

Little Angel Reader ®

Teacher's Manual

For Reader A

2012 Edition

by

Linda Bromeier, M.Ed.

*Dedicated to Our Heavenly Father
and His Most Holy Angels
through the Sacred Heart of Jesus*

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*Deepest thanks to my husband, children, family, and friends
for their encouragement, assistance, and support
in the production of these books.*

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the *LITTLE ANGEL READER*® Catholic phonics series. The readers and workbooks in this series are designed to help you teach young children to read using phonics. The teaching methods used herein are based on the author's many years of practical experience teaching reading in public and parochial schools, homeschool, and private tutoring. The series incorporates long-established principles of phonics and reading instruction. We believe you will find it effective in teaching normal children to read.

Goals

The goals of the LITTLE ANGEL READER program are as follows:

- (1) To provide systematic instruction in phonics,
- (2) To develop reading comprehension skills, and
- (3) To support and affirm the Roman Catholic faith and traditional family values

Reading Levels

Reading levels for individual books in the program are as follows:

- Reader A*: Preprimer
(Late Kindergarten-or early First Grade)
Reader B: Primer (Mid-First Grade)
Reader C: First Reader (Late First Grade)
Reader D: Second Grade

Workbooks are coordinated with the readers, and therefore have the same reading levels. Due to individual differences in intelligence and ability, some children may complete the series at an earlier or later grade level than indicated.

Features of Readers

Letter-sound relationships, or **phonograms**, are taught systematically, beginning with the easiest letter sounds in *Reader A*. Lessons build on skills previously learned, and gradually progress in difficulty. The most difficult phonograms and irregular phonograms are taught at the end of the series, in *Reader D*.

New letter-sounds are introduced with a **picture** whose name contains the letter-sound. Under each picture are

rows of words containing the new letter-sound. In daily **word drills**, the child sounds out the letters and blends them into words.

Following the word drill page are **stories** containing an abundance of words with the new phonogram. Story vocabulary has been carefully controlled so that students will be able to sound out a high percentage of the words using phonics skills they have learned. Maintenance of phonics skills is built into the stories, which continue to use phonetic words that have been previously learned. The stories provide practice in decoding the words in context, and also build comprehension skills.

Sight words, which do not follow regular phonics rules, have been kept to a minimum. (Examples: *the, two, come*) Sight words appear in **boldface** the first time they are used in the series. The teacher is instructed to help the student pronounce unknown sight words. A few phonetic words are treated as sight words if they contain a phonogram which the student has not yet learned. Often a sight word can be partially sounded out from the consonants in the word.

To minimize the number of sight words, some **rebus** pictures (miniature picture-words) have been used, particularly in *Reader A* and *Reader B*. When a student comes to a rebus, he should say the name of the rebus and continue reading the rest of the sentence.

Review pages are included at regular intervals, usually after 3-5 new phonograms have been learned. Whenever a review page appears, there is also a **test** over the phonograms on the review page.

Features of Workbooks

Workbooks reinforce lessons from the readers with exercises in phonics, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and handwriting. Workbooks follow the same sequence of instruction as the readers. In general, there is one workbook page for each lesson.

Daily Instruction Time

Each lesson plan is designed to provide you with approximately 35-40 minutes of instructional activities. If necessary, lessons may be supplemented with materials suggested in the Appendix at the back of this

Flexible Pacing

Approximately 50 lesson plans are provided for each Reader in the series. Lessons marked with an asterisk (*) allow flexible pacing based upon your students' rate of learning. Bright students who learn at a faster pace may omit the lessons marked with an asterisk (*). Slower students may repeat the activities in the lessons marked with an asterisk (*).

Daily Lessons

Daily lesson plans provide a variety of activities for teaching your students. Certain **essential** activities should be completed by **all** students every day for proper learning of phonics and reading skills. Essential activities include the following:

- Introducing new letter-sounds or phonograms
- Reviewing letters or phonograms
- Word drill
- Reading stories
- Comprehension questions over stories
- Workbook pages

Daily lesson plans also include additional activities to reinforce the learning of phonics and reading. Reinforcement activities present the same skills in a different manner, or provide additional practice of the skills. Reinforcement activities are highly recommended for average and slower students. Reinforcement activities include the following:

- Arts and craft projects
- Word games, riddles, or puzzles
- Chalkboard activities
- Movement or kinesthetic activities
- Handwriting and spelling

Homeschooling parents who do not have a separate handwriting or spelling textbook for their child should consider handwriting and spelling activities as essential.

Learning to Mastery

As an old saying goes, "practice makes perfect." Educational research has revealed that an average child must be exposed to a new concept around seven times

before he knows the material. A brighter child will need fewer times, and a slower child will need more practice. For this reason, lesson plans in the LITTLE ANGEL READER series provide for several days of word drill for each phonogram. As new phonograms are learned, old ones are reviewed. This strategy will help your child learn the phonics skills to mastery.

The first day or two with new words, the child will naturally read the words rather slowly as he sounds them out. The more he practices, the more speed and accuracy he will acquire. A child has mastered a particular phonogram when he can read all of the words on the word drill page *quickly* and *accurately*. This means he pronounces each word in one second or less, with 94-100% accuracy. Most word drill pages have about 50 words, so the child should not mispronounce more than 2 or 3 words per page. If he hesitates or labors to sound out the words, he has not mastered the page.

Once a child reaches the point of **automaticity** when pronouncing words, he can focus on the *meaning* of words when he is reading. Automaticity means he knows the words so well, he doesn't have to stop and sound out each letter in the word. Automaticity is a sign of mastery. Comprehension is directly related to the speed and accuracy of reading individual words. If a child mispronounces a key word in a sentence, the whole meaning may be lost. If he reads so slowly that he cannot remember the beginning of the sentence by the time he gets to the end, comprehension will suffer.

Multi-Sensory Activities

Some children learn better when a multi-sensory approach is used. This is particularly true of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Activities involving physical movement or hands-on activities have been included where appropriate in the lesson plans. These activities are marked with a K (kinesthetic) for easy reference.

The following multi-sensory activities have been shown to be helpful to students with learning difficulties:

- Child chants the letter name and its sound each time he writes it during handwriting tasks.
- Child makes large letter shape in the air, chalkboard, or on another student's back while saying the letter name and sound.
- Child writes the letter in a cake pan filled with sand or oatmeal, while saying its name and sound.

- Child traces sandpaper letters with his finger as he makes the sound of the letters, alone or in words.
- Child builds words out of ABC blocks, sounding out each letter as each block is added to the word.
- Child “finger-spells” words - that is, he taps a finger for each letter as he pronounces its sound, tapping faster and faster until he can blend the sounds into a word.
- Child taps on table for each syllable when sounding out multi-syllable words.

When teaching a child with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder it is extremely important to *overlearn* the material, because the child’s memory problems mean he will often forget part of what he has learned. These children will benefit from many extra days of word drill and review of previously learned phonograms.

Spelling Activities

Suggestions are included in the lesson plans for spelling practice. Spelling is closely tied to phonics. In phonics, a child takes the individual letters and blends them into a word. In spelling, the child takes the word and breaks it down into individual letters. Frequent reading helps spelling skills because students often form a mental picture of a word after seeing it in print over and over. If students know the phonetic rules for sounding out (decoding) words, they should be able to apply those rules when spelling (encoding) words.

Spelling is more difficult than reading because of the many ways the same sound can be spelled in English. (e.g. *a_e*, *ai*, *ay* are all spellings for the Long *a* sound). For this reason, many publishers and schools delay spelling instruction until halfway through first grade. This gives the child time to become familiar with many words and phonics rules before being called upon to spell those words. The words used as spelling words in the *Little Angel* lesson plans are taken from the phonetic words the child is reading, so should not be too difficult for him. If you are using a separate spelling textbook based on phonetic rules, it may not be necessary to complete the spelling activities.

Handwriting

Suggestions for handwriting practice are included in the lesson plans. If the teacher desires more extensive handwriting practice for her students, we suggest you

purchase any of the handwriting workbooks which are listed in Appendix A.

There are several different methods of manuscript handwriting (“printing”) being taught today. The traditional method is called “ball and stick” and consists of teaching the students to combine balls, straight lines, and curved lines to make various alphabet letters. The “ball and stick” method produces neat printing when done properly. However, some children have trouble matching the ball to the stick in letters such as “d” for example, resulting in a “d” which looks like an “o l”.

A second method which has been in use for many years is the “continuous stroke” method. This method is similar to “ball and stick”, except children are taught to make some letters in one continuous stroke, without lifting their pencil from their paper. This involves some retracing of lines, much the same as cursive handwriting. In handwriting exercises in this book, we use the continuous stroke method. Handwriting is a little faster with this method, and it produces a manuscript that is neat and easy to read. Advertisements, highway signs, and other signs are generally printed in traditional manuscript is because studies have shown *it is easier to read*.

A third method which has become popular in some schools in recent years is the D’Nealian method. This method looks like *italic* print, with the letters slanted to the right and curved serifs added to the letters. Proponents believe it prepares children for future lessons in cursive handwriting. Opponents say it is unlike any print children encounter in books or newsprint, is difficult to read, and really doesn’t prepare children for cursive since the letters are not joined. It also tends to make writing slower since extra time is needed to add the serifs.

Teachers must decide which style of printing they wish their children to learn. We urge you to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each method before making a final decision.

Additional Resources

Additional resources for literature, handwriting, spelling, and supplemental phonics are included in the Appendix at the back of the Teacher’s Manual.

ALL ABOUT PHONICS

Phonics is a method of reading instruction which teaches the letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds. People have learned to read and write using phonics ever since the alphabet was first invented by the Phoenicians around the year 1500 B.C. Since English uses an alphabet (as opposed to a picture-writing system such as Chinese), phonics is the easiest and most effective means of teaching a child to read.

The English language contains 43 speech sounds which are spelled using various combinations of the 26 letters in the English alphabet. Letters called **consonants** represent sounds made by stopping or restricting the flow of air, using the tongue, teeth, or lips. The 21 consonants are: *b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z*. Three consonants (*c, q, x*) make the sound of other letters. The consonant *c* makes either a *k* or *s* sound. The consonant *q* makes the sound of *kw*. The consonant *x* makes the sound of *ks* at the end of words, or *z* at the beginning of words.

Letters called **vowels** represent vocal sounds in which the air flow is not stopped or restricted. The five vowels are: *a, e, i, o, u*. Vowels are frequently combined with other vowels to make different sounds. The letters *y* and *w* sometimes function as vowels (e.g. *crow, baby*).

