

*Burns/Roe/Ross*  
*Third Edition*

**TEACHING READING IN TODAY'S  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**



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**TEACHING READING IN TODAY'S  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

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*Dedicated to Michael H. Roe  
and James R. Ross*

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# *Preface*

## **Audience and Purpose**

This book has been written primarily for the preservice elementary school classroom teacher. It is intended for a first course in reading methods. Inservice classroom teachers and teachers preparing to become reading specialists may also use the book as part of an introductory reading education course. Although primarily oriented to teachers, the book will also be suitable for administrators, for there is much information in the text that would be helpful in the administration and direction of a school's reading program.

This book is designed to familiarize teachers with all the important aspects of elementary reading instruction. It presents much practical information about the process of teaching reading. Theoretical background and the research base behind suggestions have also been included to give the teacher or prospective teacher a balanced perspective.

The primary aim of the book is to prepare teachers for developing reading readiness, all fundamental reading and study skills, and enjoyment of reading in their students. The large amount of the school day spent on reading instruction in the primary grades makes this content especially important to the primary grade teacher. In the intermediate grades students must handle reading assignments in the content areas as well as in reading periods. Our book—in particular the chapters on content area reading and study skills—also contains much information that can help teachers teach the skills appropriate for content area reading tasks.

## **Revisions in this Edition**

This book has been extensively revised. Four chapters—those on reading readiness, major approaches to reading instruction, literature and recreational reading, and readers with special needs—have been substantially reorganized and rewritten. Among the significant changes in these chapters are the inclusion of a comprehensive discussion of Piaget; the expansion of the section on computer-assisted and computer-managed instruction; the addition of discussions, by exceptionality, of the implications of PL 94-142 for classroom reading instruction; and the addition of a section on corrective and remedial readers.

In addition, recent topics of concern have been added throughout the entire book. For instance, discussions of schema theory, subskill theories, semantic webbing, story grammars, alternatives to the use of the directed reading activity, and several new procedures for reading in the content areas are now treated in considerable detail. Also, throughout every chapter important sections have been expanded and updated from the second edition. For example, the discussions of vocabulary development, questioning, critical reading, creative reading, basal readers, study guides, criterion-referenced tests, and grouping for reading instruction have all been significantly revised.

Another important aspect of the revision is the addition of many new activities and worksheets. For instance, the chapter on readiness now has an extensive appendix consisting of dozens of activity suggestions. All activities have been grouped, labeled, and identified in a more accessible manner. Example facsimiles of elementary school reading materials continue to be plentiful, and have been updated throughout.

## **Coverage and Features**

The first chapter discusses the components of the reading act, theories related to reading, and principles of teaching reading. Chapter 2 presents information on reading readiness and a multitude of activities useful in developing readiness. The next two chapters are devoted to techniques of teaching word recognition and comprehension skills; major approaches to reading instruction are described in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 discusses methods of teaching reading/study skills, and Chapter 7 tells how to present the reading skills necessary for reading in individual content areas. Chapter 8 deals with literary appreciation and recreational reading. Assessment of pupil progress is discussed in Chapter 9, and classroom management and organization are treated in Chapter 10. Chapter 11 covers the teaching of reading to exceptional students. The Appendixes contain answers to Test Yourself quizzes.

This text provides an abundance of practical activities and strategies for improving students' reading performance. Illustrative lesson plans, learning-center ideas, worksheets, independent task or activity cards, and instructional games are all presented in this text. Thus, it should continue to be a valuable reference for inservice teachers.

In order to make this text easy to study, we have included the following features:

**Introductions** to each chapter help readers develop a mental set for reading the chapter and give them a framework into which they can fit the ideas they will read about.

**Setting Objectives**, part of the opening material in each chapter, provides objectives to be met as the chapter is read.



**Self-Checks** are keyed to the objectives and are located at strategic points *throughout* each chapter to help readers check whether they have grasped the ideas presented.

**Test Yourself**, a section at the end of each chapter, includes questions that check retention of the material in the chapter as a whole; these questions may also serve as a basis for discussion.

**Vocabulary**, a list of important terms with which readers should be familiar, is included for students to review their knowledge of key chapter concepts.

**Self-Improvement Opportunities** suggests activities in which the readers can participate in order to further their understanding of the ideas and methods presented in the chapter.

