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## Bulletin 85 - Teaching Children to Read

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Number 85

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Eastern Illinois State Teachers College

—AT—

CHARLESTON

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Teaching Children to Read

—BY—

ANNA HOLDEN MORSE

TRAINING TEACHER, EASTERN ILLINOIS STATE TEACHERS  
COLLEGE

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ANNA HOLDEN MORSE


TRAINING TEACHER, EASTERN ILLINOIS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

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CHARLESTON

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## TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ

The purpose of the following pages is to help bind together the findings of scientists and psychologists with the classroom practices in teaching the beginnings of reading. There are many times when wise theories would be more useful if illustrations of their application were easily within reach of the classroom teacher. For example: (A) No arguments are now needed to prove the value of silent reading and of teaching it to beginners, but illustrations of the actual presentation to little children are not easily found. (B) There is scarcely a teacher who would not be glad to get away from a large part of the drill upon words and letter forms, but there is in the school world a lack of suggestions as to what will serve better than this formal drill. (C) There are few thinking people who do not realize that reading, from the first, should be both interesting and worth while from the child's point of view; yet in actual work with their classes many teachers find it hard to get outside the pages of the prescribed primers and first readers and provide reading matter closer to the activities of their own pupils. (D) Most teachers realize that the feelings, the emotions, of a pupil toward reading and toward learning to read will be given more consideration in the future than they have in the past; yet examples of lessons that may arouse a child's eagerness toward learning to read and his interest in reading are not always at hand. This bulletin offers a few illustrations of these types of lessons. It does not attempt an exhaustive discussion of these and other large topics related to the subject of teaching little children to read. Even if there were anyone who could write such a plan for this teaching as would satisfy every psychologist, every scientist, each fond parent, all publishers and every pupil, it would not be a point of wisdom to rob primary teachers of the joys of discovery, invention, almost creation of ways and means that in our schoolroom world make the teaching of young children a living, growing, lovable task. The following topics are touched upon:

1. Ideas about reading which underlie these plans and practices.
2. Materials for use with reading classes.
3. Suggestions for using these materials.
4. Phonics.
5. Illustrative material.

The suggestions that follow are based upon these ideas:

1. The smallest unit of thought is a sentence, but we can scarcely consider ourselves thinking unless a group of related sentences flows through the mind.



2. Reading is very closely related to thinking. It is a form of language, compounded out of thought and crystallized into symbols meant for the eye.

3. The thinking of little children is closely associated with their activities; therefore, much of the reading in the early months of first grade should either suggest and direct sensible, related activities, or be a record of interesting things recently done by these very children. "Sensible, related actions" are those that seem purposeful to the child, reasonable from his point of view. They may be those based on a game, in which all needed directions are given by the teacher in writing, at the moment of need. They are in contrast to such meaningless actions (often required in the name of silent reading) as "Hop to the window and back, John," or "Now turn around three times."

Care should always be taken not to present thoughts in reading lessons so irrelevant that the clear-eyed, intelligent six-year-old is likely, if he be brave enough, to exclaim, "Well, what of it?"

4. First habits formed in reading are very tenacious. If we as teachers wish to help the pupils toward intelligent reading and toward the most economical eye movements in the reading, we must deal from the first day of school with a group of related sentences that begin, develop, and bring to an end some simple thought-movement such as a six-year-old child can understand and enjoy.

5. A pupil's feeling toward reading, his attitude toward both subject matter and toward the business of learning to read, is of extreme importance.

The following topics are discussed for the purpose of helping teachers teach children to read, to use judgment while reading, and to grow in a liking for good thoughts well told. There is no part of this article meant to apply to any one set of textbooks, any one list of words, any set system of teaching phonics. These topics are chosen to be of use to the young teacher who has not lost her initiative, nor her curiosity; who wants to see how it holds together—this many-sided oral and silent reading, word-study and phonics, that in these days make up the material for the teaching of reading.

The material to be used:

A. Sentences and paragraphs that tell about things these particular children are doing, seeing, making, or otherwise experiencing. Frequently these sentences will first be spoken to the teacher in answer to her question, "How shall we tell about this?" "What shall we say next?" etc. Her task in such a lesson is to record in good form what the children suggest, first on the blackboard and later, in order

*too  
watching*

that each pupil may have a copy, on the mimeographed or printed page.

