

**NEW-WORLD SPELLER.
GRADES SIX, SEVEN,
AND EIGHT; PP. 194-288**

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GRADES SIX, SEVEN, AND EIGHT

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ON THE TEACHING OF SPELLING

Learning to spell involves the formation of certain habits of mind. The most important is the habit of observing correctly the printed form of words. Next in importance, and often associated with this habit, is that of hearing words correctly. Nearly all mistakes in spelling result from the failure of children to see and hear correctly. The lessons in the *New-World Spellers* have been planned to aid pupils in the formation of habits of observation. Introduction

Effective work in spelling, as in all school subjects, depends on attention. Forced attention may accomplish something, but what is done with interest leaves the more lasting impression. The lessons, therefore, introduce great variety into the necessary drill in order to make it attractive to the children.

All sentences intended for dictation are printed in the larger type. The directions for study are printed in smaller type. Train the children from the outset to read these directions and to follow them. They are intended to stimulate and develop the self-activity of the pupils, and will gradually train them to attack a lesson without hesitation and learn it in the most economical way.

The vocabulary has been selected with a view to meeting the demands of actual life. This vocabulary is most effectively enlarged by exercises requiring the pupils to give plurals, to change verbs to the forms ending in *ed* and *ing*, to build long words from shorter ones, to use prefixes, to formulate rules, and the like. Vocabulary

The sections are numbered to indicate the lessons which an average class should devote to the study of a given group of words. Assign short lessons so that thorough work may be insisted on. Two or three or five words really mastered each day are of infinitely more worth, both as knowledge and as training, than a larger number imperfectly learned. The indi- Length of lessons

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To the Teacher

Methods of study

vidual teacher, knowing the capacity of her pupils, should adjust the lesson assignment to their powers.

Teach the children *how* to study. They must learn to select from each lesson the words which they are sure they can spell and to give all their time and attention to the others; they must learn to sift the easy from the more difficult words and to give each group its due amount of time and attention; they must learn how to get the meaning and use of unfamiliar words; they must learn to clinch knowledge by repetition. To accomplish these ends, it is imperative that the teacher study with the pupils until habits of study have been established. The recitation period may be used for this purpose.

The greatest possible variety in presentation and drill should be introduced. The lessons may sometimes be studied by looking at the words, then closing the eyes and trying to see the words with the mind's eye; sometimes by writing them on paper or on the blackboard; sometimes by spelling them aloud; sometimes by building them with cardboard letters; sometimes by playing simple games, which may or may not take the form of a contest. Attention should be directed to the difficult combinations of letters by underlining them, by writing them with crayon or pencil of a different color, by repeating them orally many times in succession, by comparing them with other words which have the same combinations. Any device that will fix the attention upon the letters which make the word difficult will be of the greatest assistance.

The method of learning new words by spelling them aloud should be carried on in school only when teacher and pupils are studying together. A few minutes taken from the recitation period for the purpose of spelling aloud the hard words of the next day's lesson will repay the outlay of time a hundredfold. After habits of study have been established, spelling lessons may be assigned as home work; then the spelling-aloud method of study will be an excellent one.

To the Teacher

A child does not know how to spell a word until he can do it automatically, either orally or in writing. To develop this power, review constantly. Each day the lessons of the preceding two or three days should be quickly but thoroughly reviewed; each page should be reviewed upon completion; underlined words should be frequently reviewed; and the many special reviews suggested should by no means be omitted. Here, again, variety is of the greatest importance. Each pupil may be required to keep a blank book in which he enters from day to day the words which he has misspelled. Frequent reviews of such words will correct individual errors. Another useful device is a blank book in dictionary form kept by the teacher. The words misspelled in class may be entered under their initial and reviewed by letter, the lists being copied on the blackboard for this purpose. After a little training, the pupils will be able to write the words in this dictionary of errors, and will take pride in keeping the lists as short as possible.

