

**THE RATIONAL METHOD IN
READING: MANUAL
OF INSTRUCTION, FOR
THE USE OF TEACHERS**

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The Rational Method in Reading: Manual of Instruction, for the Use of Teachers by Edward G. Ward

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EDWARD G. WARD

**THE RATIONAL METHOD IN
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THE USE OF TEACHERS**

THE
RATIONAL METHOD IN READING

*AN ORIGINAL PRESENTATION OF SIGHT AND SOUND WORK
THAT LEADS RAPIDLY TO INDEPENDENT AND
INTELLIGENT READING*

BY

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Manual of Instruction

FOR THE USE OF TEACHERS



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**THE
RATIONAL METHOD IN READING.**

- LB1525
- First Year.** { **PRIMER.**
Material: Conversations.
PART I.—Reading by the Word Method.
PART II.—Sight and Phonetic Reading Combined.
- First Reader.**
Material: Conversations and Stories.
PART I.—Sight and Phonetic Reading. Largely Review Exercises.
PART II.—Sight and Phonetic Reading. Advance Work.
- Second Year.** { **SECOND READER.**
Material: Stories and Poetry. Literary and Ethical.
PART I.—Sight and Phonetic Reading. Advance Work.
PART II.—Sight and Phonetic Reading. The Remaining Phonograms. Reading with All the Phonograms.
- Third Reader.**
Material: Stories, Poetry, etc., from History, Folk Lore, and Standard Fiction. Literary and Ethical.
PARTS I. and II.—Sight and Phonetic Reading. Diacritical Marks omitted from the easier and more familiar Phonetic Words.

MANUAL OF INSTRUCTION FOR TEACHERS.

PHONETIC CARDS —

- FIRST SET. To Accompany the Primer.
SECOND SET. To Accompany the First Reader.
THIRD SET. To Accompany the Second Reader.

Other volumes forthcoming.

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EDUCATION DEPT.

PREFACE.

THE method of teaching reading embodied in this book is an outgrowth of the author's profound dissatisfaction with the results of the word method.

The latter method, while it possesses the undisputed merit of leading to facility in thought gathering during the first stage of the work, proves slow and cumbersome afterward, fails to excite the child to effort, furnishes him with but a scanty vocabulary, and finally sends him out of school unprovided with a key by means of which, without further assistance, he may gain access to the treasures of the language.

The RATIONAL METHOD is a peculiar combination of the word and phonetic methods. It utilizes each for that part of the work to which it is especially adapted. The word method is used, first as principal, because of its value in developing a habit of reading thoughtfully, and afterward as auxiliary, to remedy the shortcomings of the phonetic method, and increase the stock of word phonograms. The phonetic method, which is introduced by easy stages during the ascendancy of the word method, finally becomes the principal means of growth and progress. It imparts power, while it supplies the key which the word method is inadequate to give.

The aims of the RATIONAL METHOD are:—

1. To make the child not only independent in his reading, but generally self-reliant.
2. To enable him to read a vastly greater amount than heretofore in a given time, and thus acquire not only a fuller vocabulary, but greater maturity of mind.
3. To put him into possession, during the first year and a half of school life, of a complete key to the language, so that, no matter how soon thereafter his schooling may cease, his ability to read will be assured.

The following are the leading features of the phonetic part of the work:—

1. The presentation of the sounds and their symbols (phonograms) in a rational order; that is, an order in which the easier precede the harder. The easiest sounds to use in phonetic reading are those that may be indefinitely prolonged, and the blending of which in words may therefore be most readily shown and perceived. These sounds, the RATIONAL METHOD deals with first

2. **The teaching of an INITIAL STOCK of phonograms before any phonetic reading is done.** This makes provision whereby, when such reading has once been commenced, it may be carried on continuously and with sufficient wealth and variety of material.

3. **The training of the ear in the perception of phonetic blends, before phonetic reading is begun.** The teacher accomplishes this by pronouncing words sound by sound, and requiring the children to determine, in each case, the word so pronounced.

4. **An extensive and systematic use of word-phonograms and other compound phonograms.** The difficulty the child experiences in determining a new word, is, in general, directly proportional to the number of parts he has to recognize in it. By the use, then, of compound phonograms, which, being taught as wholes, are no harder to recognize than simple ones, hundreds of long and hard words are practically transformed into short and easy ones. Thus, the word *lightning*, which the child learning by this method reads, *lightning*, he finds no more difficult than the short word *left*, in which also he has to recognize and put together four separate sounds.

5. **A careful grading of the phonetic words introduced.** The first phonetic words presented contain but two phonograms each, the next but three, and so on.

6. **The gradual introduction of phonetic words into the sentence reading.** At first but one such word is used to a sentence. This prevents the phonetic work from offering any serious impediment to the thought getting. As the child's perception of the blend becomes quicker and clearer, the proportion of phonetic words is constantly increased. Finally, when this perception has become automatic, or nearly so, the reading is made almost wholly phonetic.

