

Through the Phonics Barrier Teaching and Learning

Step-by-Step Instructions For Teacher and Student

THE CONSONANTS

page 1

To the Student

Let us begin with the consonants. I don't expect you to remember all of these things, just to be able to repeat them after me. We'll come back to them all one at a time. Here at the top of the page are the consonants. There are two **c**'s, two **g**'s, and two **s**'s because these letters have two sounds, and the **q** is followed by a **u** because it always is in English. See if you can tell me the sounds these letters make.

For the Teacher

Probably your student will know the **b** sound, but not the two sounds for **c**. If he hesitates at all or makes any sounds incorrectly, take over and from then on you say the sounds and have him say them after you while looking at the letters. If he is quite uncertain, do three or four at a time; if he knows most of them, you can do a whole line at a time. He should end by being able to say all the consonant sounds once without help.

Say *k* and *s* for **c**, *g* and *j* for **g**, *s* and *z* for **s**. Be sure to say them clearly. Pointing with your pencil, show that the sounds of the first **c** and the **k** are the same, the sounds of the second **c** and the first **s** are the same, the second **g** sounds the same as **j**, and so on. Don't at this point try to show the student any written words starting with these letters unless he specifically asks you to. We want to focus his attention only on the sound and the letters at this point. You should, however, say a word beginning with **b**, such as **bat**, and pause and give him a chance to offer another word, and so on for the other letters. Most children have learned to do this in school for a few initial consonants and enjoy showing what they know. (Examples: **qu** in **quick**, **x** in **tax**; **z** sound for **s** in **is**.)

RULE 1

page 1

For the Teacher

Read the rule at the bottom of the page slowly, pointing to the letters and words. Have the student read the sample words. He need not memorize the rule.

THE VOWELS

page 2

To the Student

You know the names of the vowels **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u**, and sometimes **y**. All vowels have more than one sound. The long vowels say their own names, so they are very easy to learn. You just say *ā*, *ē*, *ī*, *ō*, *ū*. **y** is pronounced *ī*, just like the letter **i** when it is a long vowel. Below the vowels it shows how we write these sounds. The letters are in italics. Each has a straight line over it. That means it is not the letter **a**, but the long *ā* sound. Now you read the long vowels.

Next we have the short vowel sounds and they are hard little sounds to learn because, while you have said them millions of times, you have almost never said them alone since you were a tiny baby. In words they are nearly always said with one or more consonants.

In the picture you see a very lazy, fat boy by the name of Ed who is not up yet. Under the picture it says, "Fat Ed is not up." Each one of these words has one of the short vowel sounds in it – *ă*, *ĕ*, *ĭ*, *ŏ*, *ŭ*. If you try to say, "Fat Ed is not up" with your mouth wide open, you will hear yourself say the short vowel sounds. We write these short sounds as letters with little curves over them. When **y** is a short vowel, it is sounded just like short **i**.

For the Teacher

Have the student repeat the sentence after you with his mouth open a couple of times. Then, have him say the same sounds again while looking at the vowels below the sentence, saying *ĭ* for **y**. It may take a little practice to keep the lips relaxed so no consonant sound is made.

To the Student

At the bottom of the page we have one more sound for **a** in **ah**. The sound is written **a** with two dots over it. (*ä*)

For the Teacher

It is not intended that you drill the student so that he knows all of these sounds and can give them perfectly when called upon. They are difficult to learn in isolation, and a student has great trouble distinguishing between *ĕ* and *ĭ*. It is sufficient to go over them a few times until he becomes aware of what they sound like and can repeat the series after you while looking at the letters. He will learn them later.

SPECIAL VOWEL SOUNDS

page 3

To the Student

Next we have the special vowel sounds. These are sounds written with two letters, and there are little pictures down below to help you remember what the sounds are. Notice there are two sounds for **oo**. Three of these sounds are written two ways. The long **oo** sound says $\bar{o}\bar{o}$, as in **boot**, and the short **oo** sound says $\bar{o}\bar{o}$, as in **book**. Then there is **ou**. If someone hurts you, you say *ou*; *oy* is the sound in **boy**, and *aw* is the sound in **paw**. In italics we have the ways of writing these sounds. Can you say some words with $\bar{o}\bar{o}$ and $\bar{o}\bar{o}$? Now you read them.

