

2-1-1992

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Recommended Citation

Robinson, L. S. (1992). The Development of Basal Reader Teacher's Manuals. *Reading Horizons*, 32 (3). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol32/iss3/5

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The Development of Basal Reader Teacher's Manuals

Lynda Stratman Robinson

Textbooks for teachers have been around for a long time. Mulcaster's *Elementarie* was originally printed in 1582 and Hoole's *Some New Discoveries on the Old Art of Teaching* was printed in 1660. This kind of book proliferated with the rise of the Normal Schools in the 1800's, but the idea of teaching directives to go with a particular reader did not become common until the twentieth century. Graded reading series came into use in the mid-1800's, but teacher's manuals did not accompany them. These graded reading series represented the first systematic attempt to provide materials for children which varied in difficulty so that children could systematically develop reading skills as they progressed from level to level (Mathews, 1967).

Trends leading to the development of teacher's manuals can be seen in the 1800's (Smith, 1965). Some kind of directions to the teacher were becoming more common, although they consisted of only a few paragraphs at most. These directions usually took the form of remarks at the beginning of the book, although occasionally questions were found within the body of the text which appeared to be for use by either the teacher or the student. It is not uncommon in many series today for questions to appear in the child's book as well as in the teacher's manual.

As the 19th century drew to a close, some rudimentary teacher's manuals began to appear. There were several reasons for their appearance at this time. First, professional books on teaching reading first appeared during this time period (Smith, 1965). Second, as the controversy grew over teaching methods, authors may have felt it necessary to delineate their viewpoints more clearly with regard to the children's readers they were publishing. Third, whereas in earlier years information had been disseminated to teachers and others interested in the teaching of children through lectures and sermons, people were now realizing that this could be done through books and a larger audience would be reached (Smith, 1965).

By 1910 it was increasingly rare to find a child's reader published without any teacher directions, although the earliest separate teacher's manuals generally had only one manual that covered the entire series (Elson, 1915). Between 1915 and 1925 major textbook companies began publishing one manual for each child's reader. Such manuals were brief in early series, usually 20 to 30 pages (Fassett, 1922; Elson and Runkel, 1921a).

In the early years of the twentieth century, manuals for children's readers could be purchased in many different forms. A separate manual could be purchased for each reader. This manual could be purchased hard-bound together with a copy of the child's reader, or it could be purchased separately as a paperback. A single paperback manual could be purchased, or several manuals from the same series could be purchased bound together in a variety of ways. Some were bound with primer through grade 4 in one volume, grades 5 through 7 in one volume, or grades 1 through 3 in one volume (Elson and Runkel, 1921a).

One major company titled early teacher's manuals *The Rural School Teacher's Manual* (Gray and Liek, 1931a). Did they consider that urban teachers had no need for a manual? This is a possibility, since many teachers in the early years of the twentieth century had very little training. The urban school districts paid more and therefore could be expected to attract more qualified people (Cubberley, 1920). Some paperback editions of teacher's manuals continued to be called *The Rural School Teacher's Manual* until the 1940's. From these small beginnings teacher's manuals have expanded until they are, in some cases, many pages longer than the children's reading material that they are intended to explain. This article attempts to delineate when, and in which areas of the reading program, changes occurred.

Areas of little change

These earliest manuals contained much that is found in today's manuals. There has been little change in areas such as lesson plan format, controlled vocabulary, and the proportionate amounts of teacher directions between grade levels.

Lesson plans. In the earliest manuals, one lesson plan followed another on the same page. No space was wasted. If Lesson 1 ended in the middle of the page, the directions for Lesson 2 began on the next line. Paragraphs were indented, but no other indenting was used. If there were six questions for the teacher to ask the children, all six were strung together in one paragraph; this contrasts with today's method of indenting each in a list-like format (Elson, 1915; Fassett, 1922). It is even common today to separate each question by double spacing. These changes over the years represented not so much an increase in quantity as an attempt to present a similar amount of material in a

different and presumably more convenient format. Changes over time appeared to be geared toward the convenience of the teacher in using the manual as a ready reference.

While the arrangement of words on the page changed dramatically over the years in the lesson plan section of the teacher's manual, the underlying content of the lesson plan has remained virtually unchanged from 1915 to the present (Aaron, et al., 1970; Durr and Pikulski, 1986; Elson, 1915; Elson and Gray, 1930; Gray and Gray, 1946b; McKee, Harrison, Lehr and Durr, 1966; Ousley and Russell, 1960). Lesson plans consisted of 4 or 5 steps: vocabulary/background; guided reading/comprehension questions; skills development; enrichment. Some teacher's manuals such as *Beacon Readers* (Ginn, 1921) arranged these components as text sections with all vocabulary/background for all lessons together (See Appendix A). Other manuals arranged all components of a lesson in one section and all components of the next lesson in the next section. This arrangement is used in most manuals today.

