

**MAYNE'S SIGHT SPELLER.
PRIMARY, ADAPTED FOR THIRD,
FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADES
AND FOR UNGRADED SCHOOLS**

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PRIMARY

**Adapted for Third, Fourth and Fifth
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BY

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Take care that you never spell a word wrong. Always, before you spell a word, consider how it is spelled, and if you do not remember it, turn to a dictionary. It produces great praise to a lady [or gentleman] to spell well.—*Thomas Jefferson*, in a letter to his daughter.

PREFACE

Notwithstanding the assertion made by one of our prominent educators that the boy in the high school who is accused of being a poor speller should regard the accusation as a compliment rather than a disgrace, the great body of English-speaking people feel that accuracy in the use of the mother-tongue in orthography, as well as in composition, is one of the marks of even a fair education.

The problem of how to make good spellers is a very present one for the teachers in the schools. A few years ago it was thought by a number of prominent educators that it would be best to do away with the spelling-book and teach spelling incidentally in connection with the regular school subjects. In the schools where this plan, or rather lack of plan, was tried it was soon found that pupils regarded spelling merely as incidental, attaching little importance to it. Systematic use of the unpedagogic spellers now on the market is far better than this haphazard instruction given without a text.

During the past few years the subject of spelling has received increasing attention from educators and psychologists, investigations having revealed facts that cannot but prove of great value in making good spellers. These investigations of thousands of children in Germany, in Philadelphia, Chicago, and many of the important cities of Wisconsin, have shown with a reasonable degree of certainty the following facts:

1. In learning to spell, school children are largely "eye-minded"; that is, they obtain their percepts of the order of the letters in words by seeing the words in print or in script.
2. The ease of obtaining the percepts, and the ability to reproduce them with accuracy are aided by studying the words in the forms in which they usually appear in print or script, unmodified by separation into syllables or the application of diacritical markings.

3. Good spelling is aided greatly by writing, and, to a less extent, by naming the letters aloud in order. The careful pronunciation of the words by the pupil has been found to be a great aid to correct spelling.

4. Very much better results have been obtained when attention has been called to certain words of difficult orthography or when something of interest, either in pronunciation or meaning, has been given with reference to the words.

Even a cursory examination of the spelling-books published within the period of these investigations will show that their authors either had no knowledge of the investigations or chose not to utilize it. If, then, the results of the investigations are not to be discredited, the necessity for a text-book in spelling which shall take into account the ascertained facts is plainly shown. To meet this necessity, the Sight Speller has been prepared.

The words are printed in clear, bold-faced type to appeal to the eye of the pupil, and there are no marks of any kind on or about the words to distract the attention of the pupil from their usual form.

Under each list of words, in smaller type, are the words marked for correct pronunciation. Here are also given such cautions, meanings, and facts as will call more interested attention to the words to be spelled. The diacritical markings are those used in Webster's International Dictionary, but there are no re-spellings, it having been demonstrated beyond question that such re-spellings are a frequent source of poor spelling, as they present incorrect forms for critical attention, the result being that the incorrect forms are often the ones which make the stronger impressions on the mind.

The choice of vocabulary and its extent are among the most important problems in preparing a good spelling-book.

It is manifestly impossible to include in a speller all the words that are found in the dictionary, many thousands of which find no place in the vocabulary of the ordinary citizen.

Although much fault is found with the irregularity of our English spelling, it is a fact that the average child, acquainted

with the common analogies of our language, will spell correctly hundreds of words which he has never seen. The analogies and the phonetics of our language attend to the spelling of the larger number of words in the language. It is not necessary, then, to incorporate all of these in a speller. Neither is it necessary in a spelling-book to give special attention to the simpler analogies, as that is amply provided for in our modern methods of teaching reading.

