

**ACTION READINGS: A
SUPPLEMENTARY
METHOD OF TEACHING
BEGINNERS TO READ**

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ACTION READING

A SUPPLEMENTARY METHOD OF TEACHING BEGINNERS TO READ

BY

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PREFACE.



"Action reading," so called, is a system for the earliest stage of learning to read. Its chief virtue lies in the fact that it easily secures intense attention, and intensity of attention is a necessary condition and measure of the degree of any kind of learning. As a method, it is not intended as a substitute for the usual primer-methods—phonics, word or sentence learning, etc.—but it is a system to accompany them, offering the relief of change. It is especially adapted for pupils who are just entering school and are finding their energies for action curbed by the requirements of the school to sit still. By easily securing their attention and by offering opportunity for movements, it is a suitable exercise for beginners. Secondly, it will be found especially adapted for foreign children who do not understand English, and for backward pupils whose attention it is usually difficult to secure. The commands are written upon the board for class action, and these foreign or backward children will first imitate their fellows, but gradually will learn to associate a given act with its written command. For successful use of this system, it is essential that the teacher should have a clear comprehension of the distinction in principle between it and the other methods of teaching reading. When a child comes to school, he already has an oral language. The usual methods proceed to translate the new written language into the forms of spoken language by which the pupil "understands." Action reading passes directly from the written language to the understanding. It is not translation into oral language.

THREE STAGES OF THE SYSTEM.

There are three quite distinct steps or stages in the system.

STAGE I. *To associate with the specific act the written or printed command, so that, seeing this command, the pupil will execute it.* It is not necessary nor desirable that the pupil should recognize the individual

word of the command. It is sufficient that he should be moved to execute the act upon seeing the written command. He therefore does not translate the printed sentence into oral form, but he simply recognizes the command *as a whole*. The error of using the exercises in this book, in the first stage, as "translation" exercises will render useless the entire system. When, for the first time, the pupil sees "Fold your arms" he must not learn to understand it by translating each of these words into spoken language, and then, by putting them together, comprehend and execute. On the contrary, he must learn to associate the sentence *as a whole* with the act of the folding of the arms. By repeated presentation of the sentence, accompanied by the doing of the act, the two become closely associated.

STAGE II. *To recognize the words of the command, as individuals, apart from the sentence.*

STAGE III. *To get the meaning of the sentences, not in terms of action as in the first stage, but through the eye from the printed page.* We now, for the first time, place the book in the hands of the pupil and treat it exactly as an ordinary reading text. The commands, in the third stage, become translation exercises. But they are easier than the usual reading exercises of the primers, for the reason that the pupil has already learned the meaning of the former as wholes, while in the case of the exercises of the usual primer the meaning is unknown. Moreover, the child, reading the sentences which he has already learned by action, has but one thing to learn: to wit, the words. Their meaning in combination is already known. The exercises have been systematized and arranged to secure the benefits of constant repetition. New commands are introduced one at a time and then all repeated constantly. In the same manner the order of words introduced is systematically arranged.



ACTION READING.

LESSON I.

Stand.

Sit.

Fold your arms.

Write the first act to be performed, *Stand*, upon the board. Then say, "I am going to do what this (pointing to word *Stand*) tells me to do." Then stand. The teacher then calls upon the class and individuals to perform the act, pointing to the form at the same time, thus establishing an association between the act and the form. Have the class sit, and when you point to *Stand* have them act promptly. Repeat this until it is done with readiness.

While the class is standing, and without erasing the form from the board, say, "Now I am going to write something else upon the board that we shall do." Write *Sit* under *Stand*. Then say, "Now I am going to do what it (pointing to *Sit*) tells me to do." Sit in a chair. Have the entire class perform the act. Review several times the acts of sitting and standing, alternating individual and class action.

Now tell the children that you are going to write something different upon the board. Under *Sit*, write *Fold your arms*. Perform the act and proceed as before. Review thoroughly the three commands. Continue this with succeeding lessons until the commands are mastered—that is, become reflex with the class.

Since we want *concerted* action, it is necessary that the children should understand, definitely, what the teacher demands of them. They should also know the precise moment to execute the command, so that each will act upon his own judgment. Therefore, give a definite signal for the act to be performed, such as turning very quickly, or placing of the period. Word signals—"Class" or "Ready"—may be used. But whatever signal is chosen, the act must be performed promptly. If certain children fall behind they must be drilled individually, alternating with class action.

Make no effort, at this time, to have the pupils recognize the separate words. We wish them first to recognize the meaning of the sentence *as a whole*.

LESSON II.

Stand.

Fold your arms.

Sit.

Raise your hands.

Put your hands down.

Proceed as in Lesson I, impressing the new commands as vividly as possible, reviewing them at least twenty times during the lesson.

LESSON III.

Stand.

Raise your hands.

Put your hands down.

Sit.

Fold your arms.

your Raise Stand hands

Sit Fold arms down

Put

We have now reached the second stage of our work. Assuming that the children comprehend the meaning of these first five commands in terms of action, we are now ready to break the sentences into drills for word recognition. A method which brings excellent results, and at the same time does not require any decided breaking away from the first step, is to place, for example, the command *Raise your hands* upon the board. Say to the class, "This sentence told you to raise your hands. Now who can show me the one word *hands* upon the board? Who can underline *hands* with red chalk?" As the hands of the class come up the teacher should be careful to select that child who will do her bidding correctly, because the children are getting the first impressions of the

words. Then say to the class, "We will put *hands* away by itself. Now I wonder which word says *raise*. Let us put that in a row with *hands*. And whose hands are they?"

Continue thus until we have the word-drill above. Point promiscuously to words, and have them pronounced by individuals—then have the whole list named. It will be surprising how quickly the words are mastered.

To relieve the monotony of the word-drill we would suggest the following devices to be used in this and succeeding lessons:

(a) Have the list of words upon the board and give each child one word on a card. Let the children, pointing to and naming words on the board, guess which is on John's card, Alice's, etc.

(b) Send one child from the room; the class choose one word from the drill; the child returns and says (pointing to the word), "Is it *fold*?" The class replies, "No, it is not *fold*." Let him continue until he finds the chosen word.

(c) Place the words on the pantry shelf, and let the children play mice.

(d) Place the words around a circle, and let the children go around the world.

(e) Draw a train containing all the words, and let the children go through the train hunting for a friend.

(f) Draw the Golden Gate and a great many boats (words) in the bay. Any child naming a boat may have his initial on the flag, and thus he goes for a sail.

(g) Write word upon the board, erase quickly, and call upon a child.

(h) Write the words on large cards, flash before the class, and have each named.

(i) Draw a house, write the words inside the house, and represent the house as on fire. The child who can name the word may erase it. He has saved this word from the fire.

(j) Draw a ship, write the words in the ship, and represent the ship as sinking. All the words named are saved from the wreck.

(k) Arrange the words upon a ladder, and call upon a pupil to climb the ladder by calling the words upon the rounds. Sometimes, if the