

# Reading Intervention Program

Featuring Edward Miller's Sight-Word Eliminator

*A Reading Behavior Modification Approach*

by Vanessa Peters

**“To be or not to be that is the Question!”**

Reciting 99% of this well-known quote requires absolutely no reading ability. All but one word in this quote consist of high-frequency sight words that children are required to memorize. Yet, not knowing how to read the 1% word representation in this statement is a perfect example of an illiterate reader.

Memorization teaching requires no letter-sound training, decoding knowledge or sounding out skills. There are approximately 220 commonly used sight words that children are trained to memorize by sight, preferably by the conclusion of second grade.

However, the ability to read low-frequency words that make up the minority of written text is the key to understanding what is being read and necessary for reading success.

Struggling readers taught to read by sight - not letter-sound - are in need of REHABILITATION.

Labels such as reading challenged, reading disabilities, dyslexia reading need to be addressed and aided with an intensive focused reading intervention program.

## **Reflex Learned Behavior – Reading Habits**

Studies show that whatever method is learned first develops a learning response or automatic reflex and is very resistant to change. A child initially coached to sound out words looks to the INNER structure of a word and automatically utilizes their decoding skills, which allows them to focus on comprehension.

IN COMPARISON, a student taught by other methods must multitask or depend on using a combination of reading strategies like pictures, guessing, title clues, rhyming, word-shapes or word memorization. This type of reader must constantly divide their attention between the appropriate strategies to use prior to focusing on comprehension.

## **REHABILITATION – Behavior Modification Training**

Sight Word Elimination (SWE) Edward Miller SWE Method Founder

By removing sight words, pictures and titles (non-reading sound-less crutches) and reinforcing the SOS (sound-out-steps) decoding, trains the reader to use letter-sound phonics skills which improves reading speed and comprehension accuracy.

### **SWE USAGE WARNING:**

A struggling reader placed in an environment where phonetic knowledge MUST be used without the support of memorized sight words or other sound-less crutches can be emotionally difficult at first. During SWE rehabilitation a reader 2-3 grade skill levels behind their peers may initially become frustrated, agitated and oftentimes tearful if this therapy is not handled with care and understanding. After much intensive SWE drilling and practice the reader will eventually make a ‘mental switch’ to phonetic decoding and ideally an improvement in reading and understanding. Any training to correct a reading deficiency must be intensive, systematic and complete; this retraining to make the mental switch to phonetic decoding takes a lot of hard work!

AFTER a word-guessing, sight-word reading student is tutored with a full set of SOS decoding skills: all stories and reading passages should be first presented in SWE format where the student has to decode every single word. This simple behavior modification process will produce remarkable results after **60 hours** of structured intensive sessions.

With regard to illiteracy solutions to improve reading skills for struggling students of all ages, the SWE method is straightforward, simple, inexpensive and effective!

### **SWE Format Training Example:**

The following short story called “How the Coyote Stole Fire” consists of a total of **316** words. You’ll note that **169** words representing **53%** of the text consist of sight-words and **147** words representing **47%** of the text consist of decodable words.

1. Using the 7 puzzle pieces method of breaking down and identifying the sounds-inside-of-words, I typically select and pre-review words that I believe students will have a problem in both the pronunciation of and definition.
2. Without revealing what the story is about or what the title is, I list the review words on a dry erase board (or sheet of paper) for breakdown and discussion.

Sample Story Review Words:

coyote   teepees   selfishly   trickster   mountaintop   powerful

3. Two copies of the SWE version of the story are presented: 1 for the student, 1 for the teacher. I then conduct two separate one-minute timed readings and record all words read correctly.

Cold Score	Hot Score
Mistakes	Mistakes
Final Score	Final Score

**Cold Score:** first timed reading of raw text

**Hot Score:** second timed reading of now familiar text

**NOTE:** After the first reading, I quickly show students the words they mispronounce and allow for brief decoding comments if necessary.

