

Stephen Parker

Reading Instruction and Phonics

(Second Edition)

Theory and Practice for Teachers

Reading Instruction

and

Phonics

(2nd edition)

R-K

Royce-Kotran Publishing
Boston

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and
Phonics

*Theory and Practice
for Teachers*

(2nd edition)

Stephen Parker

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Foreword to the Second Edition

If you have read my Foreword to the first edition of Stephen Parker's *Reading Instruction and Phonics*, you will know that I first became aware of Stephen and his writings in early 2018, when I received an email out of the blue from him, telling me about some books on phonics instruction that he had written, and was making freely available via the internet. Such is the ongoing confusion in the early reading instruction space, that it's not unusual for me to receive emails from a range of practitioners: strangers wanting to share their (typically free) resources and spread the word about ways of improving knowledge and practice in early years classrooms. However, I quickly realised that Stephen's email was distinctive, as the resource he was asking me to review (the first edition of this text) was one I could see would have strong and immediate appeal to teachers keen to change their knowledge and practice, in the interests of stronger student outcomes.

In the less than two years since the first edition of this book was made available for free download, Stephen has engaged actively with his readership via social media, email, and closed language and literacy discussion groups. He has done so with openness and curiosity, listening to criticisms of the first edition and engaging in debate about any number of contested topics in early reading instruction.

This second edition is the result of these processes of listening and reflection. It retains the key features that caught my attention the first time around, while incorporating several improvements and additions. Notably, the book remains low on academic jargon and high on valuable knowledge and practical skills for teachers keen to change their classroom practise *now*. Stephen writes for his fellow teachers in ways that are clear and logical with respect to classroom practice. He also deconstructs some practises that have illegitimately gained icon-status in early years reading instruction.

Education unfortunately has a history of adopting practices ahead of the science being in, and this is nowhere more evident than in early reading instruction. That Stephen has placed the murky and contested history of reading instruction into the hands of teachers is as significant a gift as the knowledge itself contained in this book and his companion blogposts. Teachers need to know how we landed at this messy impasse if they are to be at the forefront of the campaign to do better in classrooms around the globe. To this end, in addition to the valuable history lesson, Stephen explains the all-important *Simple View of Reading* in this edition and positions this as

an accessible theoretical framework for thinking about the processes that need to be supported in taking children from novice to “expert” in the first three years of school.

This edition is less USA-centric, thanks to Stephen’s engagement with a wide audience in other English-speaking regions, such as the UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. In line with most other reading researchers and practitioners, this edition of the book now refers to 44 rather than 41 phonemes in English, and explicitly unpacks the *teaching letter names versus letter sounds* debate. In his typical teacher-focussed way, Stephen’s position on this is one of agnostic pragmatism. He explains both sides of the argument and suggests a way forward that does not need to wait for the debate to be resolved by academic researchers. This edition also contains an enhanced glossary and an entirely new chapter explaining how synthetic phonics instruction differs from Balanced Literacy. All reading teachers need to know this territory, and know it well.

Although I think that time spent by teachers learning and understanding the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) pays dividends, I do appreciate that this can seem daunting in the face of low background knowledge about linguistics. Stephen goes to some lengths in this book to simplify the representation of the relationship between sounds (phonemes) and letter combinations (graphemes), so that teachers don’t need to be encumbered by lack of IPA knowledge and can move straight into understanding the ways in which written text represents the sounds of spoken language. In my experience, once teachers understand the logic behind systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) instruction, they are keen to get on with the important business of teaching its core skills: knowledge of phoneme-grapheme relationships, blending and segmenting, so that children fully master the code-based nature of reading and can proficiently and efficiently access the meaning of the text.

When I asked Stephen what he was hoping to achieve through these improvements to the second edition, this is what he told me:

My dream for this book is that it actually succeeds in moving the needle on reading reform. For nearly a century, misguided reading instruction has crippled children, causing needless suffering worldwide. Such instruction adversely affects the child’s self-worth, and makes what should be a joyful part of childhood a daily nightmare of shame and failure. It severely compromises the child’s academic future and employment prospects, and helps feed a growing school-to-prison pipeline.

I think you will agree that this book has as good a chance of any before it, of achieving this, and might even succeed where others have stumbled, because of its accessibility and the ease with which it promotes translation of knowledge into classroom practise.

Children all around the world will be the beneficiaries of their teachers' engagement with this book to shape their instructional practises.

Effective early reading instruction is a public health lever we could pull tomorrow if we had the collective will – and this book shows us how. It is, literally, a tremendous gift to the world of early reading instruction.

Professor Pamela Snow, PhD

Psychologist and Speech Pathologist
La Trobe University, Australia

September, 2019

Foreword to the First Edition

One of the most wonderful things about living and working in the 21st century is the ease with which we can connect with kindred spirits around the globe. For me, as a university academic, this means that I am able to exchange information and ideas not only with other academics, but also with practitioners on the ground, in classrooms and clinics in all corners of the globe, and with parents who (sadly) are often stumbling with their children through a maze of less-than-ideal educational and therapeutic mis-haps.

I am always pleased to hear from people I haven't met, and to learn about ways in which they are attempting to solve what I consider to be one of the most wicked problems of our time: our collective failure to translate scientific knowledge about teaching children to read, into (a) knowledge and skills for pre-service teachers, and (b) knowledge and skills for novice readers.

So, you can imagine how my curiosity was piqued when I received an email from someone I didn't know, named *Stephen Parker*, offering me the opportunity to look over a copy of a book he had written for teachers, about how to teach beginning readers, making effective use of phonics-based instruction.

I dipped into my free download (I'll come back to this below) while on a domestic flight and found myself transfixed with the easy clarity of the writing, and the grasp of reading instruction history on offer. "How much difference would it make if early-years teachers knew about the history of reading instruction?" I wondered. Sadly, in most English-speaking industrialized nations, there has been a massive ideology-filter that favours so-called constructivist, child-centred approaches to reading instruction ("Whole Language", or more latterly "Balanced Literacy"), over those that empower and equip teachers to explicitly teach novices and guide them to competence in decoding and understanding the written word, in the critical first three years of formal schooling.

Mastery of the written code (reading, writing, and spelling) is the bedrock on which all future academic attainment is built. Like all construction zones, unless the foundations are strong, and the scaffolding tailored to the child's instructional needs, too many beginning readers "cave in", and they do so early. Reading is then difficult, unrewarding, and a constant source of failure, resistance, and shame. Secondary behavioural and emotional difficulties are common and the child achieves any number of diagnostic labels: dyslexia, ADHD, conduct disorder, and so on. That's not to say that

some children don't have specific difficulties with reading for intrinsic, sometimes undiagnosed reasons (e.g., developmental language disorder) – such children definitely exist, and are represented in every classroom. However, we have too many instructional casualties as a result of our failure to properly equip teachers with the science of learning to read; and a science it most certainly is.

This book is a paradox. It has slipped quietly and unobtrusively out of the shadows onto the stage but stands to create quite a disruption in the hands of practitioners around the globe. Stephen Parker would be entirely justified in wanting to reap some financial reward for his hours of toil and careful presentation of complex ideas and information. In an act of considerable humility and generosity, however, this is not his reason for writing the book. He did so, because, as a retired teacher himself, he recognises the transformational potential of this kind of information in the hands of classroom teachers around the globe.

Beginning readers everywhere would benefit enormously from some more Stephen Parkers in the world. I hope this book finds its way into thousands of teachers' hands and creates the quiet revolution that education academics have been so fearful of ever since three national inquiries (the US, the UK and Australia) called out the inadequacy of Whole Language-based instructional approaches some twenty years ago.

Children everywhere stand to have their lives transformed if they make it across the bridge to literacy in the early years of school. This book will make a significant contribution to that endeavour.

Professor Pamela Snow, PhD

Psychologist and Speech Pathologist
La Trobe University, Australia

September, 2018

Introduction

Today, most reading teachers readily acknowledge using phonics in their classrooms. But the reality is complex. Does the teacher use phonics as a *method* for teaching reading, or simply as an aid – one of many – to help with “word solving”? Is phonics emphasized at the start of instruction, and taught explicitly, or is it presented gradually, using various “discovery” exercises? What is the role of “sight words” in phonics and how are such words created and remembered? Are children encouraged to guess the identity of unknown words or are they taught to phonetically decode such words? How large a role do reason and logic play in beginning reading instruction?

At a deeper level, all these questions reduce to a single one: Is reading best taught in a *top-down* manner, starting with whole words (sight words), and only later *analyzing* those words to discover letter/sound relationships, or is it better to use a *bottom-up* approach, starting with letter/sound relationships, and then *synthesizing*, or blending, those sounds into whole words? How a teacher answers this question depends, to a large degree, upon the training that he or she received in preparation for teaching, and on the curriculum that is used in a given school. The answer to this question will also determine whether the teacher uses *analytic* phonics or *synthetic* phonics.

Here’s how the top-down/bottom-up decision influences the approach to unknown words. For a beginning reader, of course, all words are initially unknown. This fact presents no particular problem for bottom-up methodology because all words are initially *decoded*. In other words, sounds, suggested by a particular word’s spelling, are blended (synthesized) into a pronunciation that allows the beginner to recognize the word.

Top-down methodology, on the other hand, faces a dilemma right out of the gate. Since the beginner can’t read *any* words, how can instruction start with whole words? It’s at this point that the “sight word” is necessarily born. For the beginner, a sight word is created by *conscious* memorization: linking the overall visual appearance of the word, or its exact sequence of letters, directly to its meaning, without regard to the sound value of the letters that compose it. This is not an easy task. Further, how does the top-down method handle *unknown* words – words that are not yet sight words? It encourages the child to guess the word’s meaning, not a random guess, but a guess based on the word’s context in a sentence, its first letter, or on an accompanying picture.

There are, then, two fundamentally different approaches to reading instruction: a bottom-up method called “Synthetic Phonics,” and a top-down method called “Whole Word.” Educators have been arguing about which approach is better for nearly a century. During this time, Whole Word programs have been dominant. They’ve gone by various names. In the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, Whole Word was called “Look/Say”; in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, “Whole Language.” Today, Whole Word is called “Balanced Literacy.”

Why does any of this matter? It matters because most of the nation’s children are not becoming skilled readers. The US federal government tests the reading ability of the nation’s 4th and 8th graders every two years, and then publishes the results online as “The Nation’s Report Card.” Recent scores reveal that only 1 in 3 students is classified as a “proficient” or “advanced” reader. All the others are classified “basic” or “below basic.” In other words, 33% of students are being prepared for college and for the highly competitive job market; 67% of students are just getting by, or they’re illiterate. For minority youth, the statistics are even worse.

These recent test results are not an anomaly. For the past quarter-century, the results have been stubbornly consistent: 2 out of 3 students never become proficient readers. For instance, in 1998, at the height of the Whole Language movement, the average 8th grade reading score was 264 (out of 500). In 2015, after a decade-and-a-half of Balanced Literacy, that same 8th grade score was 265. Clearly something is amiss – and the switch from Whole Language to Balanced Literacy at the turn of the century has had little effect on remedying the situation.

The premise of this book is easily stated: using phonics as a bottom-up *method* for teaching reading, right from the start of instruction, will significantly improve a dismal situation. Stated differently, using Synthetic Phonics, rather than any of the above Whole Word methods, will help more of our children attain “proficient” or “advanced” reading levels.

The main reason a Synthetic Phonics (bottom-up) approach works better than any Whole Word method, is that it presents the skills of reading and spelling, from the beginning, as *reasoned* and *logical* activities – and it diligently avoids sight words. Children, like adults, need to understand what they’re being asked to do, especially if that activity requires sustained intellectual effort over a period of years. Without understanding *why* spellings say what they do, many children will give up on reading before any type of serious phonics ever takes place.

Imagine for a moment that you, as an adult, were just now beginning the process of learning to read. Which of these two teachers would you prefer? Teacher #1, right at the

outset of instruction, takes the time to teach you that the letter M symbolizes the nasal sound “mmm,” N symbolizes “nnn,” and A symbolizes “ahh” (the first sound in APPLE). Once you’ve mastered these 3 letter/sound relationships, Teacher #1 places the 3 letters together on a blackboard, M-A-N, and then helps you to blend the 3 sounds that these letters symbolize into the word MAN. Over time, the teacher does this with many other simple words as well. Before long, you start to understand the logic of print: it’s nothing more than coded sound! Beginning to understand this fact, you become enthusiastic about your reading lessons, wanting to learn more about this fascinating code.

Teacher #2 has a different approach. He or she places MAN on a Word Wall so you can see it throughout the day. The teacher also has you read the word in a repetitive (“patterned”) book pointing as you go (“The MAN is sleeping... The MAN is eating... The MAN is running...). The hope is that by constantly seeing MAN in this way, you’ll memorize it as a sight word. (You’re expected to guess the meaning of the words “sleeping,” “eating,” and “running,” by looking at the accompanying pictures.) The teacher makes no attempt to explain *why* the letters M, A, and N, in this particular order, represent the word MAN. Though difficult to do, precisely because no explanation has been offered, you study the word carefully and memorize it as the symbolic representation of the spoken word MAN, similar to the way you might memorize a password that consists of random numbers and letters. So far so good. But day after day, Teacher #2 presents more sight words for you to memorize. These words will eventually number in the hundreds.

I believe most adults would choose Teacher #1 precisely because they would want a teacher who makes the skill of reading understandable, that is to say, open to the use of reasoning and “figuring it out.” If forced to study with Teacher #2, most articulate adults would *insist* upon explanations: *Why* do the letters M-A-N represent the spoken word MAN rather than, say, DOG or TURNIP? How can guessing, based on pictures, result in skilled reading? Why are CAT, CITY, and CHAIR listed under C on an alphabetic Word Wall when all 3 of these words start with a different sound?

Children of course, have no say in how they are taught to read. Though *all* children would benefit from understanding why words are spelled as they are, they don’t have the confidence or maturity to insist on an explanation. Faced with Teacher #2, children do the best they can. Many, however, get frustrated and give up.

I have no illusions about the ability of individual K-2 reading teachers to choose their own curriculum and teaching method. That choice is usually made for the teacher at the district or state level. Further, many reading teacher’s knowledge and use of phonics is limited to the analytic phonics (or analogy phonics) used in a Balanced Literacy

program. Through no fault of their own, many contemporary reading teachers simply don't have the knowledge of phonics necessary to use it as a *method* for teaching reading. Such phonics is not emphasized in most undergraduate teaching programs – and this has been so for a long time.

If you read this stand-alone book, you'll learn what synthetic (full-strength) phonics is. You'll learn how it can be used to teach a child to read, not by resorting to sight words and guessing strategies, but in a way the child finds logical and understandable. This can inform your teaching even if you have been handed a top-down curriculum. For instance, you'll learn the 44 elemental sounds (called "phonemes") of spoken English, as well as a simple notation for referring to those sounds (see Table 1). You'll learn the full code that underlies both skilled reading and skilled spelling – a code that I have carefully summarized in Appendices P and Q. Even if you can implement only *some* of this book's synthetic phonics into your current teaching, it will still benefit your students.

Current and future reading teachers should also find the following useful: a discussion of the English code and its notation (Chapter 1), a comprehensive glossary specific to reading instruction (Chapter 2), a detailed discussion of the *Simple View of Reading* (Chapter 3), a history of reading instruction (Chapter 4), a four-part critique of Balanced Literacy (Chapter 5), and a discussion of features specific to this reading program (Chapter 6). The primary focus of this book, however, is the 17-stage Synthetic Phonics reading program itself. There you will find a carefully-sequenced, systematic plan for teaching the entire English language code to aspiring readers and spellers. I have included an appendix with each stage, containing words that should be readable, that is, *decodable*, for students at every point in the program.

As a reading teacher, you are, in any rational view, the most important teacher in a child's life. His or her intellectual future depends on the skill and art with which you perform your craft. I hope this book will help you, in some small way, to become better than you already are.

Best wishes,

Stephen Parker
Boston, 2019

Teacher Note: Throughout this book, I alternate between using the pronouns “she” and “he” in an attempt to make all readers feel welcome.

If you are using the complimentary pdf edition of this book and you decide you would like a printed copy as well, they are available at Amazon.com.

I would appreciate any suggestions or feedback – positive or negative. You can contact me at stephenparker81451@gmail.com or on Twitter [@ParkerPhonics](https://twitter.com/ParkerPhonics).

Table 1

The 44 Sounds (Phonemes) of American English

20 Vowel Sounds

Name of the Sound	Notation for the Sound	Words Using the Sound
short A	/a/	ax, apple, cat
long A	/A/	acorn, labor, date
short E	/e/	end, bed, pet
long E	/E/	evil, begin, she
short I	/i/	in, kiss, with
long I	/I/	idea, hiker, mild
short O	/o/	ox, not, bother
long O	/O/	ocean, omit, go
short U	/u/	up, gum, mud
	/oo/	good, book, wool
	/ew/	new, stew, true
	/oy/	boy, toy, coin
	/ow/	cow, allow, south
	/aw/	law, hawk, fraud
r-controlled A	/ar/	arm, cart, shark
r-controlled E	/er/	perch, birch, church
r-controlled O	/or/	for, corn, sport
	/ear/	near, beer
	/air/	hair, care
	/oor/	poor, lure, sure

Depending on where you're from, there are 41-44 basic sounds in English.

24 Consonant Sounds

Name of the Sound	Notation for the Sound	Words Using the Sound
	/b/	bat, bird
	/d/	dad, deck
	/f/	fun, fast
	/g/	gift, girl
	/h/	hat, hope
	/j/	jet, jam
	/k/	kiss, keep
	/l/	lip, last
	/m/	mom, most
	/n/	nut, note
	/p/	pet, past
	/r/	rug, reach
	/s/	sun, surf
	/t/	top, time
	/v/	van, vine
	/w/	win, went
	/y/	yard, yellow
	/z/	zip, zest
	/ch/	chip, chase
unvoiced SH	/sh/	ship, sheep
voiced SH	/SH/	Asia, vision
	/ng/	king, song, bang
unvoiced TH	/th/	thin, thrift, path
voiced TH	/TH/	this, then, those

For a discussion of these sounds, see Chapters 1 and 2.

For a summary of the entire English code, see Appendices P and Q.

Chapter 1

The Alphabetic Code

A marvelous code underlies all skilled reading and spelling. We're using that code right now. I encoded some thoughts onto this page using various alphabetic characters; you're decoding those characters and reconstructing my thoughts. It's as though I were speaking to you directly. For mature writers and readers, this encoding and decoding is quick and effortless. Because most of us were quite young when we learned to read, we've probably forgotten the multi-year effort that was required to get us to this point. And because reading and writing are so easy for us now, we may take these skills for granted, failing to appreciate how extraordinary it is that we can draw sound on paper and absorb language with our eyes.

By itself, the alphabet is only part of the code. If its letters aren't explicitly linked to individual sounds, the alphabet is simply a group of 26 abstract and meaningless characters. What follows are the first two sentences of this paragraph repeated, using letters that don't symbolize sound for you. (I simply shifted my fingers one key to the right as I retyped these 2 sentences.)

Nu oydrag, yjr saqjsnry od pmau qsty pg yjr vpfr. Og oyd aryrted strm'y
rcqaovoyau aomlrf yp omfobisa dpimfd, yjr saqjsnry od dozqau s htpiq pg 26
sndytsvy smf zrsmomhardd vjstsvyrtd.

This is how all text once appeared to you and me, before we learned the sound value of letters. It's how text appears to every beginning reader. It must be intimidating for a child, especially if her reading instructor starts with whole words. (While most reading programs in today's elementary schools do start instruction with whole words, this reading program does not.)

There are 26 letters in our alphabet and approximately 44 elemental sounds, also called **phonemes**, in spoken American English (see Table 1). The code is what specifies how these letters and sounds are connected: how each of the 26 letters symbolize one or more of these 44 elemental phonemes, and how each of the 44 phonemes can be spelled. Understanding the code is the key to learning both reading *and* spelling because these 2 skills are the opposite of one another. To spell, we encode sound onto paper using various alphabetic symbols. To read, we decode those written symbols back into sound. Armed with the alphabet, and knowledge of the code that animates it, we can

depict the million words of English on paper, using only 26 symbols – an astounding feat.

There are many types of codes. The Morse Code, for example, uses various configurations of dots and dashes to symbolize specific letters. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines “code” as “a system in which symbols are assigned specific meanings.” Therefore, we can define the Alphabetic Code – the code that underlies proficient reading and spelling – as “a system in which *letters* are assigned specific *sounds*.”

To teach this code explicitly, in the earliest stages of instruction, is the most effective and efficient way to teach reading. Doing so demonstrates to your students, right off the bat, that the skills of reading and spelling are based on reason and logic. However, if you have been handed a top-down Whole Word program to use for reading instruction, that is to say, a program that emphasizes sight words and guessing strategies, it will still benefit your students even if you explicitly teach only parts of the code. Just do so as early as possible in the school year.

To use synthetic phonics competently, a reading teacher must be able to easily identify the 44 individual phonemes of English. Every word we’ve ever spoken consists of one or more of these 44 sounds. I’ve listed them in Table 1 in the front of this book. As I indicate there, 20 are vowel sounds and 24 are consonant sounds. They are the unique building blocks of our spoken, common language. Think of them as the equivalent of the 118 chemical elements or atoms in the Periodic Table. Just as those atoms form the basis of all the matter in our physical world, the 44 phonemes in Table 1 form the basis of all the words we’ll ever speak. (The analogy is not perfect because, under extraordinary conditions, atoms can be split; these 44 phonemes, however, are un-split-able!)

Dealing with these 44 phonemes in a book requires that we have some type of notation to unambiguously distinguish them, one from the other. Here’s the problem. Suppose I want to discuss the short O sound with you. That’s the first sound you can hear in the word OX or ODD. Since I’m not physically present to you, I can’t speak it. I could try to spell the sound for you, O-H perhaps, but OH is commonly viewed as the spelling for *long* O, as in “Uh-oh! I dropped your priceless vase!” Maybe I could spell the short O sound using AH, as when a doctor says, “Open your mouth and say ah.” But then how would I spell the short A sound (the first sound in the word APPLE)? Further, how would I spell the sound of a consonant such as D: DEH? DAH? DUH? DOH?

So some type of notation is necessary. That said, the notation we use can be easy and straightforward or it can be difficult and confusing. The notation used by the

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and by most dictionaries is the latter type, employing unusual symbols like \int , θ , \int , η , ə , æ , ɔ , and ɜ . By contrast, the notation I use in Table 1 is simple. It involves forward slash marks, / /, surrounding familiar letters. I'll make you two promises. First, it won't take you long to get comfortable with this notation, and second, you won't have to teach it to your students. The notation is only to facilitate accurate communication between synthetic phonics teachers. Beginning readers, always speaking these sounds, will have no need for any specialized notation.

You'll find that Table 1 is useful throughout this book. For example, suppose that in a later chapter, you encounter /oo/ and you've forgotten how it sounds. You can quickly look it up in Table 1 where you'll see it occurs in the words GOOD, BOOK, and WOOL. In most cases, the letter(s) between the slash marks will remind you how to pronounce the sound. For instance, /ew/ is pronounced like the word NEW, but without the N. (Throughout this entire book, whenever you see something surrounded by slash marks, I strongly encourage you to speak it aloud rather than read it silently.)

What follows are some examples to help you get accustomed both to *hearing* these 44 elemental sounds, and to using this easy notation to record these sounds on paper. As you examine Table 1, you probably notice I designate short vowel sounds with lowercase letters and long vowel sounds with uppercase. With that in mind, look at these two statements:

HAT = /h/ + /a/ + /t/
 HATE = /h/ + /A/ + /t/

On the left are the spellings of two common English words; on the right are the exact 3 phonemes you can hear in each of these words. Simply blend the 3 phonemes together, quickly and smoothly, and you'll produce both words. The E in HATE is only a spelling convention (covered in Stage 10 in this reading program) and, as such, it has no sound. Here's another example:

WAG = /w/ + /a/ + /g/
 WAGE = /w/ + /A/ + /j/

Again, the spelling is on the left while the actual sounds present in the words are on the right. The notation makes it clear that these two words have different vowel sounds. But in addition, it indicates that, although both words are spelled with a G, the second word ends in a J sound rather than a G sound. GE is a common spelling convention for the sound of J (see Stage 16).

