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ABSTRACT

The acquisition of thinking skills is being stressed today by educators in all fields. There are, however, no clear and concise concepts of the different faces of comprehension which deal with higher mental processes. If the thinking skills are to be implemented, certain objectives must first be met: more research must be conducted in regard to the development of the thinking skills in connection with reading content; techniques in stimulating depth reading must be improved; and there must be an understanding of why studies show that children are not doing well in grasping meanings in reading. Comprehension has taken on many indistinct and overlapping meanings since it first became a facet of reading about 50 years ago; therefore, the author suggests that comprehension be divided into four distinct categories of thinking skills: (1) literal comprehension, the skill of getting the primary, literal meaning; (2) interpretation, the probing for greater depths of meaning; (3) critical reading, the evaluating and passing of personal judgment; and (4) creative reading which starts with an inquiry and goes beyond implications derived from the text. References are included. (NH)

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# THE MANY FACES OF READING COMPREHENSION



Confuscious, the famous Chinese scholar and teacher once wrote: "Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous."

It has been more than 2000 years since Confuscious expressed these ideas about the relationships of thought and learning. Other great philosophers have expressed similar ideas throughout the ages. Yet the implementation of their recommendation has scarcely been discernable in the teaching of reading even as century after century has passed by.

At the present moment we have one era of reading instruction that is in full bloom, another that is well on the way, and a third that is in the embryonic stage. Those who are helping to push the new era that is on its way, are urging vigorously that we couple thought and reading, that we go far beyond the stage of picking up what the book says, and use our higher mental processes in thinking about what it says. Contemporary educators are expressing themselves in dramatic and concrete ways in their attempts to spur us on in this direction.

Edgar Dale (4) says it dramatically in this way:

"...We suffer from hardening of the categories. Our mental filing system, filled with arid, unrelated facts, becomes rigid and inflexible. Further, the movement from concrete to abstract learning requires...a concern with the higher mental processes. Instead of accepting and learning what the book says, students must analyze what the author meant, compare and contrast it with their own experiences--synthesize, evaluate, apply."

Jacques Barzun (1) in urging an emphasis on thinking in education, explains the process of thinking in this very concrete way.

"Thinking is doing to a fact or an idea, what we do to beefsteak when we distribute its parts throughout our body. We are presumably stronger and better for it, readier for attack and defense, as well as more competent to assimilate more of the same protein without strain."

So it is that the thinking skills are being stressed by educators in all fields and we are being told repeatedly that our present students, who are facing the vissitudes of a changing, uncertain world cannot rely, on the accumulated experience of mankind; nor will it do them any good to ignore situations, shrink from decisions or retreat in confusion. We as teachers in general know full well that we should be teaching children to think, that we should be providing practice to develop thinking skills higher than those involved in memorization. We as reading teachers know that communication is the best medium for developing thinking skills, and that reading content is the richest and most rewarding of all the communication media to use for this purpose. Reading content reposes in a bed of details not present in mass communication media, and these details offer stepping stones to the reader in aiding him to go over, beyond and above what the mere words may say. Teachers of reading truly have the best medium in the world to use as a vehicle in developing these higher intellectual processes. As yet, however, possibilities of doing this have not been adequately explored. We do not have clear and concise concepts of the different faces of comprehension which deal with the

higher mental processes, nor do we have adequate procedures to serve us in providing practice on these specific processes in connection with reading content.

## NEEDS FOR MORE EMPHASIS ON HIGHER MENTAL PROCESSES IN READING

Several needs must be met if we are really to implement the thinking skills objective of this emerging period. Some of these needs will be enumerated.

### More Research is Needed

It is to be regretted that more research is not being conducted in regard to the development of the thinking skills in connection with reading content. We're going all out in research on decoding, the disadvantaged, perception, etc. These are important areas for investigation but the thinking processes, in reading are also important. It is discouraging to find that during the last few years comprehension has dropped to a new low in terms of number of studies reported.

As an example of reduced current research in this area we might refer to the latest summaries of reading research appearing in the March, 1969 Journal of Educational Research and the February, 1969 Reading Research Quarterly. In the Quarterly, Robinson et al (9) reported 374 researches, only two of which had to do with "Interpretation" which term of course connoted comprehension. In the Journal, Harris et al (6) summarize only three studies dealing with comprehension out of a total of 194. Hence the proportion of the number of studies reported on comprehension is pitifully small in comparison with that dealing with other topics.