English is essentially a regular language which follows regular rules for spelling and pronunciation. According to Rudolph Flesh in *Why Johnny Can't Read*, researchers have established that "13 per cent of all English words are partly irregular in their spelling. The other 87 per cent follow fixed rules." Consonants are the most regular, usually having only one sound. Vowels are less regular, having several different sounds when combined with other vowels. Many of the irregular words in English contain a single irregular vowel. Irregular words can often be sounded out fairly accurately by pronouncing the consonants (e.g. *friend, gone, four*).

Phonics is a simplified form of phonetics. **Phonetics** is the scholarly study of the sounds of speech, including the way they are made and combined, and their written symbols using diacritical marks. Speech sounds are usually designated in this manner: /b/.

The 1985 report by the U.S. Department of Education, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, recommends that "teachers of beginning reading should present well-designed phonics instruction." The Report states that "isolating the sounds associated with most letters and teaching children to blend the sounds of letters together to try to identify words are useful strategies". The teaching methods used in the LITTLE ANGEL READER series follow these principles of phonics instruction.

Phonics Rules and Definitions

1) The **CONSONANTS** are *b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, x, z* and usually *w* and *y*.

2) The **VOWELS** are *a, e, i, o, u*, and sometimes *w* and *y*.

3) **SHORT VOWEL RULE:** When a word or syllable contains a single vowel that comes at the beginning or between two consonants, the vowel usually makes a short sound.

| | | | | |
|-----|-----|-------|-----|-----|
| cat | fin | beg | top | bun |
| egg | in | attic | | |

4) **SILENT E RULE:** When a one-part word or syllable has two vowels, and the second vowel is *e*, the first vowel is usually long and the *e* is silent.

| | | | | |
|------|------|-----|-----|------|
| cake | here | pie | toe | mule |
|------|------|-----|-----|------|

5) **LONG VOWEL RULE 1:** When there are two vowels together in a one-part word or syllable, the first vowel is long and the second vowel is silent in the following vowel pairs:

| | | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <i>ai</i> - rain | <i>ee</i> - tree | <i>oa</i> - boat | <i>ui</i> - fruit |
| <i>ay</i> - play | <i>ea</i> - bean | <i>ow</i> - snow | |

6) **LONG VOWEL RULE 2:** When a single vowel comes at the end of a word or syllable, the vowel is usually long.

| | | | |
|----|----|-------|-------|
| go | he | motel | tulip |
|----|----|-------|-------|

7) A **CONSONANT BLEND** is made of two or three consonants sounded together so that both consonants are heard.

| | | |
|-------|------|--------|
| trick | blue | string |
|-------|------|--------|

8) **Y AS A VOWEL:**

a) *Y* makes the sound of Long I when it is the only vowel at the end of a one-syllable word.

cry fly why

b) *Y* makes the sound of Long E when it is the only vowel at the end of a word with two or more syllables.

baby pony lady

9) **W AS A VOWEL:** *W* acts as a vowel when it follows the vowels *a, e, o* at the end or middle of a word or syllable.

hawk new cow snow

10) **A CONSONANT DIGRAPH** is a pair of consonants which make a single sound.

thin ship cheese bank whale
ring sick knife wrong lamb

11) **A VOWEL DIGRAPH** is a pair of vowels which make a single sound.

moon bread book haul blew
grief ceiling prey saw grew

12) **A DIPHTHONG** is a pair of vowels which are both sounded but are blended together as one sound.

boy foil cow shout

13) **SOFT C AND G:** When *c* is followed by *e, i,* or *y*, it makes the soft sound of *s*.

ice lacy city

When *g* is followed by *e, i,* or *y*, it makes the soft sound of *j*.

giant gym gentle

Word Structure and Meaning

14) **HOMONYMS, or HOMOPHONES,** are words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings.

dear-deer ate-eight

15) **ANTONYMS** are words that are opposite or nearly opposite in meaning.

hot-coldbig-little

16) **SYNONYMS** are words with the same or similar meanings.

huge-enormous shiny-bright

17) **HOMOGRAPHS** are words that are spelled the same, but have different word backgrounds and different meanings. They may be pronounced differently.

lead-to show someone the way

lead-the writing substance in pencils

18) **INFLECTIONS** are letters or other elements added to words to show changes in grammatical function, such as plurals, possessives, or verb tenses.

axes Dave's hopping raced

19) **A COMPOUND WORD** is a word made up of two smaller words.

bedroom toothbrush mousetrap

20) **A CONTRACTION** is a shortened word formed by leaving out some of the letters in two other words.

is not - *isn't* they are - *they're*

READINESS FOR READING

From observations of infants and preschoolers, we know that learning follows a natural progression from **concrete** objects (things which can be touched, tasted, or seen) to things which are **abstract** (symbolic, or not able to be seen or felt). Three marbles in a child's hand are concrete; the numeral 3 written on paper is abstract. Most normal children find abstract information difficult to understand before the age of five years.

Reading is largely an abstract process, since alphabet letters are symbols for sounds. Reading is a complex activity involving many mental processes. The child

must see the letters correctly (visual discrimination), recall their sounds (association and auditory memory), blend the sounds together into a word (mental processing), and then give meaning to the word (verbal memory). A weakness or immaturity in any one of these areas can make learning to read difficult.