For the Teacher

Read the sounds one at a time and have your student repeat them after you two or three times, while looking at the letters, until he can say all five in sequence. Then cover the pictures and have him say them again. Of course, the $\bar{o}\bar{o}$ and $\bar{o}\bar{o}$ sounds are also sometimes spelled in other ways as we shall see later. (Example: **through**, **put**)

SPECIAL CONSONANT SOUNDS

page 3

To the Student

Now we have five more special sounds to learn. These are consonant sounds that have to be written with two letters, **ng** comes only at the end of a word, and **wh** at the beginning of a word. The rest can come at the beginning or the end. The pictures will help you remember them. *th* is the beginning sound in **thimble**, *ch* is the beginning sound in **chick**, and *sh* is the beginning sound in **ship**, and **ng** is the end sound in **ring**. *hw* is the sound beginning **wheel**. Now say the sounds after me while you look at the letters.

VOWEL DIGRAPHS

page 4

To the Student

Next we have vowel digraphs, that is, vowel sounds written with two letters. We have learned the long vowel sounds on page 2. These same long vowel sounds, \bar{a} , \bar{e} , \bar{i} , \bar{o} , \bar{u} , are all written in other ways with two vowels together. When you see these vowel combinations, remember they generally say the long sound of the first letter, so they are easy. (Tell the more advanced student that there are many exceptions, as we shall see.)

For the Teacher

Point to the phonograms in the first column and read \bar{a} , \bar{a} , \bar{a} (**ai** in **wait**; **ay** as in **say**). Then see if the student can carry on for the next four columns. If not, help him.

Have him repeat the rule after you, "These generally say the long sound of the first letter."

If the student asks for examples, you might use these: **see, sea, pie, oat, toe, snow, true, and fruit.**

To the Student

At the bottom on the page we see more vowel digraphs. **ei** says the long **a** sound, \bar{a} , which is a surprise. Also, in some words it says the long **e** sound, \bar{e} . **ie** says \bar{i} , as you saw above, but it sometimes also says \bar{e} . **ew** and **eu** say the long **u** sound, \bar{u} , or \bar{o} .

For the Teacher

Some examples are: **eight, receive, pie, believe, few, and feud.**

All these digraphs are single vowel sounds occurring within a syllable. The **ie** in **salient** is not a digraph, of course since the **i** and **e** are in different syllables.

VOWELS FOLLOWED BY R

page 4

To the Student

Next we have the vowels followed by r. When a vowel is followed by r, it has a different sound than it has when it is followed by any other letter; so we learn the sounds of these combinations.

The ones in the first line, **er, ir, ur**, all say exactly the same thing—*er*, as in **her**. Then **or** is just the word **or**, and there is **ar** as in **car**. The **a** in **ar** is that last **a** sound, \bar{a} . Now you read them.

For the Teacher

Read the words and put each in a sentence or phrase. "I see **her**." "The **fir** tree." "A **fur** coat." "You **or** me." etc. (The vowel sound in **er** is the \bar{e} ; in **or** it is *aw*.)

Rule 2

page 4

To the Student

Here we have the second rule that you have to learn that will help you with hundreds of words.

When you have one vowel followed by one consonant, the vowel has the short sound, ă. If there is an e after the consonant, the e is silent and does not say anything, but it makes the first vowel say its long sound, ā.

For the Teacher

Recite the rule very slowly and distinctly pointing to the **a** and **t** in **at**. Then point to the **e** in **ate**, then to the **a**. then repeat **at** and **ate**, emphasizing the vowel sounds.

Read the columns vertically—**at**, **ate**, **et**, **ete**, **it**, **ite**, etc. Explain that, except for **at**, **it**, and **ate**, these are not words; they are the ends of words and syllables. Examples of words with these phonograms are:

at	pet	kit	not	cut
ate	Pete	kite	note	cute

First read **at** and **ate** and have the student repeat those; then go on to the others, one pair at a time. Then read them all over and see if he can read them all correctly. The rule need not be learned by heart. It is used simply as an explanation. For young children do not call attention to the printed rule on the page. Older people may want to read it for themselves.