English spelling can sometimes be confusing, partly because there are so many homophones (words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings):

WAIST = WASTE = /w/ + /A/ + /s/ + /t/
 PEACE = PIECE = /p/ + /E/ + /s/
 CHORD = CORED = CORD = /k/ + /or/ + /d/
 TO = TOO = TWO = /t/ + /ew/
 THRONE = THROWN = /th/ + /r/ + /O/ + /n/

And, of course, there are a few English spellings that make no sense whatsoever, given the actual phonemes present in the word's pronunciation:

ONE = /w/ + /u/ + /n/
 OF = /u/ + /v/

Spelling is necessarily complex in English for a simple reason: our language has more phonemes (44) than it has letters (26) to symbolize them. This results in a more complex code than is found in other alphabetic languages like Italian and German. In the above HAT/HATE example, you saw how the single letter, A, can symbolize 2 different phonemes: /a/ and /A/. The opposite is also true. A single phoneme can be spelled in more than one way:

ZOO = /z/ + /ew/
 NEW = /n/ + /ew/
 BLUE = /b/ + /l/ + /ew/
 FRUIT = /f/ + /r/ + /ew/ + /t/

This example shows the phoneme /ew/ can be spelled OO, EW, UE, and UI.

Though the following example is a little trickier, it demonstrates several phonics topics that will be covered in the course of this reading program. Let's take the two words, PHONICS and CITY, and using this new notation, again state the precise sounds that can be heard in each of them. Try to do this yourself before reading any further. (Reminder: there is no /c/ among the 44 phonemes of English.)

PHONICS = /f/ + /o/ + /n/ + /i/ + /k/ + /s/
 CITY = /s/ + /i/ + /t/ + /E/

Three important phonics topics are illustrated here. First, the sound /f/ is sometimes spelled PH rather than F. Second, the letter C always spells either the sound /k/ or /s/. Finally, the letter Y can act as a vowel. When it does, it usually spells /E/ (long E).

If the notation across from CITY (above) looks like the word SITE to you, it's because you're confusing spelling with sound. The slash mark notation has nothing to do with spelling; it simply specifies sound. Here are 11 similar-sounding words that differ from each other only in their vowel sound:

SIT = /s/ + /i/ + /t/
 SITE = SIGHT = CITE = /s/ + /I/ + /t/
 SET = /s/ + /e/ + /t/
 SEAT = /s/ + /E/ + /t/
 SAT = /s/ + /a/ + /t/
 SATE = /s/ + /A/ + /t/
 SUIT = /s/ + /ew/ + /t/
 SOT = /s/ + /o/ + /t/
 SOOT = /s/ + /oo/ + /t/
 SOUGHT = /s/ + /aw/ + /t/
 CITY = /s/ + /i/ + /t/ + /E/

If you looked through Table 1 carefully, you may be wondering why /c/, /q/, /x/, and /U/ are missing. You may also be puzzling over those two *uppercase* versions of /th/ and /sh/. And what about r-controlled I and r-controlled U? While these issues will be fully explained in the course of this program, here's a quick preview:

- There's no sound /c/ because the letter C itself is unnecessary in English. CAT could be spelled KAT. CITY could be spelled SITY (as it is in UNIVERSITY). Since the sounds /k/ and /s/ are already listed in Table 1, including /c/ would be redundant.
- I omit /q/ for the same reason. Every word spelled with QU could instead be spelled with KW (compare QUACK and KWACK). Since /k/ and /w/ are already on the list, /q/ is unnecessary.
- The same reasoning holds for /x/. Every word ending in X could instead be spelled with KS (compare BOX and BOKS). Since /k/ and /s/ are already on the list, we don't need the sound /x/.
- The sound /U/ (long U) can easily be produced by sounds already on the list: /U/ = /y/ + /ew/.

- The R sound, /r/, wreaks havoc with vowel sounds. However, there's no need for /ir/ and /ur/ in Table 1 because words spelled with either IR or UR always have the sound /er/. Note how PERCH, BIRCH, and CHURCH all rhyme.
- The /th/ sound (lowercase) is made with air only. You can hear it in the words THIN, THICK, and MOTH. The /TH/ sound (uppercase) is a similar sound, but it's made with the vocal cords. You can hear it in the words THIS, THAT, and MOTHER. Try it yourself! /TH/ is voiced; /th/ is voiceless.
- Similarly, /sh/ is voiceless. You can hear it in SHIP, CASH, and MISSION. /SH/ is voiced. You can hear it in the words VISION, PLEASURE, and ASIA, even though these words are not spelled with the letters SH.

This voiced/voiceless distinction occurs for many letter pairs in English, as you can see (or hear) in this table:

Voiced	Unvoiced
/TH/	/th/
/SH/	/sh/
/b/	/p/
/d/	/t/
/g/	/k/
/j/	/ch/
/z/	/s/
/v/	/f/

Notice that for each of these sound pairs, the mouth and tongue are in the same configuration; the only difference is voicing versus air alone. Happily, in most cases, English uses different letters for the voiced and unvoiced version of a given sound. It is only in the case of TH and SH that English does not have a unique spelling for the voiced and voiceless versions of the sound.

The Schwa Sound

Schwa is a default vowel sound that often occurs in the *unaccented* syllable(s) of multi-syllable words – and it occurs no matter what the vowel happens to be. To my ear, schwa is *not* a unique sound. Depending on the word, the schwa (default) sound is usually /i/, /u/, or /er/. Look at these examples:

schwa default sound is /i/:

LEMON = /l/ + /e/ + /m/ + /i/ + /n/

FOUNTAIN = /f/ + /ow/ + /n/ + /t/ + /i/ + /n/

KITCHEN = /k/ + /i/ + /ch/ + /i/ + /n/ (I can't hear a T in KITCHEN.)

schwa default sound is /u/:

VANILLA = /v/ + /u/ + /n/ + /i/ + /l/ + /u/

AFRAID = /u/ + /f/ + /r/ + /A/ + /d/

AFRICA = /a/ + /f/ + /r/ + /i/ + /k/ + /u/

schwa default sound is /er/:

MOTOR = /m/ + /O/ + /t/ + /er/

DOLLAR = /d/ + /o/ + /l/ + /er/

BLIZZARD = /b/ + /l/ + /i/ + /z/ + /er/ + /d/

I call the schwa sound Lazy Vowel and I discuss it in greater detail in Stage 13 of this reading program.

Regional and National Variations in Phonemes

If you live outside the United States, some English phonemes are spoken differently than here. Even *within* the US, the particular way a phoneme is articulated, especially /r/, is much different in Boston than in Houston. Other countries may have one or two fewer (or different) phonemes than what I've listed in Table 1. In particular, there are national differences in the way an ending R sound is pronounced. There are six such vowel phonemes in Table 1: /ar/, /er/, /or/, /air/, /ear/, and /oor/.

The word CAR, for instance, has a distinct R sound when spoken in most of the US. In Australia and New Zealand, however, the R is nearly silent. This does not affect the utility of this book. Users from outside the US, if in doubt concerning the exact phonemes used in their particular country, can easily find help online. I'm thinking in

particular of Alison Clarke's YouTube video on Australia's phonemes and Debbie Hepplewhite's YouTube video on UK phonemes. Both can be found via a Google search.

Once you can look through the list of the 44 phonemes in Table 1, and out loud, correctly pronounce all (or most) of them, you're ready to do two things. First, compare Appendices P and Q where I have the entire Alphabetic Code summarized from opposite perspectives: spelling (encoding sounds into letters), and reading (decoding letters back into sounds). What synthetic phonics does for the beginning reader is to gradually, systematically, and logically unpack all the information in these 2 appendices. (How a teacher might accomplish this is illustrated in the 17-stage program that comes later in this book.)

Second, you can test your ability to hear individual sounds, as well as your knowledge of this new notation, by taking the following quiz, converting each of the words (or word pairs) into their component sounds (as I did above for HAT and HATE). I don't include any of the vast majority of words where the spelling exactly matches the notation, for example, NEST = /n/ + /e/ + /s/ + /t/. That would be too easy. The words in the following quiz are trickier. Take your time, say the word slowly, and then write the sounds you actually hear, *regardless* of the word's spelling. This is not an easy quiz if you have never before consciously tried to hear all of a word's sounds. Try each example on your own and then look at my answers following the quiz.