Researchers have found that children who display 3 or more of the following traits at the beginning of first grade typically experience difficulty in learning to read:

- Clumsy or uncoordinated, lacks a sense of rhythm

- Slow and fumbling when putting on shoes, buttoning up, etc.
- Has difficulty using scissors, holding pencil correctly, or coloring neatly
- Immature language - speech problems, uses "baby talk", mixes up words
- Has difficulty ordering thoughts when describing a topic, or loses main thread and goes into irrelevant details
- Difficulty remembering poems, rhymes, numbers, colors, or his age
- Withdrawn - appears shy, daydreams, avoids answering in class
- Overactive - always moving, fidgets, can't sit still
- Lacks concentration- does not pay attention or loses interest quickly
- Is ambidextrous or confuses left and right

If your child displays 3 or more of these traits, it may be best to wait a few months before beginning formal reading instruction.

Parents sometimes try to teach pre-school age children to read, then wonder if something is wrong with their child when he finds reading to be frustratingly difficult.

What's wrong? The child is simply *not mature enough* to process abstract information. If the parents will wait a year or two until the child's brain naturally matures, they will find that he/she learns to read much faster and easier than at an earlier age.

This author recommends that parents wait until their child is around six years of age before beginning formal reading instruction. The verbal skills of girls are often more developed than those of boys at the same age, so girls may be ready for formal reading instruction a few months earlier.

Before that age, there are a number of things parents and teachers can do to prepare their children for reading instruction. Parents are encouraged to read good books to their children to foster a love for reading. Especially recommended are the folktales, fairy tales, Bible stories, and classic stories which have been favorites of children for many years. In addition, parents can stimulate their child's mental development by providing a wide variety of informal learning experiences (e.g. arts and crafts, playdough, sandbox, cooking, music and dancing, playground gymnastics, imaginary play).

READING INSTRUCTION IN GRADES 3 AND UP

Once the student has mastered phonics in the early grades, the emphasis in reading instruction shifts from decoding to comprehension. A typical lesson in reading instruction for grades 3-6 includes three main components: (1) vocabulary development, (2) reading comprehension, and (3) advanced phonics and word analysis. A common method of studying vocabulary is to select unfamiliar words from the reading selection (before reading the selection) and have the student do written exercises with those words. For example, the student might look up the meaning in the dictionary, write original sentences with the words, or complete teacher-made worksheets using the words. A second method of studying vocabulary is to use published vocabulary workbooks containing a list of words and several pages of exercises over those words. Reading comprehension is developed by having the student read a passage from a book, then answer comprehension questions over the passage.

Comprehension questions typically cover such things as main idea, details, sequence, inference, cause and effect, drawing conclusions, and predicting outcomes. Oral or silent book reports, in which the student must summarize what he has read, are another means of checking comprehension. Various reading comprehension workbooks are also available to teach comprehension skills. Advanced phonics and word analysis is typically taught from 3rd grade to 5th or 6th grade, using workbooks. These workbooks review phonics taught in earlier grades, teach syllabication rules for multi-syllable words, cover prefixes, suffixes and word roots, and study homophones, antonyms, synonyms, and contractions. From 6th or 7th grade onward, the main emphasis of reading instruction is on vocabulary development, comprehension, and critical thinking. At this level, comprehension is further advanced by analyzing characters, plot development, and theme of the reading passage.

Scope and Sequence of Instruction in the *Little Angel Readers* ®

| | <i>Reader A</i> | <i>Reader B</i> | <i>Reader C</i> | <i>Reader D</i> |
|----------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Phonics | Consonants: <i>s, t, p, n, d, c, m,</i> <i>h,</i> <i>r, b, l, g, f, v, w, j,</i> <i>k, z, x, y, qu</i> Short Vowels: <i>a, i, u, o, e</i> Consonant Digraph: <i>ck</i> Rhyming word families | Long Vowels with Silent <i>e</i> : <i>a_e, i_e, o_e, u_e</i> Long Vowel Pairs: <i>ai, ay, ee, ea, oa, ow, ue, ui</i> Rhyming word families | Beginning Blends with <i>R, S, L</i> <i>Y</i> as a Vowel Consonant Digraphs: <i>sh, ch, ng, nk, th, wh</i> Long <i>i, o</i> (wild, gold) R-controlled Vowels: <i>ar, or, ir, ur, er</i> Syllabic <i>-er, -le</i> Rhyming word families | Vowel Digraphs: <i>oo, aw, au, all, ew</i> Diphthongs: <i>ou, ow, oi, oy</i> Soft <i>c</i> and <i>g</i> Silent consonants: <i>kn, wr, gn, mb, gh</i> <i>and others</i> Irregular Vowel Digraphs: <i>ea</i> (bread), <i>ie</i> (chief), <i>ei</i> (vein), <i>ey</i> (prey) R-controlled vowels in unaccented syllables: (altar, doctor) Irregular <i>a, o</i> (alone, dove) Irregular <i>ou</i> |
| Structural Analysis | Plural <i>-s</i> Inflection <i>-s</i> Possessive <i>'s</i> | Inflections <i>-ed, -ing</i> Two-syllable words Compound words Contractions | Plural <i>-es</i> Suffixes <i>-y, -ly</i> Suffix <i>-er</i> | Prefix <i>a-</i> Suffixes <i>-tion, -sion</i> |
| Vocabulary | Word Meaning Context clues | Word meaning Context clues Classifying words into categories | Word meaning Context clues Antonyms (Opposites) | Word meaning Context clues Homonyms |
| Comprehension | Details of Stories Sequence of Events Drawing Conclusions | Details of Stories Sequence of Events Drawing Conclusions | Details of Stories Sequence of Events Drawing Conclusions | Details of Stories Sequence of Events Drawing Conclusions Cause and Effect Predicting Outcomes |
| Auditory Skills | Distinguishing between consonant sounds, short vowels Rhyming words | Distinguishing between short and long vowels Rhyming words | Distinguishing between consonant digraphs, R-controlled vowels Rhyming words | Distinguishing between vowel digraphs and diphthongs Rhyme in poetry |
| Study Skills | Left/right discrimination Following directions Word order in sentences | Alphabet in order Alphabetizing words (first letter only) Following directions | Following directions | Following directions |

