

**A LIST OF ALL THE MONO-  
SYLLABLES IN THE ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE PHONETICALLY  
ARRANGED FOR USE IN TEACHING  
READING WITH EXPLANATIONS**

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A List of All the Mono-syllables in the English Language Phonetically Arranged for Use in teaching reading with explanations by Francis W. Parker

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**FRANCIS W. PARKER**

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## EXPLANATION.

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### I.

#### PSYCHOLOGY OF READING.

**P**HONICS, or the enunciation, separately, of the sounds of which syllables are composed, may be used to enhance the quick recognition of the printed word. The distinct enunciation of separate sounds also strengthens pronunciation by making enunciation clearer and stronger. The use of phonics, however, as the *main* means of teaching children to read is open to many and serious criticisms. It is granted that children may be trained to pronounce words very readily by the continuous use of phonics, and that startling results may be easily accomplished in this direction, but *pronunciation is not reading*. Indeed, children trained to feel that pronunciation is the end and aim of reading, will withdraw their minds from the thought, rather than put attention upon it. Their mental energy will be concentrated upon the mastery of pronunciation. Every teacher in secondary schools who has set himself the task of teaching his pupils to study, has had one experience,—that it is exceedingly difficult for pupils in high and normal schools to master the thought that words present. On the other hand, it is comparatively easy to train pupils to image words and recite them volubly. As a rule, pupils with the weakest intellects image words readily; *they are not troubled by the thought*.

The plain reason why students in normal and high schools do not, and even cannot, study text with fair results, is that they have neither been taught to read nor to study. Their minds have been put upon the forms of words and they have painfully mastered them. The most effective means of fastening attention upon words is by the use of the a-b-c device. The phonic device is a far more natural way of mastering word forms, as the *names* of the letters are entirely foreign to the pronunciation of words; indeed, they have nothing whatever to do with pronunciation.

Every child before he enters school images, analyzes, judges, infers, and generalizes with great ease and rapidity. The value of the reasoning depends utterly upon the value of the image of which judgment is the outcome. Making the ability to pronounce words the end and aim of reading absorbs mental action in word images, which soon becomes an over-powering habit, so that when hard, continuous study of text is demanded, the pupils have absolutely no power of educative thinking; the words stand between them and the thought, instead of being the potent means of help. It is a fact, that a small per cent of pupils taught by the a-b-c method, or by the phonic method, owing to their innate energy and their desire to think, will learn to read and study fairly well in spite of the unnatural obstructions, while the mass of children never learn to study.

It is quite possible to teach all normal children to read well and to study well, from beginning to end; their study may always be genuine thinking. When a pupil fancies that he is reading because he knows how to pronounce the words, his

mind is in a very dangerous condition. The habit of close thinking when one reads should be early formed and strongly impressed upon every pupil. The value of reading to little children is vastly over-estimated. Parents and teachers fancy that the child is not learning anything unless he is learning to read. With a great multitude, reading is not a means of education;—it is, on the other hand, very often, a means for the dissipation of energy. With many, it is a means of mind-pollution and soul-degradation. The value of reading depends first upon the value of the thought which words recall, and, second, upon the clearness and distinctness with which the thought is comprehended. With many, reading is like a perfunctory use of the senses. Millions hear and see the universe filled with educative objects, but their images thus gained are fleeting and uneducative. It is, then, of vast importance that every teacher should fully comprehend the psychology of reading.

