

**LEARNING TO SPELL: A  
MANUAL FOR  
TEACHERS USING  
THE ALDINE SPELLER**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649343003

Learning to Spell: A Manual for Teachers Using the Aldine Speller by Catherine T. Bryce & Frank J. Sherman & Arthur W. Kallom

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

CATHERINE T. BRYCE & FRANK J. SHERMAN & ARTHUR W. KALLOM

**LEARNING TO SPELL: A  
MANUAL FOR  
TEACHERS USING  
THE ALDINE SPELLER**



*Duf*

# LEARNING TO SPELL

A Manual for Teachers Using the  
**ALDINE SPELLER**

BY

**CATHERINE T. BRYCE**

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION  
YALE UNIVERSITY

**FRANK J. SHERMAN**

FORMERLY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS  
DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS

AND

**ARTHUR W. KALLOM**

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL INVESTIGATION  
AND MEASUREMENTS, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



NEW YORK  
NEWSON & COMPANY

Educ T 759.21.23.0

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY  
TRANSFERRED FROM THE  
LIBRARY OF THE  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Given in 1921

COPYRIGHT, 1921, BY  
NEWSON & COMPANY

*All rights reserved.*

[1]

## LEARNING TO SPELL

ARE we spelling as well in our schools today as our forefathers did in the little red schoolhouse? This is the question that has been asked many times but no one has been able to answer it in any convincing way. There have been advocates of both sides of the question. The fact remains that no one knows. We do not know how well children could spell fifty, or even twenty-five, years ago. As time goes by there is a glamour thrown over the past and we see only the high lights. We remember that in spelling a match there was a certain boy, or girl, who spelled down the entire school time after time, or possibly had a reputation for being the best speller in the entire county. When a spelling match was announced it was a foregone conclusion that the victory lay between two or three pupils. How many children of the eighth grade could spell the following list of words?

phthisicky

magisterial

ichthyology

convalesce

abstemious

calligraphy

demoniacal

saccharin

We remember the pupils who were able to spell these difficult words, and we forget those who were unable to spell

them. We remember the good spellers and forget how many poor ones there were.

The question is not whether one or two could spell, or learn to spell such words, but could nearly every pupil in the school spell such words? If they could, what use did they make of their knowledge? The corollary to the proposition is, how many were unable to spell "which," "there," "writing," "guess," and a thousand other common words? The question then is fairly before us; viz., *What is the object of teaching spelling?*

#### OBJECT OF TEACHING SPELLING

Ever since the school of early days spelling has accompanied "reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic" as a part of the curriculum. The day when reading was taught by the "spelling method," so called, is not far back in the past. "How can one learn to read if one does not know his letters, that he may be able to spell out the words that he meets in his reading?" Not until recently has the question been asked, "Why do we study spelling at all?" Do we need it in our reading? Modern methods have shown us that we do not. We need to know how to spell only when we wish to write. How often does the average person write "phthisicky," "magisterial," "ichthyology," "convalesce," and other equally uncommon words? Not often, perhaps never. Then why spend the time of our overcrowded school day in having children try to learn these words, when numerous recent investigations show positively that children are constantly misspelling "which," "there," "their," and many other common, everyday words?



## TEACHING VERSUS TESTING

For many years the spelling lesson has been, with many teachers, a means of obtaining a breathing space in the day's work. It was comparatively easy to say to the children "Take the next twenty words." The study of these words took some time, and it was easy work to dictate the lesson at the end of fifteen or twenty minutes, have the pupils exchange papers, and correct the words. What was the net result at the end of the year? No one knew. Had they tested the right words for the given grade? No one knew. They had tested the words that were given in the spelling book adopted by the city, town, or state. Most of the books contained from 10,000 to 12,000 words. That the children did not use many of these words in their written work made little or no difference. In some cases at least, the author of a spelling book took the dictionary and started with the *a*'s and proceeded through the alphabet, deciding that the children ought to know how to spell this word, and that word, and so on through the dictionary. No attempt was made to find out whether the pupil used the words or not, and no attempt was made to place the words according to their use in the proper grade.

Was it possible for a teacher using such a book to test the right words? Probably not. She tested all she could. She assigned ten words a day for about 150 days during the year, or if she dared, or the course of study called for it, twenty, or twenty-five words were given in the upper grades. The teacher was compelled to do so in order to *finish the speller*. Did she *teach* the words? How could she

teach even the ten words in the short time allowed? In order that spelling words might be *taught* some teachers suggested that five new words a day would be sufficient to meet the needs of the pupil. The answer of many teachers, following ancient traditions, shows that they think that this would be unwise. Not to teach "which," "there," "their," and such words until the upper grades certainly would be even more unwise.

Teachers have had the mistaken idea that children learn to spell many words because of constant use, and that there is no need of teaching them. Recent studies have shown that this is not true except with respect to occasional children who have already developed what has been called a *spelling consciousness*. In the vast majority of cases this spelling consciousness needs to be developed. To accomplish this words have to be selected, and carefully and systematically taught, to most children. The selection of words, therefore, is an important work of the author of a spelling book.

Thanks to recent investigations the day has come when two important questions are being asked:

1. *What words ought we to teach?*
2. *How shall these selected words be taught?*

#### SELECTION OF A VOCABULARY

In the past teachers have had little or nothing to do with the selection of the widely differing vocabularies which they have had to teach. The best of our teachers have attempted to select a reasonable list from the spelling book which has

been provided. That selection, however, has been limited by the spelling book in use, the vocabulary of which has already been selected, and may or may not be a reasonable one. The question may even be raised, "To what extent can teachers intelligently select the vocabulary which should be taught?" In 1914 teachers of the city of Boston chosen from all the elementary grades, were asked to make a selection of words fitted for their respective grades. The significant thing in their report was that the second grade teachers chose not only words which should be taught in the second grade, but also words which eventually should be taught in each later grade; and many teachers of the eighth grade selected words which should have been taught in a previous grade. "Always," for example, was in the list of one or more teachers of every grade, I to VIII inclusive. Many other words were in the lists of teachers of several grades.

In 1916 Jones's "Hundred Demons" (see page 22, Part III) were given to forty-five second grade teachers for them to select the words which should be retained in the second grade. Seventy-nine of these words are among Ayres's "Thousand Commonest Words in the English Language." Every word was voted to be retained by one, or more than one, *second* grade teacher as suitable to be taught to second grade pupils.

A group of twenty-eight prospective Boston teachers, who had had some experience in the grades as practice teachers, and much experience in observation, was asked to arrange the following list of words in the order of their difficulty: