

# THE WALDORF APPROACH TO WRITING & READING in GRADES 1 & 2

with special reference to teaching children from  
non-English speaking homes



WRITTEN FOR

THE EAST AFRICAN WALDORF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

BY

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This manual is indebted to the Waldorf tradition of teaching according to the principles of Rudolf Steiner (1862 – 1925), as developed by many generations of teachers. I would like to make specific mention of two colleagues at Michael Oak Waldorf School, Kenilworth, Cape Town, who have helped to develop the approaches to teaching writing and reading in the early history of the school at which I have been a teacher for many years: Marion Penfold and Sally von Holdt.

I wish to appreciate the support and guidance of Peter van Alphen. A big thank you also goes to Beulah Reeler who provided books and notes that were most useful.

Catherine van Alphen

## ***The East African Waldorf/Steiner Teacher Development Programme***

The East African teacher development programme was started by the late Adeline Mlai, a Tanzanian, in Dar-es-Salaam in 1997. Adeline recognised the developmental value of Waldorf education and invited Peter van Alphen and Ann Sharfman, teacher educators with experience working in African settings in Cape Town, South Africa, to start a teacher development programme in Dar-es-Salaam. This programme was set up for teachers from Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

After the first year, difficulties securing the funds for continuing the programme were experienced, and in 1999 the programme was relocated to Nairobi, Kenya, as a more central venue for the three countries. The Rudolf Steiner School in Mbagathi was able to secure funding for its continuation, and in the eleven years that followed an ever-increasing number of teachers from East African countries joined the programme.

Our grateful thanks go to GLS Zukunftsstiftung Entwicklung (Bochum, Germany) and Freunde der Erziehungskunst Rudolf Steiners (Berlin, Germany) for their continued support of the programme from 1999. We also wish to thank Sanduko a Ndege (Vejle, Denmark), Internationaal Hulpfonds (Amsterdam, Netherlands), Acacia (Basel, Switzerland) and Stichting Helias (Netherlands) for their additional support.

### ***About this Manual***

This manual answers the need for teachers (or student-teachers) to have notes on the modules they attend. This manual is written for Primary School teachers doing Module 3, which follows on the second module of the program in which a detailed study of Rudolf Steiner's concept of child development was given. Details of curriculum were included, to show how it was developed out of an understanding of the development and needs of the children at each age.

This manual is intended to guide teachers through the difficult task of teaching English in Grades 1 and 2. The focus has been placed on classes of non-English speakers who have to learn in English as their main language.

However, the manual will also be found to be useful for teachers who have classes that are learning in the home language, but need to learn English as second language. In this case the manual can be used to give ideas for teaching English, ignoring the indications for in which Grades what has to be taught.

This manual is intended to be handed out at the end of the module for revision and further study. The suggestion is that participants study together in groups in their respective schools. We trust that the material provided will be useful in Waldorf training programmes in many countries around the world. Comments and suggestions are welcomed, and can be sent to Peter van Alphen on [petervera@mweb.co.za](mailto:petervera@mweb.co.za).

# The Waldorf Approach to Writing and Reading in Grades 1 & 2

*with special reference to teaching children  
from non-English speaking homes*

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## Introduction: The Power of Language

Throughout Africa, and in many places around the world, children are being educated through the medium of a language that is not their mother tongue. To use an example of a Waldorf School in Alexandra, Johannesburg, South Africa, a teacher faces a class of children where there are up to eight different home languages. Which one does s/he choose as her medium of tuition?

This is a matter that needs to be discussed between the school and the parents of the children, as the school exists to serve the needs of its community. In most cases the parents demand that their children are taught in English, as this seems the only pathway to financial security in the future.

Unfortunately, this is not the best solution for the children. Research has shown that children learn best in their home language, as learning involves complex concepts that children cannot understand in a new language (not until they have learnt the language very fully). Only from about Grade 6 to 8 are they ready to learn in a different language, such as English, if they have been learning this language thoroughly in the years before.

This manual seeks to make suggestions for situations in which it is not possible to learn in the home language, a situation that is widespread. It is based on the principle that the child needs to learn to speak and understand the new language - in this case English - as much as possible, before learning to write and read it.

The manual can also be used as an example of teaching the home language as the language of instruction in a school. In this case, the teacher will ignore unnecessary steps in teaching given here, although many of the suggestions will help children who have come from homes where little education has been present.

Children learn to speak by imitating people in their environment. Thus we may say that children learn a language through actively 'doing' or 'speaking' it. It is this 'will' quality of imitation that enables young children to 'pick up' foreign languages with ease and is the basis for Rudolf Steiner saying that children can and should learn a second and even third language when they start school.<sup>1</sup>

Learning in an active way - by means of speaking and acting out the new language - allows children to learn naturally, by imitating their teacher.

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<sup>1</sup> Steiner, *Education and Modern Spiritual Life*, 1989:174

Long before writing and reading were introduced, all oral cultures taught their children through the telling or singing of the myths, legends and epic poems that were passed down from elders to children. It is the story, spoken or sung using the musical element that carried the memory of the culture, enabling the generations that followed to repeat them word for word as they tell, chant or sing them. These myths and legends allow the people of that culture to live in the imaginative pictures of spiritual wisdom that inspires their traditions, giving life and meaning to that culture.<sup>2</sup> Just as the children of these cultures learnt their stories and poems through the 'will' of unconscious imitation, so our teachers should teach the children in the same way.

We must not allow children who are not being taught in their mother tongue to miss out on the special gifts that orality in any culture offers. The practical need to learn to write and read must arise out of the wisdom and wealth of stories, myths and poetry.

As teachers, we must cultivate the children's ability to listen to stories, recite poems and live in the oral expression of language through their natural absorption of language through imitation. This will allow them to continue to be inspired and nourished through a language even if it is not their mother tongue. When children find joy in expressing themselves through the soul of language, they develop their imaginations and mature inwardly, as well as learning to use the practical gifts of writing and reading.

But part of this task of teaching children to write and read is that they feel able to reach their potential. Many children today, whether rich or poor, are deprived of the inner content of an oral tradition and this may be heard in the way they speak. Children form their sounds in ways that reflect not only the adults around them but the soul quality of that environment, e.g. harsh or loving, joyful or meaningless.

It is up to the teacher to transform the children's speech through the power of rhythm and music, poetry and song. Children who learn to speak clearly learn to think clearly. Those who learn to speak expressively gain a richness of feeling that gives conviction to their words.

For this reason, the teacher needs to be steeped in the beauty, wisdom and love of that language so that s/he is able to uplift the children through the poetry, songs and stories that feed their souls.

Speech is necessary for the development of the individual Ego (or 'I') of the human being. It leads to self-knowledge and self-worth in every child. This is the true freedom of speech, the ability of the individual to own and express their potential through the power of speaking well.

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<sup>2</sup> Rawson & Richter, *The Educational Tasks and Content of the Steiner Waldorf Curriculum*, 2000:105

Rudolf Steiner has indicated that children need to be taught through imitation until the age of nine when they become ready to grasp explanations and rules of grammar.<sup>3</sup> The teaching of writing and reading in our present day brings a 'form-giving' element, a mental picturing that stands in contrast to learning through the will in the oral aspect of a language.<sup>4</sup> This process allows the individual child to choose what he or she wishes to think, say and write. It encourages personal expression through written language and forms a bridge between the demands of the culture and the demands of the individual.

Through the development of speech we have the potential to grow and meet the challenges of our world today. We can help children to have the courage to work on expressing their gifts in the world. As teachers, we can nurture our pupils through the power of language so that they can step forward with enthusiasm and confidence into life. As Rudolf Steiner has said:

Our rightful place as educators is to be removers of hindrances so that the child's spirit may enter in full freedom into life.<sup>5</sup>

The young people that we teach must grow up to feel able to make their mark in the world, to take hold of their destiny and fulfil their dreams.

## In the Beginning was the Word

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.<sup>6</sup>

The Old Testament Bible<sup>7</sup> describes how God created the whole world through the power of the Word and how everything was created through His voice.

When we look around at our beautiful creation we hear that everything has its own sound by which we recognise it. We can hear the noises of the wind and the rain, the storm and the sea. If we strike different metals, they resonate with different tones. Even rocks, sand and clay sound differently when we work with them. The trees creak in the wind, the leaves rustle, twigs tap and the stream babbles on its way. Day and night we hear the different noises of insects from the humming of the bee to the whine of a mosquito. All the animals and birds have their instinctive cries and chirping notes by which we distinguish them. But only human beings have the power of speech.

<sup>3</sup> Steiner, *Education and Modern Spiritual Life*, 1989: 176

<sup>4</sup> Steiner, *Renewal of Education*, 1943:112

<sup>5</sup> Steiner, *Spiritual Ground of Education*, 1946:60

<sup>6</sup> Gospel of St. John, Ch 1, v1; New Testament, Christian Bible

<sup>7</sup> Genesis Ch 1; Old Testament, Christian Bible

A little baby cries and its mother senses what s/he must do to answer each wordless cry. As we grow up, we learn to speak in words, expressing our thoughts and feelings, giving information and sharing our wishes and dislikes. Thus we express both who we are and what we wish to communicate through our use of language. Each person, whatever their situation in life, benefits when they are able to express themselves well in whatever language they use. They may also be creative with language. Their innate creativity can be expressed in many ways: in story-telling, poetry writing or acting in plays.

When we paint a picture or write a poem, we may be amazed at the beauty of what emerges as our own creation. It gives us a sense of fulfilment to see something that we have done well. We love what we have done and we appreciate ourselves for having achieved it. When God looked at His creation after He had made it, He saw that it was good!

Creativity is a gift that everyone has in some measure and which everyone explores in his or her own way. It is up to us to find our gift and learn to use it imaginatively, as it is a means of expressing our individual uniqueness. As teachers we must assist our children to find and cultivate that gift of creativity. It is a spark of our spirit that we manifest in the world and that spark of creativity comes from God, as He created humankind in His own image.

Although there are many ways of being creative, a fundamental one is through the human voice whereby we naturally express who we are. What we do not always recognise is that we are continually being creative with what we say, whether we are aware of it or not. Words are powerful tools for good or for evil. The importance of words lies not only in what we say but how we say it. We know that we can understand each other not only by the words we say, but also by the tone of our voice.

We can hear if someone is young or old, tired or excited, in pain or in love by the way they speak. We can also hear if someone is speaking truthfully or insincerely in their voice. The human voice has a quality and vibration that can reveal what kind of person he or she is. And the words we say are influenced positively or negatively by the quality we carry within ourselves.

Children learn everything through imitation. They will also imitate the way their parents speak to them, both the use of language and the tone of voice, positively and negatively. Children instinctively know whether an adult is being honest with them and they absorb not only the physical aspects of language but also the thoughts and attitudes of these adults. It is therefore important that all the adults caring for children are absolutely truthful in their speaking as this assists children to learn to think clearly as well as to speak properly.

When we speak to someone we love, be it a parent, child, partner or friend, and our voice is warm, our words encourage and appreciate them in some way. We can see

immediately from their response, whether it is a smile or a friendly answer, that our words have affected them positively. When they are in our presence, they glow with pleasure and their words and gestures show that they like us and feel able to express themselves freely.

Thus our words of love are like a blessing for we encourage them to feel good about themselves. We can bless everyone we meet if we are positive, open-minded, tolerant and encouraging and this blessing is always returned to us. Thus we create goodwill, friendliness, honesty and co-operation with those around us by the way we speak to them.

Alternatively, if we are critical of others or negative about someone (even ourselves), we create unhappy relationships, misunderstandings and unfortunate circumstances for ourselves and others. We might blame other people or regret what we have said. As someone once said, 'Mince your words, you might have to eat them'.

If we are not careful about the way we use our words when speaking to or about others, we can even curse them unconsciously. That curse is always returned to us in some form as no-one wants to be disliked and they might speak negatively of us at another time, and we get a reputation for being difficult or ill-mannered. So we need to recognise that our tongue is a double-edged sword that can kill or protect. We need to choose consciously how we use the power of our words so that we learn to bless all those we live and work with.

We experience the blessing of words through the great people we meet: religious leaders, great speakers who work for the good of others, certain teachers and perhaps a particular family member – a father, mother or grandparent who has been a guiding light in our lives. Thus we, as teachers, need to choose to express ourselves through the beauty and power of our words so that we can become true role models and a guiding light for our children.

Even if we have to be strict when dealing with lively or difficult children, they must know from the tone of our voices that though we cannot allow them to misbehave, we still love them. And the rest of the time, they should always hear love in our voices: the love of children, the love of learning and the love of life. They will learn from our example and we if we teach them how to use language consciously and creatively they will carry the light of love into their lives.

## Preparation of Child from Birth to Seven Years

It is important for the primary teacher to know the many developments that children need to have mastered before they are ready for formal learning in Grade 1. There may be children who have not been to a pre-school that develops all the skills that are needed, or have not gone to a pre-school at all. In that case the primary school teacher needs to find ways to catch up on skills that should have been developed. In any case, the teacher needs to continually improve the children's skills, even if they have gone to a good pre-school.

### *Movement - ages 0 - 7*

Rudolf Steiner has said that the task of the physical body in the first seven years of a child's life is to build and form all aspects of the body, including the inner organs. If everything is in 'good working order', the body is healthy, becoming a strong foundation for all future development.

So whenever young babies are awake, they begin to move their bodies: opening eyes and mouth in different facial expressions; stretching and using the muscles of their arms, fingers and legs. Children learn to grasp, kick, roll, sit and they will eventually pull themselves upright to stand. They will then usually crawl and later walk and run. All these little muscles have to grow and become strong, gradually bringing their bodies under control.

Small children's movements enable them to connect to the world around them through their senses, especially the sense of touch. We observe how children grasp everything in reach or put all kinds of things into their mouths. Every touch informs them about the objects of their environment and they take control of that object through learning what can be done with it.

The vocal cords of the larynx (the organ in which sound is produced) and muscles of the throat and mouth need to learn about 120 different movements in order to speak the language in which the child has been born.

Young children begin using their mouths and voices in many ways; making their own sounds and exploring all kinds of noises that will later develop into words and speaking. The muscles of their vocal cords, lips, tongue and jaw need to be used and strengthened so that they can imitate the sounds around them. Children often create their own language that slowly transforms into words the parents can recognise.

Rudolf Steiner describes the direct link between movement and speech as follows:

[The study of the human body shows] ... the correspondence between the right hand movements and the so-called convolution of Broca at the left side of the brain. The hand moves, makes gestures; forces pour into it, pass into the brain where they become the impulse of speech.<sup>8</sup>

Thus we see that the development of strong, clear physical movements activates the brain towards a good quality of speaking. The mouth and jaw are the active parts of the face just as the arms and legs are the active parts of the body!

At the same time every movement that is learnt builds connections, called synapses, in the brain. Every action activates the brain and nerve-sense system, assisting the child to learn to respond and later to think. Without these synapses, speaking and thinking cannot develop. Therefore it is of utmost importance that children from birth to 7 years have the freedom to move, to play, to explore, as these develop their abilities to speak and think.

Children learn a great variety of movements by running, hopping, jumping and climbing in and out of places. By using their limbs in different ways, children develop gross motor skills and this also gives them a sense of the space around them. Fine motor skills are developed by manipulating small objects.

Speaking, then, is an outcome of walking – that is to say, of orientation in space. And the degree to which the child is able to control speech will depend largely upon whether we give him loving help while he is learning to walk.<sup>9</sup>

However, children are often restricted and not allowed the freedom they need. Perhaps their parents are strict or over-protective or else the home is full of equipment that may not be touched. This will affect their sense of freedom to speak later on. Children need spaces in which they can move, explore and play. It is also important for parents to make it a habit that children are involved in homely activities in the kitchen with mother, or helping around the house with father. This will satisfy their desire to imitate the movements of adults around them.

The development of movement skills is continued in the kindergarten or pre-school. A jungle gym in the playground with various climbing frames, steps to climb, logs to jump onto and off from, balancing beams, etc., are much needed to develop their movement skills.

Handcraft projects develop fine motor skills, and effort is made to use natural materials so as to encourage awareness of different textures that are 'alive' to the touch. All movements involved in making crafts activate the brain, increasing the children's capacity for concentration. If children learn to cut paper with scissors to make a bird or to sew and embroider a bag with soft coloured wool, they develop considerable hand-eye co-ordination.

<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Education and Modern Spiritual Life*, 1989:110

<sup>9</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *Education and Modern Spiritual Life*, 1989: 110

A person who uses his fingers clumsily also suffers from a clumsy intellect. That is, he is unable to be mobile in his thoughts and ideas, whereas someone with a skilful hand is better able to penetrate the essence of things with his thinking.<sup>10</sup>

Thus we must not underestimate the value of physical dexterity in the process of learning to think and speak.

## *Drawing*

Learning to draw freely should have happened for many years in early childhood. Young children express themselves in drawing if the necessary paper and crayons are available. This drawing should not be taught by parents as children will find their own way if left to draw by themselves.

In the kindergarten, the children are encouraged to draw, but no guidance is given. A natural sequence of development occurs in the drawings from basic scribbles to circular movements, spirals and other patterns. The emotional development of the children may be observed through the progress of the drawings.

The opportunity to express themselves freely through drawing encourages children to express themselves confidently in other ways later on. Drawing develops fine motor control and will eventually lead the children towards writing when they enter primary school.

In situations where paper is not available, teachers need to find ways of still getting children to draw, for example

- \*finding paper wasted in offices - often they have only been used on one side, and the other side can be used for drawing. Ask for computer print-out paper as well as duplicated paper

- \*have long, low chalkboards on the classroom walls, so children can draw on them with chalk

- \*find small chalkboards on which children can draw

- \*if clay is available, let children draw on clay tablets

- \*draw with sticks in loose sand (wet it first, if possible)

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<sup>10</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Renewal of Education*, 1943:67

## *Action Songs*

The teacher will also do action songs in the morning ring time with various gestures to indicate what the song is about. Soon s/he will observe those children who have good co-ordination and those who have not. All these activities assist children to improve their sense development and co-ordination, which will be much needed if their home background has been lacking in opportunities for movement.

The teacher will also notice those children who participate readily and those who do not. It is important to encourage those who do not participate. The teacher can do this by making the activities interesting, and connecting with the children all the time.

At the kindergarten age, children easily imitate whatever language is being used, but if it is their second language, the teacher has to make sure that her speaking and pronunciation is slower and as clear and correct as the first language. With daily repetition, the children will soon know many little English songs and poems. The more of these that are taught to the children, the easier it will be for them to change over to English as the medium of tuition in primary school.

Why do Waldorf teachers use practical and artistic activities only for providing learning for the kindergarten child? They follow Rudolf Steiner's advice that the child under seven years is fully absorbed in forming and developing the physical body. Francis Edmunds insisted that to divert the energy of the body into intellectual learning is detrimental to later development. His argument is that in doing so it would lead the human being "to grow up prematurely intelligent but so much weaker in physical constitution, in character and in will [the power to achieve one's goals]."<sup>11</sup> And so we wait for the fruit to ripen in its own time and nature shows us very clearly when the children are ready for the next step in learning.

## *School Readiness*

The first thing that shows the teacher that the children are getting ready for 'big school' is that the milk teeth start loosening and falling out. Gaps appear in their smiles and the children become excited about the strong new teeth that begin to emerge in their gums. Although some children may lose teeth earlier, Rudolf Steiner recommends that children only go to the primary school in the year they turn seven. The children are also growing taller and the proportion between head and body changes. When the children can put an arm over the top of their heads and touch the other ear, it also shows that they are physically ready for the next stage.

At the end of the year when they are six, children in kindergarten are formally assessed for school readiness in various ways. Their readiness for school will be observed firstly according to their physical development and their ability to make

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<sup>11</sup> Francis Edmunds, *Rudolf Steiner's Gift to Education-The Waldorf Schools*, 1975:31

“good, smooth, co-ordinated and confident movements”.<sup>12</sup> They must perform gross motor movements like walking, hopping, skipping, galloping and balancing. Inability to do any of these is often linked back to whether they crawled correctly.

Children are asked to move different arms or legs separately or together. They are expected be aware of the different body parts. The strength of the muscles is noted, also the dominant hand and foot. Various exercises are used to assess the children’s ability to cross the body midline in smooth, easy movements e.g. drawing a line on the board from left to right.

Fine motor co-ordination is assessed through copying geometric shapes and writing patterns. Children are also asked to draw a picture of a house, a tree and a person to assess their level of physical and emotional development. Children are assessed for eye dominance, their ease in crossing the midline and their ability to discriminate visual differences in a picture.

Auditory skills assess whether the children can hear, listen, understand and do what is asked of them. Can they repeat a sentence or tell part of a story from memory? Can they remember a sequence of numbers or objects?<sup>13</sup>

If the teacher practises these exercises with the children, they will notice a great improvement in their skills. This vitally important foundation for learning will assist in preparing the children to go on to primary school joyfully confident of their abilities.

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<sup>12</sup> Joyce Bruce, *School Readiness*, p 4

<sup>13</sup> Joyce Bruce, *School Readiness*, pp 4 – 14. This useful little book also gives suggestions for how teachers can assist children with difficulties or weakness in all areas.

## The Daily Timetable

In Waldorf Schools the first part of the day is considered to be the most valuable time for children to learn new material. For this reason the first lesson is called the 'Main Lesson.' Main Lessons are arranged in blocks of three weeks to handle a certain topic (sometimes they can be two weeks, sometimes four weeks or longer, depending on the topic).

A Main Lesson block allows children to go into one topic in depth, by working on it every day. The teacher deliberately plans his or her main lessons to attain this depth, by presenting the material to be learnt in an imaginative way, and by finding creative, playful ways of practising the new material learnt.

The Main Lesson lasts two hours, which may sound like a long time, but it is made up of three parts, each part appealing to a different way of learning:

- ❖ The first 40 minutes: the 'rhythmic' part, which includes rhythmic movement, and activities which are rhythmic such as singing, speech exercises and speaking poetry
- ❖ The second 40 minutes: the 'content' or 'thinking' part, in which the new material is presented by means of story or image, leading to understanding the new material
- ❖ The last 40 minutes: the 'task' or 'doing' part, in which children are actively working on what they have learnt; the teacher finds creative tasks for the children to consolidate what they have learnt

After the main lesson there is a break, followed by three 40-minute lessons (another break and more lessons from Grades 3 upwards) for a variety of purposes:

- ❖ Practice lessons, to practice language and maths skills
- ❖ 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> language lessons
- ❖ Artistic and craft lessons
- ❖ Eurythmy or dance lessons
- ❖ Games lessons

The weekly timetable can look something like the following:

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8.00 – 10.00	Main Lesson (in blocks, alternating Form Drawing, 1 <sup>st</sup> Language and Maths)				
	Short Break				
10.30 – 11.10	Practice	2 <sup>nd</sup> Language	Practice	2 <sup>nd</sup> Language	Practice
11.10 – 11.50	3 <sup>rd</sup> Language	Painting	3 <sup>rd</sup> Language	Eurythmy	Science <sup>14</sup>
11.50 – 12.30	Handwork	Painting	Games	Handwork	Science

<sup>14</sup> Science is taught by means of nature stories, in which children become aware of the natural world; after the story, the children can draw from the story or go outside to look at the world, plants or animals that were described in the story

## Preparation towards Writing and Reading

In this section we look at the skills the teacher will continue to develop so that the child is ready for learning. These exercises will continue throughout Grades 1 and 2, helping children to become awake, gain control over their bodies, develop energy, will and concentration, sharpen their senses and master the skills they need for learning writing, reading and arithmetic (the three R's!)

### *Movement*

*Movement is the door to learning. To live is to move.*<sup>15</sup>

In the primary school we need to continue this development, by providing a rich programme of movement for the children. Apart from strengthening the children's co-ordination and pre-learning skills, the use of movement becomes integrated into the learning of different subjects like mathematics and language. This is of tremendous value for the children who are learning English as a second language. Here are suggestions for developing movement in Grades 1 & 2:



- ❖ Balancing exercises, like a balancing beam on the floor, standing on one leg to the count of ten, an obstacle course made with chairs and tables or walking along a low garden wall, create 'fun' challenges for the children. They make the children aware of their uprightness, strengthen their concentration and help them to take hold of the space around them. If done daily, these exercises build confidence in weak or timid pupils provided children are not pushed beyond what is comfortable for them. Balancing exercises develop strength of ego, courage for tackling something new and the ability to stand up for oneself.

❖ Co-ordination exercises, like 'body geography' are very useful in Grade 1 to assist children to learn the names of the body parts. The little game 'Simon Says' can begin with simple instructions like 'touch your nose' and get more and

<sup>15</sup> Paul E Dennison, *Brain Gym Handbook*, 1989

more complicated as the children get to find and recognise the different parts of the body.

