

**THE RIVERSIDE.
PRIMER
AND READER**

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The Riverside. Primer and Reader by H. E. S.

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS *Primer and Reader* is designed to serve as the sole text-book in reading required by a pupil. When he has mastered it he is ready to make the acquaintance of the world's literature in the English tongue.

The methods which prevail in our primary schools for familiarizing beginners with their letters, with the forms of words and with the structure of sentences, suppose not books but the blackboard, the slate, pencil and paper. It is in the oral communication of teacher with pupil by these means that the first steps are taken, and while this process is going on the book is in the hands of the teacher only and is used by her chiefly as a source of suggestion.¹ When the child thus has become able to combine letters into words and words into simple sentences, to read at sight these words and sentences as written or printed for him, and to express his ideas in fit language, he may, alone or in a class, begin the pleasant task of reading a book, and this *Primer and Reader* is planned so as to make the task a natural and progressive one.

There are two principles which the compilers of this book

¹ There are several manuals designed to aid the teacher in this preliminary instruction: *The Riverside Manual for Teachers*, prepared by L. Freeman Hall, who has inspired and informed much of this book also, will be found especially serviceable by those who use this *Primer and Reader*. A further aid is offered by *The Riverside Instruction Frame*, which is equipped with twenty large outline pictures, twenty-five pictures of objects, and between one hundred and two hundred words and sentences in script and in print. For fuller notice see advertising pages at the end of this book.

have kept steadily in mind while preparing it, and they hold them to be fundamental in any well-considered system of teaching children to read. The first relates to the process of the child's mind and may thus be formulated : —

The child must think intelligently before he can read intelligibly.

One of the most common difficulties to be overcome by the teacher is that which arises from a parrot-like repetition by the child of what it has been told, and by far the most important result to be attained is the habit of thinking accurately and clearly before answering a question or reading a sentence. This habit of thinking accurately and clearly is cultivated by the methods which now prevail in the preliminary work upon the blackboard and slate. It should continue to be cultivated when a book is placed in the hands of the child.

The second lesson in this book illustrates one method by which the compilers have aimed to inculcate this habit, and the method employed is repeated with variations as long as it can well be pursued. The pupil is set at work reading to himself, a task which at once taxes his power of understanding more than the mere pronunciation of the words aloud. He cannot go through the sentence mechanically and repeat it by rote, for he is obliged to translate the thought of the sentence into action. If he reads to himself, *I go to the door*, the words cease to be a mere succession of sounds, for he suits the action to the word and shows that he reads both intelligently and attentively by going to the door.

This exercise of Silent Reading is continued at intervals which grow somewhat less frequent as the exercise becomes familiar and loses some of its force, but the principle involved in it is applied by other means. Thus the old-fashioned rebus is used in Lesson 4 and elsewhere. A picture is intelligible to a child before a word is, and in writing out the word which stands for the picture he is following the

logical order of proceeding from the known to the less known. Again, in Lesson 58 the exercise calls for a translation of the picture into a sentence, and here the child has to think, not only what the picture says but how he shall tell this story in his own language. The pictures¹ throughout the book lend themselves to the same constant aim of teaching the child to think intelligently and then to express himself intelligibly. They are purposely made in outline to secure great simplicity and clearness, for they are designed to be direct aids in teaching and not decorations of the text.

Suggestions for carrying this process of thinking still farther lie in many of the lessons, as, for example, those which require letters or words to be substituted for dashes. Now and then, also, the exercise becomes a cheerful game which may be shared by teacher and pupil, not as a mere recreation, but as a bright method of making progress in the art of thinking clearly and expressing accurately. Such are, Lesson 81, What is my Thought like? Lesson 105, A Rhyming Game; and Lesson 66, The Game of Making Words, which may be used to very great advantage through the entire course of a child's training in the use of words. Lessons 85 and 86, also, which give exercises in the study of color, and Lesson 122, The Clock Lesson, belong to this same order of exercises which vary the formal tasks by those which are more animated but no less directly serviceable.

As the art of reading properly includes good enunciation and proper emphasis, so the same principle of previous thought on the part of the child should be applied on this side of its training. Lesson 35 illustrates the method by which the sounding of words may be made an exercise in rapid and exact thinking. Lessons 21, 57, and 59 show

¹ If the teacher is provided with *The Riverside Instruction Frame*, she will be able to show these pictures on a larger and clearer scale, for the illustrations in the book are for the most part reduced copies of those larger drawings.

how emphasis may be taught, not mechanically or by devices of accent, but by means of natural questions which tax the child's ingenuity in framing answers to illustrate the various points of emphasis. It may be added that the practice lessons contained in the book are intended to be suggestive rather than exhaustive; to serve as models to the teacher, who will use her judgment in lingering over the successive steps.

