

Reader's Digest

# NEW ADVANCED

---

READING  
SKILL  
BUILDER

# NEW/ADVANCED READING SKILL BUILDER 1

Prepared by

NATALIE C. MOREDA

KATHERINE M. SINCLAIR

NANCY J. SPARKS

Editors, Reader's Digest Educational Division

© 1973 by Reader's Digest Services, Inc., Pleasantville, N.Y. 10570

All rights reserved, including the right  
to reproduce this book or parts thereof in any form.

Printed in the United States of America

**Reader's  
Digest**

® Trademark Reg. U.S. Pat. Off. Marca Registrada

<b>Back From Drugs: The Triumph of Johnny Cash • Floyd Miller . . .</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Boss of the Ball Park • Bill Surface . . . . .</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Dial "A" for Attention • Mary L. Harvey . . . . .</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Hector, the Stowaway Dog • Captain Kenneth Dodson . . . . .</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Face to Face With Hurricane Camille • Joseph P. Blank . . . . .</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>The Lost Gold Piece • Channing Pollock . . . . .</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Any More Like You at Home? • George Veazey . . . . .</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>The Wonderful World of Kites • John E. Frazer . . . . .</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>A Question of Honor • Allan Sherman . . . . .</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>The Almost-Perfect Kidnaping • Joseph P. Blank . . . . .</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>The Cat That Kills With a Single Spring • Stanley E. Brock . . . . .</b>	<b>78</b>

*My Wonderful Lousy Poem • Budd Schulberg .....	86
Sam Genensky's Marvelous Seeing Machine •	
George A. W. Boehm ..	90
*Who Would Want to Be a Cop? ... Or a Firefighter? •	
Howard Whitman and Dennis Smith ..	98
Old Maid Grump • Carole Gaffron .....	102
*Going Home • Pete Hamill .....	111
The Champ, Joe Frazier • William D. Ellis .....	114
My Family Is Dying! • Jean Libman Block .....	125
*The View From the Back Seat • Bill Vaughan .....	134
The Traveler Nobody Would Believe • Lowell Thomas .....	136
Making of a Champion • William J. Buchanan .....	146
*The Path Through the Graveyard • Leonard Q. Ross .....	158

\*Short story without quizzes

†Stories for which dramatized Audio Lessons are available

# NEW/ADVANCED READING SKILL BUILDER 1

Prepared by

NATALIE C. MOREDA

KATHERINE M. SINCLAIR

NANCY J. SPARKS

Editors, Reader's Digest Educational Division

© 1973 by Reader's Digest Services, Inc., Pleasantville, N.Y. 10570

All rights reserved, including the right  
to reproduce this book or parts thereof in any form.

Printed in the United States of America

**Reader's**  
**Digest**


® Trademark Reg. U.S. Pat. Off. Marca Registrada

<b>Back From Drugs: The Triumph of Johnny Cash • Floyd Miller . . .</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Boss of the Ball Park • Bill Surface . . . . .</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Dial "A" for Attention • Mary L. Harvey . . . . .</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Hector, the Stowaway Dog • Captain Kenneth Dodson . . . . .</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Face to Face With Hurricane Camille • Joseph P. Blank . . . . .</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>The Lost Gold Piece • Channing Pollock . . . . .</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Any More Like You at Home? • George Veazey . . . . .</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>The Wonderful World of Kites • John E. Frazer . . . . .</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>A Question of Honor • Allan Sherman . . . . .</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>The Almost-Perfect Kidnaping • Joseph P. Blank . . . . .</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>The Cat That Kills With a Single Spring • Stanley E. Brock . . . . .</b>	<b>78</b>

* <b>My Wonderful Lousy Poem • Budd Schulberg</b> .....	<b>86</b>
<b>Sam Genensky's Marvelous Seeing Machine •</b>	
George A. W. Boehm ..	<b>90</b>
* <b>Who Would Want to Be a Cop? ... Or a Firefighter? •</b>	
Howard Whitman and Dennis Smith ..	<b>98</b>
<b>Old Maid Grump • Carole Gaffron</b> .....	<b>102</b>
* <b>Going Home • Pete Hamill</b> .....	<b>111</b>
<b>The Champ, Joe Frazier • William D. Ellis</b> .....	<b>114</b>
<b>My Family Is Dying! • Jean Libman Block</b> .....	<b>125</b>
* <b>The View From the Back Seat • Bill Vaughan</b> .....	<b>134</b>
<b>The Traveler Nobody Would Believe • Lowell Thomas</b> .....	<b>136</b>
<b>Making of a Champion • William J. Buchanan</b> .....	<b>146</b>
* <b>The Path Through the Graveyard • Leonard Q. Ross</b> .....	<b>158</b>

\* Short story without quizzes

† Stories for which dramatized Audio Lessons are available



# BACK FROM DRUGS.

## The Triumph of Johnny Cash

Floyd Miller

He stood on a peak of the Ozarks at sunset, a tall man, feet planted wide, hands clenched at his sides. He had grown up in and around these mountains, hunted the woods, fished the streams. Now he found the familiar place threatening; his nerve endings felt raw and exposed. A chipmunk turned a twig—the sound seemed like thunder. A gentle breeze drove needles into his bare arms. His heart beat fast with fear. The tall man was deep in amphetamine psychosis.