- ❖ Skipping exercises involve skipping in a ring around the room and skipping with a rope, first individually and later as a group. It develops agility and strength, balance and stamina. Children learn to develop good timing when they have to run in and skip under a rope turned by others. They also learn to wait their turn and to consider others.
- ❖ Climbing is a wonderful activity on the jungle gym or rope ladder and any trees that are suitable. It is also good when there are rope swings that children can climb on and use. It supports the development of balance and muscle tone.
- ❖ Stepping and clapping rhythms are very useful in a classroom as part of the rhythmic time in the lesson or when the children need to get rid of some energy and to take a break from sitting in desks. Action songs may be fun, but boys and girls who are particularly energetic need to get into a loud, strong, vigorous rhythm with stamping as well as clapping so that their legs get a good workout! Also, if children are restless and inattentive, they will benefit from a few minutes of clapping and stamping that pulls the class together.
- ❖ Circle dances are also very useful for creating a fun movement activity. They need to be quite simple to begin with and should be sung by the teacher and class rather than played on a CD player. This enables the teacher to slow down, stop and explain a step and also practice the dance at the pace of the children. Simple circle dances can be made up by the teacher to any of their songs that have a suitable rhythm. They are best done on a daily basis as a short part of the main lesson and they also make a good ending to a day. Dances improve co-ordination of the body, awareness of rhythm, left and right awareness, listening and social skills.
- ❖ Bean-bag exercises are a wonderful alternative to balls for catching and throwing inside a classroom. Sitting or standing, the children learn to pass the bean-bag rhythmically in many different ways that develop co-ordination and harmony, especially when a little rhyme is said at the same time. Some of the exercises are done individually, others in pairs or even the whole group working together. Playing together develops social skills among the children as well.
- ❖ Exercises for strengthening the awareness of left and right are also important in developing co-ordination between mind and body. Simple dances usually can be worked in both directions, e.g. skipping to the right and then back to the left. ‘Here We Go Looby Loo’ is an example of a dance using right and left.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “*Movement for Learning*” collated by Peter van Alphen, has many suggestions for teachers.

- ❖ Brain-Gym involves various movement exercises that activate the brain. Several exercises are specifically to assist the children to cross the midline of the body in smooth, confident movements of eyes, arms and legs. This crossing of the midline enables the children to focus and distinguish clearly whatever they are looking at. It also assists them at a later stage when they learn to decode or encode letters and words for reading. It was originally developed to assist children with learning difficulties but people soon found that stress levels dropped and brain integration increased as a result of using these exercises.<sup>17</sup>

Life is ever changing and ever demanding. Brain Gym teaches us how to move with our challenges, our dreams and our goals.<sup>18</sup>

## *Drawing Pictures*

The children should draw daily out of their imagination to continue developing the spontaneity of self-expression begun in the kindergarten. There need to be times for allowing the children complete freedom to draw what they wish from a particular story or topic that has been discussed in class.

Rudolf Steiner has said that in the primary school the children should also learn the technique of drawing. The children can be shown how to fill the sky with blue or to let the grass grow in the garden and how to colour in the little girl's dress. Some children may have very poor drawing skills and be barely beyond the scribbles of early childhood. Nevertheless, the daily drawing sessions will assist these children to mature and begin to include more content in their drawings.

The activity of copying drawings from the board also assists the children to improve their drawing skills. Children love to copy what their teacher has drawn for them. Even observing their neighbour's drawings will slowly help children to improve.

The teacher also begins to develop the children's imagination and drawing skills by asking questions about their drawings. S/he may suggest that they include more colours or details in their pictures. The idea is not to insist that the drawing must be done in a certain way but to encourage the children to imagine what else they could put in their picture. Speaking in imaginative pictures will inspire the children.

Drawing always wakes children up to both their outer world and their own inner experiences. Drawing pictures helps the children to live into what they have learnt, developing their imagination around the subject matter. Even if they do not draw very well at this stage, it shows the teacher where they are in their understanding. If a child's drawings do not improve sufficiently, this is a sign of immaturity and it is also a warning signal that the child may need remedial help in some way.

<sup>17</sup> Melodie de Jager, *Brain Gym for All*, 2005:7

<sup>18</sup> Paul E. Dennison, *Brain Gym Handbook*, 1989

## *Form Drawing*

In the primary school, we now guide the child to draw forms (or 'patterns') as preparation for writing letters and numbers.

Quite apart from the eventual aim of their learning how to write, we allow them first to take pleasure in their drawing and painting under an artistic guidance. While they are engaged in such an activity we can observe how, in order to succeed in their drawing of definite forms and patterns, the children have to perform certain movements with their fingers, hands and arms. Thus it is not an intellectual or thinking activity, but the practice of manual dexterity which stands at the beginning of our teaching.<sup>19</sup>

These forms will also eventually develop skilled observation, eye-hand co-ordination, symmetry, sequencing and a sense for space/balance. However this process takes time after the freedom of spontaneous drawing in the kindergarten.

The teacher begins to make the children aware of the straight line and the curved line, being the basic shapes for all the letters and numbers. These two forms are imaginatively represented in a story e.g. where a boy is given a straight staff and his sister receives a round copper bowl. The teacher continues creating little stories so that many different combinations of straight and curved lines can be practised. Children are fascinated by forms, and these stimulate their minds, hearts and will.<sup>20</sup>

In introducing these forms, the teacher gets the children to move and walk them in the air with their arms and fingers, as well as on the floor with their feet in order to really experience and integrate the movement into their whole bodies. Eventually the children will draw the forms into their books.

These exercises assist the children to become used to adjusting the pattern to the size of paper. Thus the children proceed naturally from an imaginative picture (created by the little story) to drawing it as a pattern and later using the shapes in writing, spontaneously finding their sense of space for each activity. Form drawing is placed in the main lesson for the first two weeks of the school year, but it could be continued as a regular activity once or twice a week, or as a regular main lesson four times a year in Grades 1 and 2.

## Teaching English to Second Language Speakers

### *Listening and Speaking*

<sup>19</sup> Steiner, *The Renewal of Education*, 1943:67

<sup>20</sup> See *Form Drawing* Booklet for details.

Like a gardener preparing the soil before planting, the teacher has to prepare the children in her class to be ready for learning. Until the children are familiar with the language through which they will be taught, they will not be able to understand or remember what the teacher is telling them. This will prevent them enjoying the learning experience and they may easily feel helpless, inadequate and left out. So the teacher is aware that children whose home language is not English will need a great deal of language support.

Children need to learn to think in English as soon as possible rather than relying on translations. In fact, the teacher should try to avoid using the home language so that the children are forced to listen carefully to find out the meaning of what s/he is saying. However, there are times when translation or speaking in the home language are needed, especially in telling stories, as they are rich in feeling and full of meaning, which cannot be easily understood by non-English speakers.

Young children learn other languages very easily, picking up the sounds, words and sentences just by listening, watching the teacher's gestures and imitating her speaking. Some children and adults have what may be called a good 'ear for language,' which means that they learn a language more quickly and easily than others, and often learn to speak several languages. This is why Waldorf schools consider oral development to be very important in developing an 'ear for language' in all children from a young age.

### *Speaking English Daily*

In order to prepare children for writing and reading in a language that is not their own, the teacher will arrange daily lessons for the children to learn and practise the language. S/he will make sure that they develop correct speaking with good pronunciation. Before children can learn to read or write in English, besides trying to learn other subjects, they must be fairly fluent in speaking it.

The speaking of poems, speech exercises, informal news-telling, and the singing of singing games and many songs, are given a lot of attention, as these form the basis for learning to use the language naturally and spontaneously. The sooner that the children gain confidence in speaking English the more they will enjoy the lessons!

### *Learning Poems through Imitation*

Poetry is the life blood of teaching. Simple poems encourage children to feel confident of speaking a new language correctly. For second language English speaking children the teacher needs to introduce short poems (four to eight lines) that the children will learn easily.

Good morning Earth, good morning Sun,  
Good morning stones and flowers everyone;

Good morning beasts, good morning trees,  
Good morning to you and good morning to me.<sup>21</sup>

When the teacher teaches a song or poem, s/he must speak slowly and clearly so that the children find it easy to follow the words that s/he uses. S/he must also make sure that they repeat it correctly after her and do not skip or swallow the words. If s/he insists on correct pronunciation, the children will learn to listen carefully and differentiate the sounds of the words. 'Practise makes perfect.'

If the children learn a poem about something they know or have seen, it does not matter if they do not understand every word, so long as they enjoy the activity of chanting the verses. The regular repetition will ensure that in time they will understand the individual words and not merely the general meaning. They will enjoy imitating the teacher's lively expression when speaking the poems and they will find the gestures fun to do. These gestures help the children to understand and remember the words.

Poems can be spoken at any time during the day and can even be used when the class needs a breather or after some energetic activity just to gather the class. Speaking together is a good way to unite the whole class in the same activity.

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<sup>21</sup> Waldorf School opening verse

## *Patter-Words*

Children also love to use ‘nonsense’ words or sounds that have no meaning. They enjoy a poem or song with a chorus made up of these ‘patter-words’. It is fun for them and similar to their early development of sounds before they could speak. The ‘patter-words’ are good for their listening skills, their articulation and their ability to differentiate sounds e.g.

Shambara-dika, shambara-dika, wala-wala shu-shu dum;  
Come little beetle, noisy little beetle, scratching in the wood bark, come.  
Shambara-dika, shambara-dika, wala-wala shu-shu dum;  
Come little beetle, speckled little beetle, whirring with your soft-winged hum.<sup>22</sup>

## *Artistic Poems*

At every age children should be listening to and learning good poetry where the words are descriptive and imaginative. They need to learn many poems: beautiful poems in different moods and temperaments, poems that evoke reverence for all that is, and poems with strong rhythms and rhymes.<sup>23</sup> Poetry will fill the children’s souls with a love for the language!

## *Meaningful Gestures*

Following the method begun in the kindergarten, the children will learn everything by imitating the teacher. They will respond to the basic commands quite easily, especially if these are communicated with clear meaningful gestures. “Stand up.” “Sit down.” “Make a circle.”

Sign language has always been used by people who cannot speak the language of a foreign country. Similarly, a teacher who creates simple but effective movements to support everything that is said makes it easy for children to understand and to learn the words. Too much waving of hands and arms only confuses children but good gestures can easily be imitated.

The movements represent the words in different ways. Each morning the children say:

<sup>22</sup> Copywrite Catherine van Alphen

<sup>23</sup> Poems for Classes



“The sun with loving light makes bright for me each day.”

The teacher may guide the children to slowly open their arms in a radiating gesture and this is sufficient to depict the warmth and light of the sun. If they say:

“...Each bird, each flower and each tree...”

Then the children will move their hands and arms to depict the different creatures.

## *Action Songs and*

## *Verses*

The teacher will include a great many action songs and verses in every lesson. These help children to be active while learning, and they love repeating these many times. However, the teacher needs to judge when these songs and verses have been repeated enough times, and replace them with new ones to avoid the children getting bored and not learning anything new.

Some action games require the child to mime or act out the activity without using words. If children are doing the following little game, it is important that they express the different actions accurately and imaginatively. The better they are able to act out the situation, the more easily everyone learns and understands the words. Later this leads on to more subtle actions, requiring finer acting skills.

The children are in a circle and they all sing or say the question:

“What are you doing? What are you doing? What are you doing today?”

*(One child steps forward and mimes digging the ground or brushing teeth, etc. All the children mime digging as they sing the answer.)*

“He/s/he is digging, he/s/he is digging, he/s/he is digging today. We are digging, we are digging, we are digging today.”

In this way the children learn to connect the words with the appropriate actions and how to express the question and answer correctly in a sentence. They also learn to use ‘he’ or ‘she’ correctly to indicate whether a boy or girl is doing the actions.<sup>24</sup>

The teacher must always demonstrate and encourage the children to make clear, imaginative gestures in action songs, verses and games. S/he can also challenge the children to find more and more different actions and not repeat the same ones all the time. Children love to act and mime. They also enjoy guessing what someone is doing when they are not saying any words. Finally there comes the fun of adding the words to the actions.

### *Getting it Right*

The teacher needs to be very alert to check that the children are doing the gestures correctly. If children do not imitate the gestures correctly, the creative teacher will begin to ask several questions. Will a little practice and encouragement help the children to get them right? Is the gesture being done too quickly and does it express the meaning sufficiently? Are the children unable to perform the gesture correctly due to being poorly co-ordinated?

These questions will lead the teacher to understanding the children who struggle more deeply, and will therefore find ways to support these children to master the skills needed.

Some children find it easier to imitate the gestures, while others learn the words more quickly. Some find it difficult in the beginning to do both the gestures and the words at the same time. So the teacher has to practise both words and gestures with the children, being careful not to go too quickly so that children do not drop out because of the speed.

It is helpful when the teacher repeats the poem or song several times, getting the children to imitate her gestures while s/he says the words. Later, of course, they will do all the words and gestures together.

One difficulty arises when certain children in the class learn the poem easily and are able to speak it well. The teacher may think that the whole class is participating but

<sup>24</sup> This action song copywrite Catherine van Alphen, *Creative English Lessons*, 1993

closer observation will show that some of the children are pretending to say it by merely moving their mouths some of the time.

The teacher needs to check at all times which children are *not* participating properly, so that s/he can correct the situation. S/he may need to practise the poem in different ways to assist the children to gain confidence. This will help them to join in with enthusiasm instead of avoiding the challenge of learning a new language. One way is to let one half of the class do the actions while the other half speaks the poem. Then the groups swap over.

It is also very good, when the class seems to know the poem, if the teacher encourages the children to say it on their own and s/he mouths the poem instead of saying it loudly. This gives her time to observe the children more closely to see who really knows the poem. It is amazing how even the youngest children in Grade 1 can eventually manage alone and they feel very proud of themselves afterwards.

### *Singing Games*

Whatever words the children need to learn can be put into a singing game with movements. The teacher can even make these up herself. Some phrases do not rhyme easily, but if they are repeated in the rhythm in which they are spoken or sung, this will also work well. A song is often easier to teach as the music gives a flow to each phrase and invites the children to repeat it. A Greeting Song can be sung every morning to teach the children what to say when they meet someone.

“Good morning, good morning, and how are you?  
Good morning, good morning, I’m fine, thank you.”

In the beginning the children merely sing the song and then they learn that it is a question and answer between two people. The type of songs that are most effective at this stage should be short, easy to sing and repeated daily.

The children learn to name the parts of the body by touching them in a game. Learning the names of the objects in the classroom can also be made into a game of finding and touching them, e.g. boys touch the book case, girls touch the door. This kind of game can be extended to objects placed on a tray, etc. This is good for developing memory in the children.

The teacher can also take the children for a walk and when they have come back to the classroom, they can draw a picture from their experiences on the walk. S/he can get them to put some of the different plants and other objects that they saw outside into their drawing and then s/he can tell the children the names of everything. If walks are done regularly, the children will soon learn what everything is called and the teacher can create a guessing game to play with them.

“On our walk we saw something big (or small). Its name begins with ‘B’.” (Use the sound, rather than the name of the letter.) Who can guess its name?

The teacher also needs to use little songs that everyone joins in whenever the children are getting into a line, going outside or sitting in a ring for the story. These songs can be very simple like the one-line song below that is repeated until the children have moved to the place where the teacher is leading them. The teacher can even make up her own little tune to the words as these should be very simple, e.g. a tune on two or three notes. The gestures and words of these songs will soon be learnt by everyone.

“Follow me, follow me, to the greenwood tree!”

## *Songs*

A song can transform a verse or poem into a magical experience! Children learn songs easily and will often repeat favourite ones endlessly. So it is important to choose good songs with an attractive melody and a lively rhythm. Songs usually have a more complicated melody than the singing games. They are also taught through repetition, but as the melody may be more varied and have a wider range of notes, they are often more beautiful. The words of the songs should also be more interesting and more poetic than the singing games. The songs often describe a mood of nature or an animal or creature in nature or something else out of the children’s experience. Most of the songs taught at this level are quite simple, but here and there the melodies are more challenging than those of the singing games.

Here are some basic pointers to ensure that singing and the teaching of songs is a joyful experience for the children, the teacher and everybody who listens to them.

- ❖ Teacher’s preparation: learn the melody carefully and make sure you sing the song correctly to the children.
- ❖ Introduce the song with a little story or description, and sing it to the class.
- ❖ Let the children learn the melody to ‘lah’ or ‘law’ without the words first.
- ❖ Teach the words rhythmically, without singing, pronouncing them clearly.
- ❖ Correct mistakes immediately by demonstrating the correct words or notes.
- ❖ Give the class a clear note for everyone to hum or sing ‘la’ before they start the song. (It can be sung or played on the recorder.)
- ❖ Start everyone singing at the same time by counting them in. 1, 2, 3, ...

- ❖ *Always* sing sweetly and softly, except when the song has a strong character - in that case, sing with a full voice, but make sure the children do not shout.
- ❖ Listen to make sure that the sound is always beautiful (whether loud or soft)!
- ❖ Repeat the song several times for children to live into the mood of the song as they sing it.
- ❖ Praise the children when they sing harmoniously.

Children should listen to the melody they are singing and come away with the feeling in their hearts, "Oh, how I love to sing this beautiful song!"

Songs develop the children's ability to listen carefully and differentiate musical tones as well as the sounds in the words. The children learn to breathe properly through the activity of singing.

Singing also trains their voices so that they learn to sing in tune. Even if children are not able to sing in tune at first, they will learn through repetition and through listening to those who do sing correctly. It is a good idea to place those children who struggle with pitch next to a strong, good singer.

Beautiful melodies help to train the ear to listen for the rise and fall of pitch, the rhythm of the notes and the flow of the melody. Singing educates the children to listen to the beauty in music.

With all these wonderful benefits for the children through singing, the teacher should sing several songs every day, introducing new ones as soon as the children have mastered the one before. Singing a song is a delightful way to gather the class after the break or before a new lesson as it unites them all in a mood of happiness.

### *Speech Exercises and Verses*

A good time to begin working with speech exercises is during the main lesson when the children are learning the letters. Up to that time little action poems are sufficient for making children aware of sounds and language.

Speech exercises are short little phrases, sentences, couplets (two lines that rhyme), or little verses that repeat a certain sound. Through the repetition, the children become alert to the correct pronunciation of that sound. **Alliteration** is the repetition of the consonants e.g. **D**igging **D**own in **D**eep**e**st **D**arkness. The repetition of vowel sounds is called **Assonance** e.g. **T**oo soon, **t**oo soon, my **n**ew **b**lue **s**hoe... (Notice that spelling is not considered, only the sound.)

The African languages, (as well as certain other languages) use the pure open vowel sounds: A (ah), E (eh), I (ee), O (aw) and U (oo). Thus it is important to use

speech exercises to help children to pronounce the English vowel sounds correctly as there are so many variations depending on other vowels and consonants that accompany a vowel. People whose home language 'a' sounds like an open 'Ah' find it very difficult to say a short 'a' correctly.

The short vowels are tricky to get right but if the teacher has a good pronunciation herself, this will make it easy for the children. However, it may well be necessary for the teacher to practise the speech exercises herself in order to get her own speech pronunciation correct. It is good if s/he gets someone to help her with pronunciation as this will make her aware of what s/he and the class will need to practise daily.

Verses that can be used as speech exercises are in a little section at the back of this manual.

## *News Time*

Most children arrive at school with things that they are longing to tell to their friends or the teacher. On the other hand there are those children who immediately begin playing when they get to school and do not wish to talk about anything. And so the teacher tries to create a balance between the 'talkers' and the 'non-talkers' in the time called "News Time".

Children in Grade 1 do not find it easy to listen to each other for very long, so it is best if the teacher controls the length of the "News Time". S/he also has many other things that need to be done in the main lesson and so the telling of news must not take up too much time. If it does, the teacher will notice that her children become limp, restless and reluctant to do other work. If s/he is struggling to keep their attention, it is time to stop. Also the teacher has prepared a story for the children to listen to later on in the lesson and it is a pity if they are not able to listen attentively to her when s/he tells it because of having had to sit still and listen to news for a long time.

It is important that every activity has an atmosphere of enjoyment as this encourages interest and concentration. The moment this quality is lost in any teaching situation is the time for the teacher to change the activity in some way. Either s/he must move on to another activity or to ask herself if the way s/he is handling the situation could be done in a better way for that group of children.

Each teacher must find their own solution to the challenges of "News Time", but here are some methods that have been used successfully by teachers.

The first is that the class is divided fairly evenly over the five days from Monday to Friday and each child can talk about their news on a certain day of the week. This ensures that everyone gets a turn, although some children may say that they have no news today. Then the teacher may ask them to talk about something s/he knows

they have done or are interested in doing. S/he may also allow two other children to go in the place of children who did not speak and s/he must try to remember who had a turn to speak the day before.

The second suggestion is that the teacher does “News Time” during the time that the children eat their sandwiches that they have brought to school. This is usually about ten minutes before the bell for the break at the end of main lesson. The children whose turn it is to speak go first and they are followed by any one else who has news to tell. Because the children are eating, they are happily occupied and find it easier to listen, so other children can also have a turn. However the teacher may be required to stay with their class during some of the break to listen to everyone who wants to talk. This is also an opportunity to make personal contact with shy or needy children or with the class in general in an informal way. This will also help the teacher to observe and assess the development of the language in the different children.

The class may also use a ‘Talking Stick’ or ‘Talking Stone’ that is passed from child to child. The rule is that everyone must listen to the one who holds the ‘Talking Stick’ until they are finished and the stick is passed on. In this way the “News Time” becomes a social occasion as well as an opportunity for children to express themselves.

## The First Language Main Lesson Block

In the case of non-English speakers who are to be taught through the medium of English, it is advisable to postpone the learning of letters until the children have a better knowledge of the English language. Instead, it would be better to have an English block in which the main purpose is to build vocabulary<sup>25</sup> and understanding of the language. This would assist the teacher in assessing the language needs of the children and their ability to understand stories.

The chart below shows how one could structure the daily main lessons to maximise the learning of the language, using creative ways:

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Rhythmic Part, about 40 – 45 minutes	Opening of day; telling news? Movement for awakening and centering children  Songs, poems, action songs, action verses, rhymes, speech exercises to learn English in a rhythmical way, repeating and varying each item to maintain interest.			
Content Part, about 30 minutes	Tell story in home language	Look at teacher's drawing on chalkboard  Introduce and practise English words connected to story  Tell story from Day 1 in English	Recall story from Day 1 using as much English as possible  Look at teacher's drawing on chalkboard (with new items added)  Introduce and practise new English words connected to story from end of Day 2  Tell story from Day 2 in English	Repeat same pattern in the days that follow
'Work' Part, about 30 - 40 minutes	Children do free drawing from story	Act story or part of story  Copy teacher's drawing (or part of teacher's drawing)	Act story or part of story  Add new items to own drawing	
Practice Lesson			Revise new English words from before	
End of the day		Tell next part of story in home language	Tell next part of story in home language	

<sup>25</sup> Vocabulary = know words and their meaning

## *The Rhythmic Time*

In the first lesson of the school day, known as the main lesson, the teacher spends about forty minutes after the morning prayers teaching and repeating different songs, poems, action songs and games that practice some or all of the various skills listed above. This is known as the 'rhythmic' time of the main lesson and creates the opportunity for speaking and practising language on a daily basis.

This time span is appropriate for Grade 1 & 2 and may be shortened in subsequent years. One may wonder if children get tired or bored, but actually children of this age love repetition and look forward to the activities that they remember doing the day before. If the teacher flows from one activity to the next, observing the interest and energy levels of the children, s/he will see immediately when to change the activity. Because these activities are all done in a group, they assist her to gather and harmonise the class into a unified whole instead of separate individuals.

Although this part of the lesson has many movement activities, it can also be used to practise any aspect of teaching that needs daily or frequent repetition e.g. singing, poetry, recorder playing, the attendance register, news, etc. It is also a wonderful opportunity for revising and consolidating what was learnt on the previous day before continuing with new work.

## *Varied Repetition*

Children need repetition for learning. They love repetition, but only if it remains interesting.

A new activity will keep their interest for several days, but after that they start to lose interest. This is the moment to bring in a variation of the activity, which can be done in different ways:

- ❖ Change the movements that go with the song/rhyme/verse (make them different, stronger or lighter, or more difficult, for example)
- ❖ Change the speed of the song/rhyme/verse (not too fast)
- ❖ Change the temperament of the song/rhyme/verse
- ❖ Learn the next verse of the song/rhyme/verse
- ❖ Leave out one or more words (maybe replace it with an action)
- ❖ Test children's concentration by making wrong movements - see if they can keep to the correct movements

However, a poem cannot be treated in this way. It is a work of art, containing deep feelings and rich images. Poems need to be kept whole. If we pull them apart, we destroy the beauty of these works of art. One can keep the interest going by speaking more deeply about certain words or feelings in the poem, every time choosing something different to tell the children.

The teacher repeats the activities daily, but it is important that s/he changes and develops each item in the days that follow. As soon as the children can manage what has been taught, they can learn another verse, do an action song with improved expression or a rhythmic activity with different movements e.g. stamping forwards and backwards or marching quickly and slowly.

Thus the teacher will challenge the children by bringing something new as a surprise into a familiar activity. This is called 'varied repetition' and keeps the children eager to participate as well as extending their skills. It awakens and activates the class so that at the end of the rhythmic time they are ready to sit down and listen to the story or 'thinking' part of the lesson.

## *Story-telling*

With first language English speakers, the teacher gathers the children round her and together they move into the wonderland of stories. With second language English speakers, the whole approach is different as it is vital that the children are able to understand what the teacher is saying, whether given in stories or explanations. The following suggestions can be considered in the approach for second language speakers:

- Tell short sections of the story each day. Begin by telling the story in the home language.
- On the next day, introduce before re-telling the main English words to be used in the story. Then repeat the same section of the story in English.
- On the following day develop a thorough inter-active recall of the story with the children before continuing with the next section.