B. Cumulative stories, fine old folk tales, fables and the like, which the teacher has previously used in literature and oral language lessons.

C. Rhymes, poems, and songs, first taught orally, then seen in script and print.

D. Directions for school activities, such as games, care of materials, or movements of classes about the room, given at the moment of need, when the situation helps interpret the written sentences.

It does not much matter what words or sentences a child first sees in reading. What does matter is that the thought expressed is not so familiar as to be tiresome or so strange as to have no interest. It does matter what the teacher does with these sentences, and what she expects the child to do. Here are some suggestions that have proved usable:

The child knows at first what a written or printed sentence says only because some one tells him and he believes. Here his only task is to look at it, and accept what he hears about it. This is silent reading on his part, even before he knows the form of separate words; and a teacher needs to be very alert, and almost a mind-reader, in a small way, to see that pupils, *all* the pupils in the class, do learn to look at the right place, and from left to right along the line as her voice expresses the thought. The child's first step in recognizing a sentence or label is probably associating it with the place in which he first saw it, at the top of the page, or under a certain picture, or at the bottom of the chart, or on the thing labelled. Because this place-association is natural, use should be made of it the first days of school, by the teacher's keeping in the same relative position the sentences she gives on the blackboard or chart. Place-association becomes a danger if the child depends upon position alone, as he frequently does if he reads only from his book—and has only one or two books a year. Therefore the teacher sees to it, the first and second weeks of school, that besides keeping in one place on the blackboard the story as first composed, she has copies in other places (on a chart or on separate strips of paper, or on a mimeographed page), some complete, others mere beginnings.

The child's first bit of independence in reading comes when the teacher writes on the board a sentence that matches another and he sees the likeness and knows the symbols mean the same in both cases. Some of our best primers make use of this first step toward *study* on the part of the little child by arranging some cumulative story so that the likenesses in phrases and sentences are quite apparent, and yet, because it is demanded by the movement of the story, the repetition is not tiresome. Some primers furnish repetition, but in a mechanical way that hinders rather than helps the flow of thought in the lesson.

It will not be long until some of these many-times rewritten sentences look familiar to the child. He will not need to compare them with those in the original positions because he will have a mental picture for comparison.

So far he has learned to read a few sentences as wholes by :

1. Knowing because the teacher tells.
2. Knowing by the position of the sentence.
3. Knowing by comparison of the sentence with one he recognizes by either the first or second means.

During the growth indicated in the above steps, the oral reading most of the time has been done by the teacher. The child's part has been one or more of the following tasks :

1. To follow with his eyes what the teacher reads (*not* to look at the teacher, who should stand where she can see, yet not obstruct the eye-movements of the pupils across the lines of reading).
2. To point to the place where the teacher stops reading (at the end of some sentence).
3. To "put his hands around a sentence" on the board, showing its beginning and ending.
4. To find sentences that match, look away, lose the place, and find again the same two that match, while the teacher reads aloud the sentences, or some child dramatizes their meaning, or some picture shows it.
5. To find among the strips of paper on his desk those sentences that match the chart or blackboard lessons, and, now and then, mix them up, just to prove how easy it is to match them the next time. (Here, too, there is only silent reading on the part of the pupils.)
6. To do the harder task—arrange in order, *without a copy* to match, the four or five written or printed strips of paper that tell his rhyme, or his experience, or an incident in a story. (Again the child's task is silent reading.)
7. To do the hardest task—tell what each sentence says as the teacher points to it or holds it up, or otherwise indicates what is to be read. This is a memory *test*, and is not *teaching* in any great degree. At early stages in children's reading, such testing should be used sparingly though it is commonly (and mistakenly) supposed to be the biggest part in all reading lessons in primary grades. This seventh suggestion implies oral reading by the child; however, if he hesitates, the teacher should read for him, without disparagement or discouragement in her voice. (She needs to show in every way her sincere conviction that soon the child will be able to read these sentences, and that when he has the ability, he will gladly make use of it.)

As soon as the pupils recognize several sentences at sight and can arrange them to make a connected paragraph or verse, the teacher begins to read a little more slowly, yet in a natural tone, and lets the children see that each sentence is made up of parts. In acquainting the children with phrases and words, the same steps are now followed that were used in helping toward good habits in sentence study:

First the teacher tells, "This says, '*Boats sail,*' and this says, '*on the river.*'"

Next the pupils find these parts by their position in the sentence, "This comes first," or "The last three words say that," etc.

