

**THE NATURAL  
METHOD READERS. A  
TEACHERS' MANUAL**

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The Natural Method Readers. A Teachers' Manual by Hannah T. McManus & John H. Haaren

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**HANNAH T. MCMANUS & JOHN H. HAAREN**

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READERS

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TEACHERS' MANUAL

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## CONTENTS

### PART I—INTRODUCTORY

	PAGE
The Blackboard . . . . .	3
Duration of Reading Periods . . . . .	5
Oral and Silent Reading . . . . .	5
Phonics . . . . .	7

### PART II—PRIMER: FIRST HALF-YEAR

Method in Detail . . . . .	9
Phonic Exercises . . . . .	23
Phonograms . . . . .	55
Word List . . . . .	57

### PART III—FIRST READER: SECOND HALF-YEAR

General . . . . .	62
Phonic Exercises . . . . .	64
Phonograms . . . . .	78
Word List . . . . .	80

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

# A TEACHERS' MANUAL

## PART I

### INTRODUCTORY

This method of teaching has been called THE NATURAL METHOD for the following reasons:

1. *The subject-matter is suited to the natural instincts and interests of childhood.*

The PRIMER is based on the familiar nursery rhymes. These rhymes constitute the standard poetry of childhood. As fundamental folklore they are the natural introduction to literature. Indeed, as literature they have stood the test of time. In the higher books rhymes give way to stories many of which have been familiar to the child in all ages. All these stories appeal to his instincts or to his natural interests.

2. *The method obeys the natural law of basing attention on interest.*

A strong motive for learning to read is furnished by presenting material that is familiar to the child or that appeals to natural interests of childhood. Knowing the rhyme or story naturally awakens the desire to read it. Thus a definite aim is presented. The child knows the story by heart, and he readily sees that in order to read it he must learn the symbols. But reading is something more



than recognizing the form of what is known by sound. Words must be recognized in different collocations, so that ideas may become merged in thoughts. THE NATURAL METHOD early uses the words as they become known in order that they may become factors in thought-getting.

The rhymes used in the PRIMER fall into two classes: (1) Those that lend themselves to somewhat elaborate development because of complexity of content or the number of new words they contain; and (2) those that do not demand extended treatment. In the case of the former the entire rhyme is first presented in order to awaken the interest of the child. Then follow one or more pages, on each of which are given a few new words with sentences to furnish drill for fixing those words in the child's memory. The entire rhyme is then taken up, and the learner is delighted to find that it contains words *which are familiar*. In the case of rhymes simpler in content and vocabulary, the development of the content and the word drill are confined to a single page.

3. THE NATURAL METHOD *does not fatigue the child.*

The repetition of the words in sentences other than those of the rhyme adds new interest. The words taken up in the various lessons are few and they can easily be learned.

4. THE NATURAL METHOD *makes a strong appeal to the play instinct.*

Play is the natural instinct of the child, by means of which he finds a way not only to exercise his surplus activity but to lay the basis for his education. The acting of the rhymes and stories of the reading lessons fosters this instinct and stimulates the child's imagination; thus, the personal touch which the child gives to the little drama becomes an important expression of individuality.

5. THE NATURAL METHOD *presents the mechanics of reading in an easy and natural way.*

The English language is to some extent, at least, phonetic. Since to limit the instruction to an acquaintance with the forms of words as wholes would make the teaching of reading dry, formal, and difficult, some key for unlocking the formidable arrangement of characters into words must be furnished after the word method has served its purpose in the elementary stages of instruction. The study of phonics furnishes a key. THE NATURAL METHOD recognizes this. Phonics, however, is made to grow out of the lessons, and is not taken up as a separate study until a stock of words has been acquired to serve as a basis. Thus the work proceeds easily and naturally.

6. THE NATURAL METHOD *requires no elaborate preparation on the part of the teacher.*

The steps of the method as exemplified in the PRIMER may be briefly stated as:

- (1) Recitation by the teacher.
- (2) Repetition by the pupils.
- (3) Dramatization by the pupils.
- (4) Study of the words of the lesson.
- (5) Reading from the blackboard or from the book.

A special feature is made of the reviews. They have been inserted at frequent intervals and are all in *story form*. Thus the interest of the pupil is constantly stimulated. The words seen in their new setting are fixed in the memory without the aid of dry mechanical drill.

#### THE BLACKBOARD

The blackboard should be in constant requisition in the teaching of reading, except in the advanced stages, and even then occasional recourse to the board is advisable.

The PRIMER should not be put into the hands of the pupils until about twenty pages have been read from the blackboard. If facilities are available for printing on slips of paper the words as they are learned from the blackboard, a wider range of preliminary work is possible, and the use of the PRIMER can be postponed still later.

When the books are taken up the lessons previously read from the blackboard should be reviewed. The pupils should then be allowed the free use of the book in order that they may enjoy discovering old friends in new surroundings.

The ready use of the blackboard necessitates the script character. The lessons should be written clearly and well in the script character employed in the school. Print should be employed only when preparation is being made to take up the book.

The chief advantage of the blackboard is that it saves time. It also serves to stimulate as well as to focus the child's attention.

The first reading lessons should be blackboard lessons. The children having heard the rhyme see it grow on the blackboard under the teacher's chalk at this stage. The object of this stage is to associate in the child's mind the spoken word with its written picture.

A number of helpful devices toward this end will suggest themselves to the teacher. A few are given here:

1. When an individual pupil is reading the story allow another pupil to point.
2. The teacher may read while a pupil points.
3. Several slow pupils may point collectively while the class read.
4. A group of three or four pupils may read and point at the same time.