CONSONANT BLENDS

page 5

To the Student

On this page we have what we call the consonant blends. Now these are the same letters and the same sounds you have had before, but they are said so close together that they sound like new sounds. I will read the first column to you and you say them after me.

For the Teacher

Do not write out any words unless asked, but say some words beginning with the consonant blends, such as **bread**, **cry**, **try**, and encourage the student to suggest some words himself. Be sure that you say the **tr** as in **trap** and show the student that it is not like **tur** as in **turn** or **Turk**. Go over half a dozen sounds at a time and let the student repeat them after you until he can do so perfectly. There are two **sc** sounds, *s* and *sk*, as in **scent** and **scat**.

You are trying here to have your student become aware of these sounds as entities that exist in the words he speaks.

The blends with **r** are the most important and most difficult. If further work seems called for, say the words below in pairs and ask the student to tell which starts with the *g* sound and which with the *gr* sound, etc.

girl	grill
bite	bright
cane	crane
dawn	drawn
fight	fright
go	grow
tack	track

To the Student

chr says *kr*, and **sch** says *sk*. (The **h** in both of these is silent, as in **chrome** and **school**.)

ODD WAYS OF WRITING SOME CONSONANT SOUNDS

page 6

To the Student

Next we have some peculiar things. Each one is made up of two consonants with special ways of sounding them that you would never guess. In the first four, **wr**, **kn**, **gn**, and **ps**, the first letter is silent, so they all just have the sound of the second letter, **r**, **n**, **n**, and **s**. The **ph** sounds like the letter **f**, *f*, and the **gh** is a particular demon. Mostly it does not say anything at all, it is just put in to make spelling difficult, but sometimes it says the **f** sound, *f*, and sometimes the **g** sound, *g*. Now you read them.

Just to make this complete, we are going to put in some unusual things here. In **rh** the **h** is silent, and you say *r*, **gu** says *g*. **Ti**, **si**, and **ci** you will meet later in hard words where they all say *sh*, but do not worry about them now. (They can also have the sounds of *tī*, *sī*, *sī* as in **partition**, **transition**, and **precision**.)

For the Teacher

Examples of words with these digraphs are: **write**, **know**, **gnaw**, **psychic**, **phone**, **though**, **cough**, **ghost**, **rhyme**, **guard**, **station**, **mission**, **special**.

To the Student

Now we have one last thing: **le** says əl. This little upside down **e** stands for a very short vowel sound. All of the vowels are pronounced this way sometimes. For instance, in **lemon**, the **o** is shortened up so you really don't hear it as a short **o** sound at all.

These syllables occur at the ends of words, **ble** says bəl, as in **table**; **cle** says kəl, as in **circle**.

For the Teacher

The **le** is the only instance besides **wh** (*hw*) where sounds are written backward. Otherwise all words are read from left to right. Read these syllables to the student and have him repeat them after you. If he asks for further examples, they are to be found in: **ladle**, **baffle**, **struggle**, **tackle**, **apple**, **hassle**, **little**, and **dazzle**.

To the Student

Believe it or not, now you have covered the whole field of phonics. You have learned all the sounds (except *zh*) and all the ways of writing the sounds, and you have learned the two important rules. These are all the "bricks" with which our words are built. The hard part is over. The rest is just practice combining the parts you have already had.

COMBINING A CONSONANT WITH LONG AND SHORT VOWELS

page 7

To the Student

Here we are going to start combining one consonant with one vowel. Most of the things here are not words (although there are one or two words like **he** and **be**), but they are beginnings of words and separate syllables in longer words; so these will help you to read and write thousands of words. These must be read both with a long vowel and with a short vowel sound. This page sounds very silly when you read it out loud, but at least it is easy, so let's do it.

For the Teacher

Read the first line with *ā, rā, wā*, and so on, and have the child repeat it after you; do the same with the second line. Then repeat, using short vowel sounds, and be sure you say the short *ă* sound, as in **at**, clearly and distinctly and have the child repeat it. On this page he really begins to learn those long and short vowel sounds as well as to use the consonants with ease. Go on through the rest of the page, first with the long vowel sounds and then with the short ones. Most children will need a good deal of help on the first two lines and be quite fluent by the time they reach the last two. Be sure to say the soft **c** (*s*) before **e** and **i**, and the hard **c** (*k*) before **a**, **o**, and **u**.