Quiz

Directions: Convert each of the following words into their component sounds, separating the sounds by a plus (+) sign. You can use only the 44 sounds listed in Table 1.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1) MOON versus LOOK | 2) GOT versus GOAT |
| 3) PICKED | 4) FIT versus FIGHT |
| 5) BOY versus BOIL | 6) COW versus COUCH |
| 7) PAWS versus PAUSE | 8) JAW versus JAUNT |
| 9) BIRCH versus CHURCH versus PERCH | 10) CYCLONE |
| 11) NECK versus UNIQUE | 12) BALL versus BAWL |
| 13) STATION | 14) COMPLACENT |
| 15) CHEESE PIZZA | 16) HARVARD COLLEGE |
| 17) MARRIAGE versus MARRIED | 18) NEWS versus NOOSE |
| 19) AGENCY | 20) PATIENT versus PATIENCE |
| 21) COURAGEOUS | 22) RECREATION |
| 23) AMBULANCE | 24) CRUCIAL |
| 25) USE | 26) CLOSE |
| 27) CROCHET | 28) LORE versus LOWER |
| 29) KNOWN versus NOUN versus NONE | 30) CONFUSION |
| 31) MUCH versus HUTCH versus TOUCH | 32) THESE |

Answers

(There is certainly room for minor disagreement with some of these!)

- 1) /m/ + /ew/ + /n/ and /l/ + /oo/ + /k/ Even though both words are spelled with a double O, that double O symbolizes different sounds in these words.
- 2) /g/ + /o/ + /t/ and /g/ + /O/ + /t/
- 3) /p/ + /i/ + /k/ + /t/
- 4) /f/ + /i/ + /t/ and /f/ + /I/ + /t/
- 5) /b/ + /oy/ and /b/ + /oy/ + /l/ OY and OI are both spellings for /oy/.
- 6) /k/ + /ow/ and /k/ + /ow/ + /ch/ OW and OU are both spellings for /ow/.
- 7) These words are homophones. Both are pronounced /p/ + /aw/ + /z/
- 8) /j/ + /aw/ and /j/ + /aw/ + /n/ + /t/ AW and AU both spell /aw/.
- 9) /b/ + /er/ + /ch/ and /ch/ + /er/ + /ch/ and /p/ + /er/ + /ch/ ER, UR, and IR are all spellings for the sound /er/. Note how all 3 words rhyme.
- 10) /s/ + /I/ + /k/ + /l/ + /O/ + /n/ Unfortunately, uppercase I and lowercase L look almost the same using the font I chose for this book.
- 11) /n/ + /e/ + /k/ and /y/ + /ew/ + /n/ + /E/ + /k/
- 12) These are also homophones. /b/ + /aw/ + /l/
- 13) /s/ + /t/ + /A/ + /sh/ + /i/ + /n/ The schwa sound occurs in the second syllable.
- 14) /k/ + /u/ + /m/ + /p/ + /l/ + /A/ + /s/ + /i/ + /n/ + /t/ The schwa sound (Lazy Vowel) occurs here.
- 15) /ch/ + /E/ + /z/ /p/ + /E/ + /t/ + /s/ + /u/ Lazy Vowel is the final sound in PIZZA.
- 16) /h/ + /ar/ + /v/ + /er/ + /d/ /k/ + /o/ + /l/ + /i/ + /j/ Lazy Vowel occurs in the second syllable of both words. Native Bostonians would probably disagree entirely, pronouncing HARVARD as /h/ + /a/ + /v/ + /i/ + /d/.
- 17) /m/ + /a/ + /r/ + /i/ + /j/ and /m/ + /a/ + /r/ + /E/ + /d/
- 18) /n/ + /ew/ + /z/ and /n/ + /ew/ + /s/ The letter S often has a Z sound.
- 19) /A/ + /j/ + /i/ + /n/ + /s/ + /E/

- 20) /p/ + /A/ + /sh/ + /i/ + /n/ + /t/ and /p/ + /A/ + /sh/ + /i/ + /n/ + /s/
- 21) /k/ + /or/ + /A/ + /j/ + /i/ + /s/ Lazy Vowel here.
- 22) /r/ + /e/ + /k/ + /r/ + /E/ + /A/ + /sh/ + /i/ + /n/ Lazy Vowel in the final syllable.
- 23) /a/ + /m/ + /b/ + /y/ + /ew/ + /l/ + /i/ + /n/ + /s/
- 24) /k/ + /r/ + /ew/ + /sh/ + /u/ + /l/
- 25) A homograph. It has 2 correct pronunciations: /y/ + /ew/ + /z/ and /y/ + /ew/ + /s/
- 26) Another homograph: /k/ + /l/ + /O/ + /z/ and /k/ + /l/ + /O/ + /s/
- 27) /k/ + /r/ + /O/ + /sh/ + /A/
- 28) /l/ + /or/ and /l/ + /O/ + /er/
- 29) /n/ + /O/ + /n/ and /n/ + /ow/ + /n/ and /n/ + /u/ + /n/
- 30) /k/ + /u/ + /n/ + /f/ + /y/ + /ew/ + /SH/ + /i/ + /n/ The voiced version of the sound /sh/ occurs in this word. The final vowel sound could be /u/ rather than /i/, depending on your pronunciation. In either case, it's Lazy Vowel.
- 31) /m/ + /u/ + /ch/ and /h/ + /u/ + /ch/ and /t/ + /u/ + /ch/
- 32) /TH/ + /E/ + /z/ The *voiced* version of the sound /th/ occurs in this word.

[Note: I want to re-emphasize that your students will never need to know this notation. In dealing with your students, the 44 sounds of English will *always* be spoken, never written.]

Chapter 2

A Glossary for Reading Teachers

Every academic field has some specialized vocabulary. To teach reading phonetically, it will be helpful for you to know the vocabulary shown in boldface below. Your students won't need to know this vocabulary. For them, you'll want to keep jargon to an absolute minimum; they have enough of a challenge already, faced as they are with the task of learning to convert print into sound.

A **phoneme** is the most elemental sound in the English language. You're already quite familiar with them from your reading of the previous chapter. Table 1, where they are listed, could simply be called "The 44 *Phonemes* of English." With your students, you can use the word "sound," but reading teachers need to understand the difference between a sound and a phoneme. If someone says the word SHIP, they are producing a single syllable or pulse of sound. Yet SHIP consists of 3 phonemes: /sh/ + /i/ + /p/. What distinguishes a phoneme from a sound is that the former can't be further divided.

Any book that discusses phonemes must have some type of **phonemic notation** to handle those phonemes in an unambiguous way. You just took a quiz at the end of Chapter 1 that tested both your ability to hear individual phonemes and to record them on paper using proper...

/f/+/O/+/n/+/E/+/m/+/i/+/k/ /n/+/O/+/t/+/A/+/sh/+/i/+/n/

The alphabet is a set of 26 individual **graphemes** (also known as **letters**) each of which symbolizes one or another of the 44 phonemes of spoken English. By variously arranging these graphemes, the million spoken words of English can be depicted as print. If the number of single-letter graphemes (26) in the alphabet matched the number of phonemes (44) in our language, teaching reading and spelling would be greatly simplified. Since they don't match, there is no simple one-to-one correspondence in English between graphemes (letters) and phonemes (sounds). This makes learning to read and spell more of a challenge for English speakers than it is for speakers of other alphabetic languages.

You've already seen how a single letter, A for instance, can represent 2 different phonemes: /a/ (as in HAT) and /A/ (as in HATE). But it's also true that a single phoneme, /A/ for instance, can be represented by more than one letter combination. Look at the following:

ALIEN = /A/ + /l/ + /E/ + /i/ + /n/

BAY = /b/ + /A/

WAIT = /w/ + /A/ + /t/

EIGHT = /A/ + /t/

This example shows that the phoneme /A/ corresponds to 4 different graphemes: A, AY, AI, and EIGH.

I'm now in position to define **grapheme** more accurately: it's any single letter, or any group of letters, that spell (represent, symbolize) a *single* phoneme. Graphemes consist of 1, 2, 3, or 4 letters. I list all of them, about 85 in number, in Appendix Q. Two-letter graphemes, such as AI and AY in the above example, are also called **digraphs**. Looking through Appendix Q, you can see that digraphs are more common than single-letter graphemes. Three and four-letter graphemes are not common. ISH, for instance, is not a grapheme because that string of letters spells 2 phonemes: /i/ and /sh/. IGH, however, is a grapheme because it spells the single phoneme /I/ in a word like NIGHT (/n/ + /I/ + /t/). So, English is a language where the relationship between phonemes and graphemes (sounds and letters) is not one-to-one, but rather one-to-many, in both directions. [Note: Graphemes, being just spellings, are never surrounded by slash marks; only phonemes have this honor.]