This chart shows the skills introduced at each level. Skills taught at an earlier level are reviewed and maintained in succeeding levels, particularly phonics and structural analysis skills.

Placement in the *Little Angel* Series

The *Little Angel Readers* are intended for use with young children who are first learning to read. We recommend that the readers be used at the following grade levels:

| | Reader A | Reader B | Reader C | Reader D |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Slower Learner | 1st Grade - autumn | 1st Grade - spring | 2nd Grade - autumn | 2nd Grade - spring |
| Average Student | 1st Grade - autumn | 1st Grade - winter | 1st Grade - spring | 2nd Grade - autumn |
| Fast Learner | Kindergarten - spring | 1st Grade - autumn | 1st Grade - winter | 1st Grade - spring |

Placement Tests

If you are unsure of which *Little Angel Reader* to use with a particular child, we recommend that you test him/her to determine his/her current phonetic and reading skills. There are three ways to determine which *Reader* to place the child in, as follows:

1) **READING SAMPLE STORIES:** Beginning at the lower levels, have the child read aloud a page from some stories in the *Reader*. Choose three different stories, one each at the beginning, middle, and end of the *Reader*. If he reads **rapidly** and **without any errors** in pronunciation, that story (or book) is too easy for him. If he reads at a **moderate** pace, and **hesitates occasionally** to sound out a word, the book is at his instructional level, and is appropriate for instruction. If he reads at a **slow pace**, and has **difficulty pronouncing 10% or more of the words**, the book is too difficult for him and you should use an easier one.

2) **READING WORD LISTS:** Beginning at the lower levels, have the child read the words on the *Review* pages in the *Reader*. If he has mastered the particular phonograms taught in that section, he should be able to read the words **quickly**, meaning one second or less per word. He should also read the words **accurately**, meaning 95-100% accuracy. Since most *Review* pages

in the *Readers* have around 50 words, this means no more than 2 errors in pronunciation. If the child reads the words slowly, hesitates to sound them out, or pronounces the words incorrectly, he does not know those phonograms. He should then be instructed in those phonograms according to the Lesson Plans included in this *Teacher's Manual*.

3) **TAKING A WRITTEN TEST:** Administer the written tests for a particular *Reader* (located at the end of each section). Use the chart above to guide you in selecting which level to test first. If he scores **90% or higher** on the written tests, he probably does not need to cover that material at that level. In this case, test him/her with the tests from the next higher level. If he scores **lower than 90%**, continue testing with tests from a lower level to determine which phonics skills he knows. Begin teaching at the lowest level on which he/she scores below 90%. If scores vary, with some above and some below 90%, this indicates he/she already knows some phonograms but not all of them. In this case, we recommend starting at the lowest level and working your way up through the series. The skills in the books build progressively, and the extra review of some phonograms will not hurt him.

READING DISABILITIES

In recent years, much attention has been focused on learning disabilities. Up to 10% of the students in some schools have been identified as having "learning disabilities." A learning disability is a problem with learning found in children of normal intelligence, for which there is no apparent cause. This author believes there are several possible causes for learning disabilities. They are:

1) Improper teaching

The number of children experiencing difficulty in learning to read has increased steadily since the 1950's as phonics instruction has been abandoned in favor of the "sight-word" or "whole-language" methods of teaching reading.

The "sight-word" method has been taught in American schools from the 1940's-1950's up into the 1990's. In the "sight-word" method, the student learns words by memorizing how a word looks. Phonics instruction is minimal. The same few words are repeated over and over in stories until learned by memorization. Typical beginning stories have plots like this: "See Jane. See Jane run. Run, Jane, run!" Similar-looking words are often confused, and multi-syllabic words are very difficult to remember by sight. The use of the sight-word method in public and private schools has been accompanied by a gradual and steady decline in the SAT scores of American students.

The "whole-language" method was tried nearly a hundred years ago, and abandoned because it failed to produce good reading skills in students. It has been revived in the 1990's as the latest education fad. In the "whole-language" method, the teacher introduces a whole story at a time. The teacher reads the story over and over until many of the children have memorized it. Then the children recite the memorized lines as they look at the print. This "fake" reading leaves children unable to read any material except the few stories learned in class. This method is oftentimes part of an "outcome-based education" plan mandated by state bureaucrats. While it is certainly a noble goal to have children read whole books, this should not be attempted until **after** they have been taught to read individual letters and words through phonics!