COMBINING A BLEND WITH LONG AND SHORT VOWELS

page 8

To the Student

Now we are going to read the blends that you learned earlier followed by a vowel. Like the combination on the last page, these must be read with both the long and short vowels. These things are not words, but beginnings of words or syllables and, of course, they will help you with thousands of words and syllables.

For the Teacher

On this page we do exactly the same thing but we use the blends instead of the single consonants and have the child read them with both long and short sounds. First *trā*, *drā* *crā*, and then *tră*, *tră*, *dră* in **trap**, **drab**, **crab**, etc.

A/a

page 9

For the Teacher

On this page we really get into the heart-of-the system. The first column with **a** followed by the consonants, starting with five familiar words, is perfectly simple for the child with no reading problem and very difficult for the remedial reading case. One and all—whether five or forty, even though they have been reading for years and have graduated from college—will have the greatest difficulty with it. Here's where the reversals come in—they want to say **ta** instead of **at**. Frequently they act as though they were going to choice to death over a short vowel. An hour's work should clear up this page.

Say to the child, "In this first column we have a followed by all the different consonants. When we have one vowel followed by one consonant in a word, the vowel has a short sound. In the second column you have exactly the same thing as in the first column with an **e** on the end, and, as you know, the **e** is silent but the **a** has its long sound—*ăt*, *ăte*. Let us first read down the first column."

Read slowly and distinctly **at** so that he hears distinctly the *ă* and the *t* sounds, **am**, **an**, and then let him go ahead on his own. There is a little dot in front of the **ag** and the **ac**. That is to help him remember that **g** and **c** have the hard sound in the first column and the soft sound in the second column. The **s** in the first column is pronounced *z* and the second column we will read with the *z* sound, though occasionally **-se** is pronounced *s*. **al** is pronounced as in **pal**, **ar** is in parentheses because it has the sound of **ar**, as in **car**. **are** is pronounced as in **bare**, not as in the word **are**. Once you have struggled through the first column, do the second column, which will be much, much easier. Then read across—**at**, **ate**, **am**, **ame**. This is one place where you must drill until the child can do it fluently and easily with no hesitation.

Now go on to the next column and explain that the **a**'s are all short, except in the last three combinations which are marked long. Show that these columns have the same letters as the first column on the page, plus one or two more consonants. These are all the *ends* of syllables which are found in hundreds and hundreds of words. The child who learned the first column perfectly will have no difficulty at all with these two. The last three combinations with the **a** marked long come from **change**, **paste**, and **bathe**. In the last column, **ank** has a slightly nasal sound, as in **bank**, and **ang** you hear in **sang**. **al** can be pronounced either *al*, as in the first column, or *awl*, as in the words **already**, **salt**, and **all**. The last 16 combinations consist of the sound of **ar** plus another consonant. The last one is the end of the word **large**.

A WORDS

page 10

To the Student

Here we have 152 words, which you can now read. There is an **a** in each word, and you will be able to tell whether you pronounce it with its long or short sound. These words are just the same things you had on the page before, except that you have one or two consonants at the beginning. You can read them.

For the Teacher

Have the student read these words. Even a little fellow who could read almost nothing before starting this work will be able to read them by himself with very little help.

See that he notices when he starts the **ar** words. If any mistakes are made, it will be in leaving out **r**'s which should be there, or putting them in where they don't belong. If a mistake is made, point to the word with your pencil and ask him to try again.

This page may look dull but it is a very exciting moment when a little boy suddenly finds he can read 152 words on his own with no help from pictures or context. When you finish this page you are about halfway through the system in point of time. The rest will go much faster. Many children will want to start reading at this point.

To the Student

Now you can read any one-syllable word in the English language with **a** for a vowel and all of the syllables of all the other words that have **a** for a vowel. You will find the rest of the work will be much easier.

E/e

page 12

To the Student

Next you have the letter **e**. Just as on the **A** page, the first column has **e** followed by every one of the consonants. The second column is the same with the silent **e** on the end, which makes the first **e** long. Remember again that the **c** and **g** change their sounds in the second column when they are followed by **e** and that **er** has a different sound from the rest.