7. **Separate daily drills in the recognition of the individual phonograms and the reading of single phonetic words.** The purpose of these is to cultivate expertness. No other part of the work exceeds them in importance; as without them, the average child would never acquire sufficient facility in sound or word recognition, to make successful phonetic reading a possibility.

Those who undertake this method will need:—

1. To follow *implicitly* the directions laid down in the Manual.
2. To do their work with great thoroughness.
3. To hold expectation in check for awhile, and exercise patience,—looking for brilliant results only after the foundations have been laid broad and deep. In the numerous schools that have already attracted public attention by their wonderful success with this method, more ground has invariably been covered during the last five weeks of the first term than during the preceding fifteen.

E. G. W.

BROOKLYN, N.Y., June 1, 1894.

MANUAL OF INSTRUCTION FOR TEACHERS.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS EMPLOYED.

Phonogram. A written or printed representation of a sound, either simple or compound.

EXAMPLES: f, s, l, ing, ight.

Sight word. A word that has been taught as a whole, and is therefore recognized by sight alone.

Phonetic word. A word to be read by means of its phonograms.

Sight reading. The reading of sight words either singly or in sentences.

Phonetic reading. The reading of phonetic words either singly or in sentences.

Simple phonogram. A phonogram containing but one letter.

EXAMPLES: ş, ĩ, ŏ.

(Excepting ĩ, which represents a union of the sounds of ä and ë, the simple phonograms stand for one sound each.)

Compound phonogram. A phonogram containing more than one letter.

EXAMPLES: ing, ight, ip, un, ness.

(Every compound phonogram represents a compound sound, which, however, is taught as a unit.)

Word phonogram. A sight word used as a phonogram in the representation of a longer word.

EXAMPLES: old in fold, ail in sail, an in man.

(Word phonograms are really, of course, compound phonograms, but, for the sake of convenience, the term "compound phonogram" is restricted to combinations that are not words.)

Blend. The union or combination of sounds, simple, compound, or both, to form words.



I.

FIRST HALF-YEAR'S WORK. — FIRST STAGE.

(TIME, ABOUT EIGHT WEEKS.)*

*SIGHT-READING FROM THE BLACKBOARD AND PREPARATION FOR
PHONETIC READING.*

Three lines of work are to be separately practiced every day:—

1. SIGHT-READING.
2. DRILL ON PHONOGRAMS.
3. EAR-TRAINING.

1. THE SIGHT-READING.

Commence with the blackboard, using script characters only, and teach the following list of sight-words comprising the full vocabulary for Part I. of the Primer:—

a, again, ail, all, am, an, and, any, apple, are, at, boy, bread, can, come, cow, day, do, does, dog, drink, eat, egg, for, Frank, fruit, full, girl, give, go, good, has, have, he, her, here, him, home, how, I, ill, in, is, it, Jack, let, like, look, make, me, milk, much, no, not, of, old, out, picture, play, see, she, some, stay, take, tell, that, the, them, there, they, to, too, us, want, water, we, well, what, where, will, with, yes, you.

* In Brooklyn, some teachers accomplish this stage of the work in six weeks, while a few require as much as ten weeks.

Use the words in sentences from the very beginning. Construct your own sentences and make plenty of them, but make them *very short*. As far as possible, work them up in conversation or story style, several in succession relating to one topic. Do not use the sentences found in the book; and, the better to avoid doing so, work up the words in a somewhat different order from that in which they are presented in the book.

Never let a *single scholar* read a sentence until he is ready to do so without a break. At the very first symptom of hesitation or a halt, stop the pupil, and tell him he must not read until he has his sentence all ready. While he is getting it ready, he must have the privilege of asking (by number is the best way) for any word that he does not know. This mode of procedure, involving, as it does, constant waiting, seems to the inexperienced teacher most wasteful of time; but those whose experience is riper, well know that the facility it brings toward the latter part of the term makes up many times over for the time apparently lost at the beginning. Do not fall into the common error when the children show a disposition to hesitate, of telling them to hurry. You do not wish them to *hurry*; you simply wish them to read in a *natural* manner *without breaks*.

As to expression: — When a child reads without expression, draw it from him if possible, by questions or remarks on the subject-matter of the sentence. Failing in this, read the sentence properly for him, and require him to read it after you. The statement of the theorists that if the child recognizes the words readily, the expression will take care of itself, is arrant nonsense, as every practical teacher of little ones knows. With a class that is particularly unresponsive in this matter, it is often a good thing in the models you set, to exaggerate somewhat in both emphasis and inflection.

The scholars should be taught to recognize the *s* and *ing* forms of the words just as they do the simpler forms. This recognition may be easily brought about in the following manner: —

When half-a-dozen singular nouns and three or four simple verbs have been learned, write any convenient one of said words on the blackboard, and have the pupils tell what it is. Then add to it an *s*, and tell *them* what it *now* is. Next write another of the words, have it read as before, and add the *s*; but now, instead of telling the *scholars* what the word has become, ask *them* to tell *you*. Continue this process until they distinguish without