As stated before, the phonics method has been used successfully for centuries, and is still the best method to

use for beginning reading instruction. Many

students identified as having "reading disabilities" in fact are suffering from a lack of phonics instruction. The author has personally "cured" a number of students of their "learning disability" by teaching them phonics intensively for several months. Their parents are understandably grateful.

2) Physical impairments

Even with phonics instruction, a small percentage of children still find learning to read very difficult. They often have symptoms of reversing letters in words, memory problems, difficulty paying attention, or hyperactivity. New research suggests that there are underlying physical impairments which may be causing these learning difficulties.

A. Visual impairments

In order to read words on a page, more is needed than the ability to see clearly (visual acuity-or 20/20 vision). The eye muscles must work together (binocular function) to focus on words and follow a series of letters across the page. The optic nerve must transmit the information correctly to the brain, so it can tell the difference between a "b" and a "d" for instance. Symptoms of visual problems are complaints of blurry vision, reversal of letters or words, eye fatigue after short periods of reading, skipping words or lines of print, needing a finger or marker to keep one's place, or squinting. If your child exhibits these symptoms, an eye exam including **orthoptics** is recommended. Orthoptics is different from regular acuity testing. Orthoptics involves testing how well the eye muscles work together in binocular (two-eyed) vision.

B. Allergies: This author noticed that a high percentage of children in her learning disabilities classes suffered from allergies. Besides the usual respiratory symptoms of sneezing, runny nose, and wheezing, some allergy doctors now believe that allergies can trigger symptoms in other parts of the body, including the brain. Food allergies and sensitivities to chemicals (in paint, chalkdust, etc.) may trigger symptoms such as memory loss and hyperactivity.

The best way to detect hidden food allergies is with an elimination diet. If a child has a family history of allergies and is experiencing reading difficulties with

no other apparent cause, it might be worthwhile to have the child tested for food allergies and/or chemical sensitivities by a physician specializing in allergy treatment.

C. Hypoglycemia and Poor Diet

Hypoglycemia means "low blood sugar." In reactive hypoglycemia, the pancreas overreacts when a person eats sugary foods. The pancreas produces an overabundance of insulin. The insulin lowers the level of sugar in the blood well below the normal level, producing such symptoms as weakness, nausea, severe hunger, and headaches. Mental symptoms such as confusion or inability to concentrate can also result when the blood sugar level drops too low. In another type of hereditary hypoglycemia, the pancreas continuously produces a little more insulin than is needed. This can trigger the same symptoms. A child with hypoglycemia who eats sugary foods for breakfast may perform well in school for the first hour or two. By mid-morning, though, his blood sugar level will be quite low because of the overproduction of insulin. Just in time for reading class, he may exhibit mental symptoms which interfere with his learning. Hypoglycemia can be controlled by a diet low in sugar and high in protein, which helps to stabilize blood sugar levels. Hypoglycemia can be diagnosed with a blood test performed by a physician.

Poor school performance can also be linked to a poor diet. Children who are fed a steady stream of chips, soda, sweets, and other "junk food" may not be getting the proper nutrients and vitamins needed for proper brain functioning.

D. Physical Abnormalities in Brain Structure

In recent years, medical researchers have discovered some abnormalities in the brains and neural structures of persons with attention deficits or severe learning disabilities which may account for their difficulties. The abnormalities involved misplaced neurons in the brain (particularly in the language center), smaller than normal neural structures joining the two halves of the brain, and differences in brain wave activity. These abnormalities are believed to be genetic or due to prenatal causes. Research into the causes of attention deficit and language disorders continues. In some cases the drug Ritalin is prescribed to help children with Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder. In the meantime, teachers are encouraged to use intensive phonics along with multisensory activities for truly learning-disabled students.

3) Different Learning styles

In recent years, much attention has been paid to learning styles. The theory is that each child has his own individual learning style, and a child may learn easier through one sense, or modality, than another. How does this affect reading? Students who are strong visual learners will usually find learning to read easiest. Students who learn best by working with their hands (kinesthetic learners) find learning to read the most difficult. However, a child's strongest learning modality is usually not obvious in the early years of schooling. With young children, the best strategy for maximizing learning is to present material in as many different ways as possible.

4) Lack of motivation or discipline

Sometimes children procrastinate or make excuses to avoid doing their work, fail to complete homework assignments, and show little interest in reading or books. Parents should first rule out any possible physical causes for a reading disability. Second, make sure the reading material is at the right level for the child. Children naturally avoid tasks (including schoolwork) which are too difficult for them. If no other reason can be found for the child's lack of motivation, then laziness is suspected and *firmness on the part of parents is essential*.

Parents should set aside a regular time every day for their child to do his/her schoolwork, then make sure the child does it. Rewarding a child for a job well done is helpful in motivating the child. Rewards are **not** the same as bribery. Bribery is when you pay someone to do something **wrong**. Just like adults, children too need a "pat on the back" from time to time to keep them motivated. Rewards for children may include stickers, spending money, treats, privileges, or special activities that the child is interested in.

