

McNeil/Donant/Alkin

How to teach reading successfully



How to Teach Reading Successfully

John D. McNeil

University of California, Los Angeles

Lisbeth Donant

Atascadero Unified School District, California

Marvin C. Alkin

University of California, Los Angeles



Little, Brown and Company

Boston

Toronto

Copyright © 1980 by John D. McNeil, Lisbeth Donant, and Marvin C. Alkin

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 79-88441

First Printing

Published simultaneously in Canada
by Little, Brown & Company (Canada) Limited

Printed in the United States of America

Preface

How to Teach Reading Successfully is for elementary school teachers and for those aspiring to be teachers. Throughout, the focus is on helping the teacher acquire methods by which children can learn useful strategies in the perception and understanding of written materials. Theory and research findings have been incorporated in the discussion as they bear on reading instruction.

The text is comprehensive and eclectic. It features topics that both novices and teachers of teachers expect from a methods book. The chapters dealing with motives for reading, diagnosis, meeting special needs, and teaching reading in a multicultural context introduce content previously unavailable in textbooks for the teaching of reading.

The scope of the content is unusual in that it systematically offers methods appropriate for a range of approaches to the teaching of reading — basal, technological (competency-based management systems), language experience, and individualized. In addition, there is extensive description and explanation of the teaching of reading at four levels — readiness, beginning, middle, and upper. Hence, those using the book can acquire more understanding of ways to teach reading to different age groups than is allowed in texts devoted primarily to a given level.

A unique feature of this book is the inclusion of *self-instructional exercises* at the end of each chapter. These exercises aid in developing teaching competency rather than just relating information about some

aspect of reading. The exercises both reinforce the content of the chapters and introduce additional methods for successful teaching.

An instructor's manual has been prepared to provide suggestions and activities for teaching with this book, questions for discussion and tests, and additional source references.

Writing this book was a cooperative venture. Each author contributed suggestions to the others. Responsibility for the chapters, however, has been placed: Marvin C. Alkin for Chapters 8 and 11; Lisbeth Donant for Chapters 3, 7, and 9; and John D. McNeil for Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 10.

Appreciation is extended to reviewers of the manuscript: Ruth N. Hartley, California State University, Sacramento; and Hildegard Kuse, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point. Special thanks is expressed to Professor Dorcas Cavett of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, who made many valuable suggestions and shared much of her own experience in the teaching of reading. Through the arduous process of converting our manuscript into a book, we were pleased to have the extraordinary assistance of Elizabeth Schaaf, our book editor. We are indebted also to the editor who helped in planning, writing, and publishing the book — Mylan L. Jaixen.

J.D.M.
L.D.
M.C.A.

Contents

1	The Importance of Reading	3
	Why Read?	4
	The Contrast between Purposes and Activities	8
	Different Emphases in Reading Goals	9
	Summary	14
	Self-instructional Exercises	15
	Selected Readings	19
2	Approaches to the Teaching of Reading	23
	Basal Reading Approach	24
	Technological Approach	32
	Language Experience Approach	38
	Individualized Reading Approach	43
	Summary	47
	Self-instructional Exercises	48
	Selected Readings	55