*Reading is imaging by means of the action upon consciousness of written or printed words.* All reading in school should be educative imaging. *The function of a word is to bring an image into consciousness or to assist in bringing an image into consciousness.* The function of a sentence is to bring an image into consciousness, or to unite two or more images. *Reading is a means of continuous imaging.* The *study of text* is the concentration and expansion of images. That is, the only difference between reading and the study of text is that in study the images are held longer, and therefore grow. Images grow in two ways—first, by concentration, and, second, by expansion. The function of observation is image concentration. The function of reading and study of text is image concentration and expansion. Thus observation and reading are organically related. Educative imag-



ing means first an educative subject. An inexhaustible source of educative subjects is found in the study of man and nature. Teaching is the presentation of subjects or conditions for growing images. The adaptation of the subjects to the mind depends upon the capability of the mind for image growth. Reading is a mental process. It may be educative or it may be mere mental dissipation, or, again, as I have said, it may be mental degradation. Fleeting images, images that come and go with great rapidity, are never educative. An image never can grow unless it is *held*. Symbols should always be fleeting images. A symbol performs its function and flies; it has nothing to do but arouse its appropriate activities. But when, through a long and painful process of training, children form the habit of holding, or trying to hold, the mere images of symbols, the power to hold real thought or educative images becomes less and less. The a-b-c, the phonic, the phonetic or any other device that pertains to form alone, when used exclusively, trains pupils into a habit of striving to hold the images of symbols. Mental energy is exhausted in this direction. As a general rule, the weaker the mind the more easily this habit, which leads to mind disintegration, is formed. "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man but the end thereof is death.*" This profound saying is fully proven by the exclusive use of devices, which have for an end the mastering of word forms alone.

The law by which each and every word is learned is a great synthetic law that lies at the foundation of all mental action. It consists of the uniting or association of images. The law, then, by which each and every word must be learned, whether oral or written, whether Greek, Sanskrit, German, or English, is as follows: the appropriate activ-

ities or the appropriate image \* which a word was made to recall must be associated in consciousness with the image of the word. This union should be brought about with the least possible expenditure of mental energy. Teaching reading, then, is presenting the conditions for the unity of appropriate activities, or the meaning of the word with the image corresponding to the word itself. Every word is learned by one or more of acts of association, *i. e.*—the coming together of the appropriate activities and the image of the word. The word itself, as I have said, should always be a fleeting image. It should perform its function and subside. The image of the word in itself arouses little or no interest. The image of the word is extremely limited; it cannot grow beyond certain very definite boundaries. On the other hand, the appropriate activities, the meanings of words, are unlimited in growth and therefore may be made of intense interest to pupils. If pupils are studying any subject of man or nature, which they understand and enjoy, the demand for words becomes strong. Give the pupil the right word just at the moment when he needs it, and the association produces a lasting result. When a word brings into consciousness instantly its appropriate image or activities, the word is functioned.

*Learning to read means the functioning of words.* Teaching reading means the presentation of conditions for the functioning of words. The main condition for the functioning of a word is the appropriate image or activities, an image that has the power of growth. A growing image al-

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\* Appropriate activities and appropriate images are essentially the *meaning* of words; they are the activities which are brought into consciousness by the use of words; the term "appropriate activities" relates to the particular word which arouses them.

ways arouses the emotion of interest. The more intense the interest, the longer the image is held in consciousness. If the word is then presented, its image becomes absorbed in the main image and is therefore functioned. The number of associations, therefore, by which a word is functioned, depends entirely upon the interest aroused. When words are learned in a perfunctory way without marked reference to the meaning or appropriate images, there is little or no interest, and therefore many repetitions become absolutely necessary.

The reason why, through the centuries, the teacher has struggled with the dead forms of words, is that real, genuine, educative subjects—nature study, geography, history,—have not been taught to little children, under the delusion that reading was the main thing in education, and that intrinsic subjects should be put off to a later day. It has been found by repeated investigation and many trials that children become absorbed in the study of nature and in the study of man, that they begin these studies before they enter the school, and that they continue them with great delight and great profit if they have the opportunities. The stone that the builders rejected is to become the head of the corner. When children are really studying educative subjects, the teacher knows what words to present to the child and when to present them. The old, long-drawn-out process of teaching reading must be abandoned for the new and living way.

Reading and writing, especially blackboard writing, should be closely united. A child gets his thought from the words written by his teacher upon the blackboard; he gives back this thought rapidly and easily in the same way he obtained it. If the teacher, then, makes reading educat-