There are thus left for the special vocabulary of the spelling-book only such words as involve some orthographic difficulty. What constitutes orthographic difficulty is, of course, largely a matter of judgment of the author or teacher, but some advance has been made on individual judgment by a comparison of spelling tests used in a number of cities throughout the country. It is found that certain words that are frequently misspelled in one city will present no difficulty whatever in another; also, that certain words which are misspelled by pupils quite generally are such as apparently should present no difficulty whatever. An investigation of difficulties in spelling was made at the University of Wisconsin under the supervision of the professor of psychology. It was found that the greatest difficulty lies in the doubling of letters. Then, in order, with the terminations *able* and *ible*, in *ei* and *ie*, in *tion*, *sion* and *cion* and in silent letters. It will be noted that prominence is given to these difficulties in the preparation of the lessons and in the selection of the words for this book. The doubling of letters and some other difficulties involve the rules of spelling. A single rule is emphasized in each grade and a review of all the rules, with drills, is given in the eighth grade. It is believed that this arrangement will make the rules serviceable to the pupils.

In many spelling-books particular stress is laid upon lists of homophones. The spelling-book that places together the words *ton* and *tun* for the pupil to study and to distinguish is doing him a positive disservice. The word *tun* is seldom used as the name of a cask, and there is certainly no possibility that the pupils in our schools to-day will ever have any

occasion to employ it. Until these two words were studied in juxtaposition there was little probability of *ton* being misspelled; but from this time forward every pupil needing to write the word representing two thousand pounds, will meet the question, Shall I spell it with an *o* or a *u*? The more he thinks about it the more likely he is to choose the wrong letter. Spelling-books having long lists of homophones lead to the very confusion they are seeking to avoid.

There is not likely to be confusion in the minds of the pupils with words presented at long intervals. Early in life the word *load* is learned. It may not be necessary until many years afterward to add the word *lode* and when that time comes there will be no confusion unless some speller groups the words and directs the pupil to study the two words together. The words *to*, *too* and *two*, and *there* and *their* are learned at about the same time, and it is the confusion of a few words such as these that has led to the belief that it is necessary to teach many homophones, whereas, in point of fact, the number needed is very small. A few homophones with which pupils may have special difficulty are given in the Review and Dictation Exercises. Here pupils may see the words in their proper relations to other words, and with their exact meanings indicated by their use in sentences.

Though the method of presentation may vary, all practical teachers recognize the necessity of drill and of frequent review upon troublesome words. Words of this nature have been repeated in each grade. No apology is offered for the occurrence of *separate* and its derivatives seven times, nor for the repetition of *benefit* and its derivatives as frequently. Every teacher above the fourth grade will recognize the necessity of the repetition. Drill, drill, drill, is the price to be paid for good spelling. It is recommended that, besides mastering the spelling of the words for its own grade, each grade review all the words given for the preceding grade.

If an eighth grade pupil can spell every word in the spelling-book correctly, he or she may still be a poor speller for life. New words are constantly arising that must be learned.

More important than all else is the formation of the *dictionary habit*. This habit well formed will make even a naturally poor speller a good speller in adult life, as well as contribute to his general intelligence. The cultivation of this habit is one of the chief advantages to be gained by the use of this spelling-book. Each lesson has something to be looked up in the dictionary, and specific directions are given to the pupil as to what he shall look up. A teacher may talk ever so much about the use of the dictionary, and advise its use, but, unless definite lessons are given, the habit will not be formed. The act of searching for the word, the retention of the letters of the word in the mind, and the mental chastisement if they slip away before the word searched for is found, are all powerful influences in fixing the form of the word in the mind.

The compilation of a mere list of words for use in the grades would be an easy task, but would be of doubtful utility. The words in this speller are chosen with reference to their orthographic difficulty. It is primarily a spelling-book, and not a language book, a grammar, an etymology or an orthoepy. Without sacrificing this fundamental idea, however, it has been found possible to so classify the words of the speller that the meanings of hundreds of them become apparent, the pronunciation of others is indicated, and the derivation of many more is made clear.

The spelling lesson is often the lesson that is most neglected by the teacher, not because of any want of appreciation of its importance, but chiefly because of lack of time. This text is an aid to the teacher. It not only presents the list of words in proper form, but it also gives such assistance to the pupils as the careful teacher would gladly give had she the time.

It is hoped that the use of this text will make the spelling lesson something more than a "conning o'er" of a mere list of words, and the author will feel abundantly repaid if his effort to produce a spelling-book which recognizes the results of recent scientific investigations shall be accorded a welcome by teachers and pupils.