The **Alphabetic Code** (or simply “code” in this book) is the complete set of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (**GPCs**) that exist for the English language. That code, from opposite perspectives, can be found in this book in Appendices P and Q. You'll gradually teach this code to your students as you move through the 17-stage reading program later in this book.

To **segment** a word has two different meanings. For a *spoken* word, it implies an ability to recognize (hear) all the word's component phonemes. For example, CHEAP consists of 3 phonemes: /ch/, /E/, and /p/. For a *written* word, it implies an ability to recognize (see) all the word's component graphemes. For example, MOUTH consists of 3 graphemes: M, OU, and TH. To **blend** is to combine individual phonemes together, smoothly, to produce a word. For example, we might combine the sounds /m/ + /a/ + /n/ (“mmm” + “aaah” + “nnn”) together to form the word MAN.

To **encode** is to mentally segment a spoken word into its component phonemes, and then to use one's knowledge of the code to match each of those phonemes with an appropriate grapheme. This results in a written word. The process is more commonly known as **spelling**.

To **decode** is to mentally segment a written word into its component graphemes, and then to use one's knowledge of the code to match each of those graphemes with an appropriate phoneme. Smoothly **blending** those phonemes together results in a spoken word. To **sound out** a word means the same as to **decode** it.

To **read** is to decode and to understand written text. Decoding is a necessary but sometimes insufficient condition for reading. For example, a beginning reader might correctly decode the word "hoodwink," but have no idea that it means "to deceive." To **write** is to express oneself, in print, in a cohesive, logical, and entertaining manner. Spelling, then, is a necessary but insufficient condition for accomplished writing.

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to hear, pronounce, blend, and segment individual phonemes for the express purposes of reading and spelling. [Note: Most illiterate people, children and adults, are not consciously aware of the individual phonemes in spoken words. That awareness must become conscious if the novice is ever to become a skilled reader and speller.]

The **Alphabetic Principle**: Written words consist of letters (graphemes) that *systematically* represent the individual sounds (phonemes) in corresponding spoken words. In other words, there is a predictable and learnable relationship between a spoken word and its written counterpart. These systematic grapheme-phoneme correspondences can be used both to encode (spell) words and to *retrieve* the full pronunciations of unknown printed words.

Sight Word. This one is not so easy to define. For an illiterate person, a word has only two characteristics: meaning and sound. In the process of becoming literate, words gradually take on a third characteristic: appearance (spelling, orthography). A sight word is one that a reader instantly and automatically identifies without conscious effort. She doesn't analyze it, decode it, or sound it out. Rather, as soon as she *sees* the word, its sound and meaning are immediately available to her. If instead, she first *hears* the word, its spelling and meaning are immediately available; and, of course, if she first *thinks* the word, spelling and sound occur instantaneously. For mature readers, most words are sight words.

Complicating matters further is this: our brains can learn and store two entirely different types of sight words – and *both* are necessary to become literate. I'll call the two types of sight words Type 1 and Type 2. We create a **Type 1 sight word** by linking the overall visual appearance (shape) of the word directly to its meaning, without regard

to the sound value of the letters (if any) that compose it. Examples of such “words” are OF, ONE, CHOIR, FIGHT, YACHT, \$, %, #, and 24. There is no possibility of **decoding** any of these symbolic representations of sound. Yet, as soon as we see them, what we “hear” in our brains is: UV, WUN, KWIRE, FITE, YOT, DOLLAR, PERCENT, NUMBER (or HASHTAG) and TWENTY-FOUR.

Even regular words – words that *can* be decoded, like TOAST, LOOK, and SUMMER – can be learned and stored as Type 1 sight words. In fact, a child *must* learn them this way if no one bothers to teach him the full code. In such a case, he might remember TOAST as the word that starts and ends with T; LOOK as the word that has “eyes” in the middle; SUMMER the word that has double M in the middle. What characterizes a Type 1 sight word is that it must be *consciously* memorized, in one way or another, because it’s not connected – or it’s only partially connected – to sound.

We create a **Type 2 sight word** by deliberate and skillful **decoding**: segmenting a written word into its individual graphemes, linking those graphemes with corresponding phonemes, and then **blending** those phonemes together to recognize the word. The creation of a Type 1 sight word depends upon the rather arduous process of conscious rote-memorization. The creation of a Type 2 sight word depends upon successfully decoding that word, on the grapheme-phoneme level, 2-5 times, after which it becomes a sight word *unconsciously and automatically*.

As an example, consider two hypothetical beginners, Danny and Tana, each trying to read, what is for them, a new word: SHEEP. Danny knows the sound value of only a few graphemes. Nonetheless, the teacher says S-H-E-E-P means SHEEP, so Danny takes the teacher’s word. He consciously attempts to memorize that these 5 letters, in this particular order, symbolize SHEEP. How does he do so? Maybe he tries to memorize the exact sequence of the 5 letters without any reference to sound at all. Maybe he can hear the long E sound in SHEEP, so he’ll remember it as “the word with E in the middle.” Maybe he happens to know that P symbolizes /p/ and he has enough phonemic awareness to hear /p/ at the end of the word when it’s spoken. In this case he’ll remember SHEEP as “the word that ends in P.”

I think you’ll agree this type of memorization is tedious and error-prone; it’s similar to the way we memorize phone numbers or passwords. Clearly it can be done, but how many words is a child capable of learning, and remembering accurately, if such a haphazard technique is used? For Danny, SHEEP is stored in his brain as a **Type 1 sight word**.

Tana, who is learning how to read properly, has an enormous advantage over Danny. She analyzes the unknown word, SHEEP, and accurately segments it into its 3 graphemes: SH, EE, and P. Then, using her knowledge of the code, she matches each of these graphemes with a corresponding phoneme: /sh/, /E/, and /p/. Finally, **blending** the 3 phonemes together, *she figures out for herself* the meaning of the word: a fluffy animal that provides us with wool. After she **decodes** the word just a few more times, SHEEP automatically becomes a sight word for Tana, *without her ever deliberately trying to memorize it*. The word becomes part of a personal lexicon in Tana's brain reserved for words whose sound, meaning, and now, spelling, are fully and accurately fused, and bonded as a unit. Because this word has been segmented *down to its phonemic level*, with all phonemes and graphemes correctly matched, it is *automatically* handled by the brain's powerful Language Center.¹ For Tana, SHEEP is stored in her brain as a **Type 2 sight word**, fully connected to sound.²

Phonics is the study of the code. However, this study can be pursued in radically different ways. Teachers can have students *discover* the letter-sound relationships of the code, or they can teach those relationships *directly*. Phonics can be taught in a planned and systematic fashion or it can be taught on an incidental, as-needed basis as the child attempts to read a book. Phonics can be taught in a manner that requires lots of Type 1 sight words to be memorized, or it can be taught in a manner that avoids such rote memorization. It can include *all* the letter-sound relationships or it can focus primarily on just beginning and ending consonants. Phonics can be introduced at the start of instruction, or later, *after* the child is reading by other means. It can involve *guessing* the identity of unknown words based on pictures and context, or it can insist on the primacy of *decoding*.

There are **four types of phonics**. The type of phonics a teacher uses has a large and lasting effect on student motivation and student learning. The first three (see below) are **top-down** methods, meaning they begin with conscious memorization of Type 1 sight words. Then, when enough sight words have been mastered, they are used to gradually discover the grapheme-phoneme correspondences they reveal. Only the last one is a **bottom-up** method, meaning it begins not with sight words, but with grapheme-phoneme relationships, and then blends individual phonemes into whole words.

Analytic Phonics. Top-down. The child must first build up a large cache of sight words. These words can then be analyzed, allowing the child to "discover" the letter/sound relationships in the alphabetic code. Here are two examples. Once BOAT, BOY, and BED are sight words, the child can be led to discover that B symbolizes the

sound /b/. Once BOAT, LOAF, and SOAP are memorized, the child can be led to discover that OA symbolizes /O/ (long O). To systematically cover the entire alphabetic code in this manner takes 5 - 6 years, due to the required sight word memorization and to the "discovery" mode of teaching. (See for instance, the popular Balanced Literacy book, *Words Their Way*, by Donald Bear.)