E WORDS

page 13

To the Student

Now you can read all the one-syllable words with **e** for vowel and all the syllables in all the other words that have **e** for a vowel.

For the Teacher

Proceed as with the **A** page. This one will go much more easily. It is interesting that there are few monosyllables in English in which \bar{e} is spelled **e-consonant-e**. Most are spelled with **ea** or **ee**.

I/i

page 14

The two **I** pages which follow will be taught just like the **A** and **E** pages.

Notice again that **g** and **c** change their sounds between the first and second columns, that **ir** is a special sound, and also notice the long \bar{i} in **ild** and **ind**. These represent important “families” and should be learned. Here a single vowel is long before two consonants, **ind** is also pronounced with a short **i** (*i*).

O/o

page 17

Notice the long **o** in **old**, **olt** and **ost**, and that the last three items have the *aw* sound, as in **soft**, **boss**, and **cost**. Your English friends will pronounce **cost** with \bar{u} as *kōst*. **of** should be pronounced *ōf* as in **doff**, not like the word **of**, which is *ōv*.

U/u

page 20

On the U/u page, **ull** is printed twice. Note the different sounds in **pull** and **bull**. The **u** in **pull** says *ōō*, not *ū*.

Y/y

page 23

To the Student

The **Y** page you will find very easy. **y** is just like **i** when it is used as a vowel. When it comes at the end of a syllable or of a short one-syllable word it has the sound of *ī*. As a suffix or ending to a word, it has the sound you hear in **party**. Sometimes it is used in a syllable where it is followed by a consonant, and then it has the *ī* sound, just as though the syllable were spelled with an **i**.

For the Teacher

These are the first words of more than one syllable. If necessary help him read one syllable at a time by covering up the end of the word and exposing only the first syllable, then the second, etc. Then have him read the whole word by syllables. Of course, put the words in sentences where necessary.

WORDS WITH VOWEL DIGRAPHS

page 24

To the Student

On this page we start with the vowel digraphs which we first met on page 4. Remember they say the long sound of the first letter, so they are actually just a different way of writing the long vowel sounds. Following the **ai** we have some phonograms which are **ai** followed by another consonant, and the same for **oa** and **ee**. When you have read these, you can read the words at the bottom of the page. Listen as you do so to the long vowel sounds.

ea has three sound

page 25

For the Teacher

Continue with the digraphs on pages 24 and 25, There are only a few **ea** words in which the **ea** is pronounced \bar{a} , and the student should learn them right here. Explain that **ea** is pronounced not only “like the long sound of the first letter,” but also like the long sound of the second letter and like the short sound of the first letter, This is true of other vowel digraphs, to a lesser extent, and is a more accurate rule than the one quoted above which is a simplification used for beginners. With words like **read** and **tear**, which have two pronunciations, we cannot tell which one is meant unless we read the word in a sentence.

To the Student

When you come to a new word with **ea** in it, you may have to try both the long and short sounds of **e**.

The next five digraphs are easy. In these words **ow** says \bar{o} . It also sometimes says *ou* as we shall see later. **ie** more often says \bar{e} than \bar{i} .

ei, ey says \bar{e} or \bar{a}

page 27

For the Teacher

ei comes within syllables and **ey** at the end of words.

Have the student learn to write the word **eight**. This will help him recognize this odd group of letters whenever he sees it. Point out the silent **gh**. (**Height** and **sleight** are exceptions in which **eigh** says \bar{i} .)

To the Student

Once you know that \bar{a} is a regular way of pronouncing **ei** and **ey**, the spelling of many words will seem reasonable.

Remember that **cei** always says $s\bar{e}$. Then you can spell **receive** and other demons.

SPECIAL VOWEL SOUNDS

page 28

To the Student

There are two ways of writing the *ou* sound; **ou** is always within a word; **ow** at the end of a word and sometimes inside a word. Here we have two ways of writing the *aw* sound: **aw** comes at the end of a word and sometime within a word; **au** is always within a word. As you know, the word **all** has the same *aw* sound.

There are two ways of writing the *oy* sound, **oy** is generally used at the end of the word and **oi** in the middle of the word. You can always count on these two to say the same thing.