Consistent and firm discipline from parents is essential for helping a child learn to control his own behavior. Some children who are labeled "hyperactive" are in reality "undisciplined." If parents rarely set limits at home, the child will have trouble conforming to the limits of the classroom. A child cannot learn to read if he is misbehaving. Parents have a serious responsibility to teach their children proper behavior, and to instill in them good work habits.

LESSON PLANS

for

Reader A

LESSON A-1

Introducing Letters

Inform the students that today they will learn what a letter is. Hold up a newspaper and point to a headline. Tell the students that the little black marks on the newspaper are letters. Each letter stands for a sound we make when we are speaking. Pick out a few letters on the page and make the corresponding speech sound. Point out letters of different sizes and styles in the newspaper. Tell the students that even if the letters are a different size or are written in a fancy style, each letter will still make its same sound.

Next show students how the letters are grouped with white spaces in between. Tell them that each group of letters forms a word. Read a few words off the page while pointing to them. Tell them that when we read, we say the sound for each letter in the word.

Ask students if they can find any other letters or words around the classroom. Allow children to point out the letters and words they find on the bulletin board, chalkboard, etc.

Introducing Consonant Ss

Instruct students to open *Little Angel Reader A* to page 3. (Since some children may not yet know their numerals, hold up your book with the correct page showing. You can also write the numeral 3 on the chalkboard. Assist any children who are having difficulty finding the page).

Instruct students to point to the picture of the saints at the top of the page. Ask them to say the word "saints". Ask what sound they hear at the beginning of "saints". Follow the same procedure for "sun" and "sock".

Tell students that the letter *Ss* makes the "sssss" sound we hear at the beginning of saints, sun, and sock. The letter *Ss* is printed under the saints and it looks like a snake. Have them trace the letter *Ss* in their book with their finger, and say "ssss".

Point out that *Ss* comes in two sizes. The large one is called "Capital *S*", and the small one is called "lower-

case *s*". Tell them that all letters come in both Capital and lower-case.

Listening Skills - Consonant Ss

Instruct students to listen as you say each of the following words. Tell them to raise their hand if the word you say begins with the *Ss* sound.

| | | | |
|------|--------|-------|-------|
| soup | saddle | top | sink |
| fish | seal | seven | pie |
| sofa | goat | silly | salad |

Now instruct the students to listen for the *Ss* sound at the end of the word. They should clap their hands once if the word you say ends with the *Ss* sound.

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| bus | miss | book | dress |
| frog | house | goose | tape |
| grass | bug | chase | pass |

Left and Right Discrimination

Inform students that they are going to learn the direction *left* today. Instruct students to stand. With your back to the students, tell them to repeat your words and to imitate your movements.

Say and demonstrate:

"My left hand is up."

"My left hand is down."

"My left hand makes circles."

"My left hand is touching my left ear."

"My left hand is on my left hip."

"My left arm is swinging."

"My left foot is up."

"My left foot is down."

"My left leg is shaking."

"I can step to the left."

"I can point to the left."

Turn and face the students. In random order, give the students the above commands using their left side.

Writing Consonant Ss

Chalkboard Activity: Print a large *Ss* on the chalkboard. Have students come to the chalkboard in small groups to practice printing the letter *Ss*. Make sure their letters are facing in the correct direction, and that top and bottom are balanced.



Seatwork: Distribute primary handwriting paper to the students. Hold up a sheet of paper and point to the left side. Instruct them to print 3 rows of Capital *S* and 3 rows of small *s*, beginning on the left side and working across the page.

Workbook A

Page 3: Consonant *Ss*. Guide students in completing the page, working from left to right.

Art Activity: Consonant *Ss*

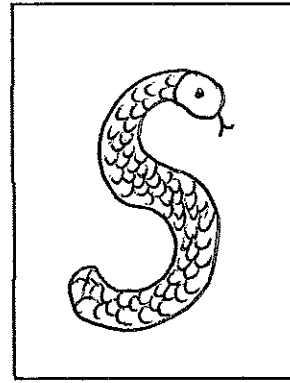
Materials needed: White paper, large colored sequins, yarn, glue, crayons, pencil

Ask students to listen to some sentences about snakes. Say these sentences, then ask students to name the words that began with the *Ss* sound:

- Snakes slither.
- Snakes have scales.
- Snakes sleep in the sand.

Tell students they are going to make a "slithering snake with scales". Have students follow these steps to complete the art project:

- 1) Draw a large *S* in the center of the paper. About 1" to the right of the *S*, draw another large *S* the same size. Connect the open ends at the top and bottom to make the snake's body.
- 2) Glue a piece of yarn around the outline of the snake.
- 3) Draw an eye and forked tongue with crayons.
- 4) Glue sequins on the snake for scales. (If you do not have sequins, draw rows of "s" across the snake's back instead).
- 5) Draw dots of sand with a yellow or brown crayon around the snake.



LESSON A-2

Reviewing Consonant *Ss*

Instruct students to open *Little Angel Reader A* to page 3. Ask students which letter sound they hear at the beginning of saints, sun, and sock.

Tell students that you are going to say some riddles. They should answer each riddle with a word that begins with *Ss*.

