

TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ

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Teaching children to read by Paul Klapper

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PAUL KLAPPER

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CHILDREN TO READ**

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M. L. B. 1920

BY
PAUL KLAPPER, Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION
COLLEGE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK



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FOREWORD

The author feels impelled to set forth the purpose and the scope of this volume, lest the student of education in search of new theories and experimentations in the physiology and the psychology of reading, be led astray. This book is given solely to the task of aiding teachers, who are seeking a method that has stood the pragmatic test, and that may, therefore, help them in their day's work. The author acknowledges his indebtedness to the large number of teachers from whose methods of instruction, he has gleaned much that is practical in this volume.

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CHAPTER I

THE MEANING AND THE PROBLEMS OF THE TEACHING OF READING

Reading Essentially a Problem of Thought Acquisition.—The word "Reading" is traced to the Anglo-Saxon "raedon," which means "to advise." "Raedon" referred to the process of searching in books (of bark) for counsel. The Latin "lego" means "to gather," hence the derived meaning "to gather ideas from written sources." These etymological definitions, crude and far from the vital problems that must be solved in teaching children to read, nevertheless reflect the essence of the function of reading, viz., "to impart ideas, thoughts, inspirations." To the ancients, reading was a "mysterie," a magic art, understood by the shamans and the medicine men. Although the ability to read is today part of every citizen's educational right, we must, however, realize that it is none the less a "mysterie," when we consider what a complex psychophysiological process it is. How can a collection of symbols, static and formal themselves, arouse dynamic thought and living inspiration in the mind of the child?

The Elements of Reading.—1. *To Extract Thought.*—

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As far as the classroom is concerned, reading must discharge certain definite functions. We must consider these before we discuss methodology in reading, for they indicate the goal of all method. Classroom reading must seek to develop first, in each child, the ability to extract thought from the printed page. Since this is essentially the object of reading in after life, it must become the governing aim of the teacher's endeavors. All other aims, such as pronunciation, expression, language, diction, must be subordinated to reading for thought.

2. *Proper Vocalization.*—The second function of classroom reading is to develop the ability to properly vocalize, in the words of the author, the thought that was gained; in other words, the ability to read with accurate enunciation, clear articulation, and convincing expression. Here is posited a secondary aim of reading, which, however necessary in the classroom, forms no part of the reading of after life. The teacher finds this added function of reading exceedingly vital. Unless the child has proper vocalization how can she test his ability to recognize symbols, to speak articulately, to utter thought expressively? Through the oral rendition the teacher even learns whether the child has the author's thought and responds to the emotional appeal. But, in after life, the sole function of reading is the acquisition of thought, while proper oral reading is regarded as a delightful accomplishment. In the final analysis, reading is a means of gaining thought, while oral reading is a means of expressing thought.