## *Telling the Story in the Home Language*

When the teacher has second language English speakers in her class, it is a good idea to break up his or her stories into small sections. Only short excerpts of the story are told each day. The more the teacher can show aspects of the story with gestures, the more the teacher can describe events and people in the story, the more the children will use their imagination and live into the images in the story. This will help them to keep up with the story even if they do not understand all the words.

If the teacher is in an area where the children all speak one home language, e.g. Kenya where many children speak Kiswahili or Cape Town where most children speak either Xhosa or Afrikaans, it is a good idea to tell the story in the home language first, preferably on the day before it is told in English.

After listening to the story, the children can draw any part of the story as a free imaginative picture on a piece of paper, or into their main lesson books.

## *Introducing Words from the Story*

When the children arrive at school on the next day, they should see a little scene on the board that the teacher has drawn from the story. It is useful if s/he has a special area of the board that is regularly used for this purpose. The teacher's drawing will only express some of the content of the story that s/he has been telling.

This drawing is far better than any pictures from a book as it will express the teacher's imagination and feeling about the poem or story. It is not necessary for him or her to draw every detail of the story as the children should use their own imagination to fill in the details. S/he will use the drawing to introduce the main characters and important words before retelling the story in English.

The drawing should be simple and show the characters as part of the story, not merely in a diagram. Then s/he can ask the children what they can see in the drawing and s/he can teach them the new words s/he will be using. By getting them to repeat key words and point to the corresponding part of the drawing, the children become familiar with some of the words they will hear in the story. This needs to happen shortly before the room is prepared for the story to be told.

If there are any items in the story that can be brought to the class (e.g. a special staff, a copper bowl, a feather or stone) that feature in the story, these will make a great impression on the children. It is good if only one or two items are brought at one time, as this will make a greater impact on the children. The teacher may wish to dress up in some way e.g. s/he may wear a special shawl for story-telling. I remember a male teacher who used a special hat that was known as his 'story-telling' hat.

For the actual story-telling, the teacher may choose to gather the children round her in a circle as people did in ancient times. The circle works best if each child has their own little chair or if they sit quite comfortably on a carpet without being pushed for space. Otherwise, they find it difficult to listen quietly. Sometimes the classroom desks are placed in an arc (curved rows) which also creates a friendly space in which to tell a story.

The teacher may draw the curtains and light a candle to bring about a more inward mood. S/he may sing a special 'story-telling' song with the class as it is a good way to quieten them and prepare them for the story. S/he might even have a musical instrument that s/he plays beforehand, provided the mood of the music belongs in the story.

The teacher does not rush into the story. S/he sets the scene slowly, watching carefully to see that all the children are beginning to get that look of anticipation on their faces. S/he knows that it is even more important to tell the story very well when

there are second language English children who struggle to follow what s/he is saying. The teacher must tell the story entirely in English and avoid translating as s/he goes along. By using gestures and pointing to the picture, the children will remember the words and the story, especially if they have already heard it in the mother tongue.

### *Telling the Story*

The teacher must know the story well as it needs to be told in a really lively way, not read to the children. If s/he changes his or her voice, speaking in a high voice for a child or a little creature like a bird, in a medium range of voice for a woman or a deep voice for a man, s/he will express the character of each of them more easily.

Then there are different types of characters, e.g. the African chief or the warriors will have strong, deep, even loud voices at times, whereas a wise woman will have a gentle quality to her voice. The teacher should try to express their many feelings of joy, fear, pity, anger in his or her voice, and bring in the different moods according to the part of the story that is being told.

To improve understanding of the story, the teacher's gestures will be very important. There do not have to be many gestures, but s/he may bend over when depicting an old person or stand up straight for someone who is young and brave. An angry warrior will shake his fist strongly and a person who is frightened will hold up their hands in fear. The children will experience the feelings of the characters in each situation through the emotions of the teacher and this will help them live into each part of the story.

### *Recalling the Story*

Rudolf Steiner says that when the children go to sleep at night they dream about the images they have experienced in the story that day. These images live in the soul of the children and their understanding of the story is deepened over night. Therefore it is important that the children understand the words, so that the pictures stand out clearly in their imagination. The children will grow into the full meaning of the story in time.

The time for the recall must not be rushed as it offers many opportunities for exploring what the children know and do not know. It is vital that everyone is involved in the recall, not only the children who know the story and love to show the teacher that they can tell it. Because the teacher has only told a small section of the story, the recall may seem insignificant, but in fact it allows the children to relive the story in a deeper way through the different images and scenes.

The teacher needs to avoid intellectual questioning around details. S/he can use questions to assist the children to find the correct sequence of events as they sometimes leap to the last action in the story.

It is not easy at this stage to get everyone to speak and the teacher begins by letting those children who think they know the story well to speak first. The conversations between the different people in the story should also be recalled, so the teacher may ask questions to help the children remember the words from the dialogue and even get them to repeat them. S/he can now help children who did not fully understand the story by explaining or translating words. It works well if these children are made to repeat the words in correct English. In this way they are given a chance to catch up through the recall and this is essential for second language speakers.

S/he must be prepared to give plenty of time to the recall, to allow for unexpected moments for discussion, and not to rush on to the next part of the lesson too quickly. The teacher will try to remember who did not speak on that day and find a special question for them on the next day.

Further questions will be asked but the teacher must observe the children to make sure that they are all listening and participating in the recall. If they are getting restless, it may be time to change the activity and sing a song or say a poem.

The teacher may use the 40-minute English lessons to develop questions and answers about the families, homes and other themes from the story so that the children learn how to ask questions and to give information correctly. It is also an opportunity to practise the new words they have learnt. S/he will always aim to do this in a creative way, bringing meaning and joy into learning the language.

If children say words or sentences incorrectly, someone should help them and then they should repeat it correctly so that they gain confidence. The teacher must continually praise and encourage second language speakers for their efforts so that they feel appreciated and that they are making progress.

### *An Example of a Story*

Here is the beginning of a story for enriching the children's language. The aim is to show how stories may be told in short sections so that second language English speakers can have the time to learn the new words they will hear in the story and receive sufficient support in understanding the content. The teacher may wish to expand the story to include more detail than is given here. The story unfolds slowly and may last a week, two weeks or even longer.

### *Telling the Story in the Home Language*

The teacher begins by telling this section of the story in the home language. S/he will then tell the story in English on the next day, preparing the children in the way described below. An alternating pattern of working emerges whereby the teacher tells the section of the story in the home language on one day and in English on the next day.

At a later stage, when the children know more words and follow the story more easily, the teacher may choose to begin the story in the home language at the end of the children's day before they go home. The next day s/he will use a picture to teach the new words and then tell the story in English in the main lesson. Again s/he will tell the new section in the home language before the children go home. In this way they will have a new section of the story every day.

### *Telling the Story in English (if there is no home language)*

If the teacher is not able to tell the story in the home language, s/he must begin with a picture on the board that introduces the different characters and the words to be used in the story. S/he begins by asking the children if they recognise anything in the picture and can give its name in English e.g. mountain, sky, river, children, etc. Then the teacher names the different objects in the picture, adding a few verbs or adjectives e.g. high mountain, blue sky, rushing river, two children, etc. S/he teaches all the words that will be needed, using gestures to make the meaning clear and the children repeat the words and gestures after her while s/he points to them in the picture.

Then the teacher prepares the room for the story and tells it slowly and clearly, with good gestures to help the children to follow the story.

The teacher will use the following day for recalling the story and consolidating the words and the content. At a later stage when the children know more words and follow the story easily, she may choose to prepare and tell a new section every day until the story is completed.

## *The River Journey*

Section 1:

*On the grassy slopes at the bottom of a high mountain, an African Chief and his tribe had built their huts. Around the huts the tribe had built a high fence of straight*

*sticks to protect them and their cattle against wild animals. A river flowed down past their homes and into a large round pool. The water was sweet for the people and their cattle to drink. Their crops grew well on the rich dark soil of the hills around the pool. The chief had a lovely wife and two children whom he loved dearly, a boy and a girl.*

*One day the boy, whose name was Sandile, came to the chief and said: "Father, where does the river come from? I wish to follow its rushing waters up the mountain and find the answer for myself." At the same time, the girl, who was called Nomsa, went to her mother and said: "Mother, where does the river come from? It seems to call to me with its silvery voice and asks me to follow it."*

*On hearing that both his children wished to follow the river, the chief said: "The time has come for you to go on a journey together to find the answer to your questions. You must pack a few things to take with you and tomorrow you will set off." The chief then gave a straight wooden staff to Sandile and said: "Take this staff with you and look after it. It will protect you in times of danger and will guide you on the right path. At the same time, the mother gave Nomsa a small copper bowl and said: "This bowl will give you food and drink when you ask for it. It will also tell you the truth of your heart when you drink from it."*

*Then the chief said to the children, "Tomorrow you are going to follow the river up the mountain to its very beginning." Sandile looked at Nomsa and said, "Yes, that is where we want to go." The chief answered, "If you follow the staff, sometimes you will go upstream and sometimes downstream, but it will lead you where you need to go." The children smiled at this strange answer and thanked their parents for the gifts.*

*On the next day the mist had swirled softly and gently into the valley along the river round the bottom of the mountain. The children said goodbye to their father and mother and set off on their journey. As they walked down to the river, the mist was already lifting and they knew it would be a lovely day. They looked up at the mountain and Sandile said, "The mountain is waiting for us to visit him." When they came to the large round pool, Nomsa knelt down and took a little water in her copper bowl and gave some to Sandile to drink. "I am looking forward to the journey", Sandile exclaimed, stepping forward enthusiastically with his staff. He marched ahead. "Wait for me," cried Nomsa, "I can not walk as fast as you!" Sandile smiled and waited for Nomsa while she drank from the bowl of water. She said, "I wonder when we will come home again?"*

*They followed the edge of the winding river upstream all morning and sat by the river to eat some food when they were hungry. In the afternoon they saw ahead of them a dark forest of tall straight trees. The path went away from the river and through the middle of the trees. Sandile held his staff in front of him and saw that the end of the staff lit up when he was facing the right direction. The light went out as*

*soon as he faced in another direction. He took Nomsa's hand to make sure that she stayed with him and that she was not afraid in the dark forest.*

*Suddenly they came to where the path split into four different directions. Which way must they go now? Sandile turned the staff to face each direction and saw that it lit up when he turned to the right hand path. "We must go this way," he said. "It is beginning to get dark", said Nomsa, "I hope that we can find some place to sleep where it is safe." They saw that the path was going uphill, closer to the mountain. But they felt sure that they would be safe.*

*Suddenly they saw an elderly man coming down the path towards them. He walked slowly and wore a large blanket around his shoulders. When he came near, Sandile greeted him, "Good day old father, can you tell us if there is somewhere along this path where we can sleep the night?" The old man nodded his head and smiled at them in a kindly way. "In this mountain there is a cave not far from here where travellers can spend the night safely. A wise woman lives there. She will give you food. But you must bring her a gift. All will go well." And he walked slowly on down the path.....*

This may be a good place to stop the story and consider how to use the images in the story for the children's own drawing. The teacher encourages the children to fill a page with colour in their own imaginative drawings.

It is fun for the children when they come to school on the following day and discover that the teacher's drawing has changed a little bit to include the new section to be told. The teacher may ask the second language children simple questions to do with the drawing or the words or a certain character.

The teacher leads the children into retelling the story of the day before by reminding them of the beginning of the story. Some children will be able to recall the story in English and others not. The important thing is to encourage every child to participate in the retelling, even if you have to give him or her the words to speak.

It is good to follow this by leading the children into acting out the story they have heard the day before, or only the important parts of the story. This will help them to get to know the words better, as well as gain a deeper understanding of the story.

The teacher continues by telling the next section of the story, first in the home language. If there is no common home language, she will first ask the children what they see in the new part of the drawing and then teach them any new words that will be needed before telling the new section of the story.

## Section 2

*The path took the two children steeply upwards and the rocks in the mountain side stretched up and up until they reached the sky. If they looked over the edge of the*

path, the rocks slid steeply down and down into the valley. The children felt so small. "The mountain is so big!" said Sandile. "Yes," said Nomsa, "But it seems as if the mountain is looking down at us in a friendly way."

Suddenly the path narrowed and they had to hold on to the rocks so as not to fall. Then they came to a place where the path had fallen away down the mountain side and left a gap. "How can we get across?" asked Nomsa. "We will have to jump across the gap," said Sandile. "I am afraid!" said Nomsa. "Let me go first," said Sandile and with a big jump he crossed the gap safely to the other side. "My legs are shorter than yours," said Nomsa, "What if I fall?" "No," said Sandile, stretching out his staff. "Hold on to my staff and I will help you cross over the gap. But do not look down!" Nomsa stretched out her hand and grasped the staff strongly. She jumped as far as she could and at the same time, Sandile pulled hard on the staff so that she easily crossed over the gap in the path. Sandile grabbed her arm and pulled her safely back on to the path. "You have done well, Nomsa," he said. Suddenly they saw in front of them a large round hole in the rocky side of the mountain. "Look! There is the cave!" said Sandile and they quickly scrambled up the last part of the path.

A large brown animal skin hung across the entrance like a door, with a small space for light. Just then, the skin was pulled aside and out of the cave stepped a strong woman in a long skirt and top of an orange-brown colour. She wore a cloth wrapped round her head and she stood there smiling warmly at the two children. "Welcome, my children, you have come just in time for a meal with me. And I am sure you are so tired that you will sleep soundly beside the fire tonight. Now tell me your names." "Our names are Sandile and Nomsa," said Sandile, "And our father is the Chief of the tribe that lives at the foot of this mountain, near the big round pool." "Oh!" said the woman, "My name is Manya and I have met your parents many years ago. I was expecting you to come and visit me." Sandile and Nomsa were surprised that the woman was expecting them. "Thank you" they said and walked into the cave.

In the middle of the cave was a lovely fire, making the whole cave warm. Manya and the children sat down beside the fire. "Now, I must ask you a question", said Manya, "Where are you going?" "We are following the river", said Sandile. "Except that we are away from the river right now", said Nomsa. "The staff led us to your cave," said Sandile. "We want to follow the river upstream to find out where it begins."

"Then you will get to know the mountain well," said Manya. "This mountain is a sacred mountain and only those who have pure hearts will find the way to the beginning of the river. You will have to climb up and up because the river begins high up on the mountain in a special cave with beautiful crystals inside it. Many a warrior has climbed up there, greedy to get jewels from the cave, only to find that he becomes completely lost on the slopes of the mountain. It takes him a long time to find his way home and he can never seem to find the cave no matter how hard he tries. When you get to the cave, you will see a spring of fresh water inside and this will tell you that you have found the beginning of the river."

*“Then you too have climbed up to the cave,” said Sandile excitedly. “Oh yes,” said Manya, “The mountain and I are good friends. That is why I am allowed to live here in this cave.” “I have always felt that this mountain was very special,” said Nomsa. “I love to see the mountain in the evening with the sunset making it a reddish colour.” “And I love to see it in the morning as the sun rises and lights up the path to the forest when we go hunting,” said Sandile. “Now it is time to see if the pot of food is cooked,” said Manya “You must both be hungry.”*

Again the children should make a drawing from the story, either from their imagination or by copying the teacher’s drawing. This helps them to remember and consolidate the story in their minds. The teacher needs to continually check the children’s drawings to make sure they are completing it satisfactorily. This will show her how strongly the children are involved in the images of the story.

On the next day, the children will notice further changes to the teacher’s drawing or perhaps a completely new section. S/he may even have erased part of the drawing or redrawn in small and placed it out of the way in a corner of the picture board. The teacher will ask the children to recall yesterday’s part of the story and s/he will use the drawing to help them remember the words that were used. The new section can be told in the home language. If s/he wishes to tell it in English, s/he will prepare the children by teaching them any new words before s/he tells the new section.

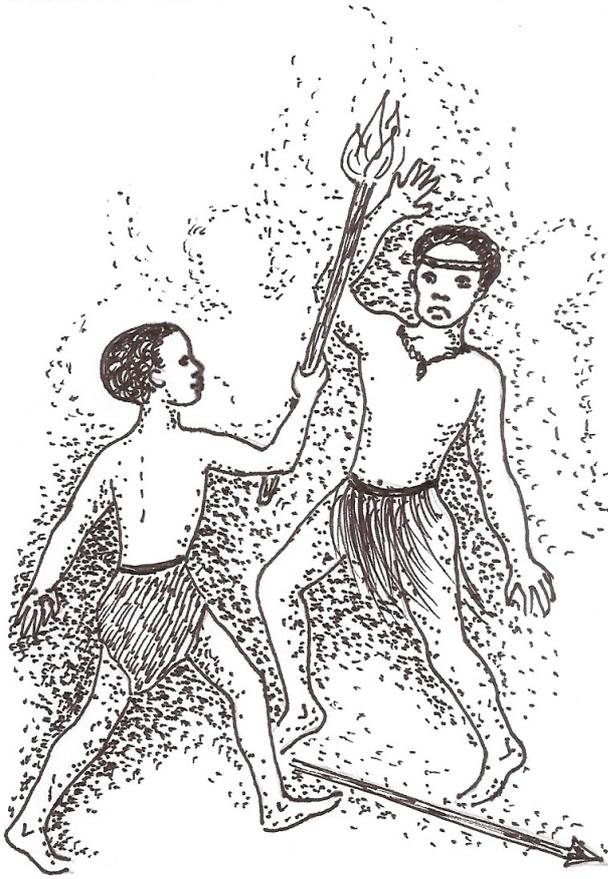
### Section 3

*The fire was warm and friendly and its light flashed on to the walls of the cave. On top of the fire there was a large black pot of food and it was steaming hot. A wonderful smell filled the air and the two children realised that they were very hungry. They could hardly wait for the food to finish cooking and to cool in the wooden bowls that Manya gave them. They sat on the floor in front of the fire and warmed themselves. They watched how the fire flashed its light around the cave and made flickering shadows everywhere. It also flashed light on to Nomsa’s copper bowl.*

*Suddenly Nomsa remembered that her copper bowl could give food and drink. She said, “Manya, may I give you a gift from my bowl?” “Thank you”, said Manya, “I would like that.” As they sat down Nomsa asked her bowl to give them something to drink. The copper bowl filled up to the brim with a delicious drink and each one of them drank from it. Manya did not seem surprised at the copper bowl. Just as they finished their food and put their bowls aside, there was a loud noise at the entrance to the cave.*

*The skin was ripped aside and three fierce warriors burst into the cave with sharp metal-tipped spears! They shouted at Manya, “Give us all your jewels!” Sandile grasped his staff firmly and leaped forward between Manya and the warriors, thrusting his staff against the first man’s spear. The warrior laughed jeeringly at this*

young boy who dared to stand up to him. He raised his spear and threatened to attack Sandile.



Suddenly fire leaped out of the top of the staff. It blazed into flame and flashed out and blinded the warrior. He cried out in fear, and stepped back quickly, falling against the warriors behind him. They picked him up and quickly dragged him out of the cave beyond the reach of the flaming staff that seemed to chase them away! Sandile ran out after them, but they did not wait any longer. They were too frightened of the magic staff that threw fire and they tumbled over their feet and ran down the hill as fast as they could. Sandile looked at his staff. The fire was gone and the top of the staff was brown wood like any other with no signs of being burnt. He laughed, "That will teach them a lesson."

Manya replaced the skin across the entrance of the cave, then she put her arms around the children and led them to the fire once more. The children sat down, still shaking from fright and excitement. "Thank you for saving us", said Manya, "You have a wonderful staff." "It was given to me by my father," said Sandile. "But it was also the fire leaping out of my staff that saved us."

"And thank you for the drink you gave to us," she said to Nomsa, "Did you feel any different after you drank it?" "Yes", answered Nomsa, "I do not feel homesick any

more. I feel that I am in the right place. And wherever we go, I know it will also be to the right place.”

“I have something to tell you”, said Manya, “But it will be best if I wait until morning when you have had a good night’s rest.” She gave each of the children a blanket and they snuggled on the floor next to the fire and in a few minutes were fast asleep.

The story can be continued by the teacher, using her or his own imaginative ideas but following the guidelines given above. The story can have many more adventures before the children return home to their parents.

### *Co-operative Learning*



When the children are older (later on in the year or in Grade 2, it is also a good idea for the teacher to let the children talk in pairs or in small groups so they can tell each other something from the story. They could discuss what they liked about a certain character, or discuss a question that the teacher has asked from the story. The teacher tells the class that they only have a certain length of time to talk together and then s/he will ask some of them to

say what they said to each other.

In this way, the children who find it difficult to speak and understand English will get an opportunity to ask questions of their neighbour or a small group. They can also have a bit of time to prepare what they can say about the story. This gives everyone a chance to speak whether it is in front of the whole class or not.

This method of Co-operative Learning is a very valuable one as the children go on in Grade 2 and later years. If the teacher encourages the children everyone will think about what they would say and also to listen carefully to the others in their group. Thus Co-operative Learning has social as well as educational benefits. More complicated questions may be asked at a later stage. The teacher may also allocate different parts of the story to be told by different groups. S/he may ask each group a different question for discussion.

This way of work-shopping a topic can be used for many different situations. The teacher will still find certain children struggling to participate actively, and will give

them time to gain confidence to participate fully. Of course there are plenty of others only too willing to talk!

## *Story Material for Grade 1*

Children love to listen to stories but it is important to tell them stories that are appropriate for their psychological development. Rudolf Steiner has recommended Fairy tales for Kindergarten and Grade 1, particularly the Grimm's Fairy Tales that were collected in Germany.

However most countries and cultures have their own tales and it is good to use these stories. Grimms Fairy Tales give us good examples of the kind of stories that are suitable for Grade 1 children. Teachers can search for similar stories in the culture of the children s/he is teaching.

What is wonderful is to recognize the wisdom that lies behind the fairy tales and to see how it fits with the stage of development of the children up to the age of seven years!

Children around the age of seven years live in a world of imagination and magic, where they experience that all is one. People and animals can speak to each other because they are alive and anything is possible. The children identify strongly with the young prince or princess as they go through the different adventures in the story. But why do we tell stories about princes and princesses in countries where there are no kings and queens?

The truth is that everyone is a child of God, and as a son or daughter of a king or queen, children unconsciously recognise their divine origin and inner nobility.<sup>26</sup>

In the Grimm's Fairy Tales there are several recurring themes. There is usually a king and queen of the country or else a poor woodcutter with his wife and children. The young prince or princess, woodcutter's son or daughter is presented with a seemingly impossible task. They may leave home to seek the answer to the problem and they are usually helped along the way by animals and birds, by a dwarf or wise woman. They may need to overcome a wicked witch or a dragon, or undo a magic spell.

All the characters are in fact aspects of the individual, so the helpers represent the instinctive inner wisdom of the child, while the magical gifts that help them overcome impossible situations are their own natural talents. Evil characters like the wicked witch represent greed, envy or some aspect of the feeling nature that needs to be overcome. The young prince or princess is an immature soul who grows up through meeting the challenges of each situation.

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<sup>26</sup> Catherine van Alphen, *Child Development*, 2009, Chapter 5:8

The magical elements are very important as they indicate that these are 'soul stories,' as are all true fairy tales. Gifts represent 'soul qualities', e.g. a staff is like the spine or will of the spirit or Ego and therefore it guides and protects. A copper bowl represents the open heart that feeds or nourishes as do all qualities of love. However, the teacher never explains the meaning of fairy tales to the children as they live into the story and absorb it in its full meaning.

The fairy tales, full of symbolism, satisfy the souls of the children, even in the second language. These stories are full of rich pictures that help children to visualise. The visualisation process develops concentration, imagination and consciousness. Consciousness in turn, develops thinking in the children.

Young children need these stories to nourish their inner life, giving them the sense that they are safe and secure in their world. The symbolic meaning contained in these stories strengthens the children unconsciously, affirming that life is a process of growth where one must learn to follow one's heart, knowing that good always triumphs in the end. The underlying message of these stories tells the children that no matter how difficult things may appear in life, they will find the help they need and become the hero of their own life story.

The teacher must therefore look for fairy tales in her own culture that carry the same themes and magical qualities as the Grimm's fairy tales. S/he may need to translate or simplify the words for second language speakers, e.g. a king is like a chief of a tribe and a castle is the equivalent of a large house with stone walls.

However, some stories are quite long and involved. The teacher should begin with the shortest and easiest stories and keep the others for when the children have a better grasp of the language. The real proof of progress will be seen in the daily recall and if all the children participate in this, then the teacher will know that they understand the story! Then all the children will love listening to the teacher's stories.

In working with children whose mother tongue originates in a rich oral tradition, we must ensure that their second language, i.e. English continues such a pattern so that the children grow up with stories that cultivate the imagination and nourish the soul. Learning to write and read should emerge out of this mythical, magical tradition and the teacher must consciously support the child in learning the English language so that the 'Cinderella' of the oral tradition is acknowledged in her beautiful gown of magic and meaning and is then able to marry the 'Prince' in the land of literacy.



## *Toys and Dolls*

Telling stories to the second language speakers in Grade 1 can be supported in another lively way. Some children in Grade 1 like to bring toys to school and if the teacher asks them to donate some toys to the class, these can become helpers in the English language lessons. S/he must make it quite clear which toys are suitable so that children are not offended if s/he does not use the toy that they have brought. The teacher then selects the ones s/he feels are most useful.

Soft toys and dolls should be used but no plastic toys, cartoon characters with guns or distorted rubber faces. If the teacher wants to use a friendly monster, it should also be a soft toy. These toys and dolls become part of the extended family of the class.

