

**THE TEXTBOOK,  
HOW TO USE AND  
JUDGE IT**

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The textbook, how to use and judge it by Alfred Lawrence Hall-Quest

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**ALFRED LAWRENCE HALL-QUEST**

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**THE TEXTBOOK**



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# THE TEXTBOOK

HOW TO USE AND  
JUDGE IT

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DEDICATED  
TO THE MEMORY  
OF MY SISTER  
HORTENSE

## PREFACE

IN presenting this discussion on the Textbook to the school public I confess to a considerable amount of fear and trembling, not unlike that of the pioneer who penetrates the dark unknown wilderness, or of him who manipulates his acids and compounds in the search for some chemical truth. I have sought in vain for any treatment of this subject in book form. After wrestling with the problem for many months I have grounds to suspect the reasons for no earlier attempt having been made to organize the various aspects of this subject into some sort of unified study.

I shall anticipate the critic's attack by saying that I know, perhaps better than he, the limitations of my effort. My real purpose in offering the book to school administrators and teachers is to arouse, if possible, someone among them to construct a volume on the textbook that will be more adequate than my own attempt. Graduate students will find many fascinating problems in this field. Every teacher who shares the responsibility of selecting texts must feel the thrill of exploration in this almost untouched department of instruction. There are, to be sure, many studies on the textbook being made by committees assigned the difficult task of recommending suitable school books in the various subjects; but many of these lie undiscovered in the offices of school superintendents, and have not been made available beyond the school system immediately concerned in their use.

In this book I have sought to analyze as simply and comprehensively as possible the reasons for the prominence of the textbook in American education. The history of the textbook is one of those uncultivated fields of research that awaits the magic touch of deep scholarship. Administrative considerations of the textbook are so closely allied with some of the most delicate situations in the management of public education, that I have found it difficult to do justice to some of the moot questions involved in this aspect of the subject. The experienced school official will be able to read more between the lines than in the type itself. The textbook as a tool, as a source of knowledge, as an interpretation of truth, as a guide, and as a means of inspiring in the pupil a will to learn links up very closely with my view of education as a means of training the pupil to study. I do not minimize any of the great movements that now occupy the attention of educational leaders. The problems of education are so immense and so numerous that they must be viewed from several angles. One of these points of view is supervised study or the provision in each class period for a certain amount of training in how to study. Skill in handling the textbook is just as important as skill in handling the tools in manual training or household arts. It is not the only tool for the mastery of the abstract subjects. There are others equally important, but in this volume I have confined my efforts to the textbook.

It is with the hope that school administrators and teachers will find in the following pages some few suggestions pointing the way to a larger study of this whole subject that I venture to offer these pages for their perusal and criticism. The material grows out of a course of lectures that I had the privilege of delivering before the Teachers Association of Rochester,