(The following paragraph may be omitted for the beginner.) The $\bar{o}\bar{o}$ and \bar{u} sounds are really very much alike. In fact, \bar{u} sounds the same as **do**, except that it starts with the **y** consonant sound. Most of us don't distinguish between the two sounds in many of the words. In the first group, **oo** is pronounced $\bar{o}\bar{o}$. In the second and third columns, **ew** and **ue** are sometimes pronounced $\bar{o}\bar{o}$ and sometimes \bar{u} . **Cue** has the \bar{u} sound, and **true** has the $\bar{o}\bar{o}$ sound; **grew** is $\bar{o}\bar{o}$, and **knew** is \bar{u} . We point this out for accuracy's sake. As far reading goes, you can forget it. You will just say these words so they sound right to you. Of course, **Tuesday** should be pronounced with a \bar{u} and not "Toosday." The sound $\bar{o}\bar{o}$ is written also with a **u**.

ODD WAYS OF WRITING SOME CONSONANT SOUNDS

Three curiosities with silent first letters

page 30

To the Student

Now we are going to study three curiosities. They are the consonant digraphs **kn**, **wr**, and **gn**, and in all of them the first letter is silent and the second letter is sounded. We have to learn these because they come in so many very common words, **kn** and **wr** always occur at the beginning of words or syllables. Right now is a good time to take a hard look at **gn**, which is always pronounced *n*—the **g** being silent. It comes at the beginning and at the end of words or syllables. There are only a few common words beginning with **gn**, and we should have no trouble just remembering to read them as though the **g** weren't there. When **gn** occurs at the end of a word or syllable, it still has the **n** sound, and you might think it would be just as well to leave out that silent **g**. Actually, it seems to have a use in some words like **sign** and **align**, because it changes the vowel sound from short to long. That is, **s-i-n** is **sin** and **s-i-g-n** is **sign**. Of course, in **reign** and **campaign**, the vowel sound would be long anyway. If you will become perfectly familiar with the sight and sound of **gn**, it will help you to learn to spell a lot of hard words which would otherwise seem baffling.

For the Teacher

The only excuse for these three complications seems to be that they are used in writing homonyms; we have **know** and **no**; **knew** and **new**, **write** and **right**; **wrap** and **rap**; and we have names like **Nat**, **Nome**, and **Nash** that are to be distinguished from **gnat**, **gnome**, and **gnash**. Explain this if it seems appropriate.

The beginner need read only the easier words and need not be bothered with all of the above explanation.

Four more curiosities

page 30

To the Student

Now for **rh**, which is pronounced *r*, Remember that the **h** is silent, **rh** is found in words that come from Greek stems. Like the other demons on this and the preceding page, it is perfectly simple to learn if you just face it squarely. Learn to recognize it when you see it, and it will enable you to read many words which would otherwise seem impossible. (*For the teacher*: In fact, it may even enable you to learn to spell two of the most difficult words in the English language: **hemorrhage** and **diarrhea**.)

gu always has the *g* sound,

To go on with our demons and oddities, we have another one that we inherited from the Greeks—**ph**, which is always pronounced *f*. It occurs both at the beginnings and ends of words and syllables. We run into it in a great many words which scientists and engineers made up from two Greek roots: **phone**, which means “sound,” and **graph**, which means “write,” as In **telephone**, **telegraph**, **phonograph**, etc. Learn **ph** and you have the key to a lot of the hardest-looking words there are. (Consider **a-poc’-ry-phal**, meaning “of doubtful authorship or authority.”)

gh is another dragon to slay. Unlike **ph**, you can’t always count on it. When it is silent, it often changes the sound of the vowel or vowel digraphs before it. That is, **light** spelled without the **gh** would be **lit**, and **ought** without it would be **out**. **Caught** seems to be an exception; without the **gh** it would still be **caught**. In a few other words, the **g** is pronounced and the **h** is silent.

For the Teacher

A small child will find this page too difficult. He might be helped to read only the one or two easiest words in each section. Or read them for him one at a time and have him repeat them after you.

Even a more advanced pupil cannot be expected to guess the pronunciation of these words if they are new to him. **ough** has six different pronunciations (*ō, awf, ŭf, ou, aw, ōō*). Read the words to him and have him read them after you. Tell him this page is a collection of the worst demons in the language. After this everything else is easy. For some reason the poor reader does not seem to be particularly troubled by the different sounds of **ough** but he does confuse **bought** and **brought**, for which there seems no excuse.

