. It is good to know that further help is always at hand if it is needed.

Once the 'word-pattern' concept has been mastered, so that word recognition can take place, the ability to read meaningfully will follow.

The ultimate goal to be achieved in this section is mastery of the word recognition skills. The next step is the development of phrase reading. This improves delivery in oral reading, and comprehension, in reading for information.

**COMPUTERS: AN ANALOGY:**

The objective in this section is to set down the skills, sequentially, that are needed if students are to achieve their reading potential. The previous reference to 'Word Awareness' is suited to all levels of instruction; the materials presented in this section are directed to meet the needs of primary and elementary students.

**THE COMPUTER-AGE:**

In this day and age most children are familiar with computers. The analogy made, with reference to 'Word Awareness,' can be readily understood. It provides a focus for the students' interest, and attention.

The concept of the camera, tape-recorder, and computer, seems to appeal to the students, and serves a purpose. It enables children to grasp the three basic fundamentals in the reading process: visual awareness, auditory awareness, and the necessary linguistics. The camera provides the visual impression of the words, the computer processes the information and provides the knowledge needed for word utterance; the tape-recorder plays it back to the reader. Most children can appreciate the fact that if the computer does not have the necessary soft-ware it cannot compute, and send the appropriate words to the tape-recorder.

# WORD AWARENESS

Sequential  
ESSENTIAL TO MEANINGFUL READING

**VISUAL PERCEPTION**



at

go

rat pet  
bit rod  
cut

rate Pete  
bite rode  
cute

train meat  
tied road

oil boy  
saw Paul  
out owl  
cool book

farm corn  
girl turn  
term

knot knit know  
write wrong

try fry  
why  
who to do

THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT  
INCLUDES:  
**COMPUTER**

**BRAIN**  
KNOWLEDGE/MEMORY

**ALPHABETIC CODE**  
A TWO-FAMILY CONCEPT

**VOWELS**  
Long; Short; Special; Controlled

**CONSONANTS**  
Variables; 'C' & 'G': Digraphs

**WORD PATTERNS**  
VC CV CVC CVCE CVVE

**WORD STRUCTURE**  
SYLLABLES  
Root words; Pre-fixes; Suffixes; mis-; dis-;  
& -tion; -ly; -ed, etc.

**MEANINGFUL READING**  
INSTANT WORD RECOGNITION  
Phrasing; Pause; Punctuation

**STUDY**  
Facts & Main Ideas;  
Review & Memory

**AUDITORY AWARENESS**



ăt

gō

răt pět  
bīt rōd  
cūt

răt Pět  
bīt rōd  
cūt

trāin mēat  
tīed rōad

ōil bōy  
sāw Pāul  
ōut ōwl  
cōol bōok

fārm cōrn  
gīrl tūrn  
tērm

~~knot~~ ~~knit~~ ~~know~~  
~~write~~ ~~wrong~~

<sup>i</sup>try <sup>i</sup>fry  
<sup>i</sup>why  
whō tō dō

WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE IN THE COMPUTER  
THE TAPE-RECORDER CANNOT FUNCTION  
EFFECTIVELY

# PHRASE READING

Phrase reading is an effective technique in silent, as well as in oral, reading. It plays a very important role in Instant Word Recognition. Phrase reading is also a leading factor in Meaningful Reading. Its importance, therefore, cannot be overlooked. It must be regarded as an integral part of the reading process.

## **"PHRASE" DEFINED:**

"Phrase" when applied to an approach to the learning/teaching of reading, and speech, does not necessarily have the same interpretation as it does when used by grammarians. For the purpose of 'Oral Expression' a phrase is best defined as: 'A group of words expressing a mental concept.' These 'sense-units' are spoken on a one-breath impulse. They are instrumental in the development of almost instant understanding of the written, or spoken, word. A phrase, and a pause, provide the split-second opportunity for 'meaning' to take place.

Phrase reading is a very important part of the learning to read process. The method should be introduced to the beginning reader as early as possible, and thereafter its importance should be stressed at all levels of learning.

## **PHRASE READING**

- A. One day a little Red Hen found a grain of wheat. "Who will plant this wheat?" asked the Red Hen.

"I won't!" said the dog.

"I won't!" said the cat.

"I won't!" said the pig.

"Then I will!" said the little Red Hen.



- B. A new machine helps train track stars in Japan. It was bought to help prepare athletes for the Olympic Games.



- C. Tim and MacDuff were inseparable. The big Collie, MacDuff, had adopted Tim when the cocker pup had first joined the Roberts family.