Comprehension is the very heart of the reading act. There is no use of reading unless one understands the meanings. Could it be that investigators think that comprehension has already been researched to its limits? That there is very little new to be explored in this area? If so, I, personally, cannot agree with them. With this strong present movement in education toward the development of inquiry, questioning, reasoning, evaluating, we in the field of reading, have an entirely new horizon opened up to us. We must find out how better to use the content of reading in developing ability to think in depth. An exciting frontier beckons to those who would like to ascertain which of the higher mental processes

best lend themselves to development in reading, and what procedures are most effective in developing these processes with different students at all levels.

## Need for Improved Techniques in Stimulating Depth Reading

Teachers questions are probably used more than any other technique in attempts to develop comprehension.

What kind of questions are teachers asking? A study by Guszak (5) reported in the March, 1969 Journal of Educational Research provides some insight that helps to answer this question. Guszak visited and recorded teachers questions on assigned reading in second, fourth and sixth grade classrooms. He concluded: (1) that literal questions were most frequently asked across all grade levels, (2) that more incorrect answers to questions were accepted as correct by teachers in the fourth and sixth grade than in the second, and (3) that the dominant pattern of interaction at all grade levels was a teachers question followed by a single congruent response from a pupil.

According to this study, plus our own common knowledge, teachers of reading generally are asking literal comprehension questions and devoting little or often no attention to discussion. Under this condition how can we expect to develop use of the higher thinking processes in connection with reading content?

## Needs of Children in Understanding Reading

A third need for greater emphasis on depth in reading is found in results of studies showing that children are not doing well in grasping meanings in reading.

I will refer to one of the latest and most comprehensive investigations in regard to this matter. Bormuth (3) conducted a study designed to ascertain student's ability to comprehend at different levels--primary, intermediate, junior high and high school levels. Among his conclusions he made these statements:

"For many years reading experts and educators in general have maintained that

the ultimate objective of reading instruction was to enable the child to understand what he read and not just to enable him to call the words on the page. And they have argued that this is the objective upon which we should expend our major efforts, since it is only through the child's use of these skills that he is able to acquire much of the knowledge he will need throughout his life. On the whole, this argument seems well reasoned."

"But when we examine how well this goal is being accomplished we find a rather discouraging situation. Children are not able to read their instructional materials well enough to gain much information from them until they reach high school. Even in high school a large proportion of the materials remain essentially incomprehensible to a large proportion of the students. Furthermore, the apparently improved ability of the high school student may, in fact, have resulted merely because the less able students, the students who were unable to read well enough to learn the content of their instruction, have failed in school, dropped out, and are no longer present to pull down the average performance to its true level."

"A more detailed analysis of children's comprehension skills showed that in the fourth grade a great many of the children were unable to exhibit comprehension of even the simplest structures by which language signals information."

In discussing his study Bormuth says further: "...An analysis of the materials used to teach comprehension skills and of the curriculum guides and textbooks which instruct the teacher in how to teach the skills, tend to suggest that there is no clear concept of what skills are to be taught. Furthermore, the teaching procedures described are described only in the vaguest terms."

"In the final analysis, we cannot, at present, definitely reject or disapprove procedures for teaching reading comprehension, but we must voice grave doubts about their efficacy. And we can definitely say that they do not produce sufficient

results to enable children to profit from much of their reading."

I have now indicated some of the urgent needs in developing thinking skills in reading. Comprehension is a complex process, and its faces are multiple and divergent. Research on reading in depth is much too scant; the thinking skills involved are not as specifically delineated as we would like to have them; effective methodology in this area is limited. With these thoughts in mind I shall devote the remainder of my talk in an attempt to sort out and label the thinking skills, and to give constructive suggestions for developing these skills in the classroom.

## RECOGNIZING MANY FACES OF COMPREHENSION

First we must realize that reading instruction had no comprehension face at all until about fifty years ago. The corpus of reading instruction up until 1915 to 1925 was that of teaching word recognition. When a child had learned to pronounce the words in reading the teaching objective had been met.

Then suddenly standardized tests were developed. In order to use these tests in reading it was now necessary to ask questions on content rather than having children read orally. They did poorly and everyone now became excited about teaching them to get the thought, and the term "comprehension" came into our reading vocabulary for the first time. We have used this terminology indiscriminately ever since and in my opinion this omnibus term of "comprehension" has stood in the way of developing true depth in reading, which makes use of the many different thinking processes. In general comprehension has meant to most people literal comprehension--giving back what the book says.