It is good to have a variety of different dolls and animals. Each has a name, perhaps given by the child and a character created by the teacher. One will be a little boy, another will be a little girl; there could be a father, mother and grandparent too. Each one should speak in a characteristic voice. Some characters can be versatile and be different people on different occasions, e.g. a boy doll may be a shepherd boy on one day and on another day he can be a prince! Then there will be various animals or fantasy characters like a giant or a dwarf. The teacher may make one toy always behave in a very silly way; another one could always be naughty and there can be a clever practical one who knows what to do when things go wrong.

The toys can be used to teach the children new vocabulary words and are very useful for conversations. The children may ask the toy a question or answer something that the toy (using the teacher's voice) has asked. The children will learn to greet the different toy characters and will look forward to hearing simple stories about the toy and his or her adventures, told in English. The teacher should use humour and keep the situations alive but simple.

### *Table Puppets*

The teacher may also want to use puppets for story-telling. A simple way is to have Table Puppets which are little doll-like figures that stand unsupported on a table that has been decorated to suit the staging of the story. One area of the table may have a little hut and tree to depict the little girl's home. There may be several table puppets representing the girl's family. Another area may have a soft blue scarf to show the river that the girl has to cross. Another area may have a few stones to signify a third area of the story.

The teacher tells the whole story, singing any songs and moving the puppets appropriately so that they can talk to each other or go and fetch water or do whatever will come next in the story. Other characters may be visible on the table before they are needed in the next scene but they may also be hidden underneath a cloth if the teacher prefers.

## *Glove Puppets*

The teacher may have a few glove puppets to help her enact the story. S/he slips them on to her hands with the head on the middle finger and the hands on her thumb and little finger. S/he should hide the puppet until it is firmly on her hand and ready to be used. The teacher moves them carefully to depict the different feelings of the character. It takes practice to move the puppet well and to speak the words well at the same time, but it is very popular with the children when the teacher is good at it.

Glove puppets may be made very simply by knitting them and adding features e.g. eyes, ears and whiskers for a cat. Human glove puppets can be knitted following an easy pattern. Woollen hair should be very simply sewn on; eyes and mouth should be no more than dots to allow the children to imagine the character. A scarf, hat or apron can be added as needed. They can also be made in a similar way to a soft doll, using stretchy cotton cloth for the head and hands. The head is stuffed with wool that is carded but not spun into thread and sewn over a cardboard funnel in the neck that fits the middle finger. Coloured wool is used for hair and then the puppet is dressed in a simple costume. The eyes and mouth are drawn in with soft pencil crayons or aquarelles. Making a puppet in this way takes time and skill and it is advisable to be guided by someone who knows how to make puppets well. Although it is great fun to build and use a puppet theatre, it is really for entertainment purposes rather than second language tuition.

Glove puppets are very useful for expressing dialogue so they are best used for small scenes that show interaction between people. If there is only one glove puppet being used, the dialogue will be between the puppet and the children, through the guidance of the teacher who speaks both for herself and for the puppet. If there are two puppets, they can talk to each other. It may be a mother and child, a cat and a dog or any other combination. Humans and animals also talk to each other. The children enjoy the contrasts between the two characters and it is possible to bring in quite a bit of humour. Glove puppets help children to understand what is being said through the combination of words and movement.

Glove puppets allow the teacher to hold the children's attention through the movements and lively speaking of the puppet. The teacher can also observe the children's responses while s/he is using the puppets. Especially where second language speakers are concerned, it is vital for the teacher to be aware of those who are engaged in the story or dialogue, and those who are not. It is possible for her to get the puppet to speak directly to one child who is distracting another. By asking the child a question or making a comment the teacher will catch the attention of that child and lead him or her back into the story with a touch of humour. From this point of view the glove puppets are very useful for second language tuition.

The puppets have a charm of their own due to the imagination of the one who has made them. They are fun to make, fun to use and the children love to see puppets in little scenes from an ongoing story. The teacher may use the glove puppets as a regular part of the English lesson.

## Dramatisation: Acting out the Story

In the same way that children love to make gestures in the poems they are saying, so they also love to act out the story. If the teacher inspires them to speak their poems in a way that is full of expression, the children will learn how to act or mime (silent acting with very clear gestures to show what the person is doing) in an imaginative way as well.

When speaking poems with a class of children, the teacher shows them, by example, how to be expressive and alive in reciting poems. Developing variation of voice, of speed, tone and mood are all needed to express feelings - the main developmental task for children at this age.

### *True to Character*

In leading children to act out a story, the teacher strives to be true to the inner quality of whatever character s/he is portraying. The teacher uses his or her knowledge and understanding of the temperaments, and of people and creatures, so that everything is expressed in its true essence. For example, if a child in the story is sad, s/he must feel the sadness inside of her and her voice must express that sadness without it being exaggerated. Then the children in her class will imitate her and learn to act well.

Children of this age are not ready to perform the story on a stage. It is better for them to do spontaneous acting, rather than learning a set way of performing a story. The teacher improvises different parts of a story day after day, the main purpose being to learn the new language.

There are different ways in which the children could enact certain parts of the story, especially dialogue<sup>27</sup> between two characters. Here are several different ways of acting with the class:

- ❖ All the children are standing in a circle around the room. Following the teacher who describes one of the characters from the story, they walk around the room pretending to be that character, e.g. an African Chief, a young prince or princess, a warrior or a wise woman. They could also walk like an animal, e.g. an elephant or a lion or a snake.
- ❖ The children can learn to say some of the dialogue from the story. If any part is written as a poem or chorus, this can be learnt by everyone. Thus they can join in at certain places with the teacher retelling the story.

<sup>27</sup> Dialogue: a conversation between two characters



Dialogues from the story could be acted out by the children in pairs. While the teacher says the words, all the children imitate the gestures of the two people speaking to each other. Then the scene is repeated a couple of times with the children joining in with the words that the teacher speaks. Finally the children are placed in pairs and each child has a turn to be each character.

It is essential that each child acts out all the parts, regardless of sex or character, so that they learn the words for all the characters. This method of acting out dialogues is very useful and can be repeated in many ways and in different situations.

Later on the teacher might even ask the children, “Make up your own words for the two characters.” But in the beginning the teacher will say the words that were used in the story. This will teach the second language speakers words that can be used, as well as allowing them to participate more fully in the story.

- ❖ As children gain confidence, they can stand in a circle with the teacher. The teacher tells the story or a part of the story. Certain children can now be chosen for the main parts and the rest of the class mimes everything. Some of the children hold their arms up with hands joined to form mountains or trees or a house. (The teacher must be aware that children holding up their arms cannot do it for long.) If there are words to be spoken, these can be spoken by the teacher, by the children who are acting the part or by a group of children supporting those children.
- ❖ The story could include a little song or dance in a circle. The children could weave their way around the circle when they go on their journey. The circle becomes the stage for the whole performance which can later be shown to the parents if desired.

## OTHER THEMES

- ❖ The whole class mimes a scene which is described by the teacher, e.g. waking up in the morning and preparing for school, cooking breakfast, making a garden and planting seeds, etc. The teacher will need an open space for the children to do this.
- ❖ Standing in a circle, one child begins the activity and mimes doing something. Then he or she passes the turn on to the next child. For example, the first child

mimes reading a book. When he passes the turn on, the next child may pretend he has a bicycle and rides it around the room. He passes the turn on to another child who may imagine looking for something in a bag.

- ❖ Encourage the children to improvise a little scene like making tea or buying something at a shop.

## GRADE 2

- ❖ As the children become more experienced at miming and speaking poetry, the teacher may develop a short play which is written in verse. Everyone learns the whole play, although some children may speak individually or in small groups for certain characters. The children may now stand in an arc (half-circle or curved line) and face the parents or rest of the school. Everyone speaks the chorus and individuals act or mime their parts. Simple movements and gestures assist the children to express the feelings of the characters.
- ❖ The children will enjoy dressing up for their parts, even if the teacher uses simple cloths for cloaks or headdresses. A few props will also make the children feel involved in the play.

## The Waldorf Approach to Writing and Reading

Essential Reading: Audrey MacAllen: *Teaching Children to Write*

### *Following the Evolutionary process of Writing*

Early cultures had no need of writing and reading. They lived close to nature in small family groups, clans and tribes, hunting animals and gathering fruits and herbs for food. They communicated closely, working together and sharing daily activities often using rhythmic songs, games and dances. Each community celebrated their seasonal rituals and rites of passage<sup>28</sup> according to their individual cultures. Festivals held at new or full moon and other significant times of the year expressed their deep sense of connection to the 'gods' or 'beings' present in nature. This was due to their natural clairvoyance that allowed them to experience the spiritual world as an integral part of the world around them.

These early cultures had an oral tradition rich in myths and legends. Their stories of the origins of the world and how humankind developed through the guidance of divine beings were expressed in pictorial imagery appropriate to their culture. This led Rudolf Steiner to recognise that these peoples, however far apart geographically, had one thing in common. They all saw the world in 'pictures'<sup>29</sup>. And thus their cultural memory, alive with images and symbols, was handed down through the songs and stories of the bards, shamans and story-tellers, preserving their sacred traditions for generations to come.

As humankind developed the skills of building and agriculture, towns and cities sprang up. Cultures became more civilized: the wheel was invented and the development of crafts in wood, metals and other materials showed that people were more connected to the earth than before. This resulted in a corresponding loss of people's openness to the spiritual world: their clairvoyant faculties<sup>30</sup> and their cultural memory began to fade. However, the experience of themselves as individuals increased and in history we begin to hear the names of kings and important rulers.

The expansion of trade led to the use of the abacus<sup>31</sup> for calculations and the beginnings of writing for record-keeping occurred in various parts of the world. The cuneiform marks on clay tablets in Mesopotamia, the pictorial images of the hieroglyphs of Egypt and the word-signs of China are well-known examples. The first-known written story was the Babylonian tale of the Flood, scratched on clay tablets and found in the library of King Hammurabi.

<sup>28</sup> Rites of passage = rituals that celebrate coming to manhood or womanhood

<sup>29</sup> 'Pictures' = pictures of the mind

<sup>30</sup> The ability to see the spiritual world: angels, nature spirits, ancestors, etc.

<sup>31</sup> Abacus = a frame with beads arranged in hundreds, tens and units to make calculations quick and easy

These marks and pictures were originally drawn or carved and slowly they were simplified until they became symbols for different words, sounds and letters. Eventually this developed into the different scripts used today. Although writing was often carved in stone and used to record the laws of the kings and pharaohs, as human beings evolved it was used by individuals to express their ideas and to communicate information by means of letters. Thus the development of writing is connected to the individuation<sup>32</sup> of the human being and the corresponding growth of personal self-expression.

### *From Writing to Reading*

In the Waldorf approach, the children learn writing before reading. When we recognise that children of this age learn by imitation and experience, we realise that they connect more deeply to what they have done for themselves than to any explanations from the teacher. The children copy the writing of the teacher and in doing so they learn the shape of the letter.

The children learn to read from the letters and words that they have written themselves. Because the children become involved in creating the writing, this helps them to remember the different sounds related to the shapes of the letters. They create their own reading books, the first one being a book of letters where they 'read' the sounds.

Printed readers are not used at this point. However, a large class library should be available for the children to look at. This will encourage them to develop a love of books and all they have to offer. Many of this collection of books will need to be picture books with a few words in large print for those children who cannot read as yet. Other books may be simple readers for those children who have begun to read or who have caught on to reading at an early age.

### *Sitting correctly*

The teacher needs to impress on the children the importance of sitting correctly. S/he must insist that they all sit upright on their chairs, with both feet flat on the floor and their knees should be higher than their hips. The size of the desk and chair must be correct for each child. This may result in smaller children having a plank of wood or something under their feet to raise them to the correct height.

Audrey McAllen in her little book, *Teaching Children to Write*, says that the teacher should tell the children, "Imagine you are a king preparing to sign a royal decree."<sup>33</sup> The crayon or pencil must be held in a grip that is relaxed but firm and the arm must

<sup>32</sup> Individuation = becoming an individual, separate from others

<sup>33</sup> McAllen, *Teaching Children to Write*, page 31

move freely across the page. Form Drawing and Brain Gym exercises both help the children to develop a handwriting or printing that is flowing and well spaced.

### *Capital Letters Come First*

The children are taught the upper case<sup>34</sup> letters first in order to let them experience the way letters evolved out of picture-symbols in the history of writing. This corresponds with the fact that children live in their imagination, and therefore also think in pictures as the early cultures did. This means that in young children the holistic right side of the brain is more dominant, and they need time to really experience each letter as a story-character, before moving on to using the letter as a symbol in the process of word-building and reading (left-brain activity).

### *Sounds: Consonants and Vowels*

In ancient times, sounds were experienced as having magical creative powers. This links back to the Creation of the World through the Voice of God. If the teacher can convey the sacredness and magical quality of sounds during this time of teaching letters and language, s/he will imbue the children with wonder and joy in learning to speak, write and read.

Letter-sounds are divided into consonants and vowels:

... in speaking, man copies the outer world by means of consonantal sounds and these he colours with his own feelings by adding the vowels.<sup>35</sup>

Consonants are taught first to the children as the picture-symbols for the sounds of the consonants are found in images of the outside world. The consonants create the structure of the words we use in speaking, being formed by the lips, tongue and teeth, e.g. FLoWeR, TaBLe. Thus it is easier to show the children the connection between the picture and the letter-symbol when teaching the consonants. It will also allow the children to learn the letters in the same way as they evolved naturally in the history of writing.

Vowel sounds, like 'AH', 'EE', 'OO', are sounds expressing feelings that come from inside the human being. These are taught at a later stage when the children have already learnt several consonants and have become used to linking a sound with a specific letter-shape.

It is fascinating to notice the languages with words that have many consonants (structure) and those that have many vowels (feeling).

<sup>34</sup> Also called 'capital' letters

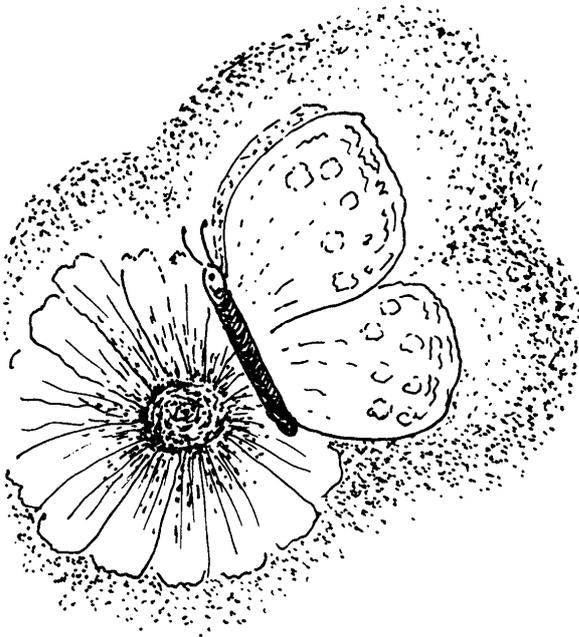
<sup>35</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Renewal of Education*, 1943:66

## Teaching the Consonants

### *Choosing an Image*

The teacher will therefore work backwards, using the shape of the consonant to find a suitable image that contains both the shape and the characteristic sound.

Listening to the sound, the teacher writes down several words and chooses one that s/he feels will give an appropriate image for that sound. Examples for S are: snail, snake, swan and smoke. Examples for B are: bear, bee, beehives and butterfly. Any one of these images can be used; it depends on the imagination of the teacher and which image appeals to them.



Imaginatively create a picture where the shape of the letter can be seen within the shape of the image e.g. S for Silent Swan or Silver Snake; B for Brown Bear or Blue Butterfly; C for Crystal Cave; M for Mighty Mountain, F for Flaming Fire; R for Rolling River, etc. It is quite permissible for the picture image to be at an angle e.g. Blue Butterfly does not fly straight upwards even if the letter shape of B will be placed upright on the page. Notice that each image is immediately linked with an adjective describing a characteristic quality. This reinforces the character of each image for the letter, as well as each sound.

It is preferable to use archetypal<sup>36</sup> and nature images as the children will remember them easily e.g. Mighty Mountain and Tall Tree. It is important to use inspiring images too e.g. Kind King, not Cowardly Courtier. Each child will identify strongly with the letter that is at the beginning of their name and also the characteristic qualities of each sound. The children should feel deeply connected to all of these sounds and letters, knowing that they are a wonderful part of the magical process of reading.

### *The Alphabet*

<sup>36</sup> Archetypal = the original, divine patterns on which everything in creation was made

The children should not be taught the alphabet names at this stage. Only the sound of the letter should be learnt, without adding a vowel at the end of it. For example, letter B should not be pronounced 'bee', only 'b' without a vowel sound. It also should not sound like 'bh' or 'ber'. This is important as the African languages contain several breathed and un-breathed sounds that have different meanings.

In teaching the letters, we do not follow the alphabet. It is far more important to select those letters that can form a string of good stories. The alphabet is only taught once the sounds of all the letters are thoroughly known.

### *Creating Letter Stories*

The teacher may choose to create a different story for each letter. However, many images may easily be linked together and so it is also fun to create a long, continuous story with the letters emerging one by one. The teacher may also want to teach a group of about seven to nine letters in the first "Letters" block and some of these may be connected in one story while others form another story. It is entirely up to the teacher.

Rudolf Steiner emphasised that the children love to hear stories created by their teacher as they contain the personal feelings and ideas of that teacher and as such have greater meaning for the children than a printed story by someone else.<sup>37</sup>

By following the guidelines below, the teacher will be able to create suitable stories for the letter-images that have been chosen. Remember that stories for second language speakers should be fairly short. Each part of the story needs to be interesting!

A story has a three-fold structure:

- a) An Introduction in which you describe the place where the story happens and the main character who is the hero or heroine. All is well in this part of the story.
  - b) The follows a Dramatic Part in which the action of the story happens; this section needs a situation of difficulty, a challenge which the character has to overcome; the story reaches a climax in which the situation is resolved
  - c) Finally a Conclusion in which all is well again; great rejoicing and celebration, as the challenge has been overcome; there is a sense that the character has grown as a result of the challenge.
2. The letter needs to be presented in the form of a character (see 'Choosing an Image' above). This character has to be the main character of the story, for example, Mighty Mountain is the character that leads children to learn the

<sup>37</sup> Steiner, *The Renewal of Education*, 1943:70

letter 'M' - the mountain is like a person: it can speak, can care for the children that are climbing it, can think, etc.

3. It is important to give a vivid description of the main character, both of the outer form and the inner feeling qualities. This will help the children to identify strongly with the letter character. For example, Mighty Mountain has two steep rocky peaks and is strong, stable and protective. Keep the original two words together as the name of the letter-picture: Mighty Mountain.
4. Decide on the temperament of your character.
5. Do not use other images for the same letter in your story as this becomes confusing for the children e.g. Mighty Mountain, but NOT Moomo the Monster as well.
6. The story needs to be told in the style of a fairy tale that allows the children to live in a world of imagination and wonder.
7. If the story is long, it may be necessary to tell it over two days. Take care to divide the story in an appropriate place. (It is necessary for second language English speakers to have relatively short stories, as it requires a lot of concentration to try to understand the story in a new language.)
8. During the introduction, use clear gestures to show the shape of the main character, in the shape of the letter as it will be written later. For example, when introducing Mighty Mountain, show the shape while you move your hand from right to left (the way the children need to see it) saying, "Mighty Mountain has two peaks that touch the sky; the one side (start on the right) moved steeply upwards; as the side became higher and higher, it rose into the first peak; then down, down a little way ..." etc.
9. Describe your characters and situations clearly, taking time to use as many of the senses as possible. It is not sufficient to say that the princess was beautiful – describe her!
10. The story needs to contain human value: the overcoming of evil, reaching a desired goal, regaining something that was lost, or the harmonious working of nature. This provides the children with the double objective of learning a letter and gaining inner nourishment ("food for the soul") as well.
11. Create different moods in the story through the changing qualities of weather and scenes in nature e.g. a dark lonely forest or a peaceful sunny meadow, a happy morning sunrise or a wild and terrifying storm.

12. Use contrasting temperaments in your characters to create natural drama and excitement. Allow your characters to express different feelings of joy and sadness, confusion and courage.
13. Use dialogue to make your characters alive and real! Get them talking to each other!
14. Hold the children in the magic of the story! Do not let them ask or answer questions. Avoid letting them join in singing or dialogue at this stage. You may do this in the recall or when you act out the story later.
15. AVOID telling a story that is merely a list of actions without feelings or descriptions e.g. “The prince rode out on his horse. He met the old man who led him to the dragon. He fought the dragon and killed it.” Even though the teacher may be telling a story to second language speakers, s/he must allow the children to really experience each image fully rather than rushing through the story. For example, “The young prince rode on his horse early, early in the morning as the sun was rising. He spoke to his horse as they were galloping through the fields and forests, saying, ‘Rusty, my faithful horse, we have to face the terrible dragon; but have no fear, for I have a shining sword that will conquer any enemy.’ Rusty snorted, saying he was not afraid, and on they galloped.” Here we see how the one line above becomes a full ‘picture’ before moving on to the next part of the story (where he meets the old man).
16. AVOID making a story that is so long and involved that it takes up too much of the main lesson. Also AVOID a story that is so short and boring that nothing happens.

Remember that the children carry these images into sleep at night, ‘digesting’ what they have been told. The more the children are able to live into the experience, the richer will be their understanding of the story. With second language English speakers, the stories may be short to begin with and slowly get longer as the children’s vocabulary grows. The more the children enjoy the story, the more successful will their learning experience be!

### *An Example of a Letter Story*

Here is a story for learning the letter M. It is first told in the home language, provided the teacher is able to speak it, and repeated the next day in English, using a picture to help the teacher teach the new English words.

Letter M for Mighty Mountain.

*Mighty Mountain looked down into the deep valley below him. He had stood there for many, many years and was very, very old. Mighty Mountain had two tall peaks*

*that reached up into the sky. He was proud of the way he protected all the plants and animals that lived on the slopes of the mountain and in the deep valley below him. In that valley there was a little village with mainly farming people who grew vegetables and fruit trees in the surrounding fields. Mighty Mountain cared for everyone, but best of all he loved the children.*

*In one house there lived a boy and his sister with their grandmother, as their parents had died some years before in a winter of terrible illness. The grandmother was a strong woman who kept her own cows and tended her vegetables every day. But one misty morning, she could not get up. She moaned with a fever and the boy rushed to get the medicine man while the sister washed her grandmother's face. But the old woman only got worse. When the medicine man came he shook his head, "I have seen this illness before. It is very bad. Your grandmother could die. The only cure is for someone to get healing water from the cave on Mighty Mountain. But it is difficult to find."*

*"I will go", said the boy. "I will look after our grandmother," said the girl.*

*The boy packed a bag with some food and a jar to collect the water. Then he set off through the mist, following the path leading towards the mountain. Mighty Mountain looked down at the boy and felt sorry for the little family. He murmured to himself, "We must help this boy to find the way to the cave."*

*The boy walked for a long time, the mist disappeared and the day grew hot. Eventually the path continued around the mountain and he realised that he would have to find his own way up to the cave. He looked up at Mighty Mountain to see if he could see any caves and there seemed to be so many that he had no idea which direction to choose. Just then he saw an eagle fly out of some rocks in the middle between the two peaks. He thought, "I wonder if that is the place where the cave is?" He began to climb up towards the rocks.*

*The slope was steep, but he was a strong boy and had walked and climbed many times, although this place was new to him. What was strange was that he seemed to have more energy now than when he started climbing. He came to a place where he thought he should go off to the right but as soon as he went that way, he felt as if the rocks were blocking his path. "So you want me to go the other way," he said. As he turned around, a path seemed to open up and so he followed it. Whenever the path seemed to be going nowhere, the boy turned around slowly and waited for the new direction to open up. "Mighty Mountain," he said, "I know you are helping me."*

*Mighty Mountain was pleased to see the boy steadily getting closer to the cave. Then the boy saw the eagle wheeling round in circles above him. He stopped and watched the eagle and saw how it flew in towards the rocks and then disappeared. "I knew it!" he said, "That is where the cave is!" He scrambled up the last few rocky cliffs and there stood a huge hole in the mountain. He had found the cave!*

*He walked slowly into the mouth of the cave. It was huge and the path soon dropped down and down, becoming narrower and narrower as it went deeper and deeper into the mountain. The cave became darker and darker. The boy saw little sparkling lights all over the walls of the cave. At first he did not understand what it was, then he realised that they were crystals on the walls catching the light from outside. Then he heard the sound of water. As he stepped forward and his eyes became used to the darkness, he saw a spring bubbling out of the rock into a clear pool. The boy knelt down and filled up his jar with the fresh, sweet water. He drank some himself as he was very thirsty. Immediately he felt strong and ready to start the return journey. "Thank you, Mighty Mountain, for this wonderful healing water", he said.*

*As he went outside, he saw that it was now late afternoon. "Mighty Mountain," he said, "Help me to find my way so that I can bring this precious water home safely." He started down the path and he looked at the sun's position in the sky. He knew he had only a couple of hours before sunset. Luckily the steepest rocks were right in the beginning, but as he went further down the mountain, the shadows got longer and longer. Then he noticed the moon rising in the sky behind him, between the two high peaks of Mighty Mountain. The darker the sky became, the brighter shone the moon. The path seemed shorter and easier to follow than when he climbed up it. Suddenly he was down on the level path that led back to the village. He began to get excited and started running along the path. He did not run too quickly because he did not want to drop the jar of water, but just fast enough to get home a bit sooner to see his grandmother.*

*When he came to the house, all was quiet. He opened the door softly and in the darkness he saw two shapes near the fire place. His sister was still there. She stood up and he could see that she was crying. "Our grandmother is hardly breathing," she said. Quickly the boy knelt beside the grandmother and he poured a few drops into her mouth, then a few more. She swallowed and then drank a little more. Then she sighed and began to breathe more easily. Slowly the grandmother drank a little more of the precious water and then went off to sleep. The boy hugged his sister and gave her some water to drink as well. They smiled and both of them knew that the old grandmother would now get better.*

*The boy told his sister the story of how he found the cave. "I know that Mighty Mountain helped me to find the cave. He is looking after all of us." And mighty Mountain rumbled with pleasure, knowing that all was well.*

### *Learn a Poem Connected to the Story*

It is a good idea to teach the class a little poem that is linked to the story in some way. If it is a story to introduce a letter, then the poem needs to be about the main character e.g. the Mighty Mountain:

Mighty Mountain, towering high,  
 Two tall peaks against the sky.  
 Mighty Mountain, steep and strong,  
 You have lived for ages long.  
 Mighty Mountain proudly stand,  
 You are guarding all the land!<sup>38</sup>

The poem will remind the children of the story whenever they say it. The poem will strengthen the children's imagination about the story and will teach them more words and language usage. The poem will also help to consolidate the content and language of the story.