The third mental step is taken when pupils are given strips of paper with the words and phrases on them and are asked to match them with the blackboard or mimeographed copy.

The fourth stage is reached when pupils can build, without seeing a copy, the whole rhyme or paragraph, from phrase strips.

It will be found that some children need to stay longer in certain stages of learning to read than do others. When children get a little beyond their depth, it is wiser to go back *in method* to earlier stages, rather than in material, since stories lose their freshness, and since a new story or rhyme can as well lend itself to these methods of use.

The above suggestions have proved useful in connection not only with reading of rhyme and story, but also in the reading based on experiences of the children. An example of such material follows. This might be used the first week of school, first on the blackboard, then on paper:

I made a clay bowl.  
It is pretty.  
I painted it green and blue.  
It is for mother.

Other suggested lessons of this kind:

1. We went to the pond.  
John sailed his boat.  
Alice sailed her boat.  
We saw the white clouds sail in the sky.  
We saw them in the pond, too.
2. We popped some corn.  
It was good.  
I ate some.  
We gave some to the birds.

3. Come to me, children.  
Let's play a game.      x | o | o    Score  
Let's play "Jack."    — | — | —    Jack, Girls, Boys  
Draw the lines, Anne.      x | o      1  
Play first, Eleanor.      — | — | —  
Give the chalk to Donald.    |    | x  
Mark the score, John.



The needed repetition in these lessons will come only as the teacher makes occasion to erase, write again and *write again* as the sentences are told to express the experiences of various members of the class, or as the third or fourth playing of the game demands repeated use of the sentences. (When pupils do not know at first what *Draw the lines* says, the teacher may say, "I'll do it, then." Thus without oral reading, the pupils interpret the meaning.)

The cumulative story from primer or chart may be "The Little Red Hen," or "The Gingerbread Boy," or any one of a dozen similar stories in which repetition is natural and frequent. Rhymes such as those of Christina Rossetti, A. A. Milne, and the simplest of Stevenson's lend themselves to this treatment. The units used are almost unfailingly memorized by the pupils, but this need not be a thing to fear if the teacher will help the child to *see where* it says these familiar thoughts, if she will remember that the eye habits formed are the most lasting things the child carries away from primary reading days. These physical habits and his attitude toward reading are far more important than his list of "sight words" at the end of three or four months' work.

Possible reading lessons from experiences of pupils in November:

## I

### APPLES

I brought an apple to school. It was red and green. It was a Jonathan.

Alice brought an apple. It was yellow. It was a Grimes Golden.

We washed the apples. We pared them. We cooked them and made some sauce. It was good. We ate it with crackers.

## II

### HOW WE COOKED THE APPLES

We put the pieces of apple into a white pan. We sprinkled some sugar over them. We poured a little water on the apple and sugar. We set the pan over our little stove. We let the sauce cook until the apples were tender and clear.

I can make apple sauce at home.

The teacher's part in such a lesson, which presupposes the actual *doing* of the things at the lunch hour, or the science period, or the free-occupation period, consists of such conversation and actions as the following:

"Let us write about making that apple sauce. What did we do first with the clean pieces of pared apple?" The child answers, and the teacher writes "*We put,*"—and interrupts her—



self to show this phrase, perhaps saying, "Now I've said 'We put'. What comes next?" "Now I've written 'the pieces'" (showing with her hand this phrase). Children suggest the words that follow, watching closely while the teacher writes rather slowly. She then re-reads what she has written, adding at a pupil's suggestion "into a dish," or "into a pan," then erasing "pan" or "dish" and adding "white pan," or "clean pan," or "little pan," as is suggested by the pupils. The teacher shows how this sentence reads, being sure that pupils follow its movement along one line from left to right and then from left to right, along a second line. Quiet, serious attention is here required from them, and mental effort on their part.

"What did we sprinkle over the apple?" asks the teacher. And as some child answers, she writes, "*We sprinkled sugar over the apple.*" "Can you puzzle out how much of this writing it takes to say, '*We sprinkled sugar?*'" she asks, and helps the class count along the line. (Not saying "one, two, three," of course, but feeling the rhythm of movement as she shows the phrase with her hand or the pointer.)

