

**INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION  
SERIES, VOL. XXXIV. TEACHING  
THE LANGUAGE-ARTS: SPEECH,  
READING, COMPOSITION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649275731

International education series, Vol. XXXIV. Teaching the language-arts: speech, reading, composition by B. A. Hinsdale

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Cover @ 2017

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# International Education Series

EDITED BY

WILLIAM T. HARRIS, A. M., LL. D.

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VOLUME XXXIV.

*INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SERIES*

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TEACHING  
THE LANGUAGE-ARTS

*SPEECH, READING, COMPOSITION*

BY

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AUTHOR OF PRESIDENT GARFIELD AND EDUCATION; SCHOOLS AND STUDIES;  
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STUDY AND TEACH HISTORY; JESUS AS A TEACHER;  
AND EDITOR OF THE WORKS OF JAMES ABRAHAM GARFIELD

NEW YORK  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

1900

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ELECTROTYPED AND PRINTED  
AT THE APPLETON PRESS, U. S. A.

## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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THE author of this volume has, in the course of his discussion of the theory and practice of teaching the language-arts, thrown light incidentally upon the teaching of all the other branches in the course of study. He has drawn judiciously upon the vast literature of his subject, and enriched his book with insights and keen observations from Aristotle and Quintilian in Greek and Roman times down to Spencer and Lowell of our own day. The book is in this respect a collection of fine thoughts on language—its use, its growth, the study of its mechanics, its grammatical and logical structures, the order of mastering its use in speaking, reading, and writing—first in the primary, next in the grammar school, and after in the high school and college; its place in the cultivation of the powers of thought, the study of literary works of art, the significance of philology among the sciences.

In following his discussions, the reader will do well to ponder carefully the distinction made by the author in the second chapter between the mechanism or technique and the theory of the language-arts; also the array of facts drawn from child study in Chapters IV, V, and VI relating to the ideas in possession of the child at six years of age, and to what he acquires and can acquire through imitation.

The author is at great pains to discriminate the me-



chanical and technical aspects of language study from its higher uses for guidance, culture, and discipline, and to give each its due place. The mastering of the mechanical and technical phases performs the great good of placing the child in relation to the repositories of the wisdom of the race so that he can use them. But it is their use, and not the mere possession of skill to use, that enables him to understand and interpret the world, and to penetrate the motives of human nature that govern the conduct of his fellow-men.

In Chapters VII, VIII, IX, X, and XIII this higher function of literature is brought out. The prevalent tendency to magnify the means rather than the end to be accomplished leads frequently in school to the error of using so much of the pupil's time in preparing to read—that is, in mere formal reading, the calling of the words found in lessons written in the colloquial style—that little opportunity is left for the practice of the art by reading the great literary works of art. But this error should not be corrected by the opposite extreme—namely, by offering the pupil in his immature years the solidest productions of prose and poetry and neglecting all formal studies with dictionaries, grammars, and spelling books. There are many impractical people who would throw away these formal studies and hope to change the child mind into a mature mind at once.

The discussion of the practice of paraphrasing in Chapter VIII places the matter in its true light. It is only by paraphrasing the text of the great author—explaining its meaning in his (the pupil's) own words—that the pupil can prove to his teacher that he understands it. The teacher in turn can show the felicities of the great writer best by comparison with the pupil's version, bringing out the superiority of the former in words

and diction. It has been truly said that the literary genius invents happy modes of expression for thoughts and feelings which were hitherto unutterable or inarticulate in the soul. The pupil in studying such gems of expression learns at once the thought or feeling and its happiest conveyance in words—he thinks and feels and expresses for himself what the poet has taught him. But paraphrasing, if used in any way except to verify the pupil's understanding of the author and for teaching him the value of the words and diction used as compared with his, the pupil's own attempts, is mostly wasted time.

In recent years there has been much so-called "language-study" in our schools ostensibly for the purpose of teaching the pupil how to write or compose with facility. He has been set at work writing numerous commonplace sentences about commonplace things. The result of this language-study has been described not inaptly as "gabble." The practice is a better one if it requires the pupils to write out in a connected manner what they have learned, say, on the occasion of a weekly written examination, or, still better, to write out their ideas gained by reading and studying literary models. The dignified content requires a dignified form. To write commonplace ideas in choice language always borders on the ridiculous.

On entrance into school at the age of six or seven years, the child knows only the words and forms of diction of the colloquial vocabulary. He has before him the hard task of mastering the new method of expressing words—that of script and printing; heretofore he has known words only as addressed to his ear. It is obviously the true method to teach him first the printed or written forms of colloquial words only—words already familiar to his ear. As soon, however, as this first mechanical stage can be passed, the pupil should begin the work on the

literary pieces. Each literary author has peculiarities of style, and draws words from the vocabulary outside of the colloquial list. He makes those partly unfamiliar words perform miracles of expression. The child should go on mastering one after another the one hundred or more pieces of fine writing which are generally to be found selected and edited for the school readers, although often mingled with other "pieces" that are of inferior merit. The teacher can, by a judicious use of books prepared for home reading, make the short selection in the reader an introduction to the reading of the whole work of literary art at home. A discussion of Gulliver's Lilliput or The Lady of the Lake will be a very profitable exercise in school after several pupils have read the entire work.

Dr. Hinsdale has, in Chapter XV, noted the fact that the teaching of English literature in our schools has begun hitherto with its history. It has been not a study *of* literature so much as a study *about* literature. It is hoped that this evil is in process of removal.

W. T. HARRIS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 20, 1896.