# Sight-Words-Eliminated (SWE) Timed Reading Activity

## How Coyote Stole Fire

*** Native Americans **** **** stories **** * man named Coyote. Coyote tried ** ****	15
others *** ** **** deeds, **** ** **** also * trickster. *** day Coyote passed * group ** crying	34
women. **** **** singing * sad song *** **** **** people *** **** died during *** cold winter.	52
Man *** *** yet **** fire, **** **** people died **** **** cold **** winter.	67
“**** <i>sun brings</i> ** <i>warmth</i> ” **** **** ** **** crying women. “**** **** **** * **** <i>piece</i> **	86
<i>sun</i> ** *** <i>teepees</i> during *** <i>winter months</i> , ** **** **** ****.” Coyote felt **** sadness ***	103
**** ** ****. ** knew **** **** **** Fire Beings **** **** ** * mountaintop. **** selfishly	120
kept fire ** themselves. *** Fire Beings **** **** **** ** share fire **** man, because ****	138
**** **** man ** become more powerful. Coyote **** ** **** Fire Beings’ mountain ***	153
observed *** **** guarded **** fire. ** noted **** during *** night, *** Fire Bears took	169
turns watching *** fire. **** ** **** time ** change guards, *** Fire Bear **** **** teepee.	187
* few moments **** pass before ** next **** **** **** **** turn. During **** time nobody	205
watched *** fire. Coyote waited until ** **** **** watching, **** ** snatched ** * piece ** ****	223
glowing fire. ** bolted **** **** mountain *** **** Fire Beings raced **** ****.	237
Coyote threw *** fire ** **** animal friends, **** **** threw ** ** Wood. *** wood swallowed	254
*** fire. *** Fire Beings offered Wood gifts, *** Wood **** **** **** fire. Finally *** Fire	272
Beings gave ** **** **** back ** **** **** mountain. Coyote knew **** ** **** fire **** ** Wood. **	291
showed man *** ** rub *** sticks **** **** ** create fire. Man **** **** “piece ** **** sun” **	311
stay **** during *** winter.	316
<i>169 SWE (Sight Word Eliminator) – 53%</i>	

4. Here is the full text of the story: Repeat step #3. Give and record two 1-minute timed readings.

## How Coyote Stole Fire

The Native Americans have many stories about a man named Coyote. Coyote tried to help	15
others and do good deeds, but he was also a trickster. One day Coyote passed a group of crying	34
women. They were singing a sad song for all the people who had died during the cold winter.	52
Man did not yet have fire, and many people died from the cold that winter.	67
<i>“The sun brings us warmth”</i> said one of the crying women. <i>“If we could have a small piece of</i>	86
<i>sun in our teepees during the winter months, we could keep warm.”</i> Coyote felt their sadness and	103
Wanted to help. He knew that the three Fire Beings who lived on a mountaintop. They selfishly	120
kept fire to themselves. The Fire Beings did not want to share fire with man, because they	138
didn’t want man to become more powerful. Coyote went to the Fire Beings’ mountain and	153
observed how they guarded their fire. He noted that during the night, the Fire Bears took	169
turns watching the fire. When it was time to change guards, one Fire Bear went into the teepee.	187
A few moments would pass before the next one came out for his turn. During that time nobody	205
watched the fire. Coyote waited until no one was watching, then he snatched up a piece of the	223
glowing fire. He bolted down the mountain and the Fire Beings raced after him.	237
Coyote threw the fire to his animal friends, and they threw it to Wood. The wood swallowed	254
the fire. The Fire Beings offered Wood gifts, but Wood didn’t give up the fire. Finally the Fire	272
Beings gave up and went back to their mountain. Coyote knew how to get fire out of Wood. He	291
showed man how to rub two sticks together to create fire. Man now had a “piece of the sun” to	311
stay warm during the winter.	316
<i>147 Decodable Words - 47%</i>	

Because many students are distracted by the words-per-line column on the right-hand side, I typically delete this column off of their copies

# Reading Speeds

**Tracking Words-per-Minute (wpm):** Purest form of Comprehension & Fluency Evaluation:

Studies show that wpm reading rates are closely linked to a student's comprehension ability. The longer it takes a student to read something becomes a drain on both mental energy and memory and requires a great deal of undivided attention.

Typically struggling readers frequently hesitate, have difficulty sounding out words, and spend a large amount of time mispronouncing and/or guessing. Because it takes so long to read a passage oftentimes they can't remember what they've just read let alone comprehend what the story is about.

Reading has to happen faster than you can think about it.

WPM (words per minute)  
**Reading Rates**

## **Research Nationwide Grade Level Recommendation**

Grade 1: early year rate 40 wpm -- end year rate 60 wpm

Grade 2: early year rate 50 wpm -- end year rate 95 wpm

Grade 3: early year rate 110 wpm -- end year rate 120 wpm

Grade 4: early year rate 120 wpm -- end year rate 150 wpm

## Prison Building Forecast

There are some states that determine how many prison cells to build based upon the reading scores of **third graders**. With unfortunate accuracy, projections of how many prisons will be needed twenty years from now can be determined by the reading failure rate of 8-year old children.