Words ending in **le** (*əl*)

page 32

To the Student

Now we come to words which have syllables ending in **le**. You remember that **le** is pronounced *əl*. Notice that when there are two consonants before the **le** there is a short vowel sound in the first syllable. If there is a single consonant before **le**, the vowel will be long. If there are two vowels in the first syllable, the sound will be long anyway, as in **steep**le.

For the Teacher

Now is a good time to introduce the idea of the syllable, since we are starting on polysyllabic words. After the learner reads the **le** words, show him that they have two syllables by pronouncing them with a decided pause between syllables. Then say the following words and let him repeat them and count the syllables on his fingers as he does so:

box	berry	afterwards	transportation
automobile		establishment	disorganization

All remedial students will tell you that they do not understand about syllables; show them that they speak in syllables whether they know it or not.

For the beginner one column of **le** words will be enough.

sh is spelled five ways

page 33

To the Student

On this page we see that the *sh* sound is written in five ways. *sh* in the middle of long words is generally spelled **ti**, **si**, or **ci**. **Partition** has **ti** pronounced two different ways.

ch has three sounds

page 34

To the Student

ch is pronounced in three ways. In words from the Angle-Saxon, it has the *ch* sound; in Greek words the *k* sound and it is *sh* in words of French origin. Also we hear the *ch* sound in words that are not spelled with **ch** but with **tu**, as in **future**, etc.

For the Teacher

Chrysalis and **chrysanthemum** are put in for fun. Your student can read them if he proceeds calmly. Tell him that **chrys** is a Greek root meaning “golden.” A chrysanthemum is a golden flower. A **chrysalis** is a golden sheath. Have him read **chrysanthemum** three times by syllables and then see if he can write it from memory, as he says the syllables. Since none of his friends and few of his relatives can spell it, it will do a lot for his ego.

zh

page 34

To the Student

The *zh* sound has no rightful spelling of its own at all, and is written with an **s** or a **z**. If you are spelling a word with this sound, remember it is never spelled with **ss**. **Occasion** could not be spelled with two **s**'s.

A SPELLING RULE

page 35

For the teacher

Point with your pencil as you read the words. Make up brief sentences for each word, us “A **diner** is one who dines,” and “Eat your **dinner**.”

Say, “If you want to turn **pine** into **pining**, you drop the **e** and add **ing**. The **i** still has its long sound, **pine**, **pining**, and we also have **pined**, ending in **d**. Now if you start with **pin**, which has the short sound of **i** (*i*) and you want to turn it into **pinning**, you can't just add **ing** or you come up with **pining**, with the long sound of **i** (*i*) again. So we put in another **n** and get **pinning**. This second **n** makes the first **i** keep its short sound. Also we need two **n**'s to keep the short sound in **pinned**.”

The same thing is true with **hope** and **hop**, **dine** and **din**. Repeat the explanation and have the student read the words.

Teach the rules. The spelling rule is taught in school and means nothing to the child who doesn't know his long and short vowel sounds.

HOMONYMS

page 36

To the Student

Homonyms are words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings. Here are a few of the common ones. Now you can see why it is an advantage to have more than one way to spell a sound. You can tell the meaning from the spelling.

Regular Irregularities

page 37

For the Teacher

This page contains eight phonograms that will clear up a lot of difficult words. These “regular irregularities” occur very frequently. Our spelling follows a more regular pattern than most people realize, **er** pronounced **air** occurs only in accented syllables. Again, only the simpler words need be read by a beginner.

To the Student

The endings of the words at the bottom of the page look as though they should have long vowel sounds, but instead they have short ones.

COMMON WORDS WITH STRANGE SPELLINGS

page 39

To the Student

Here are some of the very common words that don't seem to be spelled, as they ought to be. The first ten have a silent **e** on the end and still have short vowel sounds. These you will just have to learn to read and spell. If you try to figure out what is irregular about them and how the vowels are sounded (**o** says **ũ**) and what the silent consonants are, it will help you to remember them. You just have to accept the fact that these words are spelled strangely.