He had started taking amphetamine pills five years before, when his career seemed to demand more energy than he could produce. He didn't worry at the time. They were "just pep pills," he told himself. And he didn't plan to use them often. But soon it was every day. Then he found he had to



counter their effects with barbiturates (sleeping pills) to get a few troubled hours of sleep each night. Gradually the dosage increased until now he was taking close to 100 pills a day.

This trip to the mountaintop had been made in the hope that the wilderness would somehow heal him. [He was one-quarter Cherokee Indian. Perhaps up here he would find within himself some echo of the wisdom of his ancestors.] But the mountain-top was not powerful enough to counteract the drugs, the fears.

Darkness settled in. He swallowed two more pills, climbed into his jeep and waited. As the amphetamines seeped into his already drugged mind, some new power seemed freed within him. He stopped being an ordinary man and became godlike. Nothing could hurt him!

He put his car into gear and started down the narrow road carved out of the mountainside.

Suddenly, he shifted into neutral and stood up, steering only with his fingertips. The car gathered speed. As it approached each sharp turn, the headlights shone into the black pit that dropped away hundreds

of feet. Each time, he spun the wheel, the tires screamed—and the road reappeared. He courted death, defied it. Twice the right front tire spun in space, but each time the left one held, enough to bring the hurtling car back onto the road. Neither time did he make any move to brake the car—nor would he. He had pledged himself to this test to prove that he could not be hurt, even by death.

At last the car rolled onto the flat at the foot of the mountain. Soaked with perspiration, trembling, he shut his eyes and rested his forehead on the steering wheel. He had proved nothing. Now paranoia crept into his fevered brain, and statements made by friends and business partners suddenly took on dark meaning. They were plotting against him, out to destroy his career. He felt sick at his stomach. He swallowed two more pills.

As he approached the town, he saw posters carrying his name in large letters: JOHNNY CASH. This was the spring of 1967, and he was fast becoming a popular country and western singer. He was booked into the

town auditorium this evening; already he was 30 minutes late. The place was sold out. It gave him savage pleasure to think how his partners would sweat if he didn't show up!

For the next hour he drove aimlessly through the town's back streets, keeping watch for a police car. Surely they'd alert the cops that he was missing. Oh, there'd be hell to pay! Finally, the pleasure of laying up trouble for himself drained away. He drove to his motel, swallowed sleeping pills and went to bed.

Some time later he awakened to stare up dully at several worried faces. Everyone spoke at the same time.

"What happened to you, Johnny?"

"The crowd almost took the place apart—4000 people!"

"They're gonna sue us."

"We had to refund all the money."

He gave them a long, bleak look, then said, "I was sick." He turned his face to the wall.

### *Something Fierce and Moving*

Born in 1932, Johnny Cash grew up in a family that didn't

know it was poor. Their 40 acres of cotton in Dyess, Arkansas, required the sunup to sundown labor of father, mother, four sons and three daughters. Yet there was no feeling of want. Rather, there was that strength and sense of well-being that comes from hard labor (even as a boy, Johnny could pick 350 pounds of cotton in a day), simple joys and deeply held religious beliefs.

After high school, Johnny went to Detroit to take a job in an auto plant, but could not endure the routine and confinement. He enlisted in the Air Force and spent three years in Europe. Discharged in 1954, he tried to settle down on a farm in Arkansas. But he was not the same man who had left home—he had discovered music.

In the barracks in Germany he had learned enough chords on the guitar to accompany himself while he sang, in his rough voice, the songs he had heard in the Arkansas jukeboxes—about salvation, about railroads, cowboys, loneliness, whiskey, about home and mother and love. These were old songs, but this man brought something

new to them—something fierce and moving that welled up out of his own personality.

