

is surrounded. Do not think their value is to be underestimated, but their worth certainly depends largely on not being carried out implicitly to the letter, at the expense of the individuality of both teacher and pupil.

There are three recognized systems or methods of teaching the first steps in reading; the alphabetic, the phonic, and the word method. The first two are analytic; the alphabetic teaching letters as parts of printed words, the phonic teaching sounds as parts of spoken words; the third, or word method, is synthetic, teaching the word first as a whole.

The first step in actual reading is the naming of printed words. Now, in order to do justice to the child, we must take the easiest, shortest, best, and most natural way for him to learn the name of the printed words. If he learn the names of the letters and their sounds before he can tell what the word is, he has a long, hard, unnatural way which is not the best. On the contrary, the printed word is, in reality, an object; it is an unknown object. How does he learn the name of any other unknown object? By analysis? No. By study? No. By guessing? No. How then? By being told. Now, if the natural method of learning the names of objects in general has been correctly stated, it must follow, if words are objects, that the best method of learning the names of words has also been stated.

In using the word method there are a few things that go with it which enhance its worth as a method, otherwise it may prove a very dry and injurious affair, and instead of being, like the straight line, the shortest distance, it becomes, like the crooked line, the longest distance between two points.

The word in itself has no attraction for the little child, but is rather repelling. No stimulus can be found in the strange characters that compose it; they look as mysterious to the child as Egyptian hieroglyphics do to us. Then, to overcome this, assist the child over the first and greatest difficulty. Do what has been done many times before—present the object and give the word, not with the lips only, but with the chalk also. His mind is filled with interest for the object, and has just room enough left for the new form, the word, to find a resting-place. In this way, following the natural bent of a fixed habit, associating objects with ideas, you furnish the necessary stimulus to enable the child to take hold of the word, for naming words without ideas will be