**NOTE:**

There is excellent practice material in:  
"THE OLD WOMAN AND HER PIG"

Repetition is, also, a very useful tool for the memorization of 'sight' words.



# READING ACTIVITY

Practice Unit  
CLASS, OR INDIVIDUAL EXERCISES

**TO DEVELOP INSTANT WORD RECOGNITION  
& 'SKIMMING' SKILLS**

It is essential to eliminate the need for students to STOP in the middle of a sentence in order to 'work out' an unfamiliar word. This common practice interferes with the comprehension process.

It is helpful, however, to allow the student to practice his skills by looking ahead, quickly, at the text to check for any 'unfamiliar' words.

It is necessary to complete this exercise by telling the students to call out: 'Stop Please!' when an unrecognizable word has been encountered. Then, the problem word must (a) be copied into the student's note-book, or, (b) the teacher may make it a class activity by using the chalk-board.



**COLORED PENCILS:**  
RED for Syllables  
BLUE for Sounds  
GREEN for Underscoring

## **CVC**

rat    pet    bit    rod    cut

## **CVCE**

rate    Pete    bite    rode    cute

## **CVVC**

rain    road    fried    field    meat

## **WORD SEGREGATION - SYLLABICATION**

hopping    jumping  
final    finally    invite    invitation  
spell    misspell    misspelling  
carry    carrying    carried

-ed  
jumped    stranded    started    ragged

CONCEPTS & STRATEGIES for INSTANT WORD RECOGNITION

TEACHING, READING, SPELLING  
AND  
WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

FIRST: Break the ALPHABETIC CODE by teaching:

The **sounds** of letters

Vowels; Consonants; Digraphs

WORD PATfERNS

examples: WORD PATTERNS

VC: ät ïn -ët ðn ùs

CVC: bē gō by

CVC: rät pēt bīt rōd cūt

CVCE: rätē Pētē bītē rōdē cūtē

examples: CONSONANT DIGRAPHS

th ph sh wh ch qu -nk -ng gh gh/f

examples: SPECIAL SOUNDS: VOWEL DIGRAPHS

ou ow au aw oi oy öö öö  
and 'g' & 'c' coming before 'e' or 'i'



DECODE words by linguistic; sound patterns; word-ending; syllables, & meaning.

READ in short phrases, for meaning

PUNCTUATION important, for meaning.

ORAL READING See before Say;  
Always Read for the **Listener**  
Speak **clearly** and with **expression**

SILENT READING Read in **phrases**  
Read for **Self**

Read for **pleasure** or **information**  
**Look for** Facts; Details; Main Ideas



*Note This 'MEANINGFUL READING' will not come on its own, Students must  
'LOOK FOR IT!'*

# THE VOWELS: a e i o u

WHEN THE VOWELS ARE IN THE L o n g GROUP THEY SAY THEIR OWN NAME.

**Like This:**

**ā** as in **ā**pron  
**ē** as in **ē**at  
**ī** as in **ī**ce  
**ō** as in **ō**cean  
**ū** as in **ū**nicorn

**BUT**  
THE '**SHORT-VOWEL SOUNDS**' ARE DIFFERENT

**Like This:**

**ă** like in the word **ă**pple  
**ĕ** like in the word **ĕ**lĕphant  
**ĭ** like in the word **ĭ**nsect  
**ŏ** like in the word **Ō**ctōber  
**ŭ** like in the word **ŭ**mbrella



# WORD PATTERNS

THESE WORD PATTERNS MUST BE  
**KNOWN AND UNDERSTOOD**

Then:

**WORDS** can be **RECOGNIZED**  
no matter how **long** the word is!

Therefore

**IT IS NECESSARY TO MEMORIZE THESE WORD PATTERNS**  
for  
**INSTANT WORD RECOGNITION**

**MEMO:** In the following examples

'C' is for 'CONSONANT' 'V' is for 'VOWEL'

**cvc** - **ă ě ĭ ō ŭ** example: **răt**

**cvce** - **ă ě ĭ ō ŭ** example: **răte**

**cvvc** - **ăĭ ěă ĩe ōă** example: **răin**

Remember these '**SPECIALS**':

oi as in boil and oy as in boy  
au as in Paul and aw as in paw  
ou as in out and ow as in owl  
oo as in book and oo as in pool

SO...