Thus the paragraph is built up a little at a time as the pupils watch, share, and contribute to its growth. At its completion the teacher, or some mature child in the group, reads the whole paragraph as the teacher (or some capable child) shows its movement with the pointer. She is careful *not* to touch the pointer to each separate word, but to sweep it along under such natural groupings of words as *We sprinkled sugar over the apple*. Remembering, too, that the eye sees form only during pauses, she does not make the motion too big. This writing is kept a day or two on the blackboard.

A next lesson on this paragraph might be a page of large script for each pupil on which these same sentences appear. The same paragraph in bold, well-spaced script should have a place on the blackboard.

As the papers are given out, the teacher helps the pupil in learning to study. She may suggest, "Have you any way of finding out what this page is about?" If the pupils do not have any way of discovering, she shows the beginning of the blackboard page and says, "Does your page begin like this? It really does. I wrote about our cooking lesson, just as you told me yesterday. It begins '*We put the pieces*'" (showing the blackboard phrase as she speaks it). "Show me with your marker" (a small strip of cardboard) "where on your page you see '*We put the pieces of apples into a white pan.*' It takes two lines to tell about that. While I read, please look along the first line and then the next to see how far I've read."

The teacher reads the first sentence once, standing where she can see the pages laid on the pupils' desks. She shows and reads the second sentence from the board while the pupils find it on their pages. Thus all the sentences in the paragraph are used. The pupils may then cut their papers into strips, one

sentence to a strip. They mix these up and see if they can rearrange them, matching the blackboard narrative.

These sentences are then put into envelopes or fastened with pins or clips to take home "to show Mother" or "to play school with" or "to see if Father can make any sense out of this mixed-up puzzle."

This is the *end* of drill on these sentences. The teacher will wear out the interest in the activity if she has the sentence re-read by pupils, or gives tests to see "who knows what this says." (Notice that the suggestions above call for only silent reading on the part of the child.) A new topic is begun in the same way. Perhaps it will be related to the same activity, as for example:

#### WHERE THE SUGAR WENT

(Sentences based on the actual experiment made by children)—

I put sugar and water over the apples.

The sugar disappeared.

John said, "There isn't any sugar there."

But when we tasted it, the apple sauce was sweet.

We wondered about the sugar.

We put some sugar into some water.

It dissolved. We could not see it, but the water was sweet.

We boiled the water and boiled it and boiled it.

The water boiled away.

It evaporated.

We found syrup.

We boiled the syrup.

We found some queer looking sugar—but it *was sugar*.

We tasted it!

There should be many lessons of this kind. There is time, and time to spare, throughout the year. No other reading material so certainly provides for exactness of imagery, and gives so surely the desired connection between form and thought.

The lessons from books and chart and from mimeographed songs or poems (upper grade children can make careful copies in their writing periods, if a mimeograph is lacking) should be used in the ways indicated above.

The child's interest should center in the movement of the story (not in competition with his classmate to know more words than his friend does).

His main task throughout the reading lesson during the first months of school is to find the place where the page shows what the teacher reads orally. (She needs variety of device, to keep him looking with eagerness at the magic, mysterious symbols.) She will see that every child has found the line on his page that says, "*It was too big*," and then will say, "Now hold up your markers. Lose the place; now see how easy it is to find *It was too big*.—Now shut your eyes for a second. Can you see just how it looks—

inside your head? Look again at your book. Let your eyes slide along the line that tells *It—was—too—big*. Now cover it up with your marker. Can you pretend to see right through it, and see what is hidden? Slip down the marker and take a look. *Did you know just what you were going to see?*"

Of course such intensive "study" of each sentence would be wearisome and would wholly spoil the general intent of the lesson, but these hints are given to answer the question, "What kinds of word-drill are possible with this method of teaching reading?" Such *drills* are not *tests*. They give each child in the class a chance to add to his mental equipment—to take a little step in advance from wherever he may be in the matter of increasing his accuracy and his speed in reading.