Analogy Phonics. Top-down. This also requires a large cache of sight words to get started. My favorite example of this type of phonics, because it seems so implausible, is taken from a book by Balanced Literacy author Jennifer Serravallo. In the *Reading Strategies Book* (p 82), she suggests this strategy: Suppose a child has GREEN and SLOW memorized as sight words. Suppose, too, that the child knows (via analytic phonics) that N symbolizes the sound /n/.

Now the child is faced with reading the unknown (for her) word GROWN. So, she "word-solves" by analogy. She takes the GR sound from her sight word GREEN, the OW sound from her sight word SLOW, plus the sound of N, and blends these 3 sounds together: /gr/+ow/+n/ = GROWN. Having thus pieced together a pronunciation, she checks if the word makes sense in the context of the sentence. [Note: Whether such a strategy is realistic for beginners - and whether analogy phonics could, even in a dozen years, systematically cover the alphabetic code - the reader can judge.]

Onset-Rime Phonics. Top-down. This is really a subset of analogy phonics. Here's how it works. Suppose TEACH is a sight word for Johnny. EACH is called the rime, T the onset. Now Johnny runs into the unknown (for him) word BEACH. To identify it, he needs to recall TEACH, not by sound (he doesn't know that yet), but by the fact that *visually*, both TEACH and BEACH have the same 4 letters (E, A, C, and H) in the same configuration. Now he simply(?) subtracts the T sound from TEACH, and in its place, substitutes a B sound (buh?) and he's got it: BEACH. The hope is that he'll "read" PEACH, BREACH, LEACH, BLEACH, PREACH, and REACH in the same manner.

Okay, so that's the EACH rime family. But what about the ACK, OOP, and UNK families? You might find yourself wondering at this point, just how many rime families are out there? Most teachers who use onset-rime don't realize there are over 300 rime families in English. (See Appendix Y if you don't believe it.) One sight word, acting as the pronunciation key, must be memorized *for each rime family*. It gets worse. This covers only single-syllable words. Many more rimes exist only in multi-syllable words (e.g. ULT in ADULT, RESULT, and CONSULT; ECT in DEFECT, RESPECT, and SELECT). Rote-memorization of rimes and onsets, including the sounds of all the beginning blends (BL, SP, TR, and so on), quickly tops **400** items.

Synthetic Phonics. This is the type of phonics used in this book's 17-stage program for teaching a child to read and spell. It's *defining characteristics* are these:

- 1) It's a bottom-up approach to reading and spelling. "Bottom-up" because instruction starts, not with whole words (sight words), but with the most basic sound unit there is: the **phoneme**. The word SHOP, for instance, has 3 sounds or phonemes: /sh/, /o/, and /p/ (represented by the letters SH, O, and P respectively). To use Synthetic Phonics is to teach **phonemic awareness**, with letters, throughout the entire program. This is the type of phonemic awareness training that the US National Reading Panel calls "most effective."
- 2) From the beginning of instruction (kindergarten in the US), the major grapheme-phoneme correspondences (**GPCs**) of the alphabetic code are taught in an *explicit* and *systematic* manner, using a clearly defined sequence, with each new topic building on what has already been learned.
- 3) As soon as "some" GPCs are mastered (say 4 to 8), children can start reading words, that is, they **blend** (sound-out, synthesize) phonemes, left to right, all through a written word in order to pronounce it.
- 4) Children are taught to listen carefully, and to **segment** a spoken word into its constituent phonemes in order to spell it. Initially, best practice is to do this only with words the children have just sounded-out by decoding, thereby making the segmenting and spelling task easier for them.
- 5) Children are explicitly shown how blending and segmenting are reversible processes.
- 6) Memorization of Type 1 sight words is kept to a bare minimum.
- 7) Word-guessing – based on pictures, context, or a word's first letter – is never encouraged.
- 8) Children practice and hone their skills on **decodable text**. Text is decodable for a child if he has already been taught the letter-sound relationships necessary for him to fully **decode** the text without guessing.

Orthographic Mapping. This is a fancy name for the process by which Type 2 sight words are *automatically and unconsciously* created by beginning readers. Tana (in the hypothetical example just above) is engaged in orthographic mapping – OM for short.

OM is a connection-forming process by which the *visual* form of a word (its exact spelling or orthography) is mapped into the brain's Language Center, where the *meaning* and *sound* of particular words are already stored. Once successfully mapped, a word's spelling becomes bonded to the pronunciation of that word in long-term memory. The word will never again need to be sounded out. It has become a Type 2 sight word.

So, how does this orthographic mapping occur? Linnea Ehri, the researcher who coined the name, says this:

“Beginners remember how to read sight words by forming **complete connections** between graphemes seen in the written form of words and phonemes detected in their pronunciations. This is possible because *they understand how graphemes symbolize phonemes* in the conventional spelling system. In applying this knowledge for forming connections in sight words, spellings become amalgamated or bonded to pronunciations of words already in memory.” Beginners have “the ability to decode words never read before, by **blending** letters into a pronunciation. This knowledge [blending] enables them to form fully connected sight words in memory. Although they are able to decode words, this blending strategy for reading words is supplanted by sight word reading for words that are practiced sufficiently often.”³ (emphasis added)

OM initially occurs at the grapheme-phoneme level, not at the onset-rime level.⁴ It requires only two prerequisites for it to work: knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (**GPCs**), and the phonemic awareness skill of **blending**. If a child has these two skills and encounters an unknown word, CHEAT, for example, that child can decode (sound out) the word into a complete pronunciation. In so doing, she makes the “complete grapheme-phoneme connections” (CH with /ch/, EA with /E/, and T with /t/) to start mapping the word into long-term memory. If she goes through this process just a few times, CHEAT becomes a Type 2 sight word for her. She'll never have to decode it again.

Such a word *easily* becomes a sight word because the brain craves logic and because “making connections” is how the brain works. Using **Synthetic Phonics**, these connections are made explicit from the start of instruction in the process of **segmenting** a written word's graphemes, assigning a phoneme to each one, and then **blending** those phonemes into a full pronunciation.

Note: Reversing the process, and **segmenting** a spoken word's phonemes is also useful here because it reinforces the “complete connections” between graphemes and phonemes necessary for orthographic mapping, but it does so from the *opposite direction*: spelling rather than reading (encoding rather than decoding).

Word Identification versus **Word Recognition**. Word Identification refers primarily to the meticulous process of sounding out (decoding) a word, thereby making explicit Ehri’s “full connections” between graphemes seen in the spelling and phonemes heard in the pronunciation. Word Recognition, on the other hand, is what occurs when the word is a Type 1 or Type 2 sight word for the reader. Word Identification, if accomplished through decoding, leads to Word Recognition via Orthographic Mapping. Word Identification, if accomplished through any type of guessing (or by being told the word’s identity), leads nowhere.

Self-Teaching. Researcher David Share’s *Self-Teaching Hypothesis* reinforces Ehri’s orthographic mapping of Type 2 sight words. A skilled educated reader has 60,000 or more sight words stored in long-term memory. Since no one could store even a tenth of that number as Type 1 sight words, unconnected to sound, *independent* learning of Type 2 sight words must take place, constantly and automatically, in the course of everyday reading. According to the *Self-Teaching Hypothesis*:

“Each successful decoding encounter with an unfamiliar word provides an opportunity to acquire the word-specific orthographic (spelling) information that is the foundation of skilled **Word Recognition**. A relatively small number of successful exposures [1-4] appear to be sufficient for acquiring spelling representations, both for adult skilled readers and young children. In this way, **decoding** acts as a self-teaching mechanism or built-in teacher enabling a child to *independently* develop both word-specific and general spelling knowledge. Although it may not be crucial in *skilled* Word Recognition, **decoding** may be the principal means by which the learner attains skilled Word Recognition.”⁵

Share claims there are only two “causal co-requisites” in order for self-teaching to begin developing in a new reader. Notably, these co-requisites are the same two cited by Ehri for orthographic mapping: **knowledge of GPCs** and the specific phonemic awareness skill of **blending**. Share calls these two co-requisites the *sine qua non* of reading acquisition (the indispensable ingredient without which skilled reading is impossible).⁶

“There is strong evidence for a causal role of phoneme synthesis (**blending**) as a twin co-requisite (alongside grapheme-phoneme knowledge) for successful reading acquisition. This conclusion is supported by both laboratory and field studies. Phonics programs which explicitly teach blending produce superior

results compared to ‘analytic’ programs which generally do not include a blending component.”⁷

“There is strong support for Ehri’s view that spellings can only be memorized when linked to phonemes detected in pronunciations. The process of letter-by-letter **decoding and blending** (amalgamating) into an integrated spoken unit, or in short, bottom-up decoding, may be ideally adapted for **orthographic mapping**. Spelling, of course, is another such process which obliges the explicit processing of letter order and letter identity.”⁸

Some Implications

The essence of teaching children to read is this: teach them some **GPCs** (starting with the easiest grapheme-phoneme relationships first) and the specific phonemic awareness skill of **blending** phonemes into a complete pronunciation. Do this *at the start* of reading instruction. Reverse the process and ask children to spell (**segment**) the words they just recently created by blending. Give them lots of practice with **decodable text**. Then be confident Ehri’s *Orthographic Mapping* and Share’s *Self Teaching* will start to develop.

