



Historic School Reading Lesson

With books as work or healthful play
Let your first years be passed
That you may give for every day,
Some good account at last.

Historic School Reading Lesson

Lesson Time: 20 minutes for each of three groups

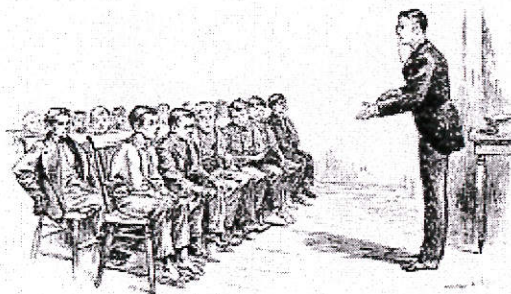
Objectives: The students will read orally from a McGuffey Reader at the recitation bench, noting pronunciation and moralistic lessons to be learned from the selection.

Background Information:

The third McGuffey Reader was chosen as most appropriate for fourth graders and lessons to be used are reproduced in this section. Readers are available at the Schools.

The readers are self-explanatory. The children could learn their vocabulary words and meanings prior to the visit. As you can see on the samples, most lessons contain a story or verse, picture, definitions, and sometimes study questions. Some of the lessons begin with a word list that the children were expected to learn before reading the lesson aloud. Some lessons have vocabulary words and definitions following the story or verse. The teacher would ask questions about the picture. Not only were pronunciation and articulation noted as the child answered, but it also served as a noun lesson.

Silent reading was minimal. As a rule, reading aloud was favored with stress on articulation, inflection, pauses, and emphasis. The teacher was careful to listen for errors in pronunciation, unnatural tones, and drawling. The child read in front of the classroom and was corrected on the spot.



When schools were first organized in Nebraska, the books used were those available from homes in the community. Most often these were Bibles, or single copies of other books. As a result, the one room school was an early example of the open classroom, with the teacher giving an introduction and each child moving at his own pace through his book.

A good word costs no more than a bad one.



Not I can't, but I will.

By the early 1870's, however, most Nebraska schools did have a set of readers for the students. The most popular series was the McGuffey's Reader, which consisted of books of ascending difficulty. McGuffey 1 and 2 dealt mainly with vocabulary development. McGuffey 3 and 4 contained moral lessons.

In rapidly growing 19th century United States, schoolbook publishing thrived, and every publisher with sufficient capital tried at least one reader or series of readers. Some had several successful series. But the McGuffey series was so popular for such a long time that in the minds of millions "school reader" and "McGuffey" were synonymous.

When McGuffey was 18, he applied for headmastership of the new public school at Warren, Ohio. But he failed the examination put together by the town's Board of Examiners. This humiliating failure was a turning point in his life. It fired his determination to become a recognized scholar.

To fulfill a promise to his deceased mother, and an expression of his fundamentalist religion, McGuffey became an ordained Presbyterian minister in 1833. He had a strong desire to teach moral philosophy and religion to his students, rather than extinct languages.

To try out some of his theories of primary education, McGuffey started a little school in the backyard of his home. One of his assistants was his precocious brother Alexander, sixteen years his junior. For his little school William prepared exercises and special lessons, and wrote stories which could teach reading and moral lessons at the same time. These lessons and stories gradually shaped themselves into a book. The First Reader was written in 1833, but was not published then. However, McGuffey had already published in London a small Treatise on Methods of Reading.

Through the years to the present, the Readers were published by seven Cincinnati publishers, each developing out of the previous one, culminating in the enormous American Book Company, the world's largest textbook publisher.

The approaches of the McGuffey Reader salesman are still being used by the textbook salesmen today. The McGuffey Reader is still published and used by some parochial schools in our country.

Historic School Reading Lesson

Reading selections from the Third McGuffey Reader for student group 1:

“The Young Teacher,” Lesson X, pages 34-37

“What the Minutes Say,” Lesson XVII, page 51

Reading selections from the Third McGuffey Reader for student groups 2 and 3:

“The Contented Boy,” Lesson LX, pages 151-155

“Indian Corn,” Lesson LXXIII, pages 193-197



ECLECTIC SERIES
THIRD READER

Lesson X.

sign marks par'ole ven'ture in quire' chalk rul'ing
draw'ing pic'ture con fused'

THE YOUNG TEACHER

1. Charles Rose lived in the country with his father, who taught him to read and to write.
2. Mr. Rose told his son that when his morning lessons were over, he might amuse himself for one hour as he pleased.
3. There was a river near by. On its bank stood the hut of a poor fisherman, who lived by selling fish.
4. His careful wife kept her wheel going early and late. They both worked very hard to keep themselves above want.
5. But they were greatly troubled lest their only son should never learn to read and to write. They could not teach him themselves, and they were too poor to send him to school.
6. Charles called at the hut of this fisherman one day, to inquire about his dog which was missing.
7. He found the little boy, whose name was Joe, sitting by the table, on which he was making marks with a piece of chalk. Charles asked him whether he was drawing pictures.
8. "No, I am trying to write," said little Joe, "but I know only two words. Those I saw upon a sign, and I am trying to write them."
9. "If I could only learn to read and write," said he, "I should be the happiest boy in the world."

