

**WHEELER'S GRADED
READERS: A
THIRD READER**

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Wheeler's Graded Readers: A Third Reader by Gail Calmerton & William H. Wheeler

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CHICAGO

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By WILLIAM H. WHEELER

PREFACE

It is well to keep in mind constantly that there are two very distinct aspects involved in presenting the subject of reading to a child. What is generally called elementary reading, is reading for the purpose of learning how to read; and what is generally called advanced reading, is reading for the knowledge and culture acquired thereby.

At the beginning and also at the end of the reading process these two aspects are clearly defined. The beginning is clearly a process of *learning to read*. The end is just as clearly a process of *reading to learn*. But the transition from the former to the latter is not abrupt. Through the whole process of learning to read there is a secondary purpose of getting thought, just as in reading for thought there is a secondary purpose of improving the pupil's skill or power to read. Both motives should always be present, but it is a matter of great importance that the teacher should know, at each stage of the work, which motive is primary, which is the principal thing to do. Throughout the process there is a gradual lessening of the mechanical processes and a corresponding increase in the emphasis to be given to the true ends of reading, — culture and information; and the increasing ease with which the reading is done is the true measure of advancement. The Third Reader represents, very nearly, the middle ground, and must, therefore, present both aspects of the reading process.

It is a great thing to know how to read well, and the principal thing that teachers can do for a child is to teach him to read intelligently. The difference between reading and reading *well* means everything for all the reading done in a lifetime. We believe that good oral reading need not be one of the lost arts. It is an art that, with care and patience and much practice, may be acquired by every

boy and girl. Children who like to read are pretty sure to become good readers.

The easiest way to teach reading is to make every lesson so simple that the children can read it easily, and so full of interest that they will take delight in reading it. Children will never acquire the habit of reading by reading what they do not enjoy.

We have tried to find stories which will interest the children and which will bear reading again and again. We have tried to keep the vocabulary small and the sentences short and simple. We have also tried to introduce a great deal of conversation, which naturally leads to good expression.

We believe that if children are given stories that they like, written in language that they can read with ease, they will read them in a natural tone and will make others understand and enjoy them. They will let the thought and the feeling of what they read come from their hearts as well as from their lips. This is the secret of good expression.

Of course they cannot do this if they have to stop and guess at the words and their meaning. In this reader all of the new words that are likely to offer the slightest difficulties are placed in the word lists at the head of each lesson. But if the children find a word now and then which they do not know, they should carefully read the sentence in which it is used. If this does not help them to get the meaning, they should either look it up in a dictionary or ask the teacher to explain it. They should then use the word in sentences of their own. It is only by learning the meaning of all the words that they can understand the stories and the poems, and make their reading a pleasure to themselves and to others.

The purpose of these selections is thus twofold,—to continue the fundamental processes of *learning to read* and to create and foster a taste for good reading. To attain these ends easily, naturally, surely, and clearly is the mission of this reader. But we do not believe that a child's introduction to the rich realm of literature will be or can be hastened by forcing him to read in this grade selections, even from the best authors, which are too difficult for him. The great authors of the past wrote chiefly for the adult mind, and gave little thought

to childish taste and capacity. No one is more anxious than we are to have every child learn to love all the best things in the permanent literature of the world. We maintain, however, that there is no better or surer way to make a child hate all literature than to insist upon his reading in the second and third grades literature which is too deep for him, — selections which are entirely beyond his ability to read or his power to understand. But many things can be and should be read to him which he cannot read for himself. He will enjoy hearing Homer before he is able to read fairy stories for himself.

The fairy story is very near and dear to the child. The fairy world is his ideal world, and in this ideal world he finds life "as it ought to be." Of course he knows it is not real; knows that it is make-believe. But every one knows that a large part of the life of every child is a series of "make-believes." And it is good for him to become acquainted with perfection, even in "make-believes." The fairy stories furnish the child's imagination with a great source of pleasure and with one of its best forms of exercise. They also furnish a rich treasury of memories, — memories that are in fact the child's hereditary right.

The fable is also near to the life of a child. It seems quite natural to him that animals should talk like men. The fable is one of the oldest forms of teaching. Its brevity, its unity, and its simplicity of style make it easy to read. Like the fairy story, it is part of the literary possessions of the race; it recurs again and again in literary and in common allusions, and is thus one of the links between the primary school and the later literary life.

The myths are stories that have come to us out of the past. They are the rich deposit of centuries. Some of them are so old that they seem never to have been made; and certainly so long as man exists they can never perish. They are the nursery tales that were made for our great old grandmother, the earth, when she was a child in frock and pinafore. But they are as interesting to-day as they were in the days of Homer. Many of them tell their meaning so simply that a child may understand. But whether he understands or not, the story itself is so concrete and so interesting that he hears it with delight. It is not essential that the teacher should insist on his

understanding the meaning. Let him get the story now, and get the meaning when he can. The story, after all, is the thing. The story is what he needs to know in order to appreciate the significance of the many allusions to the myth which he will meet in his later reading.

We have tried to select stories that will bring the force of example to bear upon the child in the very best possible way; stories that will appeal to his better nature and strengthen his love of right doing; stories that will help him to form a standard by which he can live and grow; stories that will help to educate both his head and his heart, and teach him to be always kind, thoughtful, helpful, hopeful, and industrious.

We believe that the child will see himself and his possibilities reflected in these other lives as in a mirror; that he will feel the full force of each story, and make the proper moral application without our help, and that it is an insult to his intelligence to have a little moral tacked like a tag to the end of each story for fear that he may not read it aright.

The teacher will not find the pages of this reader encumbered with suggestions of doubtful value on the method of teaching reading. The book is for the child, and it is not a handbook of methods for the teacher.

While we have tried to adapt the book to the special needs and tastes of the children, we hope that parents and teachers may find something of interest in it; something to bring back the freshness of the past,—hints and echoes from the lost world of childhood.

Grateful acknowledgments are due to the critic, the eminent philologist, Dr. Francis A. March of Lafayette College, and to all the teachers who have given helpful suggestions.

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