

LYMAN COBB'S  
ADDRESS TO TEACHERS

The practice of teaching a child to read or pronounce a *reading* lesson before he knows the orthography and pronunciation of words, retards rather than facilitates his progress in *correct* reading. No child should be required to attempt to read or pronounce a *reading* lesson until he is able to call or pronounce at sight, the words commonly met with in composition; and, this knowledge can be more easily acquired by reading or pronouncing words in the *spelling* columns of a Spelling Book, judiciously and analogically classed, than in detached *reading* lessons.

The teacher should ALWAYS require his scholars to pronounce the words in each spelling lesson, at sight, either *before* or immediately *after* spelling it, as the only *sure* and *certain* method of making good readers. Let the scholar at the head of the class pronounce or enunciate, one, two, or three words the next scholar the same, and so on throughout the spelling class; the number of words which each scholar pronounces, however, should always be proportional to the number of scholars in the spelling class. This practice the Author pursued many years, while engaged in the business of teaching, with results entirely satisfactory; and, his experience emboldens him to recommend it to those who are entrusted with the instruction of children. If the scholar be required to read or pronounce words in a *reading* lesson before he has learned to sound or pronounce them *separately* in *spelling* columns, at sight, he will hesitate; and will, most generally, be confirmed in the habit of stammering while reading; for, although a child may know perfectly how to *spell* a word and to divide as it is in a spelling column; yet, when he sees the same word in a *reading* lesson, the syllables being closed up, it presents a new appearance to him.

It should be always borne in mind that *reading* is the enunciation or pronunciation of words by syllables; and, that therefore, each syllable in every word should be as distinctly enunciated or pronounced as if the whole reading lesson were composed of monosyllables only. Hence the importance of pronouncing, at sight, in spelling columns. Unless children do acquire a correct and distinct enunciation of a syllable in spelling columns, they rarely, if ever, acquire it in after life; for, in the practice or business of reading, the pauses, emphasis, cadence, &c., occupy all, or nearly all, their attention.

ORTHOGRAPHY or SPELLING being the first step toward attainment of a good education and particularly to a correct knowledge of the English Language, it is highly important that every scholar should attain this before he is permitted to proceed to any higher branches of study. This branch of education is obviously much neglected in nearly all our schools. Teachers, whether they know Orthography and Pronunciation well or not, are apt to think these of little or no importance, and permit their scholars to pass to other lessons too soon; but this is very injudicious; a building can not be elegant and permanent, until erected on a good foundation; and, a thorough knowledge of Spelling and Pronunciation can be obtained only by a repetition of the letters, until the *association* of those letters and their *sounds* are deeply impressed upon the mind of the scholar. (16)

*Cobb's New Spelling Book in Six Parts* by Lyman Cobb, A.M. (New York, Caleb Bartlett, 1842)

<http://books.google.com/books?id=pNsAAAAIAAJ&pg=PA3&dq=cobb+spelling+book#PPA17,M1>

## Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

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This is one of the best discussions of reading I have ever seen. Notice that spelling and reading were never separated, as they are today. Today we vainly try to teach reading and then spelling. This is backwards and leads to all kinds of problems.

Our students are plagued by man-made reading disabilities because their teachers attempt to teach a **sound-associational system** (English spelling) with **sight-associational methods** (sight-word memorization method). In this attempt, we produce children who have **associational-confusion** (artificially induced whole-word dyslexia).

Ronald P. Carver in his 2000 magisterial *Causes of High and Low Reading Achievement* wrote, “One very important way to learn how to pronounce more words accurately is sometimes overlooked, that is, learning to spell more words accurately. Spelling is often considered a very important part of writing, but secondary to reading. In this regard Gill (1992) noted that spelling was used to teach reading for almost 200 years, but “by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the tide has so turned that learning to spell was largely seen as incidental to reading” (Carver 178).

For more information on the *Spelling Book Method of Teaching Reading* please visit my “Spelling Book Method for Teaching Reading: Reference Page” at [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net)

Below is my Nationwide Education Reform website.

[www.blendphonics.net](http://www.blendphonics.net)

Below is a blog-site that I have created for information on teaching reading with Spelling Books.

<http://phonicsfirstsyllablesalways.wordpress.com>

Last Corrected: 10/4/12.