With the emergence of the present new period in reading instruction under the general educational influence of placing emphasis on the thinking skills, comprehension which first stuck its head above the surface in the 1920's seems not to have developed many faces, at least vocabulary-wise and it appears to be revolving around so fast that all of the faces are blurred and merging and overlapping,

and the features of none are clear-cut or distinct. We hear of literal comprehension, factual reading, close reading, inferences, interpretation, critical reading, creative reading, etc. etc. Comprehension has, indeed, become a many-splendored, many-faced thing.

It is good that we have advanced beyond our first concept of comprehension. Many people however, seem to be taking just one step in extending their concept of this process. They recognize only two faces of comprehension. They teach the literal comprehension face in which the child gives back what the book says. Then they make some effort to recognize a second face which they call "inferences." This term is altogether too broad. There are many different kinds of inferences that make use of different thinking skills. This inference face should be broken down into several other faces.

I have spoken of people who recognize only the two faces of comprehension which they call "literal comprehension" and "inferences." Others and probably a larger group recognize two faces only, which they call "literal comprehension" and "critical reading." This phrase "critical reading" has come to be a sort of a catch slogan. Many are using this term about as indiscriminatively as the broad term of "comprehension" has been used in the past. Critical reading is used very generally to include all of the thinking skills.

If we are to break down these big "lump-sum" concepts into a variety of thinking processes, in order to distribute practice over different ones of them, we need to know what the thinking skills are. Some people have analyzed the thinking process into separate skills and listed them. Here is one such list:

"1. Memory: The pupil recalls or recognizes information.

2. Translation: The pupil changes information into a different symbolic form or language.

3. Interpretation: The pupil discovers relationships between facts, generalizations, definitions, values, and skills.

4. Application: The pupil solves a lifelike problem that requires the identification of the issue and the selection and use of appropriate

generalizations and skills.

5. Analysis: The pupil solves a problem through his conscious knowledge of the parts of thinking.
6. Synthesis: The pupil solves a problem that requires original, creative thinking.
7. Evaluation: The pupil makes a judgment of good or bad, or right or wrong, according to designated standards." (2)

I know of a situation in which teachers are given this list and told to ask questions in each of these categories in their reading lessons. The list has the advantage of presenting a diversity of skills to be developed. The teachers tell me, however, that they can't remember this long list; that they can't clearly distinguish between some of the categories; that they can't think of questions for some of them; and that some of the items are rarely, perhaps never, applicable to the reading that the children are doing.

I gave this example to indicate that a long list of higher mental processes, does not seem to be very helpful to teachers in providing practice on depth skills in reading. In the interest of attempting to offer some practical, down-to-earth assistance to the classroom teacher I would like to suggest some models for reference, in conducting meaning-getting discussion of reading content. The four models or categories of skills which I shall suggest are broad enough to include all of the thinking skills usually listed by psychologists, each category covers a cluster of these skills; the categories are clearly differentiated one from the other; they are applicable to most any selection in any book; and teachers can easily grasp and apply them. I have been using these with classroom teachers for several months now and they really work. These four categories are (1) literal comprehension, (2) interpretation, (3) critical reading, and (4) creative reading. Many teachers with whom I have been working have used these models in formulating questions and making statements designed to stimulate discussion which

would give practice on a planned variety of thinking skills rather than just asking questions hit or miss which may give practice on one or two thinking skills over and over again at the neglect of the others.

Literal Comprehension

The first category "literal comprehension" is a term which I have mentioned several times before. This category doesn't include the thinking skills. Teachers don't need special help on this, I include it, however, as a contrast to the other categories which I shall describe and because after all it does have a place in meaning gathering.

I like to define literal comprehension as the skill of getting the primary, direct literal meaning of a word, idea, or sentence in context. There is no depth in this kind of reading. It is the lowest rung in the meaning-getting ladder, yet it is the one on which teachers of the past have given the most practice, and on which the most still are devoting the preponderance of their comprehension efforts. A teacher gives practice in literal comprehension when she asks, "With what was Johnny playing?" and the pupil answers, "With his red fire engine," these are the exact words given in the book. Giving this answer requires no thinking. Such a question simply demands the pupil to recall from memory what the book says, simply asks him to repeat parrot-like the words that are in the book.

Throughout the elementary grades and high school, practice in literal comprehension dominates practice on the meaning-getting skills because the following techniques are so widely used: (1) fact questions based directly on the text, (2) true-false statements, (3) completion sentences, (4) multiple-choice exercises. These objective techniques used in standardized tests, informal tests, discussions, and assignments give practice in literal comprehension, but they do little or nothing to develop the ability to use the thinking skills in obtaining deeper meanings.