Vocabulary. Vocabulary was always controlled for beginning readers. This controlled vocabulary was usually eliminated from the series around the 3rd or 4th reader. Middle and upper grade teachers were encouraged to present stories in an order that suited their classroom rather than being constrained by the order of the reader.

Proportionate amount of teacher directions. Readers for the higher grades contained more lengthy passages; however, the amount of teacher directions per reader decreased. It appeared that the authors felt that teachers needed more information and materials for beginners. If today's readers are considered, this is still the

pattern. It is not uncommon to have seven readers for the first grade, each with its accompanying manual. At the sixth grade level, there is usually only one reader and one manual. The sixth grade manual is larger than any one of the first grade manuals, but when the first grade manuals are all considered together as one grade, they are about double the volume of the sixth grade manual.

Areas of major change

While different publishers have chosen different teaching methods according to their philosophies for how to best meet the needs of children, the net result in all cases has been the proliferation of materials and directions accompanying these materials. This is the largest change that has occurred in the development of teacher's manuals. These materials designed to meet the needs of individual children can be considered under the headings of more materials for beginning readers, more materials for older children, and multiethnic materials.

Beginning readers. The graded series which began to appear in the mid-1800's had one book for each grade in grades 1 through 6. Primers were also used for beginning readers from colonial times (Reeder, 1900). However, teacher's manuals in the early years of the twentieth century provided a section of suggestions to the teacher for how to prepare children for reading before they began the primer. This was called the preprimer section (Elson and Runkel, 1921b; Fassett, 1922).

Preprimers. In the 1920's children's readers were developed to accompany the preprimer section of the teacher's manual. These readers were called preprimers (Gray and Liek, 1931b). Preprimers gradually expanded until today a reading series commonly contains three similar

readers called preprimers (Allington et al., 1989; Pearson et al., 1989).

Prereaders. Prereaders were developed in the 1930's. These were workbooks designed to prepare children for reading. Prereaders contained pages which introduced the letters of the alphabet and exercises which were designed to teach reading skills such as left-to-right orientation — exercises which the authors felt would provide children with skills needed to be successful with reading (Elson, Gray, and Keck, 1937). In the 1930's teacher directions were found on the front and back inside covers of the child's book. There was one short paragraph for each page. Occasionally the directions for a certain page would refer the teacher to a "model" that had been presented for an earlier page. By the 1940's prereaders no longer contained teacher directions on the inside of the front and back covers. Instead, these directions were found in a separate section of the preprimer teacher's manual (Gray and Gray, 1946a; Russell and Ousley, 1948). By the 1950's prereaders had their own teacher's manuals. These manuals generally contained a full page of teacher directions for each page in the child's prereader (Arbutnot et al., 1956). Today, prereaders are usually called a kindergarten book or a readiness book (Allington et al., 1989; Durr and Pikulski, 1986; Pearson et al., 1989). Some reading series have both.

In the 1960's publishing companies began to develop "programs" for the kindergarten. What had formerly been one prereader with one teacher's manual now became a "kit" or set of materials. These sets often included such items as storybooks, children's activity kits, records, audio-tapes, and games. Some kits attempted to provide an entire kindergarten program instead of just the reading readiness

component (Aaron et al., 1970; Durr, Windley and Yates, 1976).

Selections. Both the number of reading selections available in each child's reader and the amount of supplementary materials that accompany each child's reader have increased greatly throughout the years. The largest increase in number of selections per reader occurred in the 1940's and 1950's. Although the number of children's readers for grades 4 – 8 remained the same, more stories were added to each reader with each series update (Gray and Gray, 1946b). The total number of selections nearly doubled between the years of 1940 and 1960 (Hildreth et al., 1940; McKee et al., 1951; O'Donnell and Carey, 1936; Ousley and Russell, 1960). As the content of the readers increased, the teacher's manuals grew accordingly. The 1970's and 1980's have seen a vast expansion in the availability of both materials and suggestions to teachers on how to use them (Aaron et al., 1978; Durr and Pikulski, 1986).

