

teachers forget that Rome was not built in a day. We expect too much from the little ones, and instead of getting the information out of them by questions we tell them the whole thing, usually beginning at the definition and ending in a fog.

Let us suppose that we have a class of little ones in the second grade, that is, between the ages of eight and ten years, and that we are about to teach them how to distinguish a noun from any other part of speech.

Shall we tell them that a noun is the name of any person, place, or thing, or give them any other suitable definition and make them recite it? Remember, it is our duty to educate, not to cram our pupils. The question then for us to decide should be—what shall we make our pupils tell us, rather than what shall we tell them. In dealing with these very young children I have always been able to secure attention and interest by making them do the work for themselves, and even the dry, much abused grammar lesson has been interesting.

Of course the pupils must have something told them, but I usually begin by asking a question which every one can answer.

Perhaps I may take up a piece of chalk and ask what it is, and thus I shall elicit the fact that chalk is the name of the substance I am holding. The same can be done with many articles familiar to the class, who will all be pleased to tell the *name* of anything I touch. The next step follows naturally, viz., point out the fact that it is the name and not the thing that is the noun. This can easily be explained by telling them some story, such as that of the boy who said he had a *noun* sticking into him—he meant a pin of course. To some this kind of teaching may seem very ridiculous, but we must remember that little ones will always remember a story, and this will help them to understand its application. What we have to do is to make them understand, and if telling them a ridiculous story will help them, we are justified in telling it.

The children will now comprehend that it is the *name* and not the *thing* that is the noun, and we can proceed to tell them that whatever is a *name* is a *noun*, and that they must always ask themselves “Is this word a name?” and satisfy themselves that it is before they parse it. I think too that every child should be compelled to parse in this way.

The word book is a name. Therefore the word book is a noun. This method teaches them to reason for themselves, and it also shows them that only those words which are names can be nouns.

When they have mastered this they will be able to go on to the distinction between different kinds of nouns.

This will be a little more difficult, and the teacher will have to be very careful indeed when explaining the meaning of the word “common” as applied to nouns. But the first step must be thoroughly mastered by all the pupils before attempting to go further.

Example after example should be given, using every kind of noun.