Interpretation

Interpretation is the label for a very usable category of thinking skills, which should be emphasized in reading. This term could be used in a sense broad enough to cover all of the thinking skills. But teachers of reading need something more definitive, they need categories which are sharply differentiated from one another. If the whole set of thinking skills were included under the term of "interpretation" or "inferences" some of the most distinctive and desirable skills would probably become smothered and obscured.

In general, it may be said that interpretation probes for greater depth than literal comprehension. It is concerned with supplying meanings not directly stated in the text.

For example, in a third grade class the children were reading a ship story. Among other things there was a sentence saying, "The captain swung himself up on to the roof of the cabin." The teacher asked "Where did the captain swing himself?" This was a literal comprehension question. Instead she might have used a question which would have given the children a chance to think. She might have said, "Can you give a reason why he went up on the roof?" or, "The sentence says he swung himself up on the roof. Can you tell just how he got up there?"

This is a very simple example. As children progress through the grades and secondary school, text becomes more complex and opportunities for interpretation experiences may increase rapidly, if teachers of all subjects are watching for chances to stimulate their students in the use of their thinking skills.

Interpretation involves a cluster of several different kinds of thinking skills, such as: (1) making generalizations, (2) reasoning cause and effect, (3) anticipating endings, (4) making comparisons, (5) sensing motives, (6) discovering relationships.

These are important skills that the teacher should have in mind in teaching

students to read in depth. He should raise the level of understanding far above literal comprehension, guiding it and directing it into interpretation of deeper meanings.

## Critical Reading

A third cluster of thinking skills that are over, above and apart from those ... interpretation as I see it, fall under the heading of critical reading. The critical reading skill category is the one most direly in need of development in American life at the present time, and I deplore the fact that many are using the term as a general heading, under which to classify all of the thinking skills, ever used by human beings. Critical reading in my opinion should be singled out for its own area of devleopment, and for practice on its own specific thinking skills.

Critical reading is the third level in the hierarchy of reading for meaning skills. According to my thinking critical reading includes literal comprehension and interpretation as previously defined, but it goes further than either of these in that the reader evaluates, passes personal judgment on the quality, the value, the accuracy and the truthfulness of what is read. These skills should not be included under interpretation. They belong specifically to critical reading.

The distinction is appropriate in terms of the meaning of the word critical, an adjective derived from the noun critic, which in turn has as one of its foreign source the Greek word krinein meaning "to judge, discern."

One dictionary definition of critical is "exercising or involving careful judgment; exact; nicely judicious as a critical examination." Another dictionary defines critical as "to judge with severity."

Critic is defined as "one who expresses a reasoned opinion..on any matter... involving a judgment of its value, truth or righteousness..." Criticism is defined as "A critical observation or judgment"; and criticize is defined thus, "To examine and judge as a critic."

According to the established meaning of the word then, critical reading would seem to be, the kind of reading in which the reader, gives his personal reaction to the text, passes his personal judgment upon it.

Critical thinking and critical reading can be cultivated in very young children. For example, Susan and other first graders were reading a story in their primers about a dog riding downhill in a cart. The accompanying picture showed the dog riding down the steep hill all by himself in the cart. A girl standing at the top of the hill had evidently given the cart a push. Susan blurted out, "This is foolish. A dog wouldn't sit in a cart and ride downhill like this. He'd jump out. My dog won't even sit in a cart and let me pull him around in the yard." Susan was doing critical reading. She was evaluating in terms of personal experience.

Throughout the elementary grades, students giving such evidences of critical thinking and reading should be warmly commended, and other students encouraged to do likewise.

In later grades planned experiences in critical reading may be provided, for example, developing with the class criteria in regard to the author's background, position, experience with the subject, prejudices, etc.; holding panel discussions, supported by reference to readings; evaluating news items, editorials, cartoons, and advertisements in terms of propaganda techniques. There is a very fertile field for critical reading at the secondary level.

## Creative Reading

The term "creative reading" is frequently used in as broad a sense as "inferences," "critical reading" and other current popular terms which many have fallen into the habit of employing as one label to cover all thought processes in reading. Creative reading accompanies and grows out of literal comprehension, interpretation or critical reading, but it is different from any one of these. As is the case

with these other kinds of reading, how is the teacher going to stimulate or encourage this thing called creative reading if she doesn't know what it is?