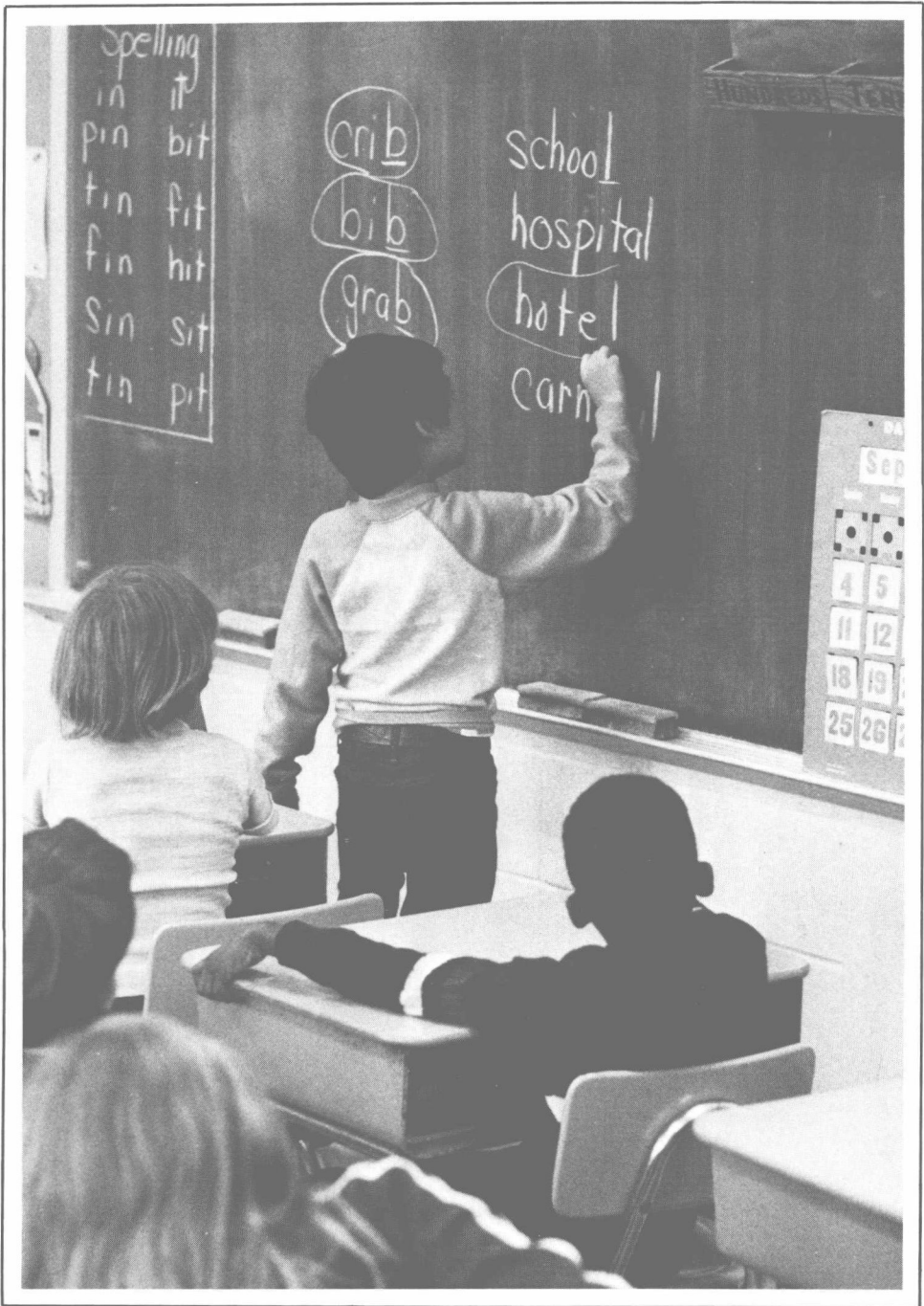
3	Organizing and Managing for the Teaching of Reading	59
	Organizational Patterns	59
	Management of the Reading Classroom	72
	Summary	80
	Self-instructional Exercises	81
	Selected Readings	86
4	Word Attack Skills	89
	Phonic Analysis Skills	91
	Prereading or Readiness Skills	92
	Phonics Skills at the Primary Level	99
	Structural Analysis Skills at the Primary Level	105
	Contextual Analysis in Word Attack at the Primary Level	108
	Phonics Skills at the Middle Level	109
	Structural Analysis Skills at the Middle Level	113
	Contextual Analysis Skills at the Middle Level	115
	Phonic Skills at the Upper Level	116
	Structural Analysis Skills at the Upper Level	119
	Contextual Analysis Skills at the Upper Level	120
	Summary	122
	Self-instructional Exercises	123
	Selected Readings	126
5	Skills for Comprehension in Reading	129
	Specific Comprehension Skills	130
	Newer Ideas in Reading Comprehension	141
	Summary	146
	Self-instructional Exercises	147
	Selected Readings	151

6	Critical Reading and Study Skills in the Content Fields	155
	Critical Reading	156
	Study Skills Common to All Content Fields	161
	Skills Required for Reading Content Fields	170
	Summary	184
	Self-instructional Exercises	184
	Selected Readings	190
7	Instruction at Different Grade Levels	193
	Orientation to Instruction: Effects on Teaching Style	195
	Principles of Instruction to Use in Designing Reading Lessons	196
	Teaching Reading Readiness	202
	Reading Lessons in the Primary Grades	212
	Reading Lessons in the Middle Grades	222
	Reading Lessons in the Upper Grades	229
	Summary	238
	Self-instructional Exercises	239
	Selected Readings	243
8	Diagnostic Evaluation	247
	Reference Bases	248
	Norm-referenced Evaluation	249
	Criterion-referenced Evaluation	252
	Materials-referenced Evaluation	256
	Strategy-referenced Evaluation	264
	Person-referenced Descriptions	266
	Summary	270
	Self-instructional Exercises	271
	Selected Readings	280