ECLECTIC SERIES
THIRD READER

10. "Then I will make you happy," said Charles. "I am only a little boy, but I can teach you that."
11. "My father gives me an hour every day for myself. Now, if you will try to learn, you shall soon know how to read and to write."
12. Both Joe and his mother were ready to fall on their knees to thank Charles. They told him it was what they wished above all things.
13. So, on the next day when the hour came, Charles put his book in his pocket, and went to teach Joe. Joe learned very fast, and Charles soon began to teach him how to write.
14. Some time after, a gentleman called on Mr. Rose, and asked him if he knew where Charles was. Mr. Rose said that he was talking a walk, he supposed.
15. "I am afraid," said the gentleman, "that he does not always amuse himself thus. I often see him go to the house of the fisherman. I fear he goes out in their boat."
16. Mr. Rose was much troubled. He had told Charles that he must never venture on the river, and he thought he could trust him.
17. The moment the gentleman left, Mr. Rose went in search of his son. He went to the river, and, and walked up and down, in hope of seeing the boat.
18. Not seeing it, he grew uneasy. He thought Charles must have gone a long way off. Unwilling to leave without learning something of him, he went to the hut.
19. He put his head in at the window, which was open. There a pleasant sight met his eyes.
20. Charles was at the table, ruling a copybook. Joe was reading to him, while his mother was spinning in the corner.
21. Charles was a little confused. He feared his father might not be pleased; but he had no need to be uneasy, for his father was delighted.
22. the next day, his father took him to town, and gave him books for himself and Joe, with writing paper, pens, and ink.
23. Charles was the happiest boy in the world when he came home. He ran to Joe, his hands filled with parcels, and his heart beating with joy.

WHAT THE MINUTES SAY

1. We are but minutes – little things!
Each one furnished with sixty wings,
With which we fly on our unseen track,
And not a minute ever comes back.
2. We are but minutes; use us well,
For how we are used we must one day tell.
Who uses minutes, has hours to use;
Who loses minutes, whole years must lose.

INDIAN CORN

1. Few plants are more useful to man than Indian corn, or maize. No grain, except rice, is used to so great an extent as an article of food. In some countries corn is almost the only food eaten by the people.
2. Do you know why it is called Indian corn? It is because the American Indians were the first corn growers. Columbus found this grain widely cultivated by them when he discovered the New World. They pounded it in rude, stone bowls, and thus made a coarse flour, which they mixed with water and baked.
3. Indian corn is now the leading crop in the United States. In whatever part of this land we live, we see corn growing every year in its proper season. Yet how few can tell the most simple and important facts about its planting and its growth!
4. Corn, to do well, must have a rich soil and warm climate. It is a tender plant, and is easily injured by cold weather. The seed corn does not sprout, but rots, if the ground is cold and wet.
5. To prepare land properly for planting corn, the soil is made fine by plowing, and furrows are run across the field four feet apart each way. At every point where these furrows cross, the farmer drops from four to seven grains of seed corn. These are then covered with about two inches of earth, and thus form "hills" of corn.
6. In favorable weather, the tender blades push through the ground in ten days or two weeks; then the stalks mount up rapidly, and the long, streamer-like leaves unfold gracefully from day to day. Corn must be carefully cultivated while the plants are small. After they begin to shade the ground, they need but little hoeing or plowing.
7. The moisture and earthy matter, drawn through the roots, become sap. This passes through the stalk, and enters the leaves. There a great change takes place, which results in the starting of the ears and the growth of the grain.

8. The maize plant bears two kinds of flowers, male and female. The two are widely separated. The male flowers are on the tassel; the fine silk threads which surround the ear, and peep out from the end of the husks, are the female flowers.

9. Each grain on the cob is the starting point for a thread of silk; and, unless the thread receives some particle of the dust which falls from the tassel flowers, the kernel with which it is connected will not grow.

10. The many uses of Indian corn and its products are worthy of note. The green stalks and leaves make excellent fodder for cattle. The ripe grain is used all over the earth as food for horses, pigs, and poultry. Nothing is better for fattening stock.

11. Green corn, or "roasting ears," hulled corn and hominy, New England hasty pudding, and succotash are favorite dishes with many persons. Then there are parched corn and pop corn – the delight of long winter evenings.

12. Cornstarch is an important article of commerce. Syrup and sugar are made from the juice of the stalk, and oil and alcohol from the ripened grain. Corn husks are largely used for filling mattresses, and are braided into mats, baskets, and other useful articles.

13. Thus it will be seen how varied are the uses of Indian corn. And besides being so useful, the plant is very beautiful. The sight of a large cornfield in the latter part of summer, with all its green banners waving and its tasseled plumes nodding, is one to admire, and not to be forgotten.

