

McGuffey Readers 美国经典语文课本

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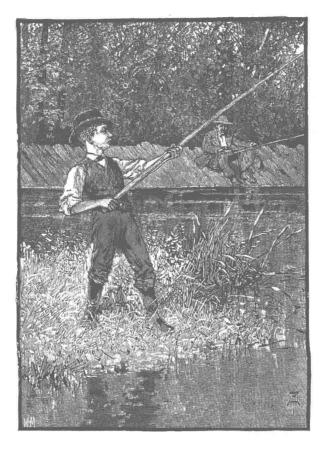
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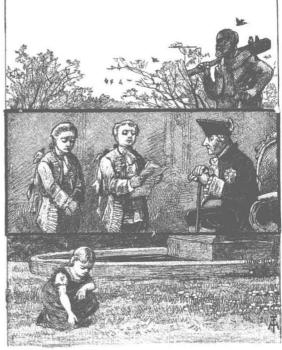
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THE GOOD READER

- I. It is told of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, that, as he was seated one day in his private room, a written petition was brought to him with the request that it should be immediately read. The King had just returned from hunting, and the glare of the sun, or some other cause, had so dazzled his eyes that he found it difficult to make out a single word of the writing.
- 2. His private secretary happened to be absent; and the soldier who brought the petition could not read. There was a page, or favorite boy servant, waiting in the hall, and upon him the King called. The page was a son of one of the noblemen of the court, but proved to be a very poor reader.
- 3. In the first place, he did not articulate distinctly. He huddled his words together in the utterance, as if they were syllables of one long word, which he must get through with as speedily as possible. His pronunciation was bad, and he did not modulate his voice so as to bring out the meaning of what he read. Every sentence was uttered with a dismal monotony of voice, as if it did not differ in any respect from that which preceded it.
 - 4. "Stop!" said the King, impatiently.



"Is it an auctioneer's list of goods to be sold that you are hurrying over? Send your companion to me." Another page who stood at the door now entered, and to him the King gave the petition. The second page began by hemming and clearing his throat in such an affected manner that the King

jokingly asked him whether he had not slept in the public garden, with the gate open, the night before.

- 5. The second page had a good share of self-conceit, however, and so was not greatly confused by the King's jest. He determined that he would avoid the mistake which his comrade had made. So he commenced reading the petition slowly and with great formality, emphasizing every word, and prolonging the articulation of every syllable. But his manner was so tedious that the King cried out, "Stop! are you reciting a lesson in the elementary sounds? Out of the room! But no: stay! Send me that little girl who is sitting there by the fountain."
- 6. The girl thus pointed out by the King was a daughter of one of the laborers employed by the royal gardener; and she had come to help her father weed the flower beds. It chanced that, like many of the poor people in Prussia, she had received a good education. She was somewhat alarmed when she found herself in the King's presence, but took courage when the King told her that he only wanted her to read for him, as his eyes were weak.
- 7. Now, Ernestine (for this was the name of the little girl) was fond of reading aloud, and often many of the neighbors would assemble at her father's house to hear her; those who could not read themselves would come to her, also, with their letters from distant friends or children, and she thus formed the habit of reading various sorts of handwriting promptly and well.
- 8. The King gave her the petition, and she rapidly glanced through the opening lines to get some idea of what it was about. As she read, her eyes began to glisten, and her breast to heave. "What is the matter?" asked the King; "don't you know how to read?" "Oh, yes! sire," she replied, addressing him with the title usually applied to him: "I will now read it, if you please."
- 9. The two pages wore about to leave the room. "Remain," said the King. The little girl began to read the petition. It was from a poor widow, whose only son had been drafted to serve in the army, although his health was delicate and his pursuits had been such as to unfit him for military life. His father had been killed in battle, and the son had a strong desire to become a portrait painter.