**WHEN THESE LONG, SHORT, & SPECIAL PATTERNS HAVE BEEN MASTERED, THE FIRST STEPS IN LEARNING TO READ' HAVE BEEN TAKEN. IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF USING THIS KNOWLEDGE IN MEANINGFUL READING & CORRECT SPELLING.**



# VOWEL SOUNDS...

SHÖRT... LÖNG... and *SPECIAL*

The Vowels have *three* kinds of sounds they make:  
THEY ARE

Long sounds ā ē ī ō ū

Short sounds ă ě ĭ ǒ ŭ

and

Special sounds  
Vowel Digraphs

**So that students who are just starting to learn**

**to read can tell which sound is which,**

**THIS MARK →- is placed over Long sounds**

**THIS MARK →~ is placed over Short sounds.**

**BUT**

**Special sounds are in a round circle**

**LIKE THIS:**

oi oy au aw ou ow oo

## PRACTICE WORDS: CVC SHORT-VOWEL CONCEPT

### CVC

past	pet	slip	shop	gum
man	when	spin	stop	rust
hand	men	did	hot	cut
band	bend	pin	got	but

### CVCĒ

#### Silent 'E' Long-Vowel Concept

plate	Pete	ride	rode	cute
cake		like	rope	tune
babe		mine	woke	

### CVVC

#### Two-Vowels: 1st Long concept.

rain	coat	nail	goat
wait	load	plain	coat
tried	stream	train	soap
fried	mean	pain	goal

**PRACTICE WITH THE SHORT VOWEL SOUND IN THE CVC FORMAT**

**'a' & 'e'**

**căt măt hăt răt băt**

**I had a cat.  
I had a mat.  
I had a hat.  
I had a rat.  
I had a bat.**

**The cat had a rat.  
The cat had a mat.  
The cat had a hat.  
The rat had a hat.  
The bat had a hat.**

**A cat is on the mat.  
A hat is on the mat.  
A rat is on the mat.  
A bat is on the mat.**

**Běn Bět Něl Nęd Měj**

**Ben has a hen.  
Bet has a net.  
Nell has a bell.  
Ned has a bed.  
Meg has a peg.**

**Ben fed a hen.  
Bet fed a cat.  
Nell fed a cat.  
Ned fed a hen.  
Meg fed a bat.**

**Get Ben a bag.  
Get Bet a pen.  
Get Nell a hat.  
Get Ned a bat.  
Get Meg a fan.**

**Tell Ben to sell a hen.  
Tell Meg to get a pen.**

**PRACTICE WITH THE SHORT VOWEL SOUND IN THE CVC FORMAT**

**'i' & 'o'**

**pĭg dĭg wĭg fĭg**

**I had a pig.**

**I had a fig. I had a wig.**

**The Pig had a wig.**

**The fig was big.**

**The wig did fit.**

**I can dig a big pig-pen.**

**dŏg lŏg bŏg fŏg**

**I had a dog.**

**I had a log.**

**A dog is in a bog.**

**A log is in the bog.**

**I sat in the bog.**

**I sat in the fog.**

**I sat in the bog in a fog.**

**A mat is in the bog.**

**A cat is in the bog.**

**A rat is in the bog.**

**A hen is in the bog.**

**A pen is in the bog.**

**A pig is in the bog.**

**A wig is in the bog.**

**A dog is in the bog.**

## PRACTICE WITH THE SHORT VOWEL SOUND IN THE CVC FORMAT

'u' & recap

sŭn bŭn rŭn fŭn

I had a bun.  
It was fun.  
I can run.  
I can run in the sun.  
I can run with a dog.  
I can run with a pig.  
I can run with a hen.  
A cat can run with a rat.  
A bun in the sun can be fun.  
A pig has a wig in the sun.  
A dog has a log in the bog.  
A cat has a rat on the mat.  
A pig has a big fig in the pen.

Fan sat in a van.  
Mag sat in a den.  
Pat ran to a cat.  
Ben fed a red hen.  
Meg fed a fat pig.  
Tell Ben to dig a big pit.  
I met a cat in a bog.  
I fed ten men in a den.



# The Mad Beast of Ant Hill



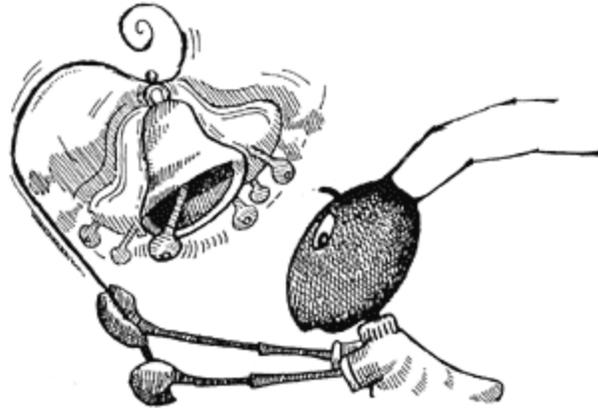
It was a hot day in Ant Land. All the ants were down by the pond. They were resting in the grass when a huge beast jumped out of a tree. It came down to the pond.