DEFINITIONS. 1. Ar'ticle, a particular one of various things. 2. Cul'ti vat ed, grown. 3. Im por'tant, of much value. 5. Fur'row, a trench made by a plow. 6. Fa'vor a ble, that which is kindly, propitious. Stream'er, a long, narrow flag. 7. Mois'ture, wet, dampness. Re sults', comes out, ends. 8. Sep'a rat ed, apart, not connected. 9. Par'ti cle, a very small portion. 10. Ex'cel lent, good superior. Fod'der, such food for animals as hay, straw, and vegetables. Poul'try, barnyard fowls. Suc'co tash, corn and beans boiled together. 12. Com'merce, trade, Al'co hol, distilled liquor. Mat'tress es, beds stuffed with hair, straw, or other soft material. Braid'ed, woven or twisted together.

PERSEVERE

1. The fisher who draws in his net too soon,
 Won't have any fish to sell;
 The child who shuts up his book too soon,
 Won't learn any lessons well.
2. If you would have your learning stay,
 Be patient,--don't learn too fast;
 The man who travels a mile each day,
 May get round the world at last.

THE CONTENTED BOY

Mr. Lenox was one morning riding by himself. He got off from his horse to look at something on the roadside. The horse broke away from him, and ran off. Mr. Lenox ran after him, but soon found that he could not catch him.

A little boy at work in a field near the road heard the horse. As soon as he saw him running from his master, the boy ran very quickly to the middle of the road, and catching the horse by the bridle, stopped him till Mr. Lenox came up.

Mr. Lenox. Thank you, my good boy you have caught my horse very nicely. What shall I give you for your trouble?

Boy. I want nothing, sir.

Mr. L. You want nothing? So much the better for you. Few men can say as much. But what were you doing in the field?

B. I was rooting up weeds, and tending the sheep that were feeding on turnips.

Mr. L. Do you like to work?

B. Yes, sir, very well, this fine weather.

Mr. L. But would you not rather play?

B. This is not hard work. It is almost as good as play.

Mr. L. Who set you to work?

B. My father, sir.

Mr. L. What is your name?

B. Peter Hurdle, sir.

Mr. L. How old are you?

B. Eight years old, next June.

Mr. L. How long have you been here?

B. Ever since six o'clock this morning.

Mr. L. Are you not hungry?

B. Yes, sir, but I shall go to dinner soon.

Mr. L. If you had a dime now, what would you do with it?

B. I don't know sir. I never had so much.

Mr. L. Have you no playthings?

B. Playthings? What are they?

Mr. L. Such things as ninepins, marbles, tops, and wooden horses.

B. No, sir. Tom and I play at football in winter, and I have a jumping rope. I had a hoop, but it is broken.

Mr. L. Do you want nothing else?

B. I have hardly time to play with that I have. I have to drive the cows, and to run on errands, and to ride the horses to the fields, and that is a good as play.

Mr. L. You could get apples and cakes, if you had money, you know.

B. I can have apples at home. As for cake, I do not want that. My mother makes me a pie now and then, which is as good.

Mr. L. Would you not like a knife to cut sticks?

B. I have one. Here it is. Brother Tom gave it to me.

Mr. L. Your shoes are full of holes. Don't you want a new pair?

B. I have a better pair for Sundays.

Mr. L. But these let in water.

B. I do not mind that, sir.

Mr. L. Your hat is all torn, too.

B. I have a better one at home.

Mr. L. What do you do when it rains?

B. If it rains very hard when I am in the field, I get under a tree for shelter.

Mr. L. What do you do, if you are hungry before it is time to go home?

B. I sometimes eat a raw turnip.

Mr. L. But if there is none?

B. Then I do as well as I can without. I work on and never think of it.

Mr. L. Why, my little fellow, I am glad to see that you are so contented. Were you ever at school?

B. No, sir. But father means to send me next winter.

Mr. L. You will want books then.

B. Yes sir; each boy has a Spelling Book, a Reader, and a Testament.

Mr. L. Then I will give them to you. Tell your father so, and that it is because you are an obliging, contented little boy.

B. I will, sir. Thank you.

Mr. L. Good by, Peter.

B. Good morning sir.

By John Aiken.

DEFINITIONS – Root'ing, pulling up by the roots. Tend'ing, watching, attending. Tur'nip, a vegetable. Weath'er, state of the atmosphere. Er'rands, messages. Raw, not cooked. Tes'ta ment, the last twenty-seven books of the Bible.

PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES FOR READING

1. Following your normal reading lesson, have children discuss the content of material contained in the basal readers, illustrations, and type size. Discuss the format of their reading lessons, including pre and post tests, vocabulary, workbooks, fun sheets, and outside reading. Some students may compare reading lessons they have participated in at other schools or classrooms.
2. Help students realize that the style of reading lessons they participate in today were influenced by Mr. McGuffey. Some interesting aspects of his life might be shared.
3. Prepare students to participate at the recitation bench. Explain that they will stand when called upon. Proper forms of address (sir and ma'am) are expected to follow each reply.
4. Preview vocabulary words used at school.

Be careful of your thoughts, they may break into words at any time.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES FOR READING

1. Draw a picture of themselves at the recitation bench.
2. Compare experiences at the Historic School to their own reading class. Make a same and different chart. Expand the chart to predict reading lessons a century from now.