## Acknowledgments

We are indebted to many people for their assistance in the preparation of this text. In particular, we would like to recognize the contribution that Paul C. Burns made to the first and second editions of this book. Many of his ideas and much of his organization have been incorporated in this text. His death in the summer of 1983 was a loss to us as his colleagues and friends and a loss to the field of reading as well. As a prolific writer and an outstanding teacher, his contributions to reading education were exceptional.

Although we would like to acknowledge the many teachers and students whose inspiration was instrumental in the development of this book, we cannot name all of them. We offer grateful recognition to the following reviewers, whose constructive advice and criticism helped greatly in the writing and revision of the manuscript: John Christoffersen, Western Illinois University; Susan Daniels, University of Akron; Helen Dermer, Bowling Green State University; J. Eldredge, Brigham Young University; Juanita Garfield, Eastern Michigan University; Cal Greatsinger, Central Washington University; Maribeth Henney, Iowa State University; Bob Jerrolds, University of Georgia; Paula Laurence, Texas Tech University; Dorothy McGinnis, Western Michigan University; Walter A. Nelson, California State University (Northridge); Florence N. Odle, Northern Arizona University; Charles Rice, Slippery Rock College; Davida Schuman, Kean College; Gary Shaffer, James Madison University; Lawrence Smith, University of Southern Mississippi; Shela Snyder, Central Missouri State; Virginia Stanley, Clemson University; and Janet W. Lerner, Northeastern Illinois University. In addition, appreciation is expressed to those who have granted permission to use sample materials or citations from their respective works. Credit for these contributions has been given in the footnotes.

Betty D. Roe  
Elinor P. Ross

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# The Reading Act

## ***Introduction***

Attempts to define reading have been numerous, and a great variety of definitions has been developed. This is partly because of the complexity of the reading act, which includes two major components—a process and a product—each of which is complicated. Teachers need to be aware of these components and of their different aspects in order to respond effectively to reading needs. In addition, they will find that familiarity with some theories related to the reading process and with important principles of teaching reading can be helpful in planning reading activities.

This chapter analyzes the components of the reading act and discusses the reading product and process. It describes two divergent theories about the reading process and presents some sound principles for reading instruction, with explanatory comments.

## ***Setting Objectives***

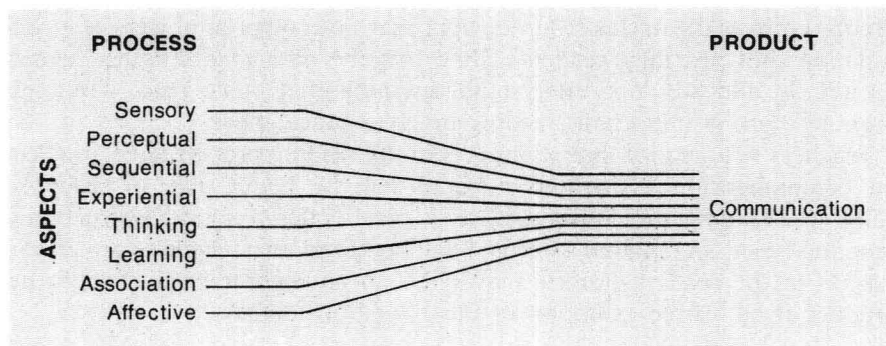
When you finish reading this chapter, you should be able to

1. Discuss the reading product.
2. Describe the reading process.
3. Explain two divergent theories of the reading process: subskill and psycholinguistic.
4. Name some principles upon which effective reading instruction is based.

## **COMPONENTS OF THE READING ACT**

The reading act is composed of two parts: the reading process and the reading product. By *process* we mean a method, a movement toward an end that is accomplished by going through all the necessary steps. Eight aspects of the reading process combine to produce the reading product. When they blend and interact harmoniously, good communication between the writer and reader results. But the sequences involved in the reading process are not always exactly the same, and they are not always performed in the same way by different readers. Example 1.1 is a diagram of the reading act, listing the various aspects of the process that lead to the product.

A *product* is the consequence of utilizing certain aspects of a process in an appropriate sequence. The product of reading is the communication of thoughts and emotions by the writer to the reader. Because your main goal as a teacher of reading is to help students achieve the reading product, we will discuss the reading product first.



## The Reading Product

As we have pointed out, the product of the reading act is communication, the reader's understanding of ideas that have been put in print by the writer. A wealth of knowledge is available to people living today because we are able to read material that others wrote in the past. Americans can read of events and accomplishments that occur in other parts of the globe. Knowledge of great discoveries does not have to be laboriously passed from person to person by word of mouth; such knowledge is available to all who can read.