### *Alliterative Rhyme*

The teacher makes up an alliterative rhyme or sentence using many words beginning with the letter-sound that is being taught. These should also be quite rhythmical in order to reinforce the sound that is being taught and if possible they should relate directly to the story. The teacher can get the children to make a simple gesture whenever the sound occurs in the sentence to increase their awareness of the sound. The rhyme should be fun for the children to say and do as part of their rhythmical time. Here are some examples of alliterative rhymes:<sup>39</sup>

Merry men are marching up the Mighty Mountain,  
 Up the Mighty Mountain in the misty morning!

Slippery snake with scales of silver, sliding through the grass,  
 Shining, sparkling as he slithers; be still ...and let him pass.

Flaming Fire, flashing freely, full of friendly fun!  
 Flickering, frightening, fiercely fighting,  
 Finis/hed when he's done!

Big Blue Butterfly, beautiful and light,  
 Bobbing between the blossoms bright.

Rippling, Rolling River, rushing on your way,  
 Rippling, Rolling River, roaming all the day!  
 Rushing through the Reeds,  
 Round the rugged Rocks,  
 And racing off to revel in your play!

### *Writing in Blank (Unlined) Books*

<sup>38</sup> Copyright Catherine van Alphen

<sup>39</sup> All copyright Catherine van Alphen

Ideally each of the children should have an unlined A3 sized book where they draw the picture on one page and a large letter, followed by smaller sizes of the same letter on the page opposite. The teacher guides the children carefully to imitate the writing and layout of the page that s/he has drawn on the board. They may first be given the opportunity to practise the letters on a small chalkboard or else a large piece of blank paper. When they come to create their own book of letters, the unlined books allow them to experience the picture quality of each letter and they are encouraged to develop their own sense of space on the page.

Some children tend to write quite large at this stage while others write smaller and they all need to learn to set out their page so that the letters are straight and evenly spaced. The children are encouraged to find their own relationship between the size of the page and the size of their writing and this in turn develops hand-eye co-ordination. This assists the children with the straight and the curved shapes of the letters. So the teacher deliberately does not give the children lined books that would keep their writing straight. Instead the unlined books allow the children the freedom and creativity of developing this skill for themselves.

### *The Three Day Rhythm*

The letter shapes are abstract symbols for the children. Therefore the teacher engages the children as fully as possible by working with one letter only over three days. Using an alternating rhythm, s/he brings the letter to consciousness through story, art and movement during the day and then lets it sink into the sub-conscious mind during the night's sleep. The following day s/he re-awakens the children's awareness of the letter and by repeating the process over three days, the teacher enables them to connect deeply with the letter. With second language English speakers it is best, in the beginning, to let the process take one day longer.

	<i>Day 1</i>	<i>Day 2</i>	<i>Day 3</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
<i>Rhythmic Part, about 40 minutes</i>	Opening of day; telling news? Movement for awakening and centering children Songs, poems, action songs, action verses, rhymes, speech exercises to learn English in a rhythmical way, repeating and varying each item to maintain interest. Day 3 onwards: include saying letter rhyme, and act out characters or parts of the story			
<i>Content Part, about 40 minutes</i>	<i>Tell Letter story in home language (using English name for the main character - see</i>	<i>Look at teacher's drawing on board</i>  <i>Learn English words connected with story</i>	<i>Recall of story in English</i>  <i>Teaching the letter *hearing the sound</i>	<i>Teaching the letter *children show shape of letter *children make sound of letter</i>

	<i>below)</i>	<i>Teacher tells story in English</i>  <i>Teacher introduces rhyme; children learn it, tap on repeated sounds</i>	<i>*seeing the shape in the drawing</i>  <i>Movement of letter (see Day 3 below)</i>	<i>*children find other words with same sound</i>  <i>Movement of letter (see Day 4 below)</i>
<i>Activity Part, about 40 minutes</i>	<i>Children draw from the story, using own their own imagination (on separate paper)</i>	<i>Children copy teacher's drawing (or parts of it) in their books (opposite to where the letter will be drawn)</i>	<i>Write letter into drawing</i>  <i>Complete drawing from yesterday</i>	<i>Writing of letter:</i> <i>*one large</i> <i>*many small</i>  <i>'Read' letter (see Day 4 below)</i>
				<i>End of the day: tell next letter story language (then Day 5 continues like Day 2 for the new letter)</i>

*N.B. The letters learnt are read every day for the whole block and in practice lessons after the block*

## DAY 1

**Story:** The teacher tells the story of the letter in the home language, so that the children understand and live into the pictures. However, because the letter-symbol is based on the English word (in this instance 'Mighty Mountain'), the teacher must tell the story using the words 'Mighty Mountain' whenever s/he refers to the mountain instead of using only words in the home language. Thus the children will learn the words 'Mighty Mountain' on the first day and realise the significance of that image on the following days.

**Drawing:** The children draw a picture out of their imagination of the story on a separate piece of paper (could be displayed on classroom wall!).

## DAY 2

**Drawing:** The teacher makes a drawing on the board before the children come to school. This drawing includes important items that are in the story, the characters in the story, especially the main character that will depict the letter. After the Rhythmic Time, s/he uses the drawing to teach the main words of the story in English.

**Story:** The teacher tells the story in English, using gestures and lively dialogue to bring out the characters and make the story alive.

**Rhyme:** The teacher recites the alliterative rhyme or sentence and teaches it to the children who speak it slowly and clearly with the teacher. They may also step or tap their fingers or make a movement while saying the rhyme in order to learn to say it well.

The children will make a second drawing, this time in their books, copying the teacher's drawing so that the main character (in this case Mighty Mountain) is clearly seen.

### DAY 3

**Rhyme:** In the Rhythmic Time, the children repeat the rhyme many times, with and without movements, listening to the sound of the letter.

**Acting:** Also in the Rhythmic Time, let the children move or walk the characters from the story e.g. Stand proudly like Mighty Mountain; walk like the boy carrying the jar of water; walk like the old medicine man, etc. Or, act parts (or even the whole) of the story

**Recall:** The teacher leads the children into retelling the story in English, starting them off by reminding them of the beginning of the story. They take it in turns to tell different parts. The teacher helps them to get the story in the correct sequence.

**Teaching the Letter:** The teacher now asks the children for the first sound that they hear in each of the words 'Mighty Mountain'. S/he shows the children the shape of the letter M in the drawing and how the drawing can be changed into the letter.

**Movement:** The teacher draws the shape of the letter over again on the board and the children imitate the movement with their hands.

- draw the shape in the air in front of you (large movement)
- draw it with a hand on the desk
- draw it with a foot on the floor
- draw it with a finger in the air (small movement)
- Act out part of the story e.g. the conversation between the children and their parents.

**Writing:** The children draw the letter into their drawing of Mighty Mountain.

### DAY 4

**Rhyme:** The children repeat the rhyme with and without movements, listening to the sound of the letter. In the Rhythmic Time, the children may act out part of the story from the day before.

**Teaching the Letter:** The children show her how the shape of the letter comes out of the drawing. They try to find as many words as possible beginning with that sound. The teacher must have her own list of words and ask questions to help the children find more words e.g. medicine man, misty morning, mother, mouth, moon. This is important as many second language speakers can not yet think of words in English. Later they can find words where the sound comes in the middle or at the end of the word.

**Movement:** The children practise the letter by moving it in many ways, starting with large movements and leading over to small movement and then writing. The children must say the sound of the letter while doing the movement, learning to associate the sound with the shape. Here are some suggestions to select from (do not use all these possibilities for each letter!):

- Children repeat the movements learnt the day before
- The teacher draws a large letter on the floor with chalk. The children walk the letter in the same way as they would draw it. They clap when they begin a stroke and when they end it. If the letter requires another stroke, they must jump to where it begins again.
- Children draw the letter in the sand with a foot.
- They use their body to make the letter shape.
- Children draw the letter on a piece of paper with a crayon between their toes.
- Sitting in their desks, children 'draw' the letter on each other's backs with their fingers.
- They draw the letter in the air with their nose, chin, shoulder, etc.
- Close one eye, point to the letter on the board and draw it in the air. Repeat, closing other eye.
- Draw the letter several times with chalk on small chalkboards.

**Writing:** Children have their books and crayons on the desk. The teacher first draws the edges of the page on the chalkboard, slightly bigger than the book size, and shows how to draw one large letter followed by several smaller ones, so that the children clearly see how to space out the letters on their page. They first 'draw' the letter in their book with their fingers and afterwards with the crayons in a mood of quiet concentration.

**Reading:** The children use their fingers to trace over the letters in their book while repeating the sound. This is done daily throughout the main lesson block, each time revising all the letters that have been learnt.

Later, either in the main lesson or before the children go home, the teacher tells them the letter story in their home language. The name of the letter–image will be the only words spoken in English at this point.

One idea the teacher could use is to paint the letter during the painting lesson, asking them to remember the sound of the letter at the beginning and again at the end of the lesson.

As children proceed along the journey of learning the consonants, they begin to pick up the different sounds and letter shapes more quickly and easily. It may be possible to then to spend fewer days in introducing and learning new letters (at first 3 days instead of 4, later 2 days instead of 3).

The teacher may feel that certain letters belong together and may even teach two of them during the three days, not just one. But the teacher must only do this if s/he feels confident that the children will manage to learn them both easily. Two that are easily linked are Kind King and Quiet Queen, unless one has chosen to use Quick Quail instead.

The last letters like X, Y and Z may be taught together. X may be the side of a box, Y the shape of a yacht in the water and Z may be Zig-Zag. So the teacher may have to be quite imaginative for the last few letters.

Some consonants have more than one sound, e.g. C can sound like both S and K. So, if one could teach the letter-image C for Crystal Cave. At a later stage, one can tell another story where C agrees to help S on certain occasions e.g. city, Celia, cell, cycle, cyclone, cymbal. This story may be more appropriate in Grade 2 unless you have a child in the class with a name beginning with C that sounds like S.

## Teaching the Vowels

After teaching several consonants (perhaps about 9), the teacher introduces the vowels, usually in the second main lesson block on “Letters”.

As already mentioned, the consonants get their shapes from the archetypal images visible in the world. By now the children have got used to anticipating the next consonant to be learnt in the story, both by the alliterative sound in the name (e.g. Kind King) and its connection to the image. The consonants are mostly formed in the front of the mouth with the lips, tongue and teeth. They give form and structure to the words we say, and this makes us conscious of the words and the objects they represent.

However, 'Man communicates the feeling element in his speech through the production of vowel sounds.'<sup>40</sup>

The vowel sounds can be voiced from the front, middle or back of the mouth and throat. If we see a beautiful sunrise, we may say "Ah!" If we are hurt, we may cry, "Ow!" or if we get excited, we may say, "Ooh!" Thus the vowels express emotions, inner moods or soul qualities. It is for this reason that teachers often use the term "Angel Sounds" when talking about the vowels, in order to help the children understand the difference between consonants and vowels.

The difficulty in teaching English is that it has several sounds for each vowel, depending on the combination of that vowel with other vowels and consonants. This can be very confusing and therefore the teacher must ensure that the children are able to distinguish one sound from the other correctly, both aurally (how we hear it) and when reading. For this reason it is very important for the teacher to speak English very clearly, giving special attention to how he or she pronounces the vowel sounds.

The teacher begins with a story about all five vowels or Angel Sounds. Following this, each vowel will be introduced in a three-day rhythm during a main lesson block of three weeks. The teacher will create a mood of reverence when talking about each angel. The story about each Angel Sound is based on the meaning of its vowel sound, and each Angel needs to express the feeling within its particular sound.

To introduce the story of the Angel Sounds, the teacher draws a picture on the board of the five angels and a rainbow bridge, connecting heaven and earth. S/he will tell the story in the home language first, followed by telling in English the day after. An example of a way to begin this story is as follows:

	<i>Day 1</i>	<i>Day 2</i>	<i>Day 3</i>	<i>Day 4</i>
<i>Rhythmic Part, about 40 minutes</i>	Opening of day; telling news? Movement for awakening and centering children Songs, poems, action songs, action verses, rhymes, speech exercises to learn English In a rhythmical way, repeating and varying each item to maintain interest. Day 2 onwards: act out story (or parts of the story) from previous day Day 3 onwards: repeat Angel verses many times, with and without movements			
<i>Content Part, about 40 minutes</i>	<i>Teacher's drawing of five Angels and rainbow bridge is on chalkboard before children</i>	<i>Teacher's drawing of Angel A on board before children enter</i>  <i>Look at five angels</i>	<i>Children retell Story of Angel A in home language</i>  <i>Teacher introduces</i>	<i>Children retell Story of Angel A in English</i>  <i>Teacher introduces</i>

<sup>40</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Renewal of Education*, 1943:66.

	<p><i>come into class</i></p> <p><i>Tell story of the five Angels in the home language (using the English names for the Angels - see below)</i></p>	<p><i>drawing on board and learn English words connected with story</i></p> <p><i>Teacher tells five Angels story in English (short story)</i></p> <p><i>Teacher tells Angel A story in the home Language</i></p> <p><i>Children learn Angel A verse (using Heavenly sound)</i></p>	<p><i>new English words needed for retelling story in English</i></p> <p><i>Teacher retells story of Angel A in English</i></p> <p><i>Children learn Angel A verses (earthly sound)</i></p> <p><i>Teaching the letter *hearing the sounds *seeing the shape in the drawing</i></p> <p><i>Movement of letter (see Day 3 in Consonants section)</i></p>	<p><i>Verse of Angel A (name sound)</i></p> <p><i>Finding words using the three Angel sounds of Angel A</i></p> <p><i>Teaching the letter *children show shape of Angel A *children make the sounds of Angel A</i></p> <p><i>Movement of letter (see Day 4 in Consonants section)</i></p>
<p><i>Activity Part, about 40 minutes</i></p>	<p><i>Children copy teacher's drawing in their books</i></p>	<p><i>Children copy teacher's drawing in their books (opposite to where the letter will be drawn)</i></p>	<p><i>Write letter into drawing</i></p> <p><i>Complete drawing from yesterday</i></p>	<p><i>Writing of letter: *one large *many small</i></p> <p><i>'Read' letter (see Day 4 in Consonants section)</i></p>
				<p><i>End of the day: tell next letter story in Home language (then Day 5 continues like Day 2 for the new Angel letter (E))</i></p>

*N.B. The letters learnt are read every day for the whole block and in practice lessons after the block*

## DAY 1

**Story introducing the five vowels:** The teacher has drawn a beautiful picture on the board of five angels. S/he now tells a story to introduce the vowel sounds. The following story is an example of how to introduce the angel sounds. It is first told in the home language.

*God looked down to earth and saw that people were deeply troubled. People on earth seemed to be struggling to find peace and happiness. They seemed to be arguing with each other, being sad or lonely.*

*God noticed that people needed help in five different ways. He noticed that people were rushing around, not noticing the beauties of nature. They were not being very helpful to each other. They didn't even like themselves very much and kept feeling very silly or useless. They were also not being very nice sometimes and kept saying horrible things to each other. They did not always tell the truth and they didn't seem to trust themselves or each other. In fact, things were not going very well at all.*

*So he called his angels together and asked which of them would like to help human beings to live in the way they were supposed to. He had five special tasks that He needed them to do for Him. Five angels came forward and offered to help humankind. They were Angel A, Angel E, Angel I, Angel O and Angel U. Each angel sang her own special sound that expressed the feelings of the heart. God knew that when human beings learned to use these sounds, they would be able to show those feelings to each other again. And God said that these sounds would be placed in all the words that people used to talk to each other, so that they can live in happiness and love again.*

*Then the angels floated down to earth on a beautiful rainbow bridge of many colours, and brought these wonderful sounds to humankind. They were mostly invisible, except to certain people who could sense their presence or see them, and they sang their beautiful sounds into the hearts of human beings. And now, whenever the people spoke to each other, they could not help using the sounds that the angels had given to them. So all the words were now filled with the feelings of the Angel Sounds.*

**Drawing:** Guided by the teacher, the children draw a beautiful picture of the five angels and the rainbow bridge on the first page of the new main lesson book on vowels.

## DAY 2

**Teacher's drawing:** Leaving the drawing of five Angels and rainbow bridge on the board, the teacher draws Angel A on another part of the board before the children enter the class.

After the rhythmical part of the main lesson, s/he first points to the drawing of the five Angels coming down the rainbow bridge (from the day before), and using questions, finds out what words the children know in English.

**New words and recall:** Then s/he teaches the children any further English words they may need and retells the first part of the story (told in Day 1) in English. This part of the story is relatively short.

**Story of Angel A:** The teacher tells the story of Angel A in the home language, remembering to call her by her English name:

*God said that He had noticed that people did not see the beauty of creation that was all around them. He had made the beautiful mountains and valleys, the seas and the sky and all the different animals and human beings. He had made the changing seasons, the colourful sunrise and sunset. But people were getting quite sad and angry with each other instead of appreciating the many lovely things that were in the world. Angel A stepped forward and asked to take on the task of teaching people to see beauty in everything around them.*

*Angel A flies softly from the rainbow bridge to a garden where she sees some children playing. They sense her presence and as they look up they see her beautiful warm smile and her lovely wings stretching into the air. Her beautiful long robes glow with radiant light and her beauty fills the garden around them. The children are filled with awe and amazement. They all say “Ah!” Angel A greets them. “Good morning, dear children, I am Angel A. I have come to show you something very special.”*

*The children eagerly follow her and she shows them many things; a butterfly fluttering on a flower, a bird’s nest with little eggs inside, a kitten trying to catch a fly.... The children are amazed and delighted and each time they see something they gasp with wonder and say “Ah!” It seemed as if their eyes had been shut and were now opened up to so many beautiful things. They are filled with happiness. They see other children playing and their mothers and fathers and grandparents, so full of love and kindness for them and each other.*

*Before she leaves, she tells the children that whenever they see beauty in the world and in each other and they say “Ah!”, they must remember her because “Ah” is the song that Angel A sings in heaven. Now that they know her, every time they say “Ah!” she is present with them even if they cannot see her. This sound that she sings is her gift to them so that they can enjoy the beauty of the world around them. Angel A also tells them that she has other sounds that she says on earth. Her earthly sound is ‘a’ as in cat, ant and man.*

*The children promise Angel A that they will tell others about her and will show them the beauty of things on earth so that they too will sing Angel A’s song – Ahhhhh! Angel A knows that she will continue to share her gift of joy and wonder with everyone whenever they say “Ah!”<sup>41</sup>*

**Verse:** The teacher teaches the children a verse about Angel A’s heavenly sound “Ah”:

Star, star, shining star,

<sup>41</sup> Adapted from a story by Beulah Reeler

Shine in darkness from afar.  
 In the darkness of the park  
 We can see your tiny spark  
 Star, star, shining star  
 Shine in darkness from afar

**Drawing:** The children then draw a picture of Angel A in their main lesson books (make sure there is a blank page opposite this drawing, for writing the vowel letter). This will be possible even if the children have not done the story in English because the home language will be using the “Ah” sound.

### DAY 3

**Recall:** The teacher leads a recall of the Angel A story (from Day 2) with the children, getting them to take turns to tell a part of it. By asking a few leading questions the children can be encouraged to tell more details of the story.

**New words:** The teacher then prepares the children by teaching any new English words that s/he may be using in the story of Angel A. S/he retells the story in English.

**Verse:** The children practise the verse containing Angel A’s heavenly “Ah” sound. Then the teacher introduces the children to two little verses containing the short ‘a’ that is Angel A’s earthly sound,<sup>42</sup> and practises it several times.

Pat-a-pat-pat,  
 The cat’s on the mat  
 Drat that cat,  
 It’s caught a rat!

I can stand  
 On the land  
 I can stand  
 In God’s hand.

**Letter:** Now comes an important moment: the teacher shows the children how the shape of A is hidden in the drawing of Angel A. Linking the shape of letter A with the two sounds the children have learnt so far, s/he now practises the shape by moving in various ways.

<sup>42</sup> See list of verses at the end of the manual.

**Movement:** The children practise moving letter A in the same way as they have done with the shape of the consonants, following the way it is written down. The teacher must ensure that the children start in the right place and follow the correct direction of the strokes.

**Writing:** The children draw the letter into their drawing of Mighty Mountain.

#### DAY 4

**Recall:** The teacher leads the children into recalling the story of Angel A in English, several children taking turns to tell the story.

**Verse:** After the story the teacher introduces the name sound of Angel A. S/he teaches a verse using the name sound of Angel A (the word 'made'):

God made you,  
 God made me,  
 God made birds  
 In the tree

**Finding words:** The children now know the three sounds that Angel A makes: her heavenly sound ('ah'), her earthly sound (short a, as in 'cat'), and her name sound (long a, as in 'name').

- ❖ The children practise the rhyme they have learnt for the 'ah' sound. They try to find more words with the 'ah' sound (e.g. father, star, dark, using the heavenly sound).
- ❖ Then the teacher asks the children if they also remember Angel A's earthly sound. They repeat the verse. They find words containing the earthly sound (e.g. hat, cat, man, ran, sad, dad, rag, sack)
- ❖ S/he can ask the children to find other words that they know that have the name sound of Angel A in it (e.g. gate, made, rain, again).
- ❖ How many of them have Angel A in their name? (e.g. Adeelah uses the heavenly sound; Jane, Jade use the name sound; Janet, Jasper, Harry, Amanda use the earthly sound)
- ❖ How do they feel when they see something beautiful? Let the teacher take them into the garden to look at all the beautiful flowers, trees, clouds, mountains, etc. Help them to say "Ah!" the heavenly sound.

**Movement:** The teacher draws the vowel letter on the board. S/he asks the children how the shape of A is hidden in the drawing of Angel A. The children practise writing it in the same way as they have done with the shape of the consonants, following the way it is written down. Again, the teacher must ensure that the children start in the right place and follow the correct direction of the strokes.

**Writing:** After much movement practise, the children will write the Angel A letter in the main lesson book, opposite the drawing of Angel A: one large A, followed by several small A's.

**Next Angel letter:** Later in the main lesson, or at the end of the day, the teacher tells the story about the next vowel sound – Angel E –in the home language.

**Painting:** During the weekly painting lesson, the children can be asked to paint with the colours that belong to the angel and the story they have heard. The teacher can 'paint the picture' in their imaginations of the shining light of the angel, and the play of colours in the surroundings where the story takes place. As painting at this age is non-representational, we treat the painting as a colour exercise rather than painting figures and specific shapes. This will enhance the feeling quality of the vowels.

During this main lesson block, all five Angel Sounds are taught, continuing to practise the different sounds for each angel as these become the basis for phonics and word-building.

### *The Five Angel Qualities*



In describing the five angels, each teacher may have different ideas and it is up to each person to choose the qualities and colours they feel are appropriate for each angel. The most important aspects to emphasise are the feeling qualities associated with the vowel sounds. Each angel is beautiful, loving and radiant with light and is there to help humankind to express feelings through the sounds they sing. Here are some suggestions to think about:

#### **Angel A**

wears glowing red robes

Qualities:

wonder, awe, amazement, joy, praise for God's creation!

Task: to help people to see beauty in the world, to give praise and thanks for creation.

Three Sounds:

- ❖ Heavenly sound – ah (star, father, calm)
- ❖ Earthly sound (English) – a (cat, ant)
- ❖ Name sound – ay (play, make)

## Angel E

wears glowing green robes

Qualities: willingness to help others, empathy, calm, inner strength.

Task: to encourage people to be open to helping others, to give them inner strength and serenity.

Two Sounds:

- ❖ Heavenly sound – ee (evening, east, seek)
- ❖ Name sound – ee (same as heavenly sound)
- ❖ Earthly sound – e (pet, egg)



## Angel I

wears glowing yellow robes

Qualities: openness, self confidence, building the connection between heaven and earth.

Task: to help people to see what is right, to follow the light, to acknowledge the best in each other.