It will be observed that in a large number of these exercises a deliberate use has been made of devices to interest the child, and a constant appeal is made to his natural curiosity. The truth is, more than half the battle is won when the child's interest is aroused, and formal difficulties disappear almost marvelously before the quick movement of the mind when its attention is concentrated by curiosity and a lively hunt for the end in view. The pupil, keenly alive to the matter in a story, his whole heart enlisted in it, will not need much formal instruction in emphasis, and words which by themselves might be stumbled over will often be taken easily when they lie in the direct course of an attractive narrative. And this leads to the second principle which the compilers of this book have kept in mind while preparing it, namely:—

The end of learning to read is to read great books.

The first steps taken by the child in the use of language are through colloquial forms. He learns to talk before he learns to read, and the work done by the teacher, before she places a book in his hands, is to accustom him to identify the words he knows how to use with the symbols of those words on the blackboard and the slate. She seeks for familiar objects and expressions and tries thus to vary and enlarge his working vocabulary. When the printed page is placed before him this same process is continued for a brief space until the child has been accustomed to the new medium. The transition from blackboard to book should be so easy that the child is not made aware of any notable change.

The vocabulary of a child as drawn from common vernacular use is very limited, though its extent is, of course, largely affected by the speech which he is wont to hear at home. Yet even under the most favoring conditions the form of language to which the child is accustomed is colloquial, not literary. It is true he may have had books read to him, and this is a very important part of a child's education; but for the most part until he goes to school these books are purposely couched in almost colloquial terms.

Now if the child is really to be educated, he is to pass over in his reading from a colloquial to a sustained literary form. Words and sentences which would not occur in the commonest speech will present themselves to his mind, and he will be called upon to use all his powers of reasoning and imagination. These powers in their simple normal activity the compilers of this book have sought to stimulate in the manner already pointed out, but they have been led to ask themselves the question: How early may the young reader be set upon the acquaintance with forms of speech which are not colloquial but literary, and how may the passage from one to the other be most readily and naturally effected?

The answer to the former half of this question they conceive to be: Just as early as the literary form by its simplicity and intelligibility can appeal to the mind and awaken an interest; to the latter half the answer may be found in the practical scheme of this book.

The attempt has been made in this *Primer and Reader* to select from existing literature of the classic order such examples as come within the range of the mind at the age when the book would naturally be used. The very earliest are taken, in verse from that storehouse, Mother Goose's Melodies, in prose from the uncounted collection of popular sayings and proverbs. Later, recourse has been had to Tennyson, Blake, Wordsworth, Stevenson, and others in verse, to versions of fables and world-renowned stories in prose.

Now and then the core of some great story of classic origin has been given in a simpler form, because the thought of the story was simple though the original form was beyond the comprehension of the child.

The design of the book is to give these examples of classic art as frequently as possible, but to lead up to each by exercises which familiarize the child with the words and even the sentence forms to be used, so that when he reaches the bit of literature it will offer no special difficulties to him. Thus it is not until Lesson 41 is reached that a familiar rhyme is given, though commonplace rhyme has been already set before him. The next piece of literature is at Lesson 56, and the third at Lesson 65. After that, literature occurs more frequently until, in the last third of the book, it becomes the rule and exercises are the exception. These exercises, to be sure, sometimes take the form of little stories and rhymes, but the child is not likely to mistake these for literature.

In agreement with the purpose of this book, the name Lesson disappears when the pupil at last reaches a group of pieces in verse and prose unattended by any drill exercises. The score of pages thus set before him represents the goal toward which he is moving in all his study of reading.

From this it will be seen that the compilers aim to make the reading of real literature as nearly as possible synchronous with the child's power to read at all. They believe that there need be no break in the continuity of such reading; that though at the outset drill is required in the elements of reading, this is introductory to more elaborate forms of the same kind of drill which must be continued throughout a student's course. When he is reading Chaucer, he is studying forms of early English; when he is reading Mother Goose, he should also be studying forms of another kind of early English; but from Mother Goose to Chaucer he should know no interruption, so far as school work goes, in the reading of great literature. There is no point along the line