Before long the child will announce, "I can read all that myself." This marks a stage of pupil co-operation for which the teacher is eager. The child who shows this power should find pleasure in using it, and should frequently be allowed to read orally in the teacher's stead. The teacher should have in mind that he is probably neither learning to read nor furthering his reading power very greatly by this step, but that he probably is increasing a certain worthy pleasure of accomplishment. Another reason for this reading aloud on the part of the pupil is that the teacher has added opportunity to note eye movements and habits of attention of the other members of the class, if the child is reading what each has a copy of, and what each knows as well as he does. The business of the listeners now is not to gain something new by way of hearing, but to see if they can recognize what Jack is reading, following the lines on book or blackboard. This is a hard task in "learning to read," but imperative because of the necessity of economizing the time when class recitations are compulsory because of the numbers of pupils admitted to primary schools. When pupils begin, as they soon do, to bring from home and library material not read by the whole class, the problem is very different. Then the audience looks at the reader, and listens attentively to the "story Alice likes," or "something about bulbs that John found in his catalogue," or "the signs Henry and David have been printing with the rubber-stamp letters."

The more natural ways of teaching reading really do teach children to read, and to read happily, intelligently and with a comfortable degree of speed. Any mother teaches her baby to talk this same language which when he is six we teach him to read. Her methods have much to suggest to primary teachers. She does not drill on lists of words before she lets the child hear her say something. She does not insist upon *accuracy first*—a thing almost fatal in the flow of thought when one is dealing with any beginnings of language as a language. Reading is no exception. Accuracy must come, of course, and will come surely, if a child's thinking is kept clear, and if he is taught to consider the reading a *kind of thinking*.

Here are a few tasks that we teachers should set ourselves:

1. Try to help the child use all the knowledge he has to read with, his common sense, his experience, his imagination, and his knowledge of how his own mind works.

Question—early in September reading lessons (illustrating the last point):

A. "How did you know what that said?"

A child's answer might be—

- (1) "You told me—just a minute ago," or
- (2) "I remembered where that part was," or
- (3) "I saw it was just like that other part."

B. "What part don't you know? I'll tell you."

(Make ignorance not a crime to be confessed with hesitation, but an opportunity to get new knowledge.)

C. "Is this true?" "Did you do this?" (Concerning such a sentence as "I made a clay bowl.")

D. "Do you understand how this could be?" "What does this make you think of?"

Question later:

"Does that sound sensible to you?" "Why?"

"What is the point there?"

"What is the joke here?"

"What hint does that give you?"

Rather than—

"What did John just read?"

"Tell that in your own words," etc.

Still later in the year ask often,

"Is there any part of this you don't understand?"

"How could you tell this more interestingly?"

"What part of this story suggests a good picture to draw?"

"How could we 'play' this story?"

2. See that a child leaves one stage in his reading for the next just as soon as he is ready for it.

A. The use of markers for keeping the place on the page, for example, should be discontinued as soon as the child can keep his eyes moving correctly without them, usually in a few weeks.

B. As soon as a child can think his sounds "inside his head" he does not need to make a noise when he is studying out words.

C. When a pupil can outread his mates, more material should be supplied him.

D. He should not be made to keep the place, nor the pace, of the slow readers. This demands that even when



large classes are forced upon a primary teacher, she must watch individual progress, individual needs, and for a part of the time at least, do individual teaching.

### PHONICS

There comes a time, of course, when independence and accuracy in finding out words are necessary. Hence the teacher looks about to discover the fewest possible forms the pupil must recognize at sight in order to get this power. Because there are so many thousands of words, the word-method is too cumbersome. Likewise, because there are thousands of syllables and meaningless pieces of words, the over-elaborate systems of phonics and phonograms are equally burdensome. But since there are only about fifty needed sounds that are represented by the thirty-odd symbols used in all our writing, it is more economical to present these and no others.

These simplest symbols are:

|      |    |      |    |           |    |                                    |
|------|----|------|----|-----------|----|------------------------------------|
| b    | d  | g    | v  | th (hard) | z  | sh (hard)                          |
| p    | t  | k    | f  | th        | s  | sh                                 |
|      |    | c    |    |           | ç  | (soft)                             |
|      |    | q    |    |           |    |                                    |
| q=k  |    |      |    |           |    |                                    |
| l    | m  | n    | r  | ch        | wh | gh ph                              |
| x=ks | or | gz   |    |           |    |                                    |
| a    | e  | i    | o  | u         | w  | y (several sounds for each vowel.) |
| W=oo |    | Y=ē, | ī, | or        | ï. |                                    |

The first row of letters have voice plus breath in the sounds they represent.