So Johnny Cash began to sing for a living. His voice rang with truth, and his popularity quickly spread. But with public attention came new pressures for which he was not prepared. He had to deal with people whether he liked them or not. No matter how he felt, he had to sing every day for weeks at a time. He was occupied with rehearsals, performances, recording dates, travel schedules, all tying him down. There was even less freedom than he'd had working in a Detroit factory. Soon the need to be alone became so great that he could endure it only by taking pills—a few at first, then more and more. Often, drugged, he acted strangely. People began to avoid him; his promising career began to fall apart.

### *Fear of the Cage*

On a summer night in 1967, Johnny Cash was driving wildly around Lookout Mountain in Georgia when his jeep flipped over, throwing him clear. As he regained consciousness, he be-



gan wandering, totally lost. Time and again he fell. The underbrush tore his clothes and whipped and cut his face and arms. At last he saw the lighted window of a cottage. He stumbled toward it.

A woman opened the door. When she saw this strange, ragged, bloodstained man, she was frightened. She screamed, slammed the door and ran to the telephone. Soon a car with flashing red roof-light arrived, and a solid man got out, his belt heavy with gun and bullets. The hysterical woman talked of a rapist lurking close by. At this moment, a figure staggered into the beam of the headlights. The woman gasped and pointed. The sheriff ordered the man to turn, spread his legs and lean his hands against the car.

After frisking him and finding no weapon, the sheriff asked, "What happened to you?"

"My jeep turned over."

"Where?"

"I don't know," Johnny said.

The sheriff put him in the car, and they began a silent trip to town. Johnny's mouth was dry; his hands trembled; sweat ran down his back and chest. The thought of confinement was pushing him to the edge of panic. He had been jailed before—once for three days in El Paso for trying to smuggle amphetamines across the Mexican border, and by the end of that time he had been almost climbing the walls.

At the sheriff's office he sat in a straight chair across a desk from the officer. "I know who you are," the sheriff said. "You're too good a man to be destroying yourself. You've got influence on the kids around here. That's a pretty rare thing, for kids to listen to an adult. So what are you going to tell them? That life is so pointless and cheap they might as well throw it away?"

Shamed and angry, Cash stared at his clenched hands.

He desperately needed some pills, but he dared not reach for the emergency supply he had hidden on him.

"I could lock you up," the sheriff continued, "but I'm not going to. I'm going to take a chance on you, for the kids' sake. I'm betting you're not going to let them down."

Moments later, Johnny was outdoors. He took a long, shuddering breath of relief and reached for the pills. To hell with the kids. To hell with the sheriff. He swallowed the pills to banish them all.

But they refused to be banished. That night, in spite of sleeping pills and pep pills, they haunted him.

### *"I'll Make It"*

Late one night several weeks later, Johnny called an old friend, a well-known Nashville doctor. "I need help," he said.

The doctor had received several such calls from Cash over the years. Each time he had arranged for hospital admission; each time the terrors of confinement had driven Johnny to disappear.

At Johnny's house, the doc-

tor found his friend almost out of his mind. In a shaking voice, Cash kept repeating, "I've lost control of my life."

"For the moment, yes."

"For five years!" Cash flared at him. "For five years I've been doing crazy things, as if I was somebody else. I can't sleep, I can't work, I can't face the kids who come to hear me sing and ask me for autographs. I can't even stop taking the pills that are driving me crazy." Then, in an agonized whisper, "Do you know what it's like to despise yourself?"

"What are you going to do about it?" the doctor asked.

Cash shut his eyes. "I'm going to quit," he said. "Starting now." His meaning was clear—no hospital confinement. Either he would do it on his own or not at all.

In a distant voice, Johnny asked, "What's it going to be like?"

"Pure hell," the doctor replied.

The flicker of a smile crossed Johnny's face. "I'm familiar with the place."

The doctor summoned Cash's family and a few close friends.

Johnny was not to be left alone at any time, day or night. These volunteer "nurses" could hardly be prepared for Johnny's agony. He paced the floor in torment. He could not sleep, or keep food down. Sweat soaked his clothes. His mouth was so dry that he had to sip water constantly to keep his lips from sticking to his teeth. He trembled, not only from chills and fever but because his nerves, tissues and muscles, suddenly freed of drug controls, were on a rampage.

"Johnny," the doctor said after a week, "you belong in the hospital."

Cash slowly shook his head. His eyes were glazed with suffering, but through cracked lips he whispered, "I'll make it."

He made it. He went through hell and survived.

### *Fused by Fire*

That was in 1967. Since then, Johnny Cash's career has soared. He sells more records, draws bigger crowds at personal appearances than any other performer in his field. His income is well over a million dollars a year. Freed from drugs, he now



TOP LEFT: Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash at taping of Cash's first TV show. BOTTOM LEFT: Cash recording his album "Johnny Cash at Folsom Prison" in 1968. ABOVE: Cash singing on his TV show.

knows who he is and what he truly and clearly thinks about life. His opinions may be unpopular in some quarters, but he speaks them loud and clear.