"Quick! Quick!" yelled an ant. "We must hide."

The ants ran in back of a rock. The beast went down to the pond and had a drink. The he picked out a place at rest and sat down. He sat on top of the ant hill. Soon he started to snore.

All the ants were upset. "What a bad place for him to be!" said an ant. "If he stays there, we can't get into the ant hill. "

Soon Moony the ant came by with her cart. Moony did not see the beast.



"Well, he can't stay here. He can't stay on the ant hill. The beast must go," said Moony. "I'll make him go."

"He is much bigger than you," said an ant. "You can't make him go."

"If I ring the bell on my cart, he will get up," said Moony.

"Let him be," said an ant. "Do not upset him."

"Go and hide if you want," said Moony. "I'm going to ring my bell."

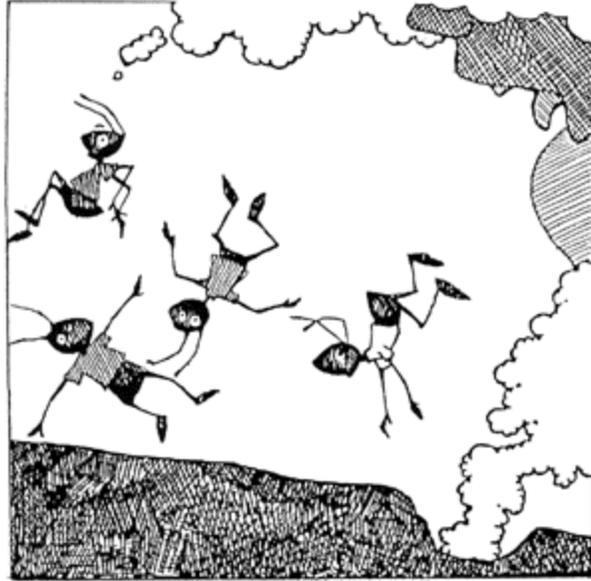
Moony rang the bell, but the beast did not hear it. He just went on snoring.

"I must get this beast out of here," said Moony.

"We need to get into the ant hill now."

Moony jumped in her cart. She drove down the beast's side. Moony got up onto her cart to speak to the ants. "I need your help to get him up," she said. "Who will help me?"

"We will. We will," yelled the ants.



First she had the ants dig a hole next to the beast. Then they put lots of sticks in the hole and set them on fire. Smoke came up from the hold. A breeze came up and sent the smoke up to the beast. He woke up and sneezed. Then he jumped up. He ran out of Ant Land.

All the ants ran up and thanked Moony for her help. "You did it! Your fire drove the beast out of Ant Land! Now we are safe," said the ants. Then they made Moony queen of all the ants. And to this day Moony is still Queen of A nt Land.

## FOR READING & PHRASE READING PRACTICE

BY  
CANDY COMEAU

### MARK & SANDY MEET A WHALE

Mark and Sandy like to play games. They like to play catch. They like to play tag. When they play tag they run to the field. They like lots of room. The field has lots of room. Well, most of the time it has lots of room. This day it did not have lots of room. This day they saw a pool in the field. It was a big pool. In the pool they saw a whale. It was a large whale, a large pink whale.

"Hi, whale," they say. "You look funny. You are pink."

"My name is not Whale. My name is Chicken Bone. It is not nice to tell me that I look funny. I think I will cry."

Mark and Sandy say, "Please do not cry, Chicken Bone. We are sorry. We will not say you look funny. Can we play with you in the pool ?"

"Yes, you may. But you must be good boys. If you are not good I will send you home."

"We will be good," say the boys, and they were.

Chicken Bone and the boys swam the whole day. Then night came. They had to go home for supper.

"We will be back later, Chicken Bone. Wait for us. We will bring you a treat. Do you like ice-cream ?"

"Yes, I really do like ice-cream. I like pink ice-cream best. Can you bring me pink ice-cream, please?"

"Yes, we can do that. We can bring chips, too. Next day we will get these things for you. Good-bye for now."