- 10. The writer told her story in a simple, concise manner, that carried to the heart a belief of its truth; and Ernestine read it with so much feeling, and with an articulation so just, in tones so pure and distinct, that when she had finished, the King, into whose eyes the tears had started, exclaimed, "Oh! now I understand what it is all about; but I might never have known, certainly I never should have felt, its meaning had I trusted to these young gentlemen, whom I now dismiss from my service for one year, advising them to occupy their time in learning to read."
- II. "As for you, my young lady," continued the King, "I know you will ask no better reward for your trouble than the pleasure of carrying to this poor widow my order for her son's immediate discharge. Let me see whether you can write as well as you can read. Take this pen, and write as I dictate." He then dictated an order, which Ernestine wrote, and he signed. Calling one of his guards, he bade him go with the girl and see that the order was obeyed.
- 12. How much happiness was Ernestine the means of bestowing through her good elocution, united to the happy circumstance that brought it to the knowledge of the King! First, there were her poor neighbors, to whom she could give instruction and entertainment. Then, there was the poor widow who sent the petition, and who not only regained her son, but received through Ernestine an order for him to paint the King's likeness; so that the poor boy soon rose to great distinction, and had more orders than he could attend to. Words could not express his gratitude, and that of his mother, to the little girl.
- 13. And Ernestine had, moreover, the satisfaction of aiding her father to rise in the world, so that he became the King's chief gardener. The King did not forget her, but had her well educated at his own expense. As for the two pages, she was indirectly the means of doing them good, also; for, ashamed of their bad reading, they commenced studying in earnest, till they overcame the faults that had offended the King. Both finally rose to distinction, one as a lawyer, and the other as a statesman; and they owed their advancement in life chiefly to their good elocution.



A. Word Definition

1. petition: formal request.

2. articulate: utter elementary sounds.

3. modulate: vary or inflect.

4. affected: unnatural and silly.

5. drafted: selected by lot.

6. concise: brief and full of meaning.

7. discharge: release.

8. dictate: speak so another may write it down.

9. distinction: honorable and notable.

10. express: make known the feelings of.

B. Study Note

Frederick II. of Prussia: b. 1712, d. 1788, or Frederick the Great, as he was called, was one of the greatest of German rulers. He was distinguished for his military exploits, for his wise and just government, and for his literary attainments. He wrote many able works in the French language. Many pleasant anecdotes are told of this king, of which the one given in the lesson is a fair sample.

C. Comprehension Questions

- 1. Where was Prussia?
- 2. Why was the King was known as "Frederick the Great?"
- 3. The moral of a story is the lesson about goodness or badness about human behavior or character it teaches. What is the moral of "The Good Reader"?
 - 4. What is a page?
 - 5. How did Ernestine form the habit of reading aloud clearly and well?

- 6. How did Ernestine address the King?
- 7. What happened to Ernestine after she took the King's answer to the poor widow?
 - 8. What happened to the pages after they improved their reading skills?

D. Writing Work

Write 200 words about the importance of writing well.

LESSON 2

THE BLUEBELL

- I. There is a story I have heard—A poet learned it of a bird,And kept its music every word—
- A story of a dim ravine,
 O'er which the towering tree tops lean,
 With one blue rift of sky between;
- And there, two thousand years ago, A little flower as white as snow Swayed in the silence to and fro.
- Day after day, with longing eye,
 The floweret watched the narrow sky,
 And fleecy clouds that floated by.
- 5. And through the darkness, night by night, One gleaming star would climb the height, And cheer the lonely floweret's sight.
- 6. Thus, watching the blue heavens afar, And the rising of its favorite star, A slow change came—but not to mar;
- 7. For softly o'er its petals white There crept a blueness, like the light Of skies upon a summer night;

- And in its chalice, I am told,
 The bonny bell was formed to hold
 A tiny star that gleamed like gold.
- 9. Now, little people, sweet and true, I find a lesson here for you Writ in the floweret's hell of blue:
- 10. The patient child whose watchful eye Strives after all things pure and high, Shall take their image by and by.



A. Word Definition

- 1. ravine: deep, narrow gorge created by water or glaciers.
- 2. rift: narrow opening, a cleft.
- 3. swayed: swung.
- 4. gleaming: shining briefly.
- 5. height: elevated place.
- 6. petals: colored leaves of a flower.
- 7. chalice: cup or bowl.
- 8. bonny: beautiful.
- 9. patient: able to endure delay or hardship.

B. Comprehension Questions

- 1. When did the story in "The Bluebell" take place?
- 2. Where was the bluebell as it watched the sky?
- 3. The bluebell is found in these countries. What do you know about them?
 - a. England
- b. Spain
- c. the United States
- d. Romania

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- 4. The bluebell is the official national flower of what country?
- 5. What is the difference between a story and a poem?
- 6. Why do you think the author chose to write a poem about the bluebell?
- 7. Who is your favourite poet and why?
- 8. Name five red flowers.

C. Writing Work

Write a paragraph about something that you have achieved or hope to achieve.