Cash has a special affection for men in jail, and he speaks out against the brutalities they endure. He fights for justice for the American Indian. His feelings about the nation's youth are expressed in a hit song he wrote, "What Is Truth?"

*Young man of 17 in school being taught the Golden Rule; by the time another year goes by, it'll be his turn to go and die. Can you blame the voice of youth for asking, "What is truth?" . . . \**

Johnny Cash is his own man. He has been through the fire, and has come out stronger.

\* "What Is Truth?" words and music by Johnny Cash © 1970. Reprinted by permission of the publisher House of Cash, Inc.

NUMBER OF WORDS: 2038 ÷ ..... MINUTES READING TIME = RATE .....

## I. ISOLATING THE MAIN IDEA

*In each group of sentences below, one sentence gives a main idea. The other sentences give information to illustrate or support it. Circle the letter of the sentence that gives the main idea in each group.*

1. A. Johnny Cash had to deal with people whether he liked them or not.  
 B. With public attention came many pressures for Johnny Cash.  
 C. No matter how Johnny Cash felt, he had to sing every day for weeks at a time.
2. A. The tall man was deep in amphetamine psychosis.  
 B. A chipmunk turned a twig—to the man the sound seemed like thunder.  
 C. A gentle breeze seemed to drive needles into the man's bare arms.
3. A. Johnny made no move to brake the hurtling car.  
 B. Johnny stood up in the speeding jeep, steering only with his fingertips.  
 C. Johnny courted death, defied it.

10 points for each correct answer

My score: .....

## II. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ARTICLE

*Underline the choice that best completes each statement according to the article.*

1. Johnny Cash's childhood was one of (comfort and easy living, hard work and happiness, hunger and loneliness, crime and drugs).
2. Johnny changed during his enlistment in the Air Force when he

discovered (religion, drugs, music, his future wife).

3. Johnny's spreading popularity as a singer led to inner feelings of (success in handling pressures, welcomed challenge and competition, longing for his old job in Detroit, being pressured and confined).
4. Johnny took amphetamines and barbiturates to find (new ideas for songs, energy and then sleep, popularity with his young audiences, inspiration for his performances).
5. The sheriff's point which seems finally to have persuaded Johnny to give up drugs was his (influence on kids, fading career, having turned to crime for money, debt to his parents).
6. When Johnny decided to quit using drugs, he chose not to go to a hospital because he wanted to (be near his family and friends, be free to write songs as he was recovering, keep his cure a secret, avoid the terrors of confinement).
7. Johnny's special concerns for men in jail and for the American Indian are most probably based on (his conversations with drug addicts, the songs he sings, his own experiences and ancestry, his belief that each man must stand alone).

10 points for each correct answer

My score: .....

PERFECT TOTAL SCORE: 100

MY TOTAL SCORE: .....

### III. GET THE WORD MEANING FROM THE ARTICLE

*Two meanings are given for each italicized word below. Underline the meaning of that word as it is used in the article.*

1. *narrow* (p. 5)—(a) prejudiced (b) of slender width
2. *flat* (p. 5)—(a) level surface of land (b) deflated tire
3. *booked* (p. 5)—(a) charged by the police (b) scheduled to appear



4. *border* (p. 8)—(a) boundary between two countries (b) design at edge of fabric or rug
5. *quarters* (p. 10)—(a) living accommodations (b) unidentified places

#### IV. TRACING EVENTS IN TIME

*Events in Johnny Cash's life are listed below in the order in which the author presented them. Number each event in the order in which it happened. What clue from the article helped you decide on your answer?*

Johnny takes a wild jeep ride down a mountain in the Ozarks. . . .

Johnny lives in Arkansas, Detroit, Germany. . . .

Johnny has a jeep accident and is almost arrested by a sheriff in Georgia. . . .

For the last time Johnny asks a Nashville doctor for help to free himself from drugs. . . .

#### V. OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

1. For a bulletin-board display, make a collage based on this article.
2. Write a brief essay showing the influence of Johnny Cash's personal life on his music. Cite examples from Johnny Cash songs you know, as well as from facts revealed in the article.
3. One way sometimes used to escape the pressures of reality is drugs. Others are rationalization, alcohol, sleep, forgetting. Find out more about methods of escape used by human beings. Be ready to report your findings to the class.
4. Who is your favorite singer-performer? Tell about his or her life and music.

From *Back From Drugs: The Triumph of Johnny Cash*  
The Reader's Digest, September '70