Creativity is a pretty involved subject with roots deep down in psychology. An adequate discussion of the creative act is quite complicated. It is a fascinating subject though and if some of you would like to read more about it, I have listed some good references. I recommend that you delve into these. (8, 10, 11, 12)

As a starting point, however, I would like to describe creative reading in such very simple terms, that a teacher can immediately see the difference between this kind of reading, and the other kinds that I have mentioned. First by way of contrast we should consider that in literal comprehension the student tries to get the direct meaning of the author who wrote the text; in interpretation he tries to supply meanings to complete the author's text, in critical reading he evaluates, passes judgment on the author's text and goes out on his own, beyond the author's text to seek out or express new ideas, to gain additional insights, to find the answer to a question or the solution to a life-like problem. (Incidentally, I include problem-solving in creative reading because in this mental activity the individual goes beyond the text to think toward a solution creatively.)

Creative reading in its higher form starts with a question or an inquiry which arises in the mind of the reader, personally, and is usually carried forward with high motivation, often a sense of urgency. We can't expect this higher type of creative reading to happen in the classroom very often, unless the teacher does something to develop it. Since inquiry is the starting point of creative reading, the teacher may ask questions which cause children to go beyond direct implications gathered from the text, at least calling for creative thinking; and she can encourage children, themselves, to ask questions. Once she develops the process of inquiry within children themselves, creative reading is apt to follow, and when it does follow it should be praised highly.

I have now tried to describe four different faces of comprehension which together include all of the thinking processes listed by psychologists, and to offer them as models to assist teachers in differentiating between the various kinds of reading, thus resulting in an increased possibility at least of providing children experiences in the use of the many different thinking skills in reading.

By way of illustration I will now give one short and extremely simple example of how a teacher might give a class experience in using thinking skills involved in all four categories that I have discussed.

The children were reading a story about a little girl named Ruth who was left at home to take care of her younger brother while her mother went away somewhere. The youngster wanted a cooky to eat. The cooky jar was kept on the basement steps. Ruth opened the door to the basement, and stepped down to get a cooky. At that moment little brother slammed the door shut. It had a snaplock so Ruth was locked in the basement when she was supposed to be upstairs taking care of little brother. She began to puzzle over her predicament. Finally she asked little brother to take the receiver off the phone and say "16 Wood Street" over and over again. This he did. The operator hearing a child's voice repeating this address, suspected trouble and sent a policeman to the address and he let Ruth out of the basement.

Now for the four different types of meaning questions:

Literal comprehension: "What did little brother want to eat?"

Interpretation: "Why was the cooky jar kept on the basement steps?"

Critical reading: "Did mother do the right thing in leaving the children alone?"

Creative thinking: "How would you have solved this problem?"

Some printed materials are very helpful in giving practice in thinking in reading, and this is good. The development of the many different thinking processes in reading, however, depends largely upon the teacher who knows and

recognizes these different processes. Thinking is a personal matter. It varies with different groups and different individuals within groups. So the best guarantee for development of the thinking skills is an informed, understanding teacher to guide and encourage students to invent questions as well as to answer them; to reflect, infer and predict; to string togehter beads of information in arriving at generalizations; to aid independence in thinking; to foster creativity; to nourish values; and to refine sensitivities. The main part of the responsibility of developing the thinking skills in reading rests with the teacher.

Now I should like to tell you a beautiful story. It has to do with reading, of course.

## POOR ROOP[8]

Once upon a time, in the tiny kingdom of Roop, there ruled a king named Esiw. Although his kingdom was poor, Esiw desired above all else to be known as the wisest and greatest king in all the land. He searched most of his days for that one magnificent deed, that would make his subjects, fondly remember him forever. In the twilight of his life, a famous wizard attended King Esiw's court. The wizard informed the king, that knowledge was the noblest gift that he could bestow upon the citizenry of Roop. The wizard promised that Esiw would be known eternally as "Esiw the Wise" if all his subjects could somehow be taught to read during his reign.

At this time the king was much too old to travel, but he had a son named John whom he dearly loved and trusted. King Esiw called his son to him.

"Johnny," he said, "before I die there is but one request I make of you. Go out into the world, and find a way, to teach all my people to read. This is the noblest gift that I can give them. If you accomplish this task, then my kingdom will soon be yours. Son, I'll not rest until I know that my Johnny, and all of my people are able to read!"

Prince John loved his father and wished to please him. He also sincerely desired to be king. He accepted King Esiw's challenge and set off to seek his fortune. As he walked down the lane, he met a man in resplendent attire.