9	Meeting Special Needs	285
	Heuristics for Discovering Answers to Problems in Meeting Special Needs	287
	Extension as a Way to Meet Individual Needs	291
	Tips for Working with Poor Readers	306
	Implications of Mainstreaming for the Teaching of Reading	314
	Summary	319
	Self-instructional Exercises	319
	Selected Readings	324
10	Teaching Reading in a Multicultural Context	327
	Teaching Reading to the Black-dialect Speaker	327
	Teaching Reading to Spanish-speaking Children	335
	Summary	348
	Self-instructional Exercises	348
	Selected Readings	352
11	Evaluating and Selecting Reading Materials	355
	General Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials	356
	Evaluating a Basal Series	358
	Rating a Basal Series	359
	Selecting Technological Materials	361
	Rating of Technology-based Materials	363
	Evaluating Materials for an Individualized Reading Approach	363
	Evaluating Materials for the Language Experience Approach	365
	Criteria for Evaluating Literature	366
	Summary	371
	Self-instructional Exercises	373
	Selected Readings	377

Appendix	380
Bibliography	387
Index	398

How to Teach Reading Successfully



Spelling
in it
pin bit
tin fit
fin hit
sin sit
tin pit

crib
bib
grab

school
hospital
hotel
carn

USA
Sep
4 5
11 12
18 19
25 26

1

The Importance of Reading

Teachers give many reasons for teaching reading. Some want children to experience the joy of reading as entertainment; others want pupils to be better informed or have a deeper understanding of the human experience. Leaders in totalitarian societies believe the teaching of reading will help them exercise control. In Revolutionary Cuba, for example, the literacy campaign not only enabled nearly a million former illiterates to read posters, poems, and songs, it achieved the political goal of uniting farmers, workers, and students and built close ties among generational groups and between urban and rural populations.¹ Cynics in our own society have tied the teaching of reading to a desire to create avaricious consumers. (Conspicuous consumption is a characteristic of our culture. Even children's primers have illustrations that feature supermarkets, toy stores, and pet shops and show children stuffing themselves with cones, hot dogs, and other goodies.) Neil Postman, in fact, has said that a minimal reading competence is necessary for people to develop a keen interest in the many products that must be sold. He does not believe the basic purposes of reading instruction are to open the pupils' minds to the wonders and riches of the written word, to give them access to great literature, to permit them to function as informed citizens, or to help them experience the sheer pleasure of reading. Instead, Postman holds that the teaching of reading

¹ Jonathan Kozol, *Children of the Revolution: A Yankee Teacher in the Cuban Schools* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1978).

is a sinister political scheme to develop the minimal reading skills people need to follow the instructions of those who govern and to transmit the myths and superstitions of society. By *myths* he means views slanted to show only the nobleness of our history, the justice of our laws, and the strengths of our institutions.² Although we do not fully agree with Postman's condemnation of the teaching of reading as a sinister activity, we think he is right in having us ask, "What is reading good for?" and "What are our motives in promoting it?" *before* we consider the techniques of teaching reading.

Without a sense of purpose, teaching is mindless. Thus it is important for teachers to clarify their reasons for teaching reading. If they can see how their teaching of reading serves encompassing and noble purposes and that the acquisition of reading skills is not an isolated and ultimate end in itself, they will make reading instruction worthy of their best efforts. Also, in understanding the goals of reading, teachers are better able to order experiences in the classroom to contribute to these ends.

This chapter will help you examine your reasons for teaching reading by encouraging introspection of your own experiences with reading, by reviewing motives for reading, and by showing how particular national attitudes have influenced the teaching of reading at given times in the United States. Finally, through the self-confirming exercises at the end of the chapter, you will have the opportunity to acquire the competency to relate specific instructional activities in teaching reading to desired objectives and to the larger purposes to which the activities and objectives point.

Why Read?

Most of us underestimate the very large part reading plays in our lives. Much of our reading we take for granted: reading information on the side of a cereal package; glancing at the newspaper; reading letters or postcards; reading TV guides, timetables, advertisements, menus, street names, and a special magazine. To tease out your arguments for teaching reading, you might ask, "What would my life be like if I couldn't read?" This may remind you of the instrumental uses of reading like helping you solve problems. Has reading also helped you in

² Neil Postman, "The Politics of Reading," *The First R: Readings on Teaching Reading*, ed. Sam Sebesta and Carl Wallen (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1972), pp. 28–39.

dealing with vocational needs? With perplexities about health? With relating to others? With orienting yourself to the universe? Has it influenced you to behave in a certain way? What authors and writings have had a significant impact on your life? Has reading provided intellectual inspiration for you or has it caused you to participate vicariously in the experiences of the characters you read about?