As well as being a means of communicating generally, reading is a means of communicating specifically with friends and acquaintances who are nearby. A note may tell a child that Mother has gone to town or it can inform a babysitter about where to call in case of an emergency. A memo from a person's employer can specify which work must be done.

Reading can be a way of sharing another person's insights, joys, sorrows, or creative endeavors. Being able to read can make it possible for a person to find places he or she has never visited before (through maps, directional signs), to take advantage of bargains (through advertisements), or to avert disaster (through warning signs). What would life be like without this vital means of communication?

Communication is dependent upon comprehension, which is affected by all aspects of the reading process. Word recognition skills, the associational aspect of the reading process, are essential, but comprehension involves much more than decoding symbols into sounds; the reader must derive meaning from the printed page. Some people have mistakenly considered reading to be a single skill, exemplified by pronouncing words, rather than a combination of many skills that lead to deriving meaning. Thinking of reading in this way may have fostered the unfortunate educational practice of using a reading period for extended drill on word calling, in which the teacher asks each child to "read" aloud while classmates follow in their books. When a child cannot

pronounce a word, the teacher may supply the pronunciation or ask another child to do so. When a child miscalls, or mispronounces, a word, the teacher usually corrects the mistake. Some pupils may be good pronouncers in such a situation, but are they readers? They may be able to pronounce words beautifully and still not understand anything they have read. Although pronunciation is important, reading involves much more.

Teachers who realize that all aspects of the reading process have an effect on comprehension of written material will be better able to diagnose children's reading difficulties and as a result offer a sound instructional program based on children's needs. Faulty performance related to any of the aspects of the reading process may result in an inferior product or in no product at all. Three examples of this condition follow.

1. If a child does not clearly see the graphic symbols on a page, he or she may be unable to recognize them.
2. If a child has developed an incorrect association between a grapheme (written symbol) and a phoneme (sound), incorrect word recognition will result and will hamper comprehension.
3. If a child does not have much experience in the area written about, he or she will comprehend the passage less completely than one who has a rich background. For example, a child who has lived on or visited a farm will understand a passage concerning farm life with greater ease and more complete comprehension than a child who has never been outside an urban area.

### ✓ **Self-Check: Objective 1**

**Discuss the product of the reading process.**

**(See Self-Improvement Opportunities 1 and 2.)**

## **The Reading Process**

The process of reading is extremely complex. In reading, children must be able to

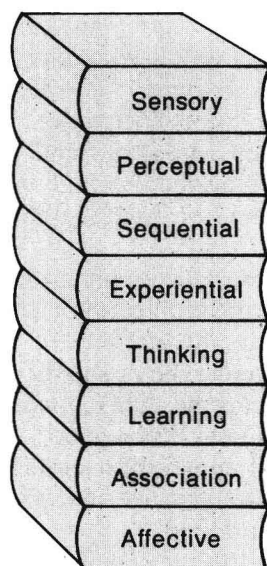
1. perceive the symbols set before them (sensory aspect);
2. interpret what they see as symbols or words (perceptual aspect);
3. follow the linear, logical, and grammatical patterns of the written words (sequential aspect);
4. recognize the connections between symbols and sounds, between words and what they represent (associational aspect);
5. relate words back to direct experiences to give the words meaning (experiential aspect);

6. remember what they learned in the past and incorporate new ideas and facts (learning aspect);
7. make inferences from and evaluate the material (thinking aspect);
8. deal with personal interests and attitudes that affect the task of reading (affective aspect).

Reading seems to fit into the category of behavior called a skill, which has been defined by Frederick McDonald as an act that “demands complex sets of responses—some of them cognitive, some attitudinal, and some manipulative” (Downing, 1982, p. 535). Understanding, rather than simple motor behavior, is essential. The key element in skill development is *integration* of the processes involved, which “is learned through practice. Practice in integration is only supplied by performing the whole skill or as much as is a part of the learner’s ‘preliminary fix.’ . . . one learns to read by reading” (Downing, 1982, p. 537). This idea is supported by a great deal of current opinion. A child can learn all of the subskills (such as word recognition) of reading and still not be able to read until a teacher shows him or her how to put the subskills together (May, 1982, p. 15).

Not only is the reading process complex, but each aspect of the process is complex as well. The whole process, as shown in Example 1.2, could be likened to a series of books, with each aspect represented by a hefty volume.