"Hold, fair prince, listen to what I have to offer. My name is g.r.k. Your great quest has reached my ears, and I am here to offer you the treasure you seek. My method will teach everyone in the kingdom of Roop, the value of books. It is called the Great Reading Key. It guarantees that everyone can learn to read. Not only will they learn rapidly, but they will advance far beyond your fondest dreams. My prince, the method is yours for just 500 pieces of gold a year. I guarantee that the citizenry of Roop will read by my method. They may not understand what they read, but they will read. You need seek no further. Swing 'n' sway with g.r.k., my dear Prince John!"

"Thank you, kind sir," said the prince politely, "but I must travel on and investigate other mehtods. You see, we're poor in Roop, and we poor Roops must receive the most for our poor Roop Roopees."

Some miles farther the prince encountered another man.

"Hold, fair prince, listen to what I have to offer. My name is Oro. Your great quest has reached my ears, and I am here to offer you the golden treasure you seek. It is called the Oral Reading Orientation Method. My system is completely housed in kits called Oro Kits. One kit for every thirty subjects should do the trick. You'll not go wrong by listening to me. My method is simple and guarantees results. It's yours for just 400 pieces of gold--each kit, that is. Remember, Prince Johnny, we have a kit for everything. 'Our kits fit,' I always say. Why! with my system no one will ever again ask why Prince Johnny can't read."

"Thank you, sir," said the prince politely, "but I must travel on to investigate other methods."

Later in the day, Prince John met a beautiful, seductive young lady.

"Hold, handsome prince, listen to what I have to offer. My name is Sulle, and only I have the great treasure you seek. My system is called the Sulle Moon-June-Spoon Method. Each child may learn to read at his own rate. Look, my young, handsome, charming Prince Johnny, at the beautiful colors we use and the fine book bindings. You may go home a tremendous success if you take my advice. You, sweet prince, may have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for only 500 pieces of silver, and my free personal instructions."

"Thank you, fair damsel," said Prince John shyly, "but I must travel on. I must make very certain that I choose the right method for my poor Roop."

"If you have doubts, sire, let me tell you of our extra refresher system. We call it the Dandy Candy Approach. The student gives the correct response and he receives a piece of candy. Clever? Our clients may have rotten teeth, but they can read."

"Thank you, but really I must continue my journey."

For the next few years, steady, determined Prince John visited many lands, where he observed a multitude of reading techniques. He listened to people explain the Crawl Approach where learned men insisted that everyone could learn to read if he had learned to crawl properly as an infant. They suggested that every citizen of Roop practice crawling for six months, before receiving reading instruction.

Another group of specialists described the Tiddledywink System. If the student gave the proper response, he received a tiddledy; if he gave an improper response he received a wink. Prince John viewed reversed and shuffled alphabet approaches. He studied the prenatal reading method while visiting the exotic Isle of Belli. He met a man who suggested that he consider his new esthetic Shot in the Arm system. He witnessed the natural learning process, the chart process, the colorbook method, and many, many more. Each promoter guaranteed wondrous results.

Weary, defeated, and thoroughly confused, our fair Prince John returned to

Roop to face King Esiw's wrath. He had travelled only a few miles into the Land of Roop, however, when noticed a small school nestled in a tiny valley. He paused to watch in wonderment for a long while, because it appeared to him that the children were eagerly engaged in learning. As the happy students left for home, he approached the teacher. "Pardon me," said the Prince. "Your students appear to enjoy learning. May I ask what method you use? Is it the Swing 'n' Sway with g.r.k., the Moon-June-Spoon, the Oro Fit Kit, the Dandy Candy Approach, the Crawl, the Belli, or the Tiddledywink method?"

"None, poor man" (she had not recognized her Prince John), "you see, I don't teach a method. I teach a child. I use whatever means it takes to teach children to read. Some need security while others need humility. Some need affection while others need discipline. Some simply need to be exposed and guided to books. There are as many ways to teach reading as there are children. Learning to read is something like climbing a ladder. Some children climb a rung at a time. Others are able to skip rungs and rush to the top. Some never reach the top. Each climber climbs in his own way and at his own rate."

The prince and the teacher talked at length. Finally, Prince John revealed his majestic identity, by solemnly displaying the royal signet ring. He then commanded the awestruck school teacher to accompany him to the castle, of great King "Esiw the Wise." He had found, the one best way to teach reading, a dedicated, perceptive, enthusiastic teacher.

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