Supplementary materials. In the 1960's and 1970's supplementary materials proliferated. Workbooks increased in both size and number. Ditto masters were often available to provide remediation for children who were not working up to grade level expectations. These materials, of course, required page by page explanations in the teacher's manuals. This increased the size of the teacher's manual (Aaron et al., 1970, 1978; Allington et al., 1989; Durr and Pikulski, 1986). Occasionally separate manuals were provided for each supplement. By the 1980's some companies were providing not only a teacher's manual, but also a teacher's resource book or kit (Allington et al., 1989; Durr and Pikulski, 1986). Occasionally separate manuals were provided for each supplement. By the 1980's some companies were providing not only a teacher's manual, but also

a teacher's resource book or kit (Allington et al., 1989; Durr and Pikulski, 1986; Pearson et al., 1989). This resource book or kit contained information such as a program preview, scope and sequence charts, and placement tests to determine the reader in which a child could most profitably be placed. While the placement tests were a new development in the 1970's (Aaron et al., 1970; Durr, Windley and Yates, 1976; Early, Cooper, Santeusanio and Addell, 1970), much of the information in the resource guide had been found in teacher's manuals for many years. However, it was now presented in greater depth. Throughout the decade of the 1980's teacher's manuals *per se* have more and more been devoted simply to lesson plans to accompany the literary selections. As research has delineated skills involved in reading comprehension, publishing companies have responded by adding not only more skills, but varied ways of teaching those skills to meet the needs of all children — gifted children and children needing remediation, as well as children who are reading at grade level.

Multiethnic concerns. Prior to the 1960's, virtually all people depicted in children's readers were Caucasian. However, the civil rights movement worked for equality in education as well as other areas during the 1960's. Some series in the 1960's were published in two editions. One edition was multiracial and the other edition contained only Caucasian people (Artley, Monroe, and Robinson, 1964). This involved changing the pictures and in some cases, adding characters to the stories. The teacher's manuals, however, remained identical except where added characters had to be taken into account (see Appendix B). In the 1970's multiethnic editions which reflect our increasingly multiethnic society became the norm.

Conclusion

Teacher's manuals were developed in the early years of the twentieth century to provide teachers with information on how to present new teaching techniques in reading. Over the years, these manuals have continued to attempt not only to present new techniques and ideas in response to research but also to provide teachers with increased amounts of materials so that teachers can offer instruction to meet the needs of individual children. No manual can ever take the place of a well-prepared teacher, but most manuals provide suggestions and supplementary materials which can be valuable to teachers.

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Appendix A

This early teacher's manual (Ginn, 1921) covered grades 1-6 in one book. The Table of Contents (page vii) shows teacher directions for grades 1-3. Note that lessons for each year are divided in two main sections: "Reading and Expression" (guided reading/comprehension and enrichment) and "Phonics and Word Study" (vocabulary and enrichment). Page 121 gives teacher directions for three selections from the Beacon First Reader. This is from the "Reading and Expression" section.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	ix
CHAPTER	
I. THE ART OF READING	1
Oral and Silent Reading, 7. Standard Tests in Reading, 9.	
II. TEACHING BEGINNERS TO READ	11
The New Beacon Reading Chart and Primer, 11. The [Original] Beacon Reading Chart and Primer, 26.	
III. THE STUDY OF PHONICS	50
Monosyllables — for Primary Grades, 50. Polysyllables — for Intermediate Grades, 61. Terms Defined, 64.	
IV. THE TEACHING OF PHONICS	65
The New Beacon Phonetic Chart and Primer, 65. The Original Beacon Chart and Primer, 85.	
V. GAMES, DEVICES, AND PROBLEMS	88
For Drill Exercises, 88. For Seat Work, 97. Problems and Projects in Beacon Reading, 106.	
VI. SENSE TRAINING AND THE ELEMENTARY SOUNDS	108
Ear Training, 108. Voice Training, 111. Teaching the Elementary Sounds by Position, 113.	
VII. THE BEACON FIRST READER	118
Reading and Expression, 118. Phonics and Word Study, 124.	
VIII. THE SECOND YEAR WITH THE BEACON READING SYSTEM	127
Reading and Expression, 127. Phonics and Word Study, 133.	
IX. THE THIRD YEAR WITH THE BEACON READING SYSTEM	139
Reading and Expression, 139. Phonics and Word Study, 141.	

3. After the story has been thus prepared there should be a recitation for its real reading. At this time it is well for the pupil who reads to stand before the group and read in a way to entertain the others. Their books should be closed, so that the reader may feel that the others are relying on him for the story. Do not interrupt him to make corrections unless he needs help. For example, if he reads *said she* as though it were *she said*, pay no attention to the mistake. But if his error affects the sense of the sentence, it should be corrected before the child is excused.