**By age 7** observant parents may realize that their child is not actually reading but guessing and/or memorizing, but more times than not this crucial time for reading intervention slips through the cracks.

In any event, **YES, WE CAN** eliminate prison building fundraising planning by methodically teaching all children the mechanics of reading by way of letter-sound relationships.

The above information was retrieved from the following link:

[http://www.sweetsoundsofreading.com/Reading-Intervention-Program\\_Rehabilitation.html](http://www.sweetsoundsofreading.com/Reading-Intervention-Program_Rehabilitation.html)



## Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

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It is not often that I find reading websites that I believe are 100% on the mark. Most advocate many features of Whole-Language and the Psycholinguistic Guessing Game, even those that claim to advocate phonics. I was ecstatic with joy yesterday when I happened upon Vanessa Peter's website, *Sweet Sounds of Reading*: [www.sweetsoundsofreading.com](http://www.sweetsoundsofreading.com).

I thought I was one of the few researchers in the world to understand and use Mr. Edward Miller's *Sight Word Eliminator*. I have used Mr. Miller's original SWE and created my own version by eliminating the sight-words in "The Great Stone Face" by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

I am greatly encouraged to know that there are other people out there who understand the great harm that teaching sight-words causes to beginning readers.

I created this document to provide a printable copy of Vanessa's SWE of "How the Coyote Stole Fire" for parents and teachers who want to use it with their students. For more information on Vanessa's work just click on the link to her website above.

As far as I know, Vanessa and I are the only people on the Internet promoting Mr. Edward Miller's work. He passed away last year. He had just started a website promoting his method before he passed away. Unfortunately that website has been discontinued. You can find more information on Mr. Miller on my website: [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net). He used Rudolf Flesch's 72 Exercises in his book, *Why Johnny Can't Read and what you can do about it*. I have developed a page of information on Flesch's Exercises and how to use them to cure artificially induced whole-word dyslexia caused by sight-word memorization.

Mr. Charlie Richardson was a longtime user of Edward Miller's *Miller Word Identification Assessment*. Over the years, He tested thousands of juvenile offenders on Rode Island. He told me often that the black students suffered more from sight-word instruction than their white counterparts. The assessment can be downloaded free from my website: [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net)

I have had great success teaching reading to black students using Samuel L Blumenfeld's *Alpha-Phonics* and Hazel Loring's 1980 *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade*.

Vanessa Peters has published five books, *Letter Sounds Save Their Soul: Secret to Reading Success for African American Children*, Volumes 1-5. The program teaches student to sound out and understand 3.913 words that fit neatly into 1 of 7 possible spelling patterns.

## Appendix I

### Statistics on the Number of Sight-Words in “How Coyote Stole Fire.”

by Donald L. Potter

There are a total of 691 words in “How Coyote Stole Fire.” There are 316 different words, 196 are sight words, 147 are decodable words.

Below are all the sight words in alphabetical order followed by the number of times the word is used in the story. There are 65 individual sight-words.

a 9, about 1, after 1, all 1, and 7, before 1, but 1, came 1, could 2, did 2, didn't 2, do 1, for 2, from 1, gave 1, get 1, give 1, gone 1, good 1, had 2, have 3, he 6, help 2, him 1, his 2, how 3, if 1, in 1, into 1, it 2, keep 1, lived 2, many 2, no 1, not 2, now 1, of 6, on 2, one 4, us 1, our 1, out 2, said 1, small 1, that 4, the 27, their 3, then 1, they 2, three 2, to 14, together 1, two 1, up 3, want 3, wanted 1, warm 1, was 3, we 2, went 3, were 1, when 2, who 2, with 1, would 1,

Note: I am not sure what sight-word list Vanessa used to create her SWE. The words above are all the words she deleted from the story so I am sure that her list included these words. Different sight-word lists will create somewhat different *Sight Word Eliminators*. I used the AHD 100 most often occurring words to create my Great Stone Face SWE. I am not sure what list Mr. Miller used. I have his SWE, but have never investigated to see which word he eliminated.

Mr. Miller's SWE was a modified copy of Pat Robertson's *America's Dates with Destiny*. That was fine choice for private tutors, but the religious content made it unacceptable for public schools.