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Round Robin

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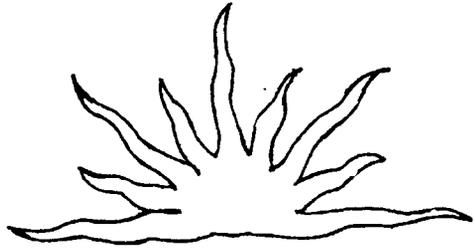
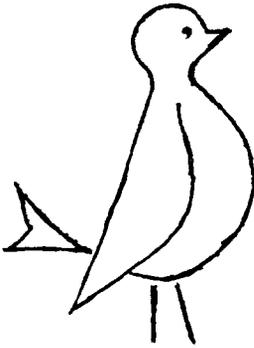


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ROUND ROBIN

Dorothy E. Smith, Editor

Academic questions come in varieties, just as flowers do. There is the annual variety; "does my class need a lesson in phonics today, or in spelling?," and there is the perennial variety; "what reading program will fit my students' needs best?"

I like the perennial questions. We can answer them and answer them, and yet they're with us still. The answers change, but the questions never do. Once in a great while a perennial question will fade away because the perfect answer is presented to us in full bloom; "what is the most important ingredient for teaching reading?" The unequivocal answer; "the teacher."

But most perennial questions remain, and the one stated earlier; "what reading program will fit my students' needs best," is the most ubiquitous variety extant. We ask the question and the answers come back thick and fast, and contradictory.

I asked a group of teachers what they thought of the reading program they were using. You might be interested in their answers. They've signed their names, but not their school systems, in deference to the need for job security.

S.R.A. Distar

I feel very positive about Distar.

The main advantages of the program are: (1) the CONTINUAL reinforcement, (2) small group instruction, (3) blending sounds.

I'm very partial to this program now that I'm working with remedial readers. These children have the "skills" but lack the ability to put them all together.

The main disadvantage of Distar is the fact that it takes four books for the teacher to manipulate to teach the lesson.

Diane Van Kampen

S.R.A. Basic Reading System

This is just one of a multitude of approaches that I use. It is a linguistic program and completely phonetic, except for some necessary sight words. I've found it to be valuable for the child who has been unsuccessful in the regular basal, but who can succeed when he/she can see a definite format and pattern for figuring out words. To make it successful requires a great deal of enthusiasm on the part of the teacher, because the stories themselves are not interesting (at least, not at the early levels which I use).

For bright children I don't think it would be appropriate, because of this lack of appeal. Even for remedial students I've found that it needs to be supplemented by some language experience so that the child can relate to the real function of language and the relationship between reading and normal conversation.

B. Suzanne Coleman

S.R.A. R.F.U. (Reading for Understanding)

Advantages—Students are able to work at their own pace.

Students can see their progress in comprehension.

Students are able to learn a type of study method because they read through the 10 questions first, then answer the questions.

Students' vocabulary is increased.

Disadvantages—Paragraphs are quite difficult to understand (large vocabulary).

Paragraphs are not interesting to 10th-12th graders.

The progress seems to take awhile and students are anxious to improve.

Students may strive for competition; however, I try to stress that they are simply improving themselves, not trying to compete with someone else.

Jill Jilek

Harcourt/Brace

From what I've seen of this basal reader, and from comments I've heard, I really like the books. The stories are very interesting, with varied topics, such as math, science, poems, and literature. They concentrate on decoding skills, sound-letter relationships, and contextual

clues. These skills are related to the stories. The books also have good illustrations.

Mike Howard

Harcourt/Brace Bookmark Series

I feel the advantages of this series is the use of leveling, the design of the readers so the primary levels can be used with older children. The skills are taught from phonics, linguistics and structural analysis. I really enjoy the organization of the skills lessons. The skill is introduced by the teacher followed up by the workbook—checked by a ditto sheet and if necessary retaught or reinforced by various means suggested in the manual.

The manual also has excellent enrichment suggestions. *The kids seem to like the series* even after 2 years.

In the intermediate levels, the vocabulary items and content of books are much more difficult. The print is considerably smaller. I like the fact that literature and skills are taught separately so that reading is still enjoyed. The skills are applied to all areas of the academics taught in elementary school. The skills book reinforces some skills taught in the text and introduces some others.

The tests do not reflect the emphasis of the text.

Judy Moeller

Holt, Rinehart, and Winston

This series has fantastic stories and an excellent teacher's guide. A wide variety of "extras" is included with every lesson so you can extend beyond the series easily. If the instructional aids are purchased, they go along beautifully with the work and add variety.

The disadvantages I have found include: over testing, and over stress on word endings to the point of confusing the children. The first book is too easily memorized.

Wendy Bull

In the next issue there will be more discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the various approaches to reading. Your reactions and comments are welcome.