In giving the sounds of the second row of letters, only breath, pushed out over a certain position of throat and lips, is needed. In telling the sounds of vowels, remember it is no harder to learn  $\bar{a}$ ,  $\acute{a}$ ,  $\grave{a}$ ,  $a$  (broad), as the four sounds of  $a$  than to pronounce any four-syllable word. (Markings are not used with children below the third or fourth grade.) Even when print and script, capitals and small letters are considered, the number of symbols is not alarming; yet there seems little need for adding to it by teaching many syllables and phonograms besides.

If a child from the first weeks of school is taught that *any* word can be very slowly spoken, so that he can hear its parts—that he can listen for  $m$  or  $t$  or  $\bar{a}$  in any word so spoken—feel its worth in the word—its position in the word—long before he cares what queer shaped letter stands for that sound, then half the burden of teaching “phonics” is removed. Children too often neither know nor care what it is all about. Drill and more drill deadens what might otherwise be a happy and healthy curiosity, an eager attempt at realizing independence in finding out what the page is telling.

Here are the simplest of steps in teaching all the phonics



any child needs until he reaches the dictionary stage, in perhaps the fourth grade.

1. Words, not more than one in a sentence, spoken so slowly by the teacher that every separate sound is heard, yet the natural cadence of the word is not destroyed. (This is to help children recognize by ear such unnaturally long-drawn-out words as their own voices will be propounding later in the year when they use phonics in their reading study.)

Example: } “Please close the d-ō-o-r, John.”  
{ “I need that little ch-ai-r, Alice.”

2. Conscious listening for certain sounds in a slowly spoken word.

Example: The teacher says, “Do you hear *e* in this word, *meat*?” (The children report by some quiet signal.) “Which sound was it?”—“The second.”  
“Raise one finger if you hear *t*” (giving sound, not name of letter) “in this word, *sh-a-d-ow*.” (Quite often must come the judgment, “No, I do not hear the sound asked for,” if honesty of answer is to be obtained.)

3. Finding sound-values of letters by saying slowly a word the teacher is writing.

Example. *N-e-s-t*. “Which letter stands for *s*?” (giving sound, not name.) “Count up and see, *N-e-s-t*.” (Continue this device throughout the year. Call the children’s attention to the need in many words of sliding past the sounds of silent letters.)

4. Starting to say words; finding initial sounds by ear. Use *many* words, and continue this device well into the year.

5. Isolating letters and drilling for speed in recognition of forms and the sounds they represent.

Devices.

A. Children have boxes of printed letters containing capitals on one side and small letters on the other.

(a) Teacher shows flash card, in print and script. Children find printed form in boxes of letters provided for each child. They repeat the sound as they show the letter.

(b) The teacher removes flash card, speaks the sound given above, and pupils find letters that represent it, without seeing a form to match.

(c) Small groups of pupils sit around a little table or lap-board. Each in turn draws a letter at random from a box in the center. If he knows the sound represented, he may keep his letter. If not, it must be returned to the box. This game is fun if the teacher plays with the group and if there are not too many unknown letters to be drawn.

B. (a) The teacher writes letters on the board, each several times over. Children in turn or in concert give the sounds as the characters are written.

(b) Teacher directs a child to find a letter among those on the blackboard as she gives the sound it represents. He points it out; others clap if he is right.

(c) Teacher uses pointer, going along a devious path among the maze of letters. Children are told to clap when she comes near a certain letter whose sound she has spoken. Sometimes she moves the pointer directly to it.

C. Teacher uses flash cards, written and printed.

(a) She shows one at a time, bringing back frequently the ones least familiar. Individual children give sounds softly, and accurately, and promptly. (If they hesitate, the teacher should tell the sound at once.)

(b) Cards are placed along blackboard ledge. A pupil picks up each in turn and tells its sounds.

(c) Cards are hidden in a limited part of the room while several children have their eyes closed. At a signal they begin hunting for them. Each may keep to hide later all the cards he recognizes. He stands before the class to "prove" his knowledge and loses every letter for which he fails to give the sounds.

