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## A Critique of How Words Fit Together

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# A Critique of How Words Fit Together

Helen E. Master

## **Abstract**

How Words Fit Together by Louis Foley. Melrose, Massachusetts: Babson Institute Press, 1958, 125 pp., \$5.60.

## A Critique of How Words Fit Together

By Helen E. Master  
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*How Words Fit Together* by Louis Foley. Melrose, Massachusetts: Babson Institute Press, 1958, 125 pp., \$5.60.

Here is a pleasant and readable series of essays on how to write and speak English correctly. It is not a textbook, though it may well represent the author's lectures to college English classes, or it may represent educational radio or TV scripts. The various topics are developed fully with multiple and pertinent examples plus a running commentary which argues in a sweetly reasonable way for the "correct" locution. The little book, however, follows the point of view of the conventional prescriptive grammarian for all its insistence on "patterns" in language and on the primacy of spoken over written English. Mr. Foley's "pattern" is not that of the structural linguist. The criteria of correctness are arbitrary, and very little recognition is given to the legitimacy of divided usage. Nor does the writer make use of the theory of functional varieties and cultural levels. For example, in dealing with such a locution (Mr. Foley calls it a "ridiculous crudity")—"They invited my wife and I," he says: "No one could be so ignorant as to say, 'they invited I.'" This may be so, but there are many who will say, ignorant or not, "They invited my wife and I." Again he quotes, "He was French like you and I." Then, "Can anyone be imagined to say, 'like I?' " Perhaps not, but many people can be heard to say, "He was French like you and I." Correctness seems to be the cultured habits of a few rather than the actual usage of the majority of "educated" people. A speaker will always be safe in following Mr. Foley's book, but he may be sorry.

The useableness of the book as a reference tool is greatly hampered by the fact that there is no index. The chapter headings are too arch to be helpful if one is pressed for a quick decision between *who* and *whom* or between "one of those who is always horsing around," and "one of those who are always horsing around." "Helpful Hyphens" may guide us efficiently to what is to be found in the chapter thus titled, but what is the reader who really could *use* such a book going to make of "Crooked Furrows" or "Interwoven Strands"? Nor does the arrangement of the chapters help. The chapter on the comma is

placed between that on the conjunction and that on the sentence; the chapter on *ain't* between that on the form of plurals and adverbs, and that on alliteration.

Lack of index and what seems to be rather haphazard ordering of the material does have the advantage, however, of making one read the book through, of not allowing him to dig for a nugget here and there. This is an advantage for the reader who has leisure and some background in the theory and practice of prescriptive grammar because Mr. Foley's examples are fresh and to the point and his own use of English pleasantly meticulous.

## Ten Second Reviews

By Dorothy J. McGinnis  
Western Michigan University

Anderson, Paul S., "Group for Better Reading," in Oscar S. Causey's *The Reading Teacher's Reader*, pp. 96-100. The Ronald Press Company, New York, 1958.

The value of knowing the needs, interests, and abilities of each child, instructional materials, and the teacher's own abilities as well as the administrative situation are factors which, according to this writer, must be considered in determining how to group for reading. Three important questions are answered. They are: Why would a teacher use one basic reading program? Would the program be better if each group followed a different set of basic readers? What will happen as children progress through the grades?

Austin, Mary C., "Organizing the Class for Effective Development of Basic Skills," *Reading In Action* (1957), 2:89-90.

Four current grouping practices are briefly described in this article. Miss Austin states that factors other than homogeneity of reading achievement should receive greater consideration in our grouping plans. She specifically mentions the social structure, social class, and personality structure of the reading group