Review
and drill

The grouping of homonyms introduces a difficulty where none exists. It is a mere accident that *there* and *their* are pronounced alike. They are spelled differently and have entirely different meanings, and if each is repeatedly used in its proper relation to other words, the child remains unconscious of the similarity of pronunciation, and consequently no confusion arises. The same is true of all homonyms. In the higher grammar grades when the words have been fixed, no harm can result from associating them in a drill exercise, although such drill will then no longer be necessary.

Homonyms
and vowel
combina-
tions

Though the spelling of many English words is absurd, as, for instance, *eight*, *trough*, *reign*, *bureau*, *once*, these are much less troublesome than common verb forms and words containing a sound expressed by several different vowels or combinations of vowels. *Feed*, *read*, *shield*, *pique*, *receive*, *here*, are illustrations. Nothing but frequent oral spelling and still more frequent writing of these words in sentences or phrases will fix them in the

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child's mind. If the word is important, clinch it; if it is not important, do not teach it at all.

Use of sentences and phrases

The sentences and phrases are intended for dictation. The phrases afford an economical method of giving a large amount of drill on writing related words without taking time for complete sentences. Incidentally the children learn to discriminate between groups of words which express complete thoughts and those which do not. It is a good plan to read the sentence or phrase distinctly once, and then have the pupils repeat it before writing. Insist that they write without hesitation. This involves a thorough study of the lesson.

Syllabication

Learning to see the syllables of which a word is composed is one of the most important steps in learning to spell. Pupils must ultimately learn to see the syllables in undivided words. As an aid to this end, the words in this book are usually divided when they appear for the first time. The exercises requiring the pupils to find the short words of which longer ones are composed, those requiring them to combine short words into longer ones, and those requiring them to copy words and divide them into syllables, are all designed to cultivate the observing powers, and long use has demonstrated that such exercises are effective.

Have the pupils constantly pronounce distinctly before spelling by syllables. Since authorities differ, many of the best teachers accept any syllabication which is not absurd. Pronunciation is a safe guide in a majority of cases.

Correction of errors

Since the purpose of correcting spelling is to fix the right form in the child's mind, keep this end constantly before you. In oral spelling, have the child who made the error spell the word correctly at once. In correcting written exercises, cross out the wrong forms, and insist on their being rewritten correctly, so that finally only correctly spelled words shall be before the pupil. Many teachers make the mistake of so correcting papers that the wrongly spelled words are the more prominent. Train pupils to leave a blank space whenever doubtful of a

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word, and to write the word correctly after the papers have been returned to them, underlining it for thorough study.

The dictionary habit is an invaluable one; its importance cannot be overestimated. Exercises requiring the use of the dictionary have been introduced into this book, but these should be supplemented in connection with every school subject. No diacritical marks are used. Only in the case of the unusual word will the pronunciation be unfamiliar, and such a word must become familiar by use before an effort is made to spell it.

Use of the
dictionary

Teach the pupils how to use the dictionary in the fourth grade, and thereafter make its use a part of the regular work. Give many exercises requiring the pupils to find a word in a given time, and show them how to turn quickly to the place where words beginning with certain letters are to be found. Give exercises with several words beginning with the same letter, as *dream, desist, dory, digress*, to show that the first letter alone does not determine the place of a word in an alphabetical list.

Next give exercises in finding the pronunciation. Show the pupils the use of the diacritical marks by means of the key words at the foot of each page of the dictionary. Familiarize them with the marks by constant reference, and teach also the meaning of the accents.

Show the pupils by classroom exercises how to find the meanings of words. Explain the abbreviations for the parts of speech. Teach them to select the most likely definition and to avoid meanings marked rare, colloquial, or obsolete. Encourage them to read the examples to help in deciding which meaning to select for a particular word under discussion.

In the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades have each pupil keep a pocket dictionary at hand, and encourage him to refer to it for spelling in preparing his compositions and in all written lessons. Train the pupils to go to the dictionary whenever they are not absolutely certain that they can spell the word in question. Above all, try to arouse a feeling of pride in the matter of spelling.

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