Two sounds:

- ❖ Heavenly sound – I (light, fine, iron)
- ❖ Name sound – I (same as heavenly sound)
- ❖ Earthly sound – i (in, ink, sit)



**A**

## ngel O



wears glowing orange robes

Qualities: Caring, sympathy, nurturing, protecting, enfolding.

Task: to help people to be more loving and caring of others, to show that love can overcome fear, to protect all creatures and people.

Two sounds:

- ❖ Heavenly sound – O (protect, enfold, only, gold, hope, glow)
- ❖ Name sound – O (same as heavenly sound)
- ❖ Earthly sound – o (dog, pot, orange)

## Angel U

wears glowing deep blue robes

Qualities: thoughtful, focussed, reverent and truthful.

Task: to help people to respect themselves and each other, to trust themselves, to be truthful and honest, to be focussed and self-directed, open to inner guidance.

Two sounds:

- ❖ Heavenly sound – U ('oo') (truth, beauty, you)
- ❖ Name sound – U (same as heavenly sound)
- ❖ Earthly sound – u (trust, fun)



## Oral Work (Practice Lessons after the main lesson block)

The purpose of the main lesson is to introduce children to new items of learning, in a qualitative and imaginative way. The 40-minute practice lessons (see page 16) that follow are there to consolidate and extend what they have learnt.

Usually when there is a language main lesson, one is working on maths skills; vice-versa, when there is a maths main lesson, one will be continuing the work from the language main lesson that has just ended.

It is very important to do a great amount of oral work with the class to ensure that a bridge is being built between speaking, listening and understanding. The teacher always needs to be aware of what the children know and can do. It is so easy for second language speakers to hide their difficulties if the class only speaks and does everything as a whole.

After the language main lessons, games and creative exercises need to be played in order to practise the sounds and letter symbols. A lot of this work needs to be oral.

### *Listening Correctly*

The teacher needs to do oral exercises where children listen to different sounds. S/he says,

“What sound do you hear at the beginning of ‘man’?”

“What sound can you hear at the end of ‘mud’?”

“What Angel sound do you hear in the middle of ‘dig’?”

S/he may emphasise those sounds as s/he says them to make sure the children are aware of them.

Later the teacher can ask the children to find words that begin with a particular letter. The children can also find groups of words that end with a letter. The teacher needs to give examples from words the children already know and perhaps even help the children to guess certain words by asking leading questions. S/he may even ask two children to help each other find words as the children often learn new words from their friends. By repeating the exercise daily the children improve and feel good about their achievement.

Very important is that the vowel sounds must be spoken correctly. Many words may be found by the class having the correct sound, but not spelt the same way, due to irregularities in English. Because we are doing oral work, the spelling of these words does not matter, as these words will not be written on the board. It is the sound that is important - here are some words that all have the same sounds, even though they are spelled differently:

**Home, gnome, foam, dome, roam**

**Queen, bean, seen, niece, thirteen**  
**Sing, king, wing, ring, sting**  
**Up, hut, above, mother, love, once**

Do NOT say that a word is “wrong” if a child mis-hears or mis-pronounces a sound; rather encourage the child to listen again, helping him or her find the correct sound in a positive, affirming way.

This exercise is essential as many classes have children who come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds where pronunciation of English may be poor, colloquial or incorrect. Thus oral and speech exercises form an important basis for learning to write and read. This will assist the children when they need to learn to spell correctly later on.

Speech exercises and poems should be used daily to improve correct pronunciation. The teacher can even make some fun poems up with the class e.g.

Why did the bat  
fly past the cat?

Be awake,  
There's a snake!

Working with Angel E as an example:

- ❖ Let the class experience how long the heavenly sound can be: “Ee .....
- ❖ Let them do movements with the heavenly sound (see suggestions in ‘Gestures for Vowels’ below)
- ❖ Let the children find some words with the heavenly sound!
  
- ❖ Let the children experience how short the earthly sound can be: “e, e, e...”
- ❖ Children do movements to show how the short sound moves.
- ❖ Let them find some words with the earthly sound.
  
- ❖ Let the children experience the name sound of E. (They will discover it is the same sound as the heavenly sound!)
- ❖ Let them move the name sound.
- ❖ Let them find some words with the name sound.

Many activities involving movement and the forming of the letters in artistic and creative ways should be repeated from time to time in order to balance the oral work. The teacher needs to develop the joy of using language in a lively, fun way.

## *Gestures for the Vowels*

The learning of vowels is most crucial, especially in English, where sounds are quite similar and easily mistaken. For example, some children may not hear the difference between 'a' and 'o'. Therefore the teacher must pay careful attention to the speaking and recognising of different vowels. Rudolf Steiner has said that if children are not recognising or speaking sounds correctly, the teacher must check her own speaking:

The teacher ...should endeavour to speak not only distinctly, but also with a rhythmical and harmonious flow<sup>43</sup>

If s/he is speaking too quickly or not clearly enough, second language speakers will not grasp what s/he is saying. This will affect their ability to listen properly so they can hear the differences between sounds, and so they will also find it difficult to spell at a later stage.<sup>44</sup> For this reason it helps to use gestures for the different vowel sounds as in the following game:

The teacher says to the children, "Show me with your hand what Angel sound is in the following words: man, pet, bin, dot, mud." If the children have been taught the gesture associated with the vowel sound, they will give the correct movement. If they are not hearing the sound correctly or have not recognised it correctly, the gesture will be incorrect. Then the teacher can see immediately when children are unsure of what sound they are hearing.

Here is a list of suggestions for gestures for the vowel sounds. Feel free to make up your own as well.

<u>Short Vowel</u>	<u>Gesture</u>
'a' (cat)	A downward tap of the right hand on to the left hand
'e' (bed)	A short sideways movement of the hand with palm facing downwards
'i' (tin)	One finger pointing upwards, a short upward pointing movement
'o' (pot)	A short movement with thumb and first finger touching to make a circle
'u' (hut)	A short upward movement of the hand with palm facing upwards

Some long vowels and diphthongs make the same sound and should therefore have the same gesture as the exercise is heard and spoken, not spelt or written

<u>Long Vowel</u>	<u>Gesture</u>
'ah' (star)	Both hands together (as in prayer), move apart slowly
'ar' (car)	Same gesture as above

<sup>43</sup> Steiner, The Renewal of Education, 1943: 144

<sup>44</sup> Steiner, The Renewal of Education, 1943: 144

'ah' (path) Same gesture as above  
 'ah' (ask) Same gesture as above  
 'ah' (mast) Same gesture as above

'A' (make) Hands joined at finger tips and thumbs to form shape of A  
 'ay' (day) Same gesture as above  
 'ai' (rain) Same gesture as above  
 'ea' (break) Same gesture as above

'ee' (tree) Arm moves diagonally upwards to the right in a smooth gesture  
 'ea' (easy) Same gesture as above

'I' (like) Arm moves down and up in a bow (like pendulum of a clock)  
 'y' (my) Same gesture as above

'O' (home) Palms make O shape

'oo' (pool) Hands parallel moving downwards  
 'U' (Truth) Same gesture as above

The children should play with the sounds on the tips of their tongues, thereby developing a fine ear for language which will assist them later with spelling.

### *Vowel Poems*

See the Appendix at the end of this manual (page 109) for verses the children can learn to hear the vowels correctly

### *The Alphabet*

The alphabet is only taught once all the letter sounds have been thoroughly learnt, so as not to confuse the children. A clear difference needs to be made between the sound of a letter and its name, and the children must be aware of the difference.

The alphabet can be taught through a song, and the children quizzed by being given a sound and them saying what the name of the letter is.

### *Combining Sounds*



A simple song (sung to the tune of Jingle Bells) can assist the children in saying and recognising the short vowel sounds. First sing the SHORT vowels to the above tune.

**a, e, i; a, e, i; a, e, i, o, u.**

**a, e, i; a, e, i; a, e, i, o, u, etc**

Then sing the tune but add a consonant in front of each vowel.

**Ba, be, bi; ba, be, bi; ba, be, bi, bo, bu; ...**

Then try singing the tune with a consonant behind the vowel.

**At, et, it; at, et, it; at, et, it, ot, ut; ...**

Then try singing the tune with a consonant, vowel and consonant combination.

**BaT, BeT, BiT; BaT, BeT, BiT; BaT, BeT, BiT, BoT, BuT; ...**

By using several vowels and consonants that the children have already learnt, they will get practise in combining two or three sounds before they have to learn to read them in proper words.

## Activities to consolidate letters

### *Shapes of the Letters*

The teacher can practise the shapes of the letters, by:

- ❖ asking children to 'draw' them in the air
- ❖ blind-folding children and give them letters cut out of fine sandpaper; they need to recognise the letters by touch
- ❖ make letters out of clay, dry them and play games recognising their sounds

### *Games*

Many games can be played that support the consolidation of learning and memorising consonants and vowels, and it is essential that children who are learning as second language speakers become actively involved and enjoy learning the letters.

If there are children who are not keeping up for any reason, the teacher needs to be aware and find ways to help them at this early stage when it is easier to deal with than later on. These children may need some extra help, going back to the stories that introduced each letter, and helping them to make the connections with the sound consciously.

It is also important that the teacher builds up a very thorough approach that supports the children to learn the letters with ease. It is far better to work more slowly and thoroughly at this stage, before the split comes between those children that can read and those who cannot.

### *Sound Games*

- ❖ *First Sound Switch.* Choose a word e.g. man and children must change the first letter to form another word. See how many words can be found. You can even allow nonsense words just for fun. E.g. man, can, ban, tan, lan, Dan, pan, etc.
- ❖ *First Sound/Last Sound.* The teacher says a word e.g. 'fish' and the children must tell her the first sound and then the last sound.
- ❖ *Find a Word.* The teacher can ask the children to find words that begin with a particular letter. The children can also find groups of words that end with a letter. The teacher needs to give examples from words the children already know and perhaps even help the children to guess certain words by asking leading questions. She may even ask two children to help each other find words as the children often learn new

words from their friends. By repeating the exercise daily the children improve and feel good about the number of words they know.

- ❖ *Clap the Syllables* of one-syllable words (run, dot), two-syllable words (running, letter) and later three-syllable words (happily, beautiful).
- ❖ *Where is it?* Where do you hear the 't' in 'top', 'rat', 'letter'?
- ❖ *Count the Sounds.* How many sounds in 'mat'? m/a/t (3), 'sock'? s/o/ck (3).
- ❖ *Last Sound Switch.* Change the last letter to make a new word. Nonsense words may be allowed. Man, mat, mad, map, mab. Fish, wish, dish, swish, mish-mash
- ❖ *Find the Angel Letter.* The teacher says a word e.g. 'dog' and the children must tell her the Angel Letter (vowel sound) that they hear.
- ❖ *I Spy.* The teacher begins by saying "I spy (or see), with my little eye, something big (or small) beginning with the sound 'b'. Answer: bush. Whoever guesses the object correctly has the next turn. OR On our walk I saw something beginning with the sound 'p'. Answer: pig. Later the teacher can also use consonant blends e.g. 'sh' Answer: sheep.

## Flash Cards

The teacher needs to make Flash Cards of all the letters with the story-picture related to the letter on the back of the card. S/he shows a card, and the class (or the boys or girls, or the front row, next row, or a particular child) answers by making the sound of the letter. In this way s/he can practise regular recognition of the letters.

Usually the teacher draws a picture image that includes the letter and places it above the board in the classroom so that the children can see the whole alphabet and refer to these beautiful images at any time.

Once the letters are well established, the teacher can make flash cards with words, which the children have already learnt, on them.

## Own Letter Cards

Each child should have an envelope containing individual letters on cards for recognition of letters and word-building. Each child can then build his or her own words.

In addition to the activities already mentioned, games involving Letter Cards for both letters and words can be used, allowing the children to work with a partner and test each other.

Games such as **Memory** involve having two sets cards mixed together, so there are two cards of the same letter (for all the letters). All the cards are placed face down and the children take turns. As a child turns over a card, they must name the letter that they see and then try and find the other card with the same letter. If they succeed they get another turn. If they do not get it right, it is the other child's turn.

**Snap** can also be played. Each child has a set of cards with letters. They take turns to turn over a card and whenever they turn over the same card, the one who says Snap first wins the whole pile on the table. A simple **Scrabble** can be done in Grade 2 and upwards where they learn to build up words using one of the letters from the word that is already there as a base.

It is important to remember that teaching a letter with a beautiful story is not enough. **The teacher must continually refer back to the letter and the story from which it came, repeating activities that involve using letters learnt previously in different ways. These games to practise the letters should be played daily so that the children continually revise those letters they have learnt.**

## First Steps in Reading

The little Grade 1 children have many demands made on them. From the freedom and playfulness of the kindergarten or pre-school, it is a big jump into primary school and it is important that the teacher approaches the children with sensitivity and understanding. The teacher needs to be imaginative, and allow the children to explore everything they do in a relaxed and experiential way so that learning is always a joyful activity for them.

Even children who develop early and who are already intellectually awake need this approach so that they retain the ability to play creatively with everything they are learning, allowing the experience to be soaked up and thus to mature within them.

The change from learning the letters to reading is also a big jump and it is essential that the teacher facilitates the process sensitively and with the awareness that the children will only read when they are ready. Reading is such a complex and individual skill and the teacher needs to work carefully and thoroughly with the three modes of

- listening/speaking (aural and oral)
- seeing (visual) and
- touch/movement (kinaesthetic)

that have been fully used in this manual.

Working with second language speakers requires constant vigilance on the part of the teacher so that every child is being met and that no one is lost or left behind. The teacher must take care not to demand that the children learn to read and spell immediately. She must find ways to respond patiently and creatively to the children's needs so that they feel capable of doing the tasks that she sets them, and feel appreciated for their efforts.

In the same way that one cannot force a plant to grow, children need time to learn and recognise letters and words. Each child is different in his or her development, and so some children will take longer than others. Where the teacher finds that a certain child has a block<sup>45</sup> to learning, remedial help may be needed.

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<sup>45</sup> Something that stops the child from being able to learn

## *From the Whole to the Part*

From child development we know that the child experiences the world as a whole, and lives in the 'pictures' of the story very strongly. Even so, the child also wants to know what each thing in the world is made of. Therefore it wants to break things up into its parts, so that it can understand the essential nature of each and every thing. This process of breaking something up into its parts is called 'analysis'.

The opposite of analysis is 'synthesis', in which we collect separate things together to make up something. In learning words, it is better to know the whole word, for example the word 'king' has a particular meaning to the child, and then to analyse it, breaking it up into k-i-ng. If we were to do the opposite, by writing the word 'king' on the board and asking the children what the word is, we are asking the children to synthesise the letters into a word, which is difficult for many children to do. In synthesis we do not have the rich meaning that the whole word approach gives us.

As Rudolf Steiner says,

There exists an instinctive desire in man's soul to split up a unity into its constituent parts. If, instead of building up words from single letters, we begin with whole words which then are analysed, we are working in harmony with human nature.<sup>46</sup>

The faculty of analysis begins with recognising the inner qualities of things. On the other hand, synthesis only views the outer aspects. Thus it is that we teach language out of the oral culture steeped in myth, fairy tale and poetry with its spiritual depth of meaning.

It is therefore natural that the children first hear a story or else a poem they already know, from which they begin to write whole phrases or sentences. The teacher makes sure the children know what the phrase or sentence says, and then leads the children into analysing the sentence into words, sounds and letters. Children, having learnt a word by heart find it easier to analyse the word into letters.

Rudolf Steiner says that this way of working - from knowing a word, that has meaning to the child - has a benefit to the child in his or her development:

*Through analysing sentences and words, we wake up the child's consciousness.*<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Steiner, *The Renewal of Education*, 1981:126.127.

<sup>47</sup> Steiner, *The Renewal of Education*, 1981: 128

This approach is known as the Whole Word approach, where children learn to recognise whole words at a time, as part of a sentence. It is known as working 'from the Whole to the Part'. This approach is found in all subjects throughout Waldorf teaching.

### *Phonic and Look-and-Say Words*

The English language is challenging to learn, because it has two kinds of words:

**Phonetic Words:** these words can easily be read, as the letters within them make the sounds that one has learnt; for example, sun, hat, hot, bed, sit, and name, reed, like, home, truth all make the sounds one expects; therefore they are called phonetic words.

**Look-and-Say Words:** These words are not phonetic, and so one cannot decode them, as the letters do not make the sounds one has learnt. Here we have to use the Whole Word approach, where we have to recognise how to say the word from the way it is used in a sentence. For example, one (should be written 'wun'); mother (should be written 'muther').

### *Phonics*

Phonics is the study of phonetic words.

It is essential that the children begin to learn the skills of word-building which is known as the Phonic approach. This is essential for putting letters together to build up their own words and sentences for reading, and later for decoding individual words in reading.

These two approaches - the Whole Word (Look-and-Say) and Phonic approaches - are developed at the same time, and they suit the teaching of English where some words are more easily learnt through the Look and Say method (e.g. another, said,) while others work best with the Phonic approach (e.g. cat, desk).

Both approaches need to be taught through the three modes described above: aural/oral, visual and kinaesthetic.

In choosing the phrases that the children will be writing, we do not have to stick to the "first 100 words" that are easiest for the children to read. This would limit us to very dull phrases, which goes against the enriching experience the children have had in listening to the story. The short phrases



or sentences will contain both 'Look and Say' words as well as Phonic words, but should give the children several words that they can begin to work out for themselves. Direct speech works best for the children.

These sentences will become the reading material for the children. They connect strongly to the sentences through the vivid telling of the story by the teacher that stirred their feelings. They will also have made a drawing from the story, perhaps said a poem, sang a song and maybe even acted out the story. All these artistic activities help them to integrate and understand the meaning of the story. From the story about Rumpelstiltsken<sup>48</sup> we choose a sentence:

I MUST SPIN STRAW INTO GOLD.



The teacher will have used this sentence when telling the story on the previous day. She will also have used it if the children acted it out.

After the recall, in which the first section of the Rumpelstiltsken story from yesterday is re-told or acted out, the teacher will work on the sentence orally

<sup>48</sup> Grimm's Fairy Tale

first. The teacher speaks the sentence in the sad character of the miller's daughter. The children repeat it, speaking the line with feeling and imitating the teacher.

Then they can repeat it several times, each time stressing a different word.

I **MUST** SPIN STRAW INTO GOLD.  
 I MUST **SPIN** STRAW INTO GOLD.  
 I MUST SPIN **STRAW** INTO GOLD.  
 I MUST SPIN STRAW INTO **GOLD**.

The class can speak the words while a few children step in time to the words. Then the children help the teacher to write the sentence on the board. Letter by letter, the teacher asks them what sound they have heard and which letter she should write.

Teacher: The first word is "I". Can you hear the sound? "I". Make the sound with me all together. Do you remember which Angel made that sound? What shape does that Angel have?

The teacher writes the word on the board and they all read the word together.

Teacher: I must, must – can you hear which sound this word begins with? (When the children answer "M", they all say it together.) Can you remember whose letter that is?

Children: Mighty Mountain (or whatever character the children had to introduce letter M.)

Teacher: What shape does Mighty Mountain have? (The children draw it in the air.) What is the sound of that shape? (They all repeat "M".) The teacher writes the letter on the board and continues.

Teacher: Must, must – what sound do you hear next?

Children: u (They all say it together, listening to the sound.)

Teacher: Which Angel made that sound? What was its earthly sound?

Children: Angel U.

Teacher: How do we write Angel U's letter? Show me. (The children draw it in the air. And the teacher writes the letter on the board.)

Two words need to be treated as Look-and-Say words: 'straw' and 'into'.

## STRAW:

The children listen to the first three letters. Which letters do you hear? “S – T – R”

And which Angel sound should follow now? “ ‘aw’ ”

We have not learnt this sound, have we?

This is a special word. One can hear a faint sound at the end of ‘straw’ - a soft ‘w’!

Which letter says ‘w’? “The Wild Waves letter.”

Now, children, the wild waves are always causing a lot of trouble! And so Angel A comes to calm the wild waves.

But what happened to Angel A when he did this? He learnt to say a new sound! Together with the Wild Wave letter, he started to say ‘aw’!

And if you listen very carefully, you can still hear letter W very softly at the end of the new sound the Angel A makes: ‘aw’

## INTO:

The first three letters are handled as before. But how do we explain the ‘oo’ sound at the end of this word?

We ask the children, “What sound do we hear after the Tall Tree letter?”

Children: “Angel U”

Teacher: “Yes, this should be Angel U. But ...” and here follows a little story to explain why Angel U could not be there, for example:

“Angel U is always very busy helping people to tell the truth. He was so busy that sometimes he just could not manage to do everything there was to be done with his sound. Angel O noticed this, and said, ‘Let me help you, Angel U. Whenever you are too busy, I will take your place and say your sound.’ And so we will see how, every now and then, Angel O is saying ‘oo’, just to make sure Angel U can manage all his work.

In this way, with the active participation of the children, the sentence is written onto the board. The class can now read it a few times and then write it down in their special main lesson books with loving care. Afterwards they make a drawing on the opposite page. In order to keep the correct space between the words, they are asked to draw little stars (preferably in a different colour) between the words.

More sentences can be chosen from the same story, one per day, as the story continues:

## WHAT CAN I DO?



## WHAT IS MY NAME?

### I SAW A FIRE IN A WOOD.

The sentences that are written down and those from previous days, become the daily reading material for the children. A book can be made covering a whole story or several stories. Through the enthusiasm for the story and the effort of writing it down, the children make a special connection to the reader.

As the children read, we get them to touch every word with their fingers. The children reinforce the experience that the words that they speak are represented by symbols. This touching of the letters supports the kinaesthetic mode of learning for the children.

The children become engaged in the activity of reading without any pressure to analyse and synthesise words that are strange to them. Knowing the sentence by heart, they can look at each word and simultaneously touch it as they speak it.

As teachers we must realise how important repetition is in the learning process. If we do something once, it is experienced only in the head and quickly forgotten. Through repetition, especially with movement, the content material begins to be integrated into the whole being of the children.

If we engage the children's feelings, they will become enthusiastic and they will want to participate actively. They will become highly motivated to write the sentence carefully and correctly and also to read the sentences over and over again.

Through repetition, the experience becomes a lasting joy and sense of achievement. The children feel secure, knowing that reading is non-threatening and enjoyable and every time they can go back into known territory.

However the teacher continually uses varied repetition in order to consolidate the learning process. S/he combines many games and activities to keep the children engaged in using and interpreting the letters and words. The development of enthusiasm and will to do things is of immense importance for establishing a positive attitude to life and this brings about maturity as the children move into adulthood.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> The above section is based on notes from Marion Penfold

## *Fairy E or Helping Angel E*

The teacher does not only teach the short vowels, in the ways described above, but also introduces 'Fairy E' or 'Helping Angel E' as many words use the heavenly sound (or name sound) of different vowels. In the sentences above, there are two examples of this:

In the word NAME, Angel A is saying its name sound

In the word FIRE, Angel I is also saying its name sound

Make up a little story image where Angel E is always looking after the other angels. She gives of herself all the time, never thinking she is giving too much. Whenever another angel needs to say its own name, Angel E is there to help. She stands silently at the end of the word, helping that vowel to sound its name more strongly, as people often do not listen well enough to what the angels have to say. There are so many words where she can help the other angels that she sends Fairy E along as her special helper. So when we see words like NAME and FIRE, there is Fairy E standing at the end of the word to help the other Angel say its own name.

## *Other words needing explanation*

Other words from the above sentences also need an imaginative explanation for the children:

DO, WOOD: Here again Angel O is taking the place of Angel U, as in the story above. The children can be reminded of the story. In the word 'wood', we find two Angel O's holding hands to make a long OO sound. This will need a little story of its own, why this word needs two and not one Angel!

SAW: Here again, also, the children can be reminded of the story told about the 'aw' sound when dealing with the word 'straw' on the first day.

MY: Usually we hear Y as in 'you', but it can sound like 'I' as in 'my'. There are many examples: by, my, shy, fly, why, dry, try and cry. In this case, the letter Y is helping Angel I who feels a bit shy at the end of a word, so she asks Y to stand in for her<sup>50</sup>.

## *Word Patterns or Phonograms (Word - Building)*

<sup>50</sup> The letter Y has three sounds. The one not mentioned is Y can also sound like 'ee' as in filly, carry and poppy.

As soon as a teacher has taught a word from a story that is part of a particular word pattern, e.g. 'CAN', it makes sense that she uses time in the phonics lesson to help the children to find other words from the same group.

The teacher begins by telling the children a little story that contains the words she wishes them to learn. She then asks them if they remember the word 'CAN'. Together they explore the sounds and the children tell the teacher how to write it on the board. This should be easy as it is repetition from the previous story. From their envelopes of letter-cards, the children pull out the letters C, A and N. The children make the word CAN on their desks.

Then the teacher asks the children what words from the little story that they have just heard sound like 'CAN'. The children remember different words, e.g. RAN, MAN and FAN. They tell the teacher what the different letters look like and the teacher writes these on the board. The children find the same letters in their envelopes and make the words on their desks. They all sound the letters and read the words together.

Finally the children write down all the words in a book that is known as their 'Word Book'. The children draw a picture next to each of the words, but the teacher chooses one of them that has a clear picture e.g. FAN and this group of words becomes known as the 'FAN' words. Thus the children associate that word pattern with the picture and word FAN. FAN may also be called the 'Mother Word'<sup>51</sup> for that word pattern.