A report of how adults perceive reading in their lives appears in a study by Beverly Miller and Frances Pollard: *What Reading Does for People*. Two findings from this study support beliefs about the need for directed teaching of reading in the early years. Those adults who value reading had the reading habit established in early childhood and their initial stimulus to reading came through the efforts of another person rather than as a self-initiated activity.³

Your Role as a Reader

Shirley Fehl has studied the roles persons assume when they are reading and has identified several categories of readers: *observers*, those who externally evaluate what they read; *participators*, those who affiliate or identify with what they read; *synthesizers*, those who create new images of self on the basis of the encouragement and ideas found in reading; and *decision makers*, those whose reading has influenced them to make particular choices of action.⁴

It is doubtful that you have been only an observer or participator while reading, or that you have adopted only one of the four basic roles. Instead you probably have reacted by assuming more than one of these roles depending on the book. For instance, we believe many readers responded as decision makers to *Silent Spring* but as participators to *Roots*. Also whatever responses you now make to what you read may result in part from the way you were taught. Perhaps your teacher asked questions that led you to identify with certain characters and situations, to look at yourself from another's point of view, to weigh consequences of courses of action, or to link decisions and actions. Two important reasons for examining adult experiences with reading are to show the variety of uses to which reading can be put and to lay the groundwork for the argument that methods of teaching affect reading roles in adult life.

³ Frances M. Pollard and Beverly Miller, *What Reading Does for People* (Charleston, Ill.: Eastern Illinois University, 1977).

⁴ Shirley L. Fehl, "When Does Reading Make a Difference?" *Reading Between and Beyond the Lines*, Claremont Reading Conference, 37th Yearbook (Claremont, Calif.: Claremont Graduate School, 1973), pp. 93–103.

Learners' Motives for Reading

No discussion of the importance of reading is complete without considering the personal needs of learners that can be satisfied through reading. Too often teachers accept the teaching of reading solely on the assumption that learning to read is a most important element in learning how to learn, and that without this instruction, pupils are unlikely to fulfill their potentials in school and in society at large. We believe that teachers will be more successful in teaching reading if they attend to the learners' own motives for reading as well as to the reading demands imposed by school and society.

Learners are motivated to read by a variety of needs and desires. Their *motives*, then, are the expected satisfactions that cause them to act — in this case to read. The desire to feel good about oneself and the need for friendship are examples of motives. A prestige motive for reading is seen in pupils' desires to put themselves in the place of those characters in books who do things that win admiration. Children's self-esteem may increase as they envision themselves as the real or unreal heroes of their reading. Other expressions of the prestige motive are seen when pupils seek prestige or anticipate praise because they have read a recommended book.

The need to understand is another motive for reading. The sheer satisfaction of understanding can be rewarding. Using reading to answer one's questions about mechanics, animal life, and human nature is a case in point. The need to understand is often related to a fundamental desire to control. Many specific motives, in fact, are built upon the desire to control one's environment. Hence pupils sometimes want to understand people in order to control them.

About forty years ago, Douglas Waples and others labeled a group of motives *respite motivation*. Respite motives imply a search for writing that will diminish anxiety or boredom by intensifying aesthetic experiences, supplying vicarious adventures, or merely diverting the reader's attention from personal worry. Unlike other motives, the effect of respite reading tends to evaporate as soon as one's eye leaves the page and is almost never followed by overt behavior.⁵

The need for security constitutes another motive for reading. To read pseudoscientific articles on psychology and health, for example, may be seen as stemming from concern about mental and physical security. Pupils with personal problems, such as lack of parental affection, an impending divorce, and overprotective parents, sometimes

⁵ Douglas Waples et al., *What Reading Does to People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940).

find it helpful to read materials that deal with these problems.⁶ Teachers who learn about pupils' attitudes toward themselves, parents, and friends often are able to put these pupils in touch with materials that may help satisfy their need for security. Books can be helpful in moments of sadness and tension. As teachers learn what pupils cherish in their attitudes toward themselves and others, they are able to tell what pupils will find in a writing and how they are likely to respond to it.

The following are some of the most important reasons why pupils learn to read. The ordering of items does not imply priority and there is some overlap.

1. To be accepted by parents, teachers, peers, community, employers, and religious and other groups
2. To help others through reading, for example, reading to the blind
3. To participate more fully in the religious experience and to seek spiritual understanding and inspiration through reading
4. To solve problems related to obtaining food, shelter, and other basic needs
5. To engage in intellectual study, hobbies, and other interests
6. To attain a satisfying economic level by holding a job that requires particular reading skills and to improve one's performance through reading
7. To escape psychologically through fairy tales, plays, short stories, and the like
8. To find pleasure through the written word, including an appreciation of fine writing, and to seek knowledge for the pleasure of knowing
9. To expand one's views and satisfy one's curiosity through reading
10. To improve oneself by finding specific information, new opportunities, and new studies in reading
11. To protect one's political and economic interests by understanding through reading the forces that are affecting one's life

⁶ The basic idea that literature has therapeutic properties is an old one. Guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading is termed *bibliotherapy*. Such guidance is practiced by many librarians, educators, psychologists, social workers, and others. A fine collection of articles on bibliotherapy appears in Rhea Joyce Rubin's *Bibliotherapy Source Book* (Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx Press, 1978).