"Good-bye boys. I am glad you came to my pool. Sleep well. Wish on a star. Dream good dreams. I will be waiting for you right in my pool. I will rest all night long, just like you. Then, after we rest we can swim fast. I am a whale, so I will swim faster. But you will swim fast, for boys. Good Night!"

## 'The Bear That Wanted More'

One May morning two teenage brothers, Bill, and James, took their dog, Bruno, for a walk in the park. Bruno loved to be taken for walks, and, small as he was, he would trot along beside the boys no matter how far they hiked.

On this beautiful Spring day they had packed up a lunch for themselves, and something for Bruno. They set out for Greenhill Park. The sun was shining. The air was filled with the perfume of early blossoms, wafted on the warm breeze.

After they had walked for some time, silently thinking their thoughts and enjoying the scenery, Bill stopped suddenly. "Look!" he said, pointing. "Over there, by the trees, there's a super bench. It would be a neat place to eat our lunch. We could tie Bruno's leash to it so that he couldn't wander away."

"Right on!" agreed James. "Let's do it."

The boys made their way, following the pathway to the seat near the trees. James tied Bruno's long leash to the metal arm of the bench, and Bill threw off the back-pack that he had been carrying. The sun was high in the sky and it was warm. Taking off their jackets they sat down and began to unpack the lunch from the knapsack. Their mother had thoughtfully included Bruno's dish, some biscuits, and a bottle of water.

Bruno stood up with his tail wagging when he saw his dish. He lapped up the water noisily. "Bruno was thirsty," remarked Bill, as he put down the dog biscuits beside the dish. Then it was time to open up the packages of sandwiches. The boys had barely time to settle down to enjoy their meal when they heard strange noises coming from the woods nearby. It was the crashing sound of breaking branches followed by a deep growling. Before they could take any action whatsoever, out of the trees appeared a large brown bear. It stopped and raised its head and sniffed the air. Then it ambled purposefully towards the two startled boys. It had all happened so quickly that they were frozen to the seat. Bill was the first to move. He stooped and grabbed Bruno, quickly covering the little dog with his discarded jacket, before his pet was aware of what was happening.

The boys knew enough about bears to know that running away was not the thing to do. Bears are very fast runners indeed. Bill and James sat perfectly still, and waited. They were too frightened to move! Bill was thanking his stars that Bruno had settled down quietly, on his lap. Dogs and bears are a deadly dangerous mix!

The big brown bear came slowly towards the boys and then stopped right in front of them. It looked at them closely, before lowering its head and grasping the open knapsack between sharp teeth. The bear turned, and, with a grunt of satisfaction, walked slowly back towards the woods with the knapsack swinging from its jaw.

Bill and James quickly recovered their senses. They found it hard to believe they were still sitting, unharmed, on the bench, with Bruno still sleeping quietly. "Gee!" breathed

James. "That was some close shave! Let's go, pronto, in case he comes back when he's finished our lunch."

The boys quickly picked up their scattered belongings. They were just ready to untie Bruno's leash when they caught sight of an elderly man coming out of the trees. Bill made a move towards the man. "What now?" muttered James. "Don't stop to chat, Bill. Let's go!" But Bill was already on his way to meet the stranger who was shouting out something. As he approached he called out, "Have your boys, by any chance, seen a brown bear around here?" As the man drew close he added, "I guess you have, from the look on your faces."

"Haven't we just!" exclaimed Bill. "We were scared stiff. We thought we'd had it! But all it did was grab our haversack with all our food in it."

"But he did say 'Thanks' and 'Good-bye!'" added James.

The elderly man burst out laughing. "That's old Wally for you, polite as ever, and always wanting something to eat."

"You mean you know him?" asked Bill. "Sure thing, you bet. He's a real friendly fellow, and always well mannered too," he added with a smile. "He belongs to the circus that's just come to town here. I'm his keeper. He's my best friend. He took off this morning when his cage was being cleaned. You say he went back in, over there?" Bill and James nodded and pointed to the trees where Wally had disappeared.

"Well, I'll be off then, and be after him." As the man turned to go there came a low growl, and out from the trees, once more, shambled Wally, the bear! The two boys broke out laughing when they saw that Wally was carrying their back pack. The circus man joined in their laughter when he said, "Well, I'm not sure if he has come to return your property, or to ask for a refill!"

"This is some story to tell the folks at home," said Bill, as they made their way back along the path.

"Wally made our day, even though he nearly scared us to death!"



**Notes:**