The class should now be able to "dig out" the words containing a short vowel, and those with a long vowel spelled with final *e*. During the study lesson encourage the children to "sound out" words: but after the lesson has been studied and the children are ready to read it for enjoyment, as little delay on the words as possible should be permitted. If a child hesitates on a phonetic word, it is far better to assist him to get the word from the book than to write the word on the board and develop it in script form. The next time he comes to this word it will be in type, so the type form should be mastered.

The afternoon is the better time to study and read the stories from the First Reader. This leaves the more difficult lessons in phonics and phonetic application to be given from the blackboard and the Primer during the two morning periods. If the First Reader stories seem difficult, lay the book aside for a time and read an easy primer or two while the Beacon Primer is being completed. The Browne Readers, Book One, and the Field Primer fit in well at this point.

"The Old Woman and her Pig." Before this lesson is begun, the story should have been told several times, and the children should have been given an opportunity to play it. First turn the pages to study and enjoy the pictures. Let these help tell the story. "Notice the old woman talking to the ox, or to the rope. What is the cat on page 19 saying? Do you think the little pig

THE BEACON FIRST READER

121

understands her? See how intently he listens! What does a stile look like?" Make a definite point of studying the pictures as a means of story interpretation. It is sometimes possible for children to cut or color pictures illustrating some parts of the story that particularly please them (see Chapter V).

Proceed with the reading of "The Old Woman and her Pig" much as you did with "The Pancake" story, the children working out the lines independently and then answering well-framed questions to prove their knowledge of the story. Finally, have the story read in an intelligent manner. It may be well to delay the reading until the next day, leaving the children a little further time for study at their seats.

"The House that Jack Built." This story will require considerable study. If it is partially memorized as a preparation, all the better. The words listed will easily swing into the reading if the children know the rime fairly well. A drill on the past-tense verbs, page 156, will fit in here nicely. If the story seems too hard, no harm will result in delaying it for a time. The next lesson is merely a memory exercise. The children will enjoy reading it a little later. This is true also of other poems in the First Reader.

"Chicken Licken." This story is a great favorite. Study the pictures to get the movement of the story. Notice, on page 39, the crafty old fox leading the flock to his den. The proper names in this story are unimportant. The children will not meet many of them again. It is important, however, that the reading should move along smoothly. Because there are several quoted sentences, the class may be able to dramatize portions of the story. This phase of interpretation is very helpful in securing good expression.

"Titty Mouse and Tatty Mouse." It will require several days to read this story. The introductory words should be developed, as usual, at the outset.

Appendix B

Compare the two pictures on this page and the next. They appear in different 1965 editions of *Fun With Our Friends* (Scott Foresman, 1965). Though the pictures contain different children, the text of the teacher's manual (shown on page 224) is identical in the two editions.



“Happy birthday to you.
Happy birthday to you.
Happy birthday, dear Pete.
Happy birthday to you!”





“Happy birthday to you.
Happy birthday to you.
Happy birthday, dear Pete.
Happy birthday to you!”

—How can you tell how old Pete is?

—Why do you think Pete's mother decorated his cake with little animals?

—Why do Pete's friends have their mouths open so wide?

Since the last page will be singing in children's heads as they read, suggest they join the party and sing "Happy Birthday" to Pete.

draw reasonable conclusions...

join the party...

WHOLE STORY

Review details that gave this gathering of Dick, Jane, and Sally and their friends its special character.

—How could you tell as soon as the story started that it was going to be about a party?

—What did Pete's friends bring him?

—What did Pete's mother make especially for the party?

—What do you like best about a birthday party?

link story to personal experience.

Reactions will depend on whether a child takes the point of view of host or guest, and this should be brought to youngsters' attention as the discussion goes along.

Before the oral reading, ask the group to turn to page 75 and read the first sentence. Explain that this sentence tells how Pete felt. Have the last sentence on the page read and point out that it tells what happened. With the parts of all characters assigned and arrangements made for the reading of the first and last sentences on page 75, suggest that children remember their own pleasure in a party when they try to show what a good time everyone was having at Pete's.

read the story aloud.

Pupils who are using *Learn to Listen, Speak, and Write* have probably finished Book 1¹ of that series or have only one or two pages remaining. If so, they have discussed Jane's birthday party and have learned to write the phrase *Happy Birthday*. Let the youngsters demonstrate their skill by writing the greeting *Happy Birthday*, transcribing it from a model you write on the board. Some children may prefer to transcribe the first line of the birthday song from page 76 of the Primer. A few pupils may wish to make a birthday card for Pete and put it on the bulletin board.

write Happy Birthday.