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## Round Robin

Dorothy E. Smith

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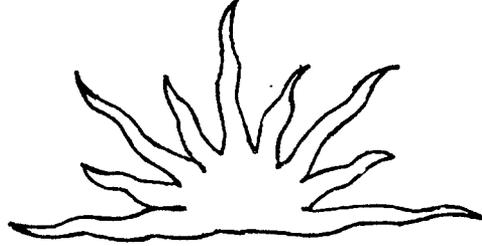
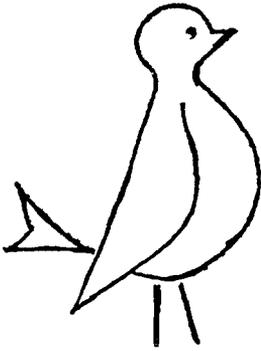
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## ROUND ROBIN

*Dorothy E. Smith, Editor*

Dear Readers,

Below are two statements of opinion on the ever-present question of Phonics or Not Phonics. What do you think?

Dear Editor:

“THIS I BELIEVE . . . . .

The purpose of phonics instruction, as it relates to reading, is to provide the reader with the ability to pronounce or to approximate the pronunciation of any word he meets in reading, which he does not know as a sight word. Phonics does not constitute a total method for teaching the complicated process called reading.

The question is often asked as to the teaching of phonics separately or as an integrated part of reading. As I stated above phonics is part of an overall curriculum. It is not a subject in itself as music, or mathematics, or science so often tends to be. It's difficult to say “THIS” is phonics, “THIS” is reading . . . they go together.

Phonics is a means used by the teacher to reach an end, reading. She uses her text or texts as tools in helping all individuals master the technique of reading. It can be used at other times during the school day, as can music, mathematics, and science. The creative teacher can and does correlate all subjects into one over-all learning experience.

When one starts separating phonics and reading, I feel, the goal has been thwarted or even lost. Application and immediate use is necessary. One can read—even memorize—the multipli-

cation tables, but unless the user can put them to work—SOON—the time spent has been wasted.

Drill with intent to improve is practice. If rules and various lessons are presented to the student without proper direction, all that should be gain will be pure waste. A drill for drill's sake . . . I say no. But drill for the need of keeping lessons fresh in mind is good! And this drill doesn't mean a boring, unstimulating, and unchallenging part of the day. It can be the dessert for the day . . . limited only by the teacher's and the pupils' imagination.

And I do not feel there is one set way to teach phonics. Teachers are human beings working with little human beings; and humans vary. Research has shown that there are several approaches to teaching phonics, but who is to say, "This is the Way for all?"

Our class has even proven that this just doesn't happen. Out of eleven teachers, various methods are used and evidently, there is success. But the actual process depends upon the school, the students, the teacher, and the way these elements are worked together.

Regardless of our methods, or our creativeness, or our individual personalities, or our own preferences, we all want to accomplish the same task—teach children. We are the cogs about which our nation's children turn; we must make sure each one of them will continue to turn and seek out new horizons.

If children lack the proper tools with which to work, they will be handicapped in their efforts to learn to read. Phonics is simply a basic method of word attack which permits the child to translate written symbols into spoken sounds. By teaching him a few sounds at a time and helping him to recognize them in varied combinations, we equip him with the skill and confidence that makes life an enjoyable and joyful experience.

It is up to me, it is up to every teacher to believe . . ."

Jane Ropp  
Sturgis, Michigan

Dear Editor:

Reading to me is the most important skill one should master. It is known that there is a close connection between being able

to read well, success in school and success in life. Reading broadens horizons, builds background, develops moral and spiritual values, helps language development, increases the desire to read, and entertains.

I believe this skill should begin to be developed not later than first grade, and for those who are eager and ready kindergarten is not too soon; even some pre-schoolers are ready. Picture reading should begin as a child can sit on one's lap looking at colorful pages. Parents as a rule do not do enough to foster their children's urge to read. Teachers are handicapped in doing their best by lack of time and pressures from many sources. It is difficult to know the child's history and the best means of approach for that child.

Several methods have been tried in the past, sight reading, use of phonics, the alphabet, and then words. None of these methods in themselves are a success. To me the better part of each should be correlated and used. For instance, I believe reading and phonetics should be used together and not always treated as two individual subjects.

I believe that the basic skills of reading such as letter sounds, a large sight vocabulary, good habits of posture, use of books, speed and fluency of silent reading, skill of comprehension, should be well covered during the first three years of school. After that, students should review these and branch out into an area of wider reading and varied interests. Better comprehension, word and sentence structure should be learned in later elementary grades.

Reading should be a pleasant experience, something of interest and not too difficult. Every child differs in his needs and the way he should approach this learning. The teacher should be aware of the fact that every child needs love and affection, a feeling of belonging, real achievement and much success. I recently learned this little message:

Talking is not teaching.  
Listening is not learning.  
Reading is not studying.  
We learn by doing.

Ruth Lehmer  
Sturgis, Michigan