

**A SPELLING
BOOK, PP. 71-192**

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A Spelling Book, pp. 71-192 by Georgia Alexander

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GEORGIA ALEXANDER

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A
SPELLING BOOK

BY

GEORGIA ALEXANDER

SUPERVISING PRINCIPAL IN THE INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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SYLLABICATED

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I tell you, earnestly, you must get into the habit of looking intensely at words, assuring yourself of their meaning, syllable by syllable, nay, letter by letter. . . . A well-educated gentleman may not know many languages, may not be able to speak any but his own, may have read very few books; but whatever language he knows, he knows precisely; whatever word he pronounces, he pronounces rightly.

Let the accent of words be watched, and closely; let their meaning be watched more closely still.

—JOHN RUSKIN.

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PREFACE

THE reasons for this book are three: —

1. The need of teaching spelling through interest.
2. The need of a word list composed only of common words together with a constant review of difficult words.
3. The need of training children to spell in sentence writing, especially in original work — the only true test of ability.

Improved methods in the teaching of spelling are replacing old ones as rapidly as the modern principle of teaching form through content is gaining recognition. However, this distinctive tenet of modern education as set forth in Professor John Dewey's "Interest as Related to the Will" is far from being recognized as it should be in schoolroom practice. The teaching of spelling will not be successful until the motive of interest as found in the desire for social intercourse through writing becomes the controlling feature in its study.

It is a common fallacy for teachers to believe that if they teach the letters of a word, time will fill in the empty form with the proper content. Two things are forgotten in this process: first, that in the human mind nothing dwells in isolation, and that the child puts some content into every form he learns, a wrong one if he is not supplied with the right one; and second, that the child, realizing that his teacher is indifferent to his knowing the content of the word, grows both mentally and morally careless.

Repetition and drill are necessary — emphatically so — but they should be preceded by intelligence and interest. Teachers would often be astounded at the results obtained should they

put their pupils to the test of using in original sentences the words they spell so glibly. Not until each word in the column has been correctly used a number of times can a teacher be assured that the child has added it to his vocabulary.

After interest in a word has been aroused, the child's mind must be concentrated upon the peculiarity of its spelling and appealed to through all possible avenues — the eye, the ear, and the muscles of both the throat and the hand. So clear and strong should be the image formed that it becomes individual, even personal. For this reason, words included in this book have not been classified after the "*ace, mace, lace*" fashion, but have been purposely distributed so that each new word invites to fresh attack. In the first grade, however, there is a list of words containing the fundamental phonograms, for ear training.

Spelling is learned primarily through the eye, secondarily through the ear. For this reason, the image of the word, when learned, must appear as a unit to the child. Many teachers, however, believe that the child learns a word more readily if it is first presented to his eye in syllables. In such case the child should copy the word without syllabifying and thus make for himself an unbroken visual and motor image of the word.

The child is offered in the pages of this book a most carefully chosen and graded vocabulary. His limited yet constantly increasing power of comprehension, and the responsibility of shaping his thoughts, determined the selection. The graded quotations from standard authors serve the child in a multitude of ways. They teach him spelling more effectively than do words studied in columns, by affording a constant review of those short words that are often misspelled, such as *which* and *their*. And they give him vocabulary and style: to know, even in the slightest way, Æsop, Carlyle, Dickens, Ruskin, Browning, and Tennyson, will dignify all life for him. These exercises were selected directly, however, for their practical

use to the child in spelling; for instance, Merivale's description of Julius Cæsar on page 185 contains sixty of the most necessary words in the language — words that are in the vocabulary of every educated man and woman, but which the child would not voluntarily use.

The exercises in construction are designed to correlate, still further, interest in the word with drill upon its spelling. The ability to use a particular group of words in a correct and entertaining way is no mean accomplishment; and if, while doing so, the child spells correctly, he has proved his power to spell. The model letters by Hans Andersen, Phillips Brooks, Matthew Arnold, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Woodrow Wilson, together with several exercises in business and social correspondence, give distinct practice in letter-writing, the only form of composition employed by the average adult.

It is neither possible nor desirable in the short years of a child's school life to teach him to spell all the words in the language. But it is possible to give him the spelling of common words, and what is even more valuable, a "spelling conscience" that will *send him to the dictionary when he is in doubt.*

The spelling book is usually considered the driest and most mechanical of the text-books, whereas, rightly constructed and used, it will become a source of highest culture. Mastering the words of his mother-tongue, the child masters the thought of the race. To teach children to appreciate words and to discriminate between them should be a matter of conscience with teachers, for such appreciation insures not only a respect for correct form in spelling, but makes for character. "A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it," says Emerson, "depends upon the simplicity of his character, that is upon his love of truth and desire to communicate it without loss."

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G. A.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

THE purpose of teaching a child to spell is to give him tools whereby he may express his thoughts in writing. The steps in attaining this purpose are:

- (a) The oral and written spelling of detached words;
- (b) The writing of words in sentences and paragraphs dictated by the teacher;
- (c) The writing of words in original sentences in formal composition. The effort demanded of the child increases markedly in moving from the first stage to the last. He has not learned to spell until he can write the word automatically in original composition.

THE ORAL AND WRITTEN SPELLING OF DETACHED WORDS

Make the lessons short, lively, and interesting. In the primary grades four or five new words, and in the grammar grades seven or eight, are usually all that can be mastered in one lesson, and are all that are necessary. By this means alone, in the school course the child will acquire a vocabulary of over eight thousand words. It is to be remembered that the child will learn incidentally many words from his reading; and also that in learning the spelling of one word, he is learning the spelling of all words containing the same phonograms.

Constantly and persistently review.

Ask pupils to discuss the meaning of each word, and to illustrate it in sentences relating to their work in geography, history, literature, current events, etc. Do not permit the use