There are many word patterns that can be taught in this way and they can assist the children to learn many three letter words using short vowel sounds.

### *Consonant Blends*

A consonant blend is a combination of two consonants usually found at the beginning or end of a word e.g. 'st' as in 'stop' or 'fist'.

The teacher can also begin to teach **consonant blends**<sup>52</sup> to help the children decode words from phrases and sentences that are written down. The phonograms support the learning of consonant blends because they form a group of words that usually rhyme e.g. 'ick' words: kick, lick, sick, tick. The rhyme makes the words easy to decode and remember. On another day the teacher proceeds to teach the 'ack' words: back, sack, lack, tack, pack, etc.

<sup>51</sup> Louise Oberholtzer, *A Tentative Curriculum for Spelling in a Waldorf School*, pg 4.

<sup>52</sup> See lists at end of this manual.

Working with a combination of consonant blends and phonograms, the teacher helps the children develop the phonic skills required for reading. The children should be encouraged to make simple sentences with one or more of the words. This will depend on the familiarity of the words and the ability of the group. As soon as someone makes up a sentence, let everyone repeat it or act it out.

### *Flash Cards*

The teacher needs to make Flash-Cards for all the words containing phonograms or consonant blends that s/he teaches. It is also effective to have pictures either separately or on the back of all cards of 'picture words' e.g. tree, horse. In this way s/he can play games where the children match the picture with the corresponding word.

Children should be encouraged to read the flash cards in groups, in pairs and individually for regular practice. This will ensure that each child learns the words with the support of the group but can also read on their own.

### *Picture Words*

Picture words are names of things we can see in the world around us. Many of these words will be learnt orally before the children are able to read them e.g. the parts of the body and the objects in the classroom. It is easy to teach these words by touching them and naming them if they are used daily. It is also easier to teach these words in groups e.g. fruit, animals, the kitchen, etc. It is useful to have a picture containing many of these picture words that are associated together e.g. a picture of a farmyard.

It is important to have individual flash cards with pictures on the back or flash cards linked to a large picture in which everything may be identified.

Some words do not have pictures but they are usually connected to another 'picture word'. Then the teacher must use phrases that include the word with other picture words e.g. The tail of the donkey.

Some words can be acted out more easily than drawn in a picture e.g. pronouns and prepositions. No mention is made of the parts of speech, but the acting out of the words helps the children to remember the meaning and how they are used.

The teacher will also be aware of the 'Look and Say' words that need to be taught by referring to the list of 100 first important words.<sup>53</sup> Many of these are irregular words that need to be introduced in small groups every week e.g. I, he, she we. These are repeated regularly in the different stories and introduced in the same way as other groups of words. The children will know many of them orally and now they should be learnt visually and practised through games and flash cards.

No spelling is taught in Grade 1; the children must merely become familiar with the groups of words that belong together.

Plenty of repetition must be given to ensure that children remember the words and feel confident about how to sound or read them. The teacher will always be encouraging, allowing the children to move at their own pace. There will always be those children who do not yet read at the end of Grade 1, but the children need to feel secure and appreciated no matter where they are in terms of literacy as all progress is based on inner maturity.

## Literacy in Grade 2

In Grade 2 the fairy tales give way to the animal fables and legends of the saints. African Tales have many animal stories and these are very easily understood by children, who will enjoy the humour of the situations and characterisation of the different animals.

Animal stories relate to the spontaneous, instinctive nature of children and help them to acknowledge their trust in this inner sense that is such a fund of resourcefulness in everyone. The animals also represent different qualities within each one of us, so the stories are often less about the animal characters, than to make the children more aware of the animal in us. These stories are fun for the children to act out and they will easily learn the words required for the dialogues. Thus the children will learn a great deal by miming and acting the fables and animal tales.

The stories of the saints or holy people of different cultures form a contrast to the instinctive world of animals. The saints demonstrate the ideal qualities in the human being. Through the stories of those wise and loving souls whose lives have been spent helping and uplifting humankind, the children identify with the best in themselves and those around them.

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<sup>53</sup> See end of this manual.

In many of these stories the saint is linked with an animal, e.g. St Francis and the Wolf or St Jerome and the Lion. The stories often represent the overcoming of the animal nature in us or the acknowledging that both aspects work together in the human being. As far as possible, the teacher should try to find stories that honour the holy people of different cultures and religions so as to promote tolerance, thoughtfulness and goodwill between all God's children.

## *Grade 2 Syllabus*

Grade 2 is about deepening and extending what has been taught in Grade 1. It is an important year for developing the oral usage of English while the children are still strongly in the imitative phase of learning before the ninth year. The children should be fluent and confident in their speaking and feel ready and eager for reading. They will learn many short verses for phonics, but it is good if they can also learn some longer poems and perhaps a simple play in rhyme towards the end of the year!

The teacher begins the work on phonics with a revision of all the letters and word patterns learnt previously, particularly the short vowels. The children can begin learning the alphabet names if the teacher feels that the sounds are well known. The lower case letters that are usually introduced for first language speakers in Grade 2 should be left until the teacher feels that the children are secure in their recognition of the upper case or Capital letters. If the teacher notices that the class is making good progress with consonant blends and word patterns, they could introduce the lower case towards the end of the first term.

Learning to read remains the main focus, and so the stories that are told become the writing for the children. During the English Language main lesson blocks the children now write full sentences, and gradually more sentences, from the board, arising from the stories. These sentences become their readers.

## *Stories from Animal Fables*

The teacher will find the Animal Fables of Aesop and later the animal tales of Africa and other countries much easier in some ways than the Fairy Tales from the year before. They are very suited to the teaching of second language children who do better with a short and simple story. However, the fables themselves are sometimes so short, that the teacher needs to expand them in order to create an interesting story to satisfy the children.

The teacher must prepare the children in the same way as in Grade 1, telling the story first in the home language (if the teacher speaks it) and drawing a picture on the board, using it to teach the necessary vocabulary to the children. Some of the words may already be known from Grade 1, but it is a good idea to revise these words and extend the children's knowledge.

Therefore if the story of The Lion and the Mouse is to be told, the teacher should make sure that the children identify with these creatures by miming their way of walking and practising the sounds they make. As well as learning the words to be used in the story, the children should get to know other characteristics e.g. parts of the body of the animals. It is particularly good to teach a few adjectives to describe these animals as second language children often have very few words e.g. *strong* paws, a *shaggy* mane for the lion and a *long* tail, *sharp* teeth, a *pointed* nose for the mouse. These words could easily be taught using a drawing of the Lion and the Mouse.



Following a similar pattern of the Three Day Rhythm that was established in Grade 1, the teacher will tell the story in English and let the children copy the drawing from the board into their books. On the next day, s/he will do a thorough recall of the story with the children to make sure they understand it.

## WRITING FROM THE STORY

The first sentence will be worked orally with the children.

A BIG LION LAY SLEEP-ING ON THE GRASS.

The teacher says the sentence and the children repeat it several times, emphasising a different word each time. Then the class will help the teacher to find the letters for the teacher to write each word correctly on the board.

The teacher then asks the children to sound out the letters of the first three words. They should remember the letter shapes quite easily. When these words are written up on the board, the teacher practises reading them a few times with the children: A BIG LION.

## LAY

Teacher: “What is the letter for the first sound?” L

“What Angel sound can you hear?” Angel A.

“Is Angel A saying its heavenly sound, its earthly sound or its own name?”

Its own name. “Angel A needs a helper to say its own name and this time Y comes to help but just stands there silently.”

The teacher will use the English lesson to find other words that rhyme with LAY (day, say, way, may, etc.)

## SLEEP-ING

This word is long and has two syllables. The teacher can get the children to clap the two syllables so that they can hear the two parts quite clearly.

“What letters are at the beginning of the word ‘SLEEP’?” S and L.

“What Angel sound do you hear?” Angel E.

“In this word, Angel E is saying her name and so we have two Angel E’s standing next to each other to make a long E sound. Otherwise we would have a short earthly sound,”

The teacher gets the children to make the long E sound, using a gesture to feel how long the sound is. Then the children find the letter P to complete the word SLEEP. They read the word a few times. Then the teacher asks the children how they are going to write the ING sound.

“What Angel sound do you hear?” Angel I

“Is it the heavenly sound or the earthly sound?” The earthly sound.

“The Angel I is singing her sound in the word ING and this is how we write it – ING.” The teacher makes the children sing the phonogram ING so that they hear how the NG creates a ringing sound. S/he writes up the ING to complete the word SLEEP-ING.

## ON THE GRASS

The children tell the teacher the letters for ON THE

The teacher asks the children for the first letters of the word GRASS. GR. “What Angel sound do you hear?” Angel A. “Is it the heavenly sound or the earthly sound or the name of Angel A?” The heavenly sound.

The teacher asks for the last sound – S. “But this little S is feeling lonely at the end of the word and asks another S to stand next to him. So now we have two SS’s at the end of the word.”

Now the teacher and the class read the sentence several times, forwards and backwards:

### A BIG LION LAY SLEEP-ING ON THE GRASS.

The children now write the sentence into their book opposite their drawing. They may be ready for two or more short sentences each day. The teacher will soon sense when to give the children more writing from the story, as they begin to work faster and their writing becomes smaller in size. The story will be continued during the week until it is completed and the children will be proud to have a whole story for reading practice. The teacher may encourage the children to do another drawing from the story when they do the writing from the second half of the story.

Here is a simple version of the story for the children to write in their books. If the teacher feels that the class can manage more describing words s/he may include them.

A BIG LION LAY SLEEP-ING ON THE GRASS. A LITTLE MOUSE RAN OVER HIS PAW. HE WOKE UP AND GRABBED THE MOUSE. LET ME GO! CRIED THE MOUSE. I WILL HELP YOU SOME DAY. THE LION LET THE MOUSE GO.

LATER THE BIG LION WAS WALKING IN THE FOREST. HE FELL INTO A NET MADE OF ROPE. HE WAS TRAPPED! HE GAVE A LOUD ROAR. LET ME GO! THE LITTLE MOUSE RAN TO HELP THE LION. HE BIT THE ROPE AND MADE A BIG HOLE IN THE NET. THE LION WAS FREE AGAIN.

From these sentences, the teacher sees the vowel digraphs and consonant blends that need to be taught or revised in the English lesson. The teacher can introduce the word pattern in a little story or verse containing several of the words. Afterwards the children should remember the words and create lists for each phonogram or word pattern. These lists can be written on the board and read by the class and individual children. Then each child writes the list in their “WORD BOOK” and makes small pictures next to the picture words.

## *Example story for NG.*

NG

The angels were always singing songs. They were so happy that they sang all the time wherever they flew. They did not sing any words but the sounds rang out through the air and made everyone happy.

One day Angel I said, "I want to teach everyone on earth to sing beautifully too." "How will you do that?" asked the other angels, "Many of their words with earthly sounds do not ring clearly." "I will ask the earthly sounds to help me," she said.

So Angel I flew down to earth on her shining wings and began to sing. Soon some people heard her and said: "That sounds so beautiful. Can you teach us to sing." So they tried, but they could not get the lovely ringing sound that Angel I made. "What can we do to get that ringing sound?" they asked. "There must be some sounds that could help to carry my song. Please ask them to help us," said Angel I

The sounds came forward to try and carry the angel sounds. (Children, can you try to guess which sounds are good for singing?) Each one tried their sound. B, D and T were too heavy and earthly. Then S and Z made better sounds. Then came L and M and they both made quite lovely sounds. "I want to try," said N and she made a lovely sound too. "Oh dear," said G, "My sound is too heavy, but if I could work with another sound, like N, perhaps it would be alright." So N and G tried their sounds together. N...G "You are still too heavy," said N. So G became softer and softer until suddenly there rang out a beautiful new sound NG!" "What sounds are they?" asked the people. "N and G. When they are said together, they sound like a bell ringing. "NG... NG... NG. And when you say an Angel sound as well, it is even more beautiful. ING...ING...ING."

"You must listen for the words with NG in them and learn to let your sounds ring as you sing," said Angel I. The people did so and they found many words that had NG or ING in them that made a lovely singing sound just like the angels e.g. sing, singing, ring, wing, bring, ding, king, etc.

LITTLE

The children work out the letters LIT.

"Letter T feels quite lonely and so another T stands next to it but does not say anything."



“What is the last letter you can hear?” L . Now the word looks like LITTL.  
 “Now L feels shy at the end of the word and so Angel E goes and stands next to it. So there are two letters being helped in this word – LITTLE.”  
 In the English lesson, the teacher will look for other words with a similar pattern e.g. cattle, puddle, middle, bottle.

## MOUSE

Perhaps the children need to learn the vowel digraph OU from mouse. The teacher may choose to teach them a little verse:

Little mouse, little mouse,  
 Running round about the house;  
 Little feet across the ground  
 Make a gentle scratching sound  
 Sharp eyes watching all about  
 Hiding from a noise or shout.  
 Little mouse, little mouse,  
 Running all about the house.<sup>54</sup>

When the children know the verse and can do actions to it, let them tell the teacher all the words with OU. (There is another one in the story.) These can be written on the board, read several times and then copied into their WORD BOOK.

## PAW

“Remember the words in Grade 1 that rhyme with PAW - STRAW and SAW.”

## WOKE

Which letter is used for W ?”

“What Angel letter do you hear in WOKE?” Angel O.

“What letter must I write for the sound K?”

“Who remembers the Fairy that comes to help the other Angel Letters to say their name?” Fairy E.

Fairy E words occur in several places in the story: WOKE, MADE, ROPE.

## GRABBED

“What are the first two letters for GRAB?”

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<sup>54</sup> Copyright Catherine van Alphen

“Now, letter G needs to have a friend next to it. Which letter do you think will come to help?” Another B.

And again Angel E comes to stand next to it without making her sound.”

“What is the last letter?” D.

## CRIED

“What are the first two letters?” C and R.

“What Angel sound can you hear?” Angel I.

“But Angel I needs some help to say her name. Which Angel will come to help her?” By this time the children should be able to answer correctly.

Angel E. The children work out the last sound - D.

## SOME

This is a Look and Say word that the children may have learnt in Grade 1.

“What is the first letter?” S.

“Does anyone remember this very tricky word? Who would like to try to write it?”

This method of working trains the children to work out the words for themselves whether they are Phonic words or Look and Say Words. In time, they will learn all the different combinations and be able to guess what letters are needed.

The second part of the story is handled in the same way.

## LATER

The children work out the first three letters LAT.

“What Angel letter will help Angel A to say her name?” Angel E.

“Now we have a sound we have heard before – ER. It sounds like the end of MOTHER, so we will use the same letters –ER. Angel E is already there so we just add R.”

They also clap the two syllables for LATER.

## WAS WALK-ING

The children should know the Look and Say word WAS.

“What is the first letter of the word WALK?” W.

“What is the last letter of WALK?”

“Now, who remembers the the word pattern ING from the first part of the story?” ING.

## IN THE FOR-EST

The first two words are easy. The teacher and children say the word FOR-EST and clap the two syllables. The teacher gets the children to sound out the letters one by one and s/he writes them on the board. They practice the whole word and then the whole sentence.

## HE

This word has probably been learnt in Grade 1 and belongs to a group of words like I, me, we, she, go, so, where the last letter is an Angel letter and therefore says its own name. (An exception is 'do'.)

## FELL

The teacher asks the children to sound out the letters FEL.

“We need one more letter. Who can guess what it is?”

The children should remember the other double letters already used in this story. When the children find the correct letter, they can look for the other words with double letters at the end or in the middle of the word.

## INTO A NET MADE OF ROPE

The children should manage these words easily.

## HE WAS TRAPPED

The third word will be new to the children. However, it is similar to GRABBED and will be dealt with in the same way.

ROAR is a new Look and Say word that has a completely different sound from the Angel letters that are used.

“What is the first letter?” R. The teacher writes up the rest of the word. The remaining words in the story are sounded out as above and the children practise the whole sentence and then the whole story.

Each day the teacher gets the whole class to read the writing of previous days, the children touching each word with their fingers as they are reading. S/he can vary this by asking different groups of children to read, while others listen. While other children are working, the teacher listens to each child reading from the writing they have copied.

## *The Daily English Lesson*



In addition to the language main lesson blocks, the children should have an English lesson every day to develop their listening, speaking and phonic skills for reading. The children need to be challenged so that they take hold of the English language far more strongly than the year before.

### *New Letter Combinations*

As the children practise daily with decoding words into sounds, many new letter combinations are needed, as seen in the story above. Up to now all the phonic work has been around

- ❖ the short vowels; they should be familiar with many three-letter words.
- ❖ some consonant blends which have been taught already; the children are now ready to discover four-letter and later on five-letter words.
- ❖ Helping Angel E (or 'Fairy E') words

There are many consonant blends, vowel digraphs and phonograms to be dealt with during this year. Each one must be done thoroughly as it involves learning new words as well as word patterns.

### *Consonant Blends*

Second language speakers often know so few words that it works best if the teacher uses a consonant blend group from the story e.g. The Lion and the Mouse. In the English lesson the teacher creates another story containing several words from that particular consonant blend to extend the children's vocabulary.

It also works well if the teacher finds or creates a suitable verse or alliterative sentence containing words from the consonant blend that s/he wishes to teach the children. The teacher can also use the verse as inspiration for a story.

### *Double Letters (Twins)*

A natural progression is to teach the double letters that follow a short vowel and form one sound:

ll (will, bell)

ss (kiss, less, miss, mess, boss)

ck (duck, buck, tuck, back, sick, sack, pack, rock, sock, lock)

ff (puff, huff).

dd (add, odd)

gg (egg)

zz (buzz, jazz)

Here follows an example of a verse for teaching 'll' words:

Verse: Roll the ball, pull the bell,  
 Fill the bucket from the well.  
 Will he fall off the wall?  
 Tell them all to hear the call.

Teach the verse in the Rhythmic Time of the main lesson, using actions to illustrate the meaning. Introduce the poem with a little story. Get the children to tell you the words ending with 'll'. You may want to use more words than are in the poem or story.

### *Example Story inspired by the Verse.*

Bill and Jill lived with their mother on a hill outside a little village. Every afternoon they would go to fill a bucket with water from a well in the centre of the village market place. Jill carried the bucket when it was empty and Bill brought it back when it was full. Bill usually took his ball and played with it. He tried to see how far it would roll down the hill before it stopped. He would also throw it against a wall and then catch it again.

Jill liked to visit their aunt who lived in the village. She would bring her some flowers and she would pull the door bell of the house to let their aunt know they were there. The aunt gave Jill and Bill tea and biscuits when they visited.

One day Bill decided to walk along the wall of their aunt's garden. It was quite high and Jill was afraid that he would fall off. "Don't worry!" he said, "I will call out and tell you if I fall. All of you will hear my call!" And of course he was so careful that he did not fall at all. "Do not tell our aunt that I walked on the wall", he said to Jill. After tea they filled their bucket with water from the well and went back up the hill to their home.

Let the children find all the 'll' words from the story and the teacher can write them on the board. They read the words several times. Then let the children write these words down in their Word Book and draw a picture next to the picture words (ball, bell). These words can also be written on paper leaves and placed on a Letter Tree.

Practise these words daily in different ways. You may be able to do more of these double letters or 'twins' during that week, provided you teach another little sentence or poem and story to create a context for them.

Play a guessing game related to the blend you have just taught: “Look around and you will see....something beginning with ‘st’.” Or “....something ending with ‘ll’.” Make sure you have some objects available in the classroom for that sound.

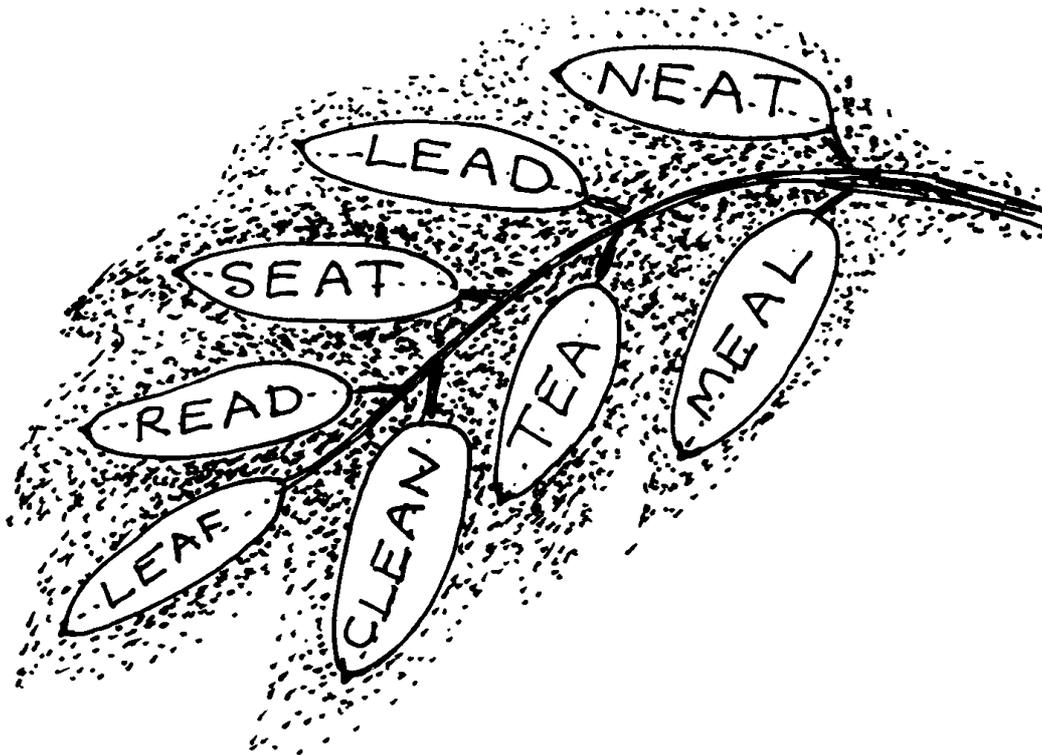
Those consonant blends that are linked to the short vowels will be easiest for a start, whether they are placed at the beginning or the end of a word. Some of the words using a particular consonant blend may be longer than four letters, but allow them to speak them orally even if they do not write them down. Only choose a few of the simplest words for sounding out and writing down. Sometimes use the blend that is at the beginning of a word, e.g. shop then later on a blend that is at the end of a word, e.g. fish

Every week, the teacher should practise one or two blends that the children know and use already. S/he can also choose a new consonant blend to teach words that the children need to learn. Choose a combination of phonic words and ‘Look and Say’ words for them to learn each week. Help the children use them in sentences to clarify the meaning and show how they are used. Do not rush this process. Make sure that the children feel confident about recognising the blends before introducing new ones. This is especially necessary where children are slow at grasping and remembering sound combinations due to lack of confidence in the second language..

### *The Letter Tree*

The teacher can create a Letter Tree on a wall in the classroom by drawing a large tree with many branches but no leaves. Each branch becomes the carrier of words with a particular letter combination e.g. ‘at’ (cat, hat, rat), ‘st’ (step, stop, stick) or ‘ea’ (leaf, read, seat). The different words from that group that have been learnt are written on leaf-shaped pieces of paper and stuck on to a branch for that word group.

The advantage is that the teacher can refer to that word group with ease, either for reading practice, spelling or writing purposes. It is like having a dictionary on the wall and the children get used to looking up the words they need for their own writing.



### *Fairy E*

The Fairy E who helps the vowel sounds to say their names has already been introduced in Grade 1 but there are many more examples to be learnt, leading the children naturally from the three-letter words to four and five-letter words. Make up a little story containing several Fairy E words. In this way the children begin to learn the difference between the short and the long vowel sounds.

A list of Fairy E words is at the back of this manual.

### *Vowel Digraphs*

Vowel digraphs are far more difficult to teach than Consonant blends and the teacher may find it easier to link each of these sounds with a picture word or phonogram. Thus, it is more effective to teach the sound 'ea' under the 'Mother' word group called 'leaf' words. An example of a story for teaching 'ea' words is at the end of the manual.

These vowel digraphs form a new single sound:

oo (moon)	ee (tree)	ea (leaf)	ie (chief)	aw (saw)	au (saucer)
oa (boat)	ew (screw)	ou (house)	oi (oil)	ai (rain)	ay (tray)

Do NOT teach two different spellings for the same sound at the same time. It is better for the children to learn the 'ee' group of words thoroughly and then learning the 'ea' group at another time. If children can link a word group to a particular story and rhyme or alliterative sentence, they will find it easier to remember which words belong together in a group.

As the year progresses, the children will be able to manage the learning of the different blends more quickly, especially as they get to know more words and word patterns.

Many little poems and verses need to be learnt as a basis for all the new sound combinations and plenty of practice is required for the children to hear the different sounds clearly.

### *Own Writing*

Later in the Grade 2 year the children can begin to do some of their own writing in English, however simple the words or sentences.

The teacher can do a simple dictation for the children to write down a few words that they have been learning from a particular word group. She may sound out the letters or get them to sound the letters before writing them down.

With 'News Time', the children can now have a little book in which to write one or more sentences of News. The teacher encourages the children to use words that they know and not to worry about spelling. The children share their sentences of news with each other.

The words on the Letter Tree can be used and the teacher soon discovers the new words that she needs to teach the class from the questions that the children ask of her. She also begins to pick up the spelling errors and to realise where she needs to revise certain word groups. This exercise can be done once or twice a week.