- 1) What is something hot that you eat with a spoon? (soup)
- 2) What is something warm and fuzzy that you wear on cold days? (sweater or sweatshirt)
- 3) What do we plant in the ground to make flowers or vegetables grow? (seeds)
- 4) What do we build castles with at the beach? (sand)
- 5) How does a lemon taste? (sour)
- 6) What black and white animal has a bad smell? (skunk)
- 7) What is cold and white and covers the ground in the winter? (snow)
- 8) What has eight legs and spins webs? (spider)
- 9) What might a bee do if you bother it? (sting)
- 10) What do we do with a broom? (sweep)

Introducing Consonant *Tt*

Instruct students to open *Little Angel Reader A* to page 3. Have students to point to the picture of the

tabernacle in the middle of the page. Ask them to say the word "tabernacle". (If they do not know what a tabernacle is, tell them that a tabernacle is a beautiful golden box where Jesus lives in our Catholic churches. It is usually found in the middle of the main altar). Ask what sound they hear at the beginning of "tabernacle." Follow the same procedure for "turtle" and "table."

Tell students that the letter *Tt* makes the /t/ sound we hear at the beginning of tabernacle, turtle, and table. The letter *Tt* looks like a telephone pole. Have them trace the letter *Tt* in their book with their finger, and say "t-t-t".

Point out the difference between capital *T* and lower-case *t*.

Listening Skills: Consonant *Tt*

Instruct students to listen as you say each of the following words. Tell them to raise their hand if the word you say **begins** with the /t/ sound.

| | | | |
|-------|------|------|------|
| tag | top | game | tire |
| doll | tack | tool | nose |
| teeth | baby | team | tub |

Now instruct the students to listen for the /t/ sound at the **end** of the word. They should raise their hand if the word you say **ends** with the /t/ sound.

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|------|
| boot | fight | ride | wet |
| dog | seat | coat | cane |
| pet | bad | late | meet |

Left and Right Discrimination

Review *left* by asking students to raise their left hand. Ask individual students to point to and name objects on the *left* side of the classroom.

Inform students that they are going to learn the direction *right* today. Instruct students to stand. With your back to the students, tell them to repeat your words and to imitate your movements.

Say and demonstrate:

"My right hand is up."

"My right hand is down."

"My right hand makes circles."

"My right hand is touching my right ear."

"My right hand is on my right hip."

"My right arm is swinging."

"My right foot is up."

"My right foot is down."

"My right leg is shaking."

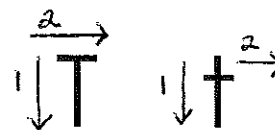
"I can step to the right."

"I can point to the right."

Turn and face the students. In random order, give the students commands similar to the sentences above using their *right* side. For example, "Put your right hand on your head."

Writing Consonant *Tt*

Chalkboard Activity: Print a capital *T* on the chalkboard. Have students come to the chalkboard in small groups to practice printing capital *T*. Repeat for lower-case *t*.



Seatwork: Distribute primary handwriting paper to the students. Hold up a sheet of paper and point to the left side. Instruct them to print 3 rows of Capital *T* and 3 rows of small *t*, beginning on the left side and working to the right side. Encourage them to use straight lines when making their *T*'s.

Workbook A



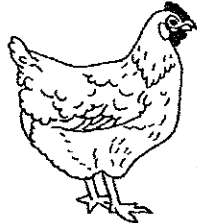
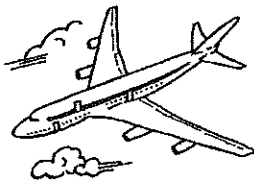
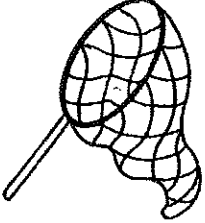

Page 4: Consonant *Tt*. Guide students in completing the page, working from left to right.

Art Activity: Consonant *Tt*

Materials needed: White paper, popsicle sticks, string, glue, crayons

Distribute a sheet of paper, 4 popsicle sticks, and some string to each student. Tell students that they are going to make "tall telephone poles." Instruct students to glue 2 of the popsicle sticks onto the upper left part of the paper, in the shape of a *t*. Have them glue the other 2 popsicle sticks onto the lower right part of the paper, in the shape of a *t*. Then glue strings between the two "telephone poles" for telephone wires. Children may draw scenery in the background to complete the picture.

Say the name of the picture. Circle the word that names the picture.

| | | |
|--|--|---|
|  <p>bid bad bed</p> |  <p>leg log led</p> |  <p>hand hen hem</p> |
|  <p>jut jot jet</p> |  <p>not net nut</p> |  <p>bill bull bell</p> |

Circle the word that makes sense in the sentence. Write it on the line.

1. A bug fell on the _____ .

wet
web
win

2. The red hens are in the _____ .

pin
pan
pen

3. Set the jug on the _____ .

duck
neck
deck

4. Ten men will fix the _____ .

met
jet
yet

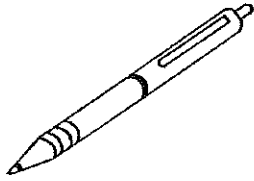
Print the letter for the vowel sound you hear in each picture name.



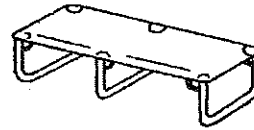
b _____ g



w _____ l l



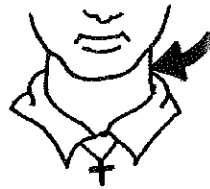
p _____ n



c _____ t



t _____ n



n _____ ck