LONG WORDS

page 41

To the Student

By now you should be able to read almost any word that is in your speaking vocabulary. Here are some long ones, which are divided into syllables and then printed as whole words. When you meet long words like these, you will have no trouble with them if you just start at the beginning and work through the word. You will find they are all made up of syllables that you recognize. No one can take in a long word like **transportation** the first time he meets it in one swoop. Instead, read it by syllables, think what it means, read it once more, and after that you will recognize it at a glance.

For the Teacher

The student has been trained in the previous pages to read every one of these syllables. He should not have to guess at the pronunciation or to sound them out letter by letter.

Explain to the student that when he meets a new word he may have to try more than one vowel sound or more than one sound for **ch**. If he comes out with a pronunciation that is almost right but not quite, the right pronunciation will probably come to mind at once. For instance, if he read hospital with the *ō* sound, the right pronunciation would be easy to guess.

UNFAMILIAR WORDS

page 43

To the Student

Now you can read all the words in your speaking vocabulary. When you come to a word you have never heard before you can read it except that you may not be sure where the accent is placed, and then you have to consult a dictionary.

Here is a page of words that may not be familiar to you. They are written below, divided into syllables with the accents marked. There is one important thing to remember—that the long words in English normally come from the Latin. Their spelling is perfectly regular, and they are made up of the same old syllables over and over again, so they are really very easy to read. Just for fun, we have put down the two longest words in the language. If you can read them, you should be awarded a diploma right here and now.

For the Teacher

These words are deliberately chosen as difficult ones that the student probably would not understand. After he looks at the first six words, show him these same words divided into syllables. Show him how different these words sound if you put the accent on some other syllable. Try saying **at mos' phere**, with the accent on the second syllable; it sounds quite different from **atmosphere**.

To the Student

In reading you will meet words whose meaning you do not know. If you take the trouble to pronounce every new word you meet, you will build up your vocabulary rapidly.

People who have done a great deal of reading have learned the meaning of thousands of words simply by guessing the meaning over and over again from the context, without ever consulting a dictionary. If you come across some word, like **truculent**, several times and still can't figure out what it means, you will finally be driven by sheer curiosity to look it up. Educated people, however, make a friend of the dictionary and consult it much more often than the uneducated. An accurate vocabulary is the mark of an educated person.

A LAST NOTE TO THE TEACHER

This is as far in the system as many children will need to go. Have your student spend half an hour reading long words in the dictionary to convince him that he is capable of anything, then find the right book and let him read aloud.

Spelling

This book may be used as a speller. Go back as far as necessary, have the student read selected words, then write them while he says the syllables, not the letters. Later you dictate them to him. He should be able to teach himself the spelling of a new word by reading it once or twice. In spelling he starts with the sounds of the spoken word and represents them with letters, which is the opposite of the reading process. A person who reads with complete comprehension of phonics learns to spell hundreds of words without practice. A list of the spelling demons that require extra work is included at the end of the text. If you want your child to be a really good speller, have him write a little bit every day. Tell him the words he asks for and have him keep an alphabetical list. He should have the spelling demons handy to refer to like a dictionary.

Notes from Publisher: Donald L. Potter

These pages are from *Reading: chaos and cure* by Sibyl Terman (Mr. Walcutt's sister) and Charles Child Walcutt, McGraw Hill Book Co. Inc. 1958, pages 168 to 273. They are being published on the www.donpotter.net website in the interest of making this excellent phonics method available to a worldwide audience. The Internet version is made available for **free** download in Adobe pdf format. Free online mp3 files are available for students wishing to teach themselves to read with *Through the Phonics Barrier*.

The student material has been sized specifically for making transparencies so that the entire program can be taught to both small and large classes using an overhead projector.

I appreciate Mrs. Walcutt for permission to publish her husband's brilliant phonics method.

Reading: chaos and cure was first read by Donald L. Potter on 11/21/97. *Through the Phonics Barrier* was typed into a Word document by Donald L. Potter, 11/19/02. Corrected 10/18/03. Extensive Corrections 10/27/03. Revised again on 11/8/03. Formatting updated 5/7/09.

I have happy to report that hundreds of thousands of people have visited this document since I first published it. Numerous parents and teachers have commented on the effectiveness of the program especially when used with my audio (mp3) instruction.

This document last updated 2/15/10.