The teacher can also get the children to make up a little sentence using the words from the different word groups as they learn about them. After the children have spoken their sentences orally, they write them down.

The children can also make up a sentence as a class and then everyone writes it down. They will gain confidence in writing their own sentences if it is done in the right way. The teacher will judge at what stage this exercise is

possible, perhaps only towards the end of the year. Some children may write a few sentences, others only one.

### *Shared Writing*

When children act out a dialogue from a story, they have either learnt the words to be said or made them up themselves. The children could now write these words down. The children could help each other or use the Letter Tree for spelling or the teacher could encourage the children to write the words down without worrying about the spelling. Afterwards they can read the sentences to each other, putting their fingers on each word as they read it.

### *The Class Reader*

As in Grade 1, the children read from the sentences that they write down. The animal fables can be written down very simply in the main lesson book and will form a basis for the children's reading. Many of the children will still learn the words of the story off by heart and so it is up to the teacher to practise the phonic sounds until the decoding skills are well in place.

At a certain point the teacher may want the children to have reading material other than the stories in the main lesson book. If the teacher can manage to make a reader for each of the children, with assistance from the parents, this becomes a very special first reading book for the children.

Otherwise the teacher may look for a Graded Reading Scheme with simple stories and beautiful pictures for her class. The advantage of this is that the stories are pitched at different levels so that the children can progress from a very simple level to more challenging ones. The teacher must create co-operative learning situations where the more able children test each other or assist weaker children with their reading. If the teacher can enlist the help of a parent or two to listen to the children's reading at certain times in the week, the children will be able to receive more individual attention and will make better progress.<sup>55</sup>

## First 100 Important Words in Learning to Read Murray/McNally

a and all as at are an be but I in it is

<sup>55</sup> This section owes much to the expertise of Joyce Bruce, Louise Oberholtzer and Yvonne Bleach.



that the to was for had he have him his not on  
 said so they we with you about back been before  
 by call came can come could did do down first  
 get go has her here if into just like little look  
 make more me much must my no new now off  
 only or our other out over right see she some their  
 there this two up want well went were what when who  
 which will your where then old made from big one of

## Vowel digraphs and Word lists

A digraph is a combination of two letters that together make one new sound. It is not necessary for children to learn all these in one year - the teacher should rather work thoroughly than rush through these digraphs. Some of these can be left for Grade 3.

**‘ay’** day, say, may, lay, hay, pay, ray, way, away, stay, play, tray, clay, bray, stray

**‘ai’** rain, pain, main, gain, grain, again, stain, strain, brain, plain, drain, paid, laid, maid, fail, rail, pail, wail, mail, nail, sail, tail, trail, snail, paint, faint, wait, waist

**‘ee’** feel, peel, seem, feet, feed, meet, seen, weed, need, seed, bee, see, free, tree, three, weep, keep, steep, sheep, sleep, green, queen, creep, heel, wheel, steel

**‘oo’** food, boot, root, hoot, toot, shoot, tool, fool, pool, cool, stool, moon, soon, doom, loom, room, broom, spoon, loop, stoop, tooth

**‘oo’** (short sound) book, look, took, cook, good, wood, stood, foot

**‘ea’** tea, sea, leaf, lead, read, meal, real, deal, heal, seal, peal, steal, eat, seat, heat, beat, meat, neat, cheat, clean, lean, mean, dream, steam, stream, scream, weak, speak, peach, teach, reach, teacher



**'oa'** oak, coat, boat, float, loaf, moan, loan, road, load, toad, soap, foam, toast, roast, boast, soak

**'ar'** are, car, far, tar, bar, star, art, cart, start, hard, card, carpet, garden, bark, park, mark, lark, dark, spark, shark, arm, farm, harm, charm

**'ie'** chief, brief, grief, thief, field, priest, shield, piece

**'er'** fern, herd, her, under, over, paper, clever, never, ever, spider, river, rider, sister, shiver, silver, winter

**'or'** for, ford, form, storm, corn, torn, worn, horn, morn, acorn, thorn, cork, fork, pork, stork, port, short, sport, story, horse

**'ir'** bird, first, girl, dirt, shirt, skirt, chirp, birth, birthday

**'ur'** fur, burn, turn, curl, hurl, hurt, burst, nurse, purse

**'oy'** boy, toy, joy, enjoy

**'ow'** cow, now, how, row, bow, down, clown, brown, crown, drown, town, frown, owl, fowl, howl, prowl, growl, towel

**'ou'** out, shout, spout, cloud, round, sound, bound, found, hound, mound, ground, count, house, mouse, mouth, south, proud, loud

**'oi'** oil, boil, toil, soil, spoil, join, coin, noise, moist, point

**'ow'** low, sow, glow, grow, flow, tow, blow, know, show, slow, throw, snow, own, bowl

**'ew'** new, few, dew, chew, drew, stew, grew, blew

**'au'** Paul, haul, saucer, fault, sauce, because

**'aw'** paw, jaw, law, saw, raw, caw, straw, claw, draw, hawk, fawn, dawn, lawn

## Verses for Vowels



The children need to learn many little poems and verses to help them learn to pronounce the English words and especially the vowel sounds correctly. The teacher can question the children as to which Angel sound they can hear in different words.

## Vowel A

For the **name** of the vowel

God made you  
 God made me  
 God made the birds  
 In the tree

For the **pure vowel** ('heavenly') sound

Star, star, shining star,  
 Shine in darkness from afar.  
 In the darkness of the park  
 We can see your tiny spark.  
 Star, star, shining star,  
 Shine in darkness from afar

For **short 'a'** sound

Pat-a-pat-pat  
 The cat's on the mat.  
 Drat that cat  
 It's caught a rat!

I can stand  
 On the land  
 I can stand  
 In God's hand

## Vowel E

For the **name** of the vowel

I see the sun  
 The sun sees me  
 I see the moon  
 The moon sees me  
 I see my star  
 My star sees me

I see you and  
You see me

I need to see the seed spring green  
And feel my feet run free  
To meet and greet my friends unseen  
Beneath the beechwood tree

Weep, weep,  
The water's deep  
The rocks stand steep  
And silent keep.  
Deep, deep,  
The waters sleep  
The slender reeds  
Their secret keep.  
Sleep, sleep  
In darkness deep  
The waters weep  
Their sorrows keep

For **short 'e'** sound

Jen's red hen  
Lays eggs in her pen  
Tell me when  
She gets to ten

Put your ear  
Against a shell  
And listen very, very well  
The sound will swell  
Just like a bell  
So listen very, very well.

Lend me a pen  
Said Mel to Ben.  
Said Ben to Mel  
If you will tell me  
When I get  
My pen again

Have you met  
My best pet?  
His coat is black  
I call him Jet.  
My dog Jet  
Runs in the wet

He's the best pet  
I'll ever get

## Vowel I

For the **name** of the vowel

I like my father  
I like my mother  
I like my sister and  
I like my brother

For the **short 'i'** sound

Little Miss Mindy  
Small and thin  
Lifts the lid  
Of the biscuit tin  
Little Miss Mindy  
With a grin  
Nibbles the biscuits  
In the tin.  
Little Miss Mindy  
Not so thin  
Leaves a little bit  
On her chin

## Vowel O

For the **name** of the vowel

Go home, little gnome  
Alone on a stone  
Go home, little gnome,  
Go home!  
No, no, I won't go,  
I won't go to my home  
I will laugh Ho-ho-ho  
Alone on my stone

For the **short 'o'** sound

Hop to the shop  
The shop at the top



The top where you stop  
You stop and shop.

Hot potato, hot potato,  
Hot potato, Hot!  
Not a lot in the pot  
Keep it hot, Keep it hot!  
Hot potato, hot potato,  
Hot potato, Hot!

## Vowel U

For the **name** of the vowel<sup>56</sup>

The sky is blue  
My heart is true  
I am glad  
To be with you

Do, do –  
What shall I do?  
My shoe is broken  
Through and through.  
Too soon, too soon,  
My new blue shoe  
Is worn right through  
Oh, what shall I do?

### **Oo makes a short sound**

Take a look at the book  
In the nook where you cook

For the **short 'u'** sound

Let us run  
In the sun  
In the sun  
Run and run.  
Oh what fun  
Oh what fun

---

<sup>56</sup> At this stage, it is hearing the sounds of the vowel that matters; the name sound of vowel U is spelt in many ways, but the children at first only hear the sound, and do not learn to write the words. These verses can be used at a later stage for writing, and then the spelling does matter.

To run in the sun!

### Verses for the Name of the Vowel

**A** – Awake, awake and take your way  
Be brave and gay today!

**O** – Sow the oats and mow the oats  
and sow the rosy clover

**E** – Easily sweep the eagles free  
Each to his eerie at evening

**U** – Soon through the gloom  
The cool moon will loom

**I** - High in the sky shines the mighty  
Sun with the bright light of life.

Children love playing with words and these verses encourage their enjoyment of sounds. The teacher should use gestures with each verse or step in time to the rhythm

### *Verses for Vowel Digraphs*

**OW**

The wind says I blow  
The river says I flow  
The sun says I glow  
The plant says I grow  
Man says I know

**EW**

The day was new  
The west wind blew  
The wild birds flew  
And then I knew

**AW**

A cat has a claw  
A dog has a paw  
A mouse has a jaw  
Which it uses to gnaw

**AI** Await the rain to swell the grain

**OU**

**OU**

I found a cave deep underground  
And heard a sound go round and round  
A sudden shout – Out-out! Out-out!  
And oh! It echoed all about!

Little mouse, little mouse  
Running all around the house  
Little feet across the ground  
Make a gentle scratching sound  
Sharp eyes watching all about  
Hiding from a noise or shout.  
Little mouse, little mouse  
Running all around the house

**IR** -The first bird chirps in mirth of the morning's birth!

**OW** - How, now, brown cow!

Don't scowl or howl at the hoot of the owl on its nightly prow!  
The clown in the town bows down to the king in his golden crown!

**OA** – My boat is afloat and I'm off to roam  
On the sea road's foam  
With the wind's moan and groan.

**OI** - Why boil the oil and spoil the joint?  
You'll waste your toil so what's the point?

And who knows when I'll be home?

IE – The chief saw the thief  
With a piece of shield in the field.

AY – Pray, may we stay away today  
And play with clay upon the tray?

OY – Oh lovely boy, enjoy your toy!

ER – Do you listen to the whisper of the river?  
Where the river ripples with a shiver,  
Where the spider sister spins with silver  
Under fern leaves waving with a quiver,  
Ever waiting for the rider of the winter.

UR-Turn wheel, turn  
And burn fire, burn;  
Let curl after curl  
Of smoke unfurl.

EA Speak of your dream, your dream by the stream,  
The stream by the peach tree where you drank tea;  
Where you sat on a seat in the shade for the heat  
And a leaf fell into your tea.

## Consonant Blends at the beginning of a word

A consonant blend is a combination of two or more letters usually found at the beginning or end of a word e.g. 'sh', 'str' or 'tch'. A digraph is a combination of two sounds which together make one new sound e.g. 'th' or 'ch'. The first words on the list have short vowels and blends already taught. The other words may be used orally or kept for later phonic work. The second language speakers need to get to know more words than they may be able to read.

'sh' shop, ship, shut, shot, shall, shack / shoe, show, shout

'ch' chick, chap, chop, chip, chill / chair, chest, chink, cheese, child, chirp)

'th' thin, thick / thorn, threw, thatch, thread, thumb)

th this, the, then, that, there, their

'pr' pram, prod, prick, press / pride, pray, print, pretty, prince, prize

'fr' frog, from, fresh, frill / free, freeze, frame, friend, fruit, fry

'cr' crab, crop, crack, cross / crash, creep, crept, crow

'dr' drag, drip, drop, drum, drill, dress / drink, draw, drift, dry

'gr' grab, grin, grip, grill, gruff / green, grass, greet

'tr' trap, trot, trip, trim, trick, truck, track

'bl' black, block, blot, bless / blue, blood, blind

'br' brick, broke, brim, bring, brand, brass, bride, break, bright

'fl' flat, flag, flip, flop, flick / flame, fling, flash, flew, flimsy, fly

'cl' clap, clip, clop, clash, clock, cliff / clang, clatter

'gl' glad, glum / glade, glitter, glimmer

'pl' plan, plot, plum, plug, pluck / please, play, plate, plastic, plant, plain, place

'sl' slap, slip, slam, slim, slug, slit, slack, slash / slate, sleep, sleeve, slide, slow

'st' stop, stick, stand / stamp, store, stump

'sw' swim, swam, swell, swop, swat / switch, swing, swan, swamp

'sk' skin, skip, skid, skim, skill

'sn' snip, snap, sniff, snack / snail, snow

'sp' spot, spin, spit, spill / speck, spring

'sm' smug, smack, smell / small, smile

'scr' scrap, scam, scrape, scream

'str' strap, strip / string, struck, stripe, stride

## Consonant blends at the end of a word

'st' best, rest, must, dust, crust, lost, just, west, mist, east, fist, most

'ft' raft, lift, soft, loft, left, swift, tuft, craft

'lt' melt, felt, belt, lilt, jolt, bolt, colt

'nd' end, bend, send, mend, lend, and, band, land, sand, grand, wand, wind

'nt' lent sent, bent, cent, dent, pant, rant, hint, hunt, print, want

'mp' lamp, damp, samp, stamp, jump, dump, thump, bump, limp, plump, tramp

'sk' task, mask, desk, risk, brisk, disk, tusk, dusk, rusk

'nk' bank sank, tank, plank, pink, link, sink, wink, drink, think, slink, sunk

'pt' kept, wept, slept, crept

'sp' wisp, wasp, crisp, grasp

'lk' milk, silk, sulk, bulk, talk, walk, stalk

'ng' sing, wing, ring, king, ding, string, spring, swing, thing, sling, fling, bring,

rang, sang, bang, hang, clang, long, song, dong, gong, strong, rung, dung, hung

'ght' right, might, night, fight, sight, light, tight, flight, bright

## Fairy E (silent e)

bake, cake, lake, sake, make, wake, rake, take, shake, flake, cape, shape, ate, fate, late, date, hate, mate, rate, crate, mane, lane, tame, lame, name, fame, flame, made, shade, tale, male

bike, wine, line, fine, mine, life, wife, fire, wire, wide, ride, side, stride, hide, nine, dine, pride, five, hive, dive, drive, alive

nose, hose, tone, bone, stone, alone, phone, joke, stroke, smoke, hope, rope, stove, stole, pole, mole, hole, home, dome, rude, tune, mule, cute, etc.

## Verses for Consonant Blends



SH

I wish I had a fish in a dish. Shall I rush to the shop or will it be shut?

NG

Long and strong is the sling  
Bang and clang hear it ring  
Through the air the stone does sing.

Roll the ball, pull the bell  
Fill the bucket from the well  
Will he fall off the wall?  
Tell them all to hear the call.

CH

Cheeky Chick chirps a lot  
Thinks he is the best!  
Sees a man chop- chopping wood  
Gets a chip upon his chest  
Chirps among the chips and chunks  
Then goes home to rest!

TH

Through thick and thin a thorn tree grew  
And scratched the thatch on the roof of the house – ‘th–th’.

Fairy E - Bake a cake and take it to the lake!  
We'll dine with fine wine and have a great time!

ST

East, west, home is best; nowhere else I come to rest.  
Stop and stand with stick in hand; Stare at the stump and stamp, stamp, stamp!

FR – I get fresh fruit from my friend Frank on Friday.  
Freckled frog frightens flies frisking fresh and free.

TR - Trip-trap, trip trap, Trotting up the track.  
Trim trick in a truck, Driving there and back!

PL – Please pluck the plums early or late  
And place them on a plain plastic plate.

PR - Pretty Prue, filled with pride, Pushes a pram with her baby inside.

SW – High in the sky	On a pool below
The swift birds fly	The sweet swans go
Sweeping, swirling by.	Swimming slowly to and fro.

CL - Click your fingers, clap your hands, clip-clop trot the horses;  
Clang the hammer, clash the swords, clatter plates for dinner courses.

GR – Grab and grip the gruff bear growling GRRR!  
Gracefully greet the great blue sky and the green grass on the land!

SM – Smart cat smells cream, Licks up every drop,  
Small smug smile, Now it's time to stop.

LK – The cow gives milk as soft as silk,  
The cat will stalk the mouse  
While you and I just walk and talk  
Around about the house.

PT - Her secret she kept -  
To bed she crept  
And wept  
Until she slept.

ND – Lend me a wand to call up the wind  
And find the bend in the land;  
I'll wave my hand and turn my gold band  
And stand where the sea meets the sand.

SK – Be brisk and do not risk  
To leave your task  
Upon your desk till dusk!

MP – Light the lamp, the night is damp  
And we must stamp and tramp the road.  
The ditch we'll jump and if we bump,  
We'll dump the heavy load!

GL - Gladys the glow-worm was glum,  
She could not glow in the night?  
She entered the glade  
And magic was made  
So she glittered with glorious light!

BI - The blind boy blunders to the block  
And leaves a blot of blue and black!

LT - The buckle of the belt was so hot that it felt as if it would melt.  
The colt got a fright and gave a jolt.  
He bucked the boy and raced off like a bolt!

FL - The flimsy flag flips and flaps in flight.

FT - Steer the raft  
And let the swift current lift her left  
Or she will drift into the rift.

NK – In a wink the tank sank near the river bank.  
I think she poured the pink drink into the sink.

SCR – Did she scream and scrape up the scrap of scrambled egg?

STR- He struck a strip of hide  
And made a strap and string with pride.

NT – He lent me a cent, a cent that was bent  
With a hint of a print on the dent.

BR- Bring your brand-new boots with buckles bright and brass!  
Bring the brown brick to build the broken bridge!

SP – There's a spot on his shirt, a speck of spit,  
Did he spill it as he sprang?

DR – She drank a drink and dropped a drip;  
It dribbled down her dress.

It dried and then she dripped some more,  
Her dress is quite a mess.

CR – Crafty old crow caws at a crab Crossing a crack a crumb to grab.

SL – Slow slug slips and slides Over the slimy slate.

SK - Skip with skill Or skid and skim your skin!

GHT – How bright was the light in the middle of the night  
When two bold boys got up to fight!  
It was left and right with all their might  
And left and right – they held on tight!  
Until they were tired and sank out of sight  
Back in their beds and said: Good Night!

## Example Stories for Teaching Consonant Blends

### *Example story for 'th'*

List of words: 'th' thin, thick / thorn, threw, thatch, thread, thumb  
'th' this, the, then, that, there, their

*On the edge of a wood there stood a little house. Often people did not notice it at first if they just walked down the path that ran past the house, because there were trees all round that hid it from view. Close to the house stood a thorn tree that stretched its thorny branches against the roof of the little house. When the wind blew, you could hear the thorn tree brushing against the thatch roof of the house and making a soft noise 'th – th'. In the evening, when the lights of the lamps twinkled through the curtains on the windows, and the firelight flickered on the hearth and soft smoke rose from the chimney, people could see that someone must live there.*



*Actually there was a sweet and thoughtful lady who lived there. She was tall and thin and had thick, dark hair. People would bring her their clothes to mend or cloth to make a garment with her needle and thread. She could thread her needle as quickly as a thought, and her eyes twinkled as she listened to the people telling her about things they had done that day. Sometimes the people*

would say, "What is that noise?" And the lady would say, "Oh that is the thorn tree brushing against the thatch roof. It says 'th-th'."

Afterwards they would give her some fruit from the trees in their gardens, or bread they had baked in their kitchens, or a pillow stuffed with sweet-smelling heather. Then they thanked her for her beautiful sewing and walked back home along the path.

### *Example Story for sh:*

The children may have learnt the individual letters of S for Silver Snake and H for Happy House. In this story, the S and the H are brought together in a new sound called 'sh'. There are several words with the 'sh' sound at the beginning or the end of the words. The children may not know all these words, but the 'sh' sound is repeated in the sound of the rain, the wind, the snake and finally by the traveller himself. However, it is the poem in combination with the story that helps to reinforce the awareness of the sound in the actual words.

List of words: shop, ship, shut, shot, shall / rush, bush, push, wish, fish, dish, flash, crash, shoe, show, short, shadows, shelter, shiver, shout, share.

*There was once a traveller who was walking to a town. A short way from the town, the wind began to blow harder. The clouds gathered; there was a crash of thunder, a flash of lightning and down poured the rain! It poured down in a great rush and a gush on to the earth. In a short time, the road was like a rushing river and his shoes were soaking wet. The traveller struggled to walk in the muddy road. Here and there he held on to a bush to keep his balance.*

*Suddenly he saw a light shimmering in between the trees. The path was mushy but he managed to rush over to an old house under the trees. He gave a shout, "Is any one at home? Can I shelter here for the night?" A lantern with a burning light hung from a beam outside the open door.*

*The traveller stepped inside the house, but it seemed as if no-one was there. "How strange?" said the traveller. Just then he saw something shiver in the dark corner of the room. He looked closely and there lay a snake in the shadows. It lifted up its head and hissed at him. Suddenly he realised that the snake was speaking to him.*

*"Do you know that this is my house? If you wish to stay here you must show me that you will do me no harm." The traveller was surprised to hear the snake's soft*

voice, but he answered. *“Good snake, I will be grateful if we can share the shelter of this house tonight. I shall not harm you at all.”*



*“Then shut the door and you may sleep here. But do not shout or make a noise. If you are quiet, you will sleep peacefully and nothing will harm you.. So, shhhh!”*

*“Thank you snake, I shall be very quiet. Just as you say... Shhhh....” So the traveller took off his wet coat and hung it over the door handle. He also took off his wet shoes. Then he lay down on the hard floor and tried to sleep. The*

*noises of the storm grew quiet; the wind died down and also seemed to whisper to him, Shhh... Before long, the tired traveller fell fast asleep.*

*In the morning, the traveller awoke with a start, not quite sure where he was. Then he saw the snake in the shadows looking at him with its beady eyes and for a moment he shivered with fright. Then he smiled, remembering what the snake said to him, “Shhh”*

*“Thank you, snake for letting me sleep in the shelter of your house,” said the traveller. He put on his coat and shoes that had dried a bit in the night, picked up his bag and stepped out on to the path. Soon he was on the road and in a short time, he came to the town.*

### Verse

Shelter in the house  
From the crash and the flash  
Of the rain. Sh-sh.  
Shelter in the shadow  
Where the shiver of a snake  
Shows he is awake  
So hush! Sh-sh.

In the shelter do not shout,  
Do not rush all about,  
Show me you can share  
The shelter of my house  
With care. Sh-sh.

### Example story for 'ch'

Words: chip, chap, chop, chick, cheeky, child, chirp, chest, cheese, chair, chance, chicken, chink, chew, chase, chain, Charlie.

*Cheeky Chick was the biggest of Mother Hen's chickens. He chirped loudly, puffing out the yellow fluff on his chest and made as much noise as he could. "Look at me!" he chirped, "What a clever chap I am! I am Cheeky Chick! Chirp-chirp-chirp!"*

*One day Cheeky Chick saw that there was a chink in the door of the chicken coop and being small, he squeezed through. "What a clever chap I am!" he chirped, "I am Cheeky Chick and I am going off to chase my food!" And he ran across the barnyard. He didn't know where he was going but that didn't matter. He ran past a child who was sitting on a chair chewing some bread and cheese. The child couldn't say anything because his mouth was full of bread and cheese so he just watched Cheeky Chick running out of the gate.*

*Cheeky Chick ran on and chirped, "What a clever chap I am. I am Cheeky Chick!" He heard a chop-chop noise and ran towards it. A man was chopping wood. There were chunks of wood in a pile and chips were lying all around. As the man chopped, more chips flew off the log. Chop-chop-chop went the sound of the axe. By chance a chip flew over and hit Cheeky Chick on his fluffy yellow chest. Cheeky Chick got such a fright that he started chirping loudly. Chirp-chirp-chirp! Help-help-help! In that moment the man stopped chopping and he heard Cheeky Chick. He called, "Charlie! Charlie!" The child came running up and said, "What is the matter, Dad?"*

*"Look at this chick. He has got out of the chicken coop and a chip hit him. Can you take him back?" "Yes," said Charlie. He picked Cheeky Chick up and carried him back to the chicken coop and put him inside. "You Cheeky Chick," he said. "Chirp-chirp, thank you," said Cheeky Chick. "I am a lucky chap to get home safely. Chirp-chirp-chirp!"*

## Example Story for Teaching a Vowel Digraph

### *Example story for 'ea'*

Words: leaf, tea, peach, teacher, read, Jean, clean, seat, lead, real, speak, heat, dream.

*Jean had a dream. She was sitting on a seat under the shade of a peach tree because of the heat. The peach tree stood next to a stream. Jean could feel the heat of the tea in her mug and the next moment she was in a dream. She saw her teacher standing in front of her as real as life. She wore a clean apron over her blue dress and she began to speak to her. "Jean, please read to me," she said.*

*“But I can’t read,” said Jean, “I try so hard, but I don’t know how to read.” Then the teacher said, “Don’t try so hard. When a leaf falls, it just lets go. Each leaf falls one at a time. You must read one sound at a time, like the leaf letting go. Listen to each sound and let them go one by one.”*

*Then Jean opened her eyes. Her teacher was gone, but the leaf was still there in her mug of tea – reminding her to let the sounds go - one by one. Somehow she felt better and knew that her teacher believed in her and that the dream had come to lead her to believe in herself too.*

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