► **EXAMPLE 1.2:** Aspects of the Reading Process





## Sensory Aspects of Reading

The reading process begins with a sensory impression, either visual or tactile. A normal reader perceives the printed symbol visually; a blind reader uses the tactile sense. (Discussion of the blind reader is beyond the scope of this text, although the visually handicapped reader is discussed in Chapter 11, "Readers with Special Needs.") The auditory sense is also very important, since a beginning stage in reading is the association of printed symbols with spoken language. A person with poor auditory discrimination may find some reading skills, especially those involved with phonics, difficult to master.

**Vision** Many visual demands are imposed upon children by the reading act. They must be able to focus their eyes on a page of print that is generally fourteen to twenty inches away from them, as well as on various signs and visual displays that may be twenty feet or more away. In addition to having visual acuity (or sharpness of vision), children must learn to discriminate visually among the graphic symbols (letters or words) that are used to represent spoken language. Reading is impossible for a person who cannot differentiate between two unlike graphic symbols. Because of these demands, teachers should be aware of how a child's sight develops and of the physical problems that can handicap reading.

Babies are farsighted at birth and gradually become less farsighted as they mature. By the time they are five or six years old, most children have attained 20/20 vision; however, some do not reach this point until later. Several authorities feel that the eyes of many children are not ready for the demands of reading until the children are eight years old. To complicate matters, visual deterioration begins almost as soon as 20/20 vision is attained. Some research indicates that approximately 30 percent of people who once had 20/20 vision no longer have it in both eyes by age seventeen (Leverett, 1957).

Farsighted first graders may learn reading skills more easily through work on charts and chalkboards than through workbooks and textbooks. Near-sighted children may do well when working with books, but are often unable to see well enough to respond to directions or exercises written on charts or chalkboards.

Some children may have an eye disorder call astigmatism, which results in blurred vision. This problem, as well as the problems of nearsightedness and farsightedness, can generally be corrected by glasses.

If a child's eyes do not work well together, he or she may see two images instead of one. Sometimes when this occurs the child manages to suppress the image from one eye. If suppression continues over a period of time, he or she may lose sight in that eye entirely. If suppression occurs for only short periods, the child may be likely when reading to lose the appropriate place on the page and become confused and frustrated.

Eye movement during reading appears to the casual observer as a smooth sweep across a line of print. Actually, a person makes numerous stops, or

*fixations*, when reading in order to take in the words and phrases and react to them. A high proportion of total reading time is spent on fixations; therefore, fixation time is closely related to speed of reading. Both the time and the frequency of fixations will vary according to the difficulty of the material. Easy material involves fewer and briefer fixations.

Eye movements back to a previously read word or phrase in order to reread are called *regressions*. Although they can become an undesirable habit, regressions are useful if the reader performs them to correct false first impressions.

It takes time for children to learn to move their eyes across a page in a left-to-right progression and to execute a return sweep from the end of one line to the beginning of the next line. This is a difficult maneuver. Those who have not yet mastered the process will find themselves rereading and skipping lines. Both of these activities hamper comprehension. Although teachers often attempt to correct faulty eye movements, such movements are more often *symptoms* of other problems (for example, poor muscle coordination or poor vocabulary) than *causes* of problems. When the other problems are removed, these symptoms usually disappear.

**Hearing** If a child cannot discriminate among the different sounds (phonemes) represented by graphic symbols, he or she will be unable to make the sound-symbol associations necessary for decoding unfamiliar words. Of course, before a child can discriminate among sounds, he or she must be able to hear them; that is, auditory acuity must be adequate. Deaf and hearing impaired children are deprived of some methods of word identification because of their disabilities. (See Chapter 11 for more information.)

## Perceptual Aspects of Reading

Perception involves interpretation of the sensory impressions that reach the brain. Each person processes and reorganizes the sensory data according to his or her background and experiences. When a person is reading, the brain receives a visual sensation of words and phrases from the printed page. It recognizes and gives meaning to these words and phrases as it associates them with the reader's previous experience with the objects, ideas, or emotions represented.

Visual sensations reach the brain through the optic nerve. The brain compares each pattern of nerve impulses that reaches it with memory traces of similar patterns: its visual form, its verbal label, and the meanings that the person has accumulated for it. A child can recognize a printed word when he or she associates its sensory trace with the other two types of traces in memory. Thereafter, when the child encounters that word in print, the pattern of nerve impulses elicited by that word matches its memory trace in the brain, which arouses the traces of the verbal label and the cluster of meanings (Harris and Sipay, 1979, p. 19).