(d) Teacher gives each child two cards to hold. She then speaks slowly some simple phonetic word. The holders of the cards whose sounds are given must step to the front and hold up the correct letter. This drill is too complicated to use the first months of school, but is of use a little later.

D. Phonics used in word study. Long before the pupils are asked to puzzle out "new" words by sound they see such application as the following:

The teacher refers to a paragraph used in reading, "Find the name *M-a-r-y*," she may say. "Prove it by showing how the sounds go along to make the word." Children look at word and say, "*M-ā-r-y*." (Markings are not used with pupils.)

"Find another word beginning with *M*," or "Find another word in which *y* is an ending." "Find the place where it tells that 'Mary ran f-a-s-t.' See, there are four letters in *f-a-s-t*. What do you hear *last*? Look at the *t*" (speaking the name of the letter) "that means *t*" (giving the sound of the letter).

"Where does it speak of Mary's *m-o-th-er*?" or "If you forget this word *ran*, show me by making the

sounds how you could find out again." (The vowel is the emphasized sound in every syllable. This the teacher must make plain as she "sounds" words.)

#### PHONICS LATER IN THE YEAR

Teacher uses writing and blackboard.

"Now I'm going to write *b-oa-t*. (*A* doesn't sound in this word.) How can you change this so it will be *coat*? (Keep the silent *a*.) Now change it to *goat*; to *float*; *oats*; *toast*; *roast*." This kind of word building has the following advantages:

1. It calls for a review of many consonant sounds along with the use of the single vowel sound. From these two known things the pupil finds he has made a "new word"—not new, of course, to his understanding, his speaking or hearing, perhaps not new to his eyes, but probably new to his fingers, and he feels the pleasure of creating something.

2. It interests the child in words that rhyme, in words that have sounds in common. (The teacher will be careful to avoid calling rhyming words *families*.)

Most of the time during the last half of the year, the bright child's desire to "know what the page says" will lead him to try to puzzle out unfamiliar words by their sounds, usually with sensible but sometimes amusing results. A first grade boy was reading a flower catalogue one spring. (He was unusually eager for seeds and for gardening.) An older person asked him if he could understand enough of it to get what he wanted. He said "Yes, I can make out all but the *elbs*." (His pronunciation for *lbs*.)

The slower group of pupils needs more continued help in learning to use the sounds of letters. Even in the last half of the year some will need to be guided by such helps as—"Play you have forgotten the word *wind*. Make the sounds of the letters and hear what they tell." (By the way, nearly all drill in phonics should be individual, very little in concert, with small pupils.)

"What are you supposed to do when you come to a word you can't remember?" ("Think what would be sensible to say there." "Make the first few sounds, to see if that gives a hint," etc.) "Listen to what I'd do, if I couldn't remember *sh-a-d-ow*." (Such suggestions imply that practically all phonics application to words is given with words in sentences, so that the context helps prove what the word might be.)

The slower group needs frequently to see how the teacher does it, and she tries to show them the workings of their own minds in her study of a few of their sentences. "Here I'd guess by the picture I was reading about a bird. Yes, here it says *the bird*; I know for sure because I can make those

sounds—*b-r-d*. *The bird we saw in the* (maple tree). Suppose I don't know what comes after *the*. I might think, 'We really did see a bird in a tree.' No, that word can't be *tree* because it begins with *m*. Perhaps it tells what kind of a tree—*m-a-p-l-e*. Yes, we did go to a maple tree. Now I can read it: '*The bird we saw in the maple tree was a cardinal.*' Of course I'd know *cardinal*, but, just to be sure, I'll prove it by sounding the first few letters."

This is too wordy for an every day lesson, but now and then it serves a purpose. Most frequently the teacher's reading is to lift the thought of the story along, help the children feel her interest in the tale and, of course, help their eyes to move a little more readily across the lines of print.

The more good reading the children do in first grade, the easier it becomes, but quantity and ease are not the only goals. There should be time for enjoyment, for interpretation through picturing and dramatizing, there should be time for hearing good material read by the teacher. The school day, even in a crowded primary school, is not only long enough for this, but if the teacher knows how to manage, it is also quite long enough to allow the time for things more valuable than reading—real living, experiencing, creating, conversing, picturing, singing, and learning to be one among many in the social group.