

**THE TEACHING OF READING: A
MANUAL TO ACCOMPANY
EVERYDAY CLASSICS. THIRD
AND FOURTH, FIFTH AND SIXTH
READERS**

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The Teaching of Reading: A Manual to Accompany Everyday Classics. Third and Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Readers by Franklin T. Baker & Ashley H. Thorndike

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FRANKLIN T. BAKER & ASHLEY H. THORNDIKE

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THE TEACHING OF READING

A MANUAL
TO ACCOMPANY
EVERYDAY CLASSICS

Third and Fourth Readers

BY

FRANKLIN T. BAKER

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN TEACHERS COLLEGE
AND SUPERVISOR OF ENGLISH IN THE
HORACE MANN SCHOOL

AND

ASHLEY H. THORNDIKE

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

This Manual is offered to the teachers of the *Everyday Classics* in the hope that it may help them in the important work of teaching children to read intelligently and willingly. It offers hints on method, general and specific; additional information about the selections and their authors, and about other literature and ideas that are properly associated with them; suggestions for the proper interpretation of the selections; and further hints for varying and enriching the study.

The general title of this series of Readers is intended to be more than a name; it is a description and a designation of their purpose. The title is meant to denote those things whose long established excellence has marked them out as classics, and, also, those classics which are so commonly known, so often referred to, as to be everyday, *i.e.* familiar and proverbial. In choosing basic reading matter for children, this familiarity, this fact of being accepted as everybody's material, is of the first importance.

It would seem, therefore, that the series is based upon a valid principle and a vital need. The principle is that there is a considerable body of good literature, known to all people who know books, and simple enough to be under-

stood and enjoyed by children. Much of it, indeed, is of most value if read in childhood, and retained through life as a permanent influence upon one's attitude towards life. The need for such a series is seen in the fact that many children are put in touch with so little of this common heritage of the race. In the desire to find something new and different, many of the old and approved things have been pushed aside.

A classic is something more easily known than defined. It is not necessarily abstruse, difficult, or remote from common life. It is a piece of literature that has received the approval of good judges for a long enough time to make that approval settled. Like good music, it cannot grow old. It is last year's rag-time that becomes unpleasant, not the good old songs. A classic may be as old as Homer, or as new as Hawthorne; it may be as difficult as Dante, or as simple as *Mother Goose*. Indeed, a large proportion of the classics of the world are very simple. In Æsop and Homer, and the old fairy tales, and many of the great stories of the world, like *Robinson Crusoe*, their simplicity is one of their highest merits.

The educational worth of such material calls for no defense. In an age when the need of socializing and unifying our people is keenly felt, the value of a common stock of knowledge, a common set of ideals, is obvious. A people is best unified by being taught in childhood the best things in its intellectual and moral heritage. Our own heritage is, like our ancestry, composite. Hebrew, Greek, Roman, English, French, and Teutonic elements are blended in our cultural past. We draw from these and perpetuate what suits our composite racial and national spirit. And an

introduction to the best of this is one of our ways of making good citizens. Not what we *know* only, but what we have *felt* and *enjoyed*, makes character.

This series, by its very purpose, excludes "new" material. There is a place for that, but not in this plan. We have chosen what is common, established, almost proverbial; what has become indisputably "classic"; what, in brief, every child in the land ought to know, because it is good and because other people know it. And it is well to remember that what is old to us is new to the child. The Little Pigs That Went to Market, Little Red Riding Hood, Aladdin and His Lamp, Robin Hood, and the Gods of Olympus are to him fresh creations of the imagination, which open the door of an enchanted world.

We should not look for novelties here, any more than we look for a new multiplication table. Though a selection may be centuries old, the children are new; and the experience of the child who comes to the old thing is as fresh as was our own experience when we first came to it. Is not the world itself a new thing to every child?

It is not argued that no new or modern material is to be read by the children. There is a rightful place for it, as supplementary reading, in school and outside. Many such things are recommended in this Manual. The school ought to be a sort of intermediary between the child and the public library. The librarians are among our most helpful and willing public servants. If the teachers will make suggestions, the librarians will carry them out in the purchase of books and in advice to the children.

The **THIRD READER** of this series is made up largely of folk-literature, — fables, fairy-stories, etc. It includes also

poetry of a simple type, like Stevenson's, and some of the stories that — like George Washington and his hatchet — are classic in substance, though not in form.

The **FOURTH READER** continues the appeal to the fancy in imaginary stories of travel, such as Gulliver and Sindbad; passes to a view of the world in which the imagination plays upon and beautifies fact in stories of out-of-door life and poems on nature; and gives a good deal of space to stories of child life. A group of stories about brave or generous actions, a group of patriotic selections, and finally some humorous nonsense, complete the general scheme of this book.

A survey of the material of the **FIFTH** and the **SIXTH READERS** is given on pages 97 and 147 of this Manual.

ON METHODS

It is well established that *no one method* is always the best. We do not speak of *the method* of teaching reading, but of *methods* of teaching. The best teaching is eclectic in its freedom of choice among devices, tactful in its adaptation of them to the situation in hand, and fertile in invention.

In the third school year, it may be assumed that the pupils can read simple things without help, though not yet with fluency; that they have skill enough in identifying words, — the printed symbols that convey ideas, — to set free a considerable part of their mental energies for taking in the meaning of a story, and that their control of phonics is sufficient to enable them to make out for themselves the pronunciation of new words of ordinary difficulty. But all of these processes are still in their elementary stages. Drill

in phonics and practice in making out words, in identifying them again, and in pronouncing and writing them, are still needed to insure the certainty and facility that make reading easy and pleasant. To this end, word lists, with the pronunciations simply indicated, and occasional definitions, have been freely inserted. These lists may often need to be extended by the teacher. It is of great importance in this year, however, to keep the emphasis upon the ideas read rather than upon the mechanical side of the work. It is this that supplies the interest and incentive.

In the fourth year, there are still echoes of the primary drill in learning the symbols; but, if the earlier work is well done, they are echoes only, and the class should read with considerable fluency and confidence. There is more study of the content, more reflection upon its significance, a wider range of interests, and better control of the faculties in general. This is commonly regarded as the transitional year, the year that separates the primary period from the upper elementary period, that demands of the pupil more conscious and concentrated effort and brings him more confidence in his own powers. The treatment of the reading lessons will be determined by these considerations. It will call for less questioning upon mere content, and for more questioning involving comparison and reflection. It will deal with larger units, and expect a firmer memory. It is the appropriate period for introducing the dictionary, for maintaining responsibility about spelling ordinary words, for clear and definite accounts of things read;—in brief, it is the appropriate period for expecting the beginning of a workmanlike attitude towards study.

In the fifth and later years the same widening of interests