

THE READING PROCESS

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The reading process by William A. Smith

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WILLIAM A. SMITH

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PREFACE

This book is not primarily a treatise on methods of teaching reading. It concerns itself rather with the principles which underlie method. Its chief aim is to furnish a body of information—psychological, philological, historical, and experimental—which will enable the teacher to develop and use methods intelligently in place of accepting them blindly and following them slavishly.

More than the usual amount of attention is given to language—both spoken and written, but especially the latter. For this the author makes no apology. There is—as is commonly known—no dearth of instruction in the vernacular and in foreign languages in our secondary and higher institutions of learning. In spite of this, however, the majority of those who specialize in languages—either English or foreign—are poorly informed regarding the genetic and scientific aspects of the English language and of language in general. This is due to the fact that the students' activities are for the most part directed toward the mastery of literature and the acquisition of skill in expression—philological aspects being neglected. For the teacher whose work lies chiefly in the field of language—including the teacher of reading—this is unfortunate since it deprives him of the perspective so essential to initiative and resourcefulness. The chapters which deal with language and its accessories—for the most part chapters I to

IV—are, therefore, intended to supply the linguistic information most urgently needed by the teacher of reading.

Considerable historical material has been introduced. For this, too, no apology is needed since a critical analysis of current practices can usually be undertaken most advantageously in the light of their development.

The vast experimental literature which has been produced during the last few decades has been freely drawn upon. In fact, it constitutes the basis of the discussion from beginning to end. The treatment is, therefore, distinctly quantitative. Suffice it to say that no other mode of approach or method of treatment would be justifiable at this stage of educational practice.

The content of the book—as well as its arrangement—is essentially that of a course which the writer gave for several years to prospective teachers and supervisors of reading.

Special acknowledgments are due to my colleagues, Mrs. Alice O. Hunnewell and Miss Katherine L. McLaughlin, who have offered many valuable suggestions—the former in connection with the chapter on **TEACHING BEGINNERS TO READ** and the latter in connection with the chapter on **CONTENT OF READERS**.

Acknowledgments are due, also, to Dean W. S. Gray, Mr. E. D. Burbank, The American Antiquarian Society, The Bureau of American Ethnology, Henry Holt and Company, D. Appleton and Company, Harper and Brothers, Ginn and Company, The Macmillan Company, and the Simplified Spelling Board for permission to use valuable materials.

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Finally, the writer is greatly indebted to the many other sources—far too many to mention here—upon which he has so freely drawn throughout the discussion.

LOS ANGELES, California.

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