The preceding paragraph, of course, is also the essence of **Synthetic Phonics**. No student requires a different method in order to learn to read (although some students will require more time than others). What about dyslexic students? Don’t they at least need something different? Here I’ll let Sally Shaywitz, internationally known expert on dyslexia, answer the question. Speaking about matching graphemes with phonemes and then blending those phonemes into a word, she states:

“Letters linked to phonemes are no longer meaningless marks on paper, but, like Cinderella, have been transformed into something truly spectacular: language. Printed words are now accepted by the neural circuitry already in place for processing spoken language. Decoded words are processed automatically by the [brain’s] language system... A young child must understand that spoken words are made up of smaller units of speech sounds, phonemes. And, of course, it is these very same phonemes to which the letters of the alphabet must attach if the written word is to be brought into the language system. **All readers – dyslexic readers included – must take the same steps**. The difference is simply in the effort involved and in the time it takes to master the alphabetic principle.”⁹
[emphasis added]

But what about “comprehension” and “reading for meaning”? Addressing these concerns is the topic of the following chapter.

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1. Sally Shaywitz, *Overcoming Dyslexia* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2004), 46-51.
 2. Linnea Ehri, “Grapheme-Phoneme Knowledge is Essential for Learning to Read Words in English,” in *Word Recognition in Beginning Literacy*, ed. Jamie Metsala and Linnea Ehri (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 21-2.
 3. Ehri, “Grapheme-Phoneme Knowledge,” 21.
 4. Linnea Ehri, “Orthographic Mapping in the Acquisition of Sight Word Reading, Spelling Memory, and Vocabulary Learning,” *Scientific Studies of Reading* 18, (2014): 5-21.
 5. David Share, “Phonological Recoding and Self-Teaching: Sine Qua Non of Reading Acquisition,” *Cognition* (June 1995): 155.
 6. Share, “Phonological Recoding,” 156, 173.
 7. Share, “Phonological Recoding,” 194.
 8. David Share, “Phonological Recoding and Orthographic Learning: A Direct Test of the Self-Teaching Hypothesis,” *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 72, (1999): 123.
 9. Shaywitz, *Overcoming Dyslexia*, 51-52.

Chapter 3

The Simple View of Reading

In 1986, Whole Language, a philosophy for teaching reading that rejected any type of systematic phonics, was approaching peak popularity. The two founders of Whole Language, Ken Goodman and Frank Smith, had little patience for **decoding**, that is, for matching a sound with each letter (or letter group) in a word and then **blending** those sounds together, left to right, to **sound out** the word.

Goodman believed that “matching letters with sounds is a flat-earth view of the world, since it rejects modern science about reading and writing and how they develop.”¹ Smith added: “Reliance on phonics – or spelling-to-sound correspondence – is dysfunctional in fluent reading and interferes with learning to read.”² Whole Language, in 1986, was nearly universally accepted by the educational establishment and by reading teachers throughout the English-speaking world.

All the more surprising, therefore, that in that same year, Philip Gough and William Tunmer proposed their *Simple View of Reading*.³ Surprising because their model placed “decoding” front and center, right along with “language comprehension,” as the two independent factors necessary for a child to read. The model succinctly states:

$$\mathbf{R = D \times C}$$

where R stands for “reading comprehension,” D for “decoding,” and C for “language (listening) comprehension.”

To understand this model today, more than 3 decades after it was proposed, it’s important to know how Gough and Tunmer understood their three variables. It’s also important to recognize that the numerical values assigned to the variables D and C are *multiplied*, not added.

Language comprehension (C) involves not only hearing words spoken by another, but also *understanding* what was just spoken. Reading comprehension (R), which comes later developmentally, is exactly what everyone means when they speak about reading something: not only producing the words (mentally or aloud), but also *understanding* what was just read.

For Gough and Tunmer, D stands for two distinct types of “decoding”: the decoding done by a beginner (the “sounding out” defined above and in Chapter 2), *as well as* the decoding done by a skilled reader. Skilled readers don’t sound out words, rather, they simply recognize words immediately, as “sight words.” Most of these are Type 2 sight words, meaning they were created *automatically* and *unconsciously* precisely because the child was taught the grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) of the alphabetic code and then used those correspondences – at least initially – to sound out words.

In other words, for Gough and Tunmer, “skilled” decoding (automatic word recognition) depends directly upon the child going through the process of “primitive” decoding (matching letters with sounds and then blending those sounds to produce a pronunciation). Gough and Tunmer expressed it this way: “Word recognition skill is fundamentally dependent upon knowledge of letter-sound correspondences...We assume that decoding varies directly with knowledge of letter-sound correspondences.”

Since Gough and Tunmer referred to two distinct types of “comprehension” in their model, it will likely avoid some confusion if we take the liberty to rename two of the variables in the Simple View this way:

$$\mathbf{RC = D \times LC}$$

Reading Comprehension is the product of Decoding and Language Comprehension.

The variables D and LC in their model can each be assigned a numerical value that ranges from 0 (no skill) to 1 (perfection). Those numbers are then multiplied to determine RC (reading comprehension). There’s a lot to unpack here.

First, when two numbers in the range 0 to 1 are multiplied rather than added, the result will be a number *smaller* than either of the multipliers (e.g. $1/2 \times 1/4 = 1/8$). I will present some examples below that demonstrate the significance of this fact.

Second, D and LC are independent of each other. For instance, I studied Spanish for two years in high school nearly 50 years ago. Based on that experience, I can decode Spanish text quite well ($D = 1$) but I can’t understand spoken Spanish ($LC = 0$). So, in this case we have $RC = D \times LC = 1 \times 0 = 0$. You can see then, that in using this model, it’s quite possible to decode text, yet fail (completely) to *read* that text. Decoding is a necessary but *insufficient* condition for reading.

Conversely, a child can have perfectly good (age-appropriate) language comprehension skills ($LC = 1$) yet have no decoding skill ($D = 0$). Many four and five-

year-olds are living examples of this. But knowing a language does not make one literate. In this case, $RC = D \times LC = 0 \times 1 = 0$. If $D = 0$, reading ability is 0 no matter how good language comprehension might be. Language Comprehension is *also* a necessary but *insufficient* condition for reading. The necessary AND sufficient condition for reading to take place is that BOTH decoding (D) and language comprehension (LC) both have values greater than 0.

The Ideal

The ideal situation is one where a student attains, *as quickly and efficiently as possible*, a decoding score of 1. In such a case, $RC = D \times LC = 1 \times LC = LC$, or simply: $RC = LC$. In other words, once a child can fully and accurately decode the print on the page into sound, even if that sound only unfolds in her head, her reading comprehension (RC) will be every bit as good (or bad) as her current language comprehension (LC). For her, it will be as though the text on the page were being spoken by someone else.

As D approaches 1, the finite task of “learning to read” evolves into the life-long task of “reading to learn.” From this point on, her reading comprehension (RC) and her language comprehension (LC) will increase in unison ($RC = LC$). Reading about a new subject will improve her language skill, just as conversation about a new subject will improve her reading skill. A lifetime of learning via both reading and conversation lies ahead, as “sounding out words” gives way to “automatic word recognition.”

Less Than Ideal (Dyslexia)

There are many children in school – and countless adults in our communities – whose language comprehension skills (LC) are fully (or nearly) appropriate for their age (so $0.9 < LC < 1$), but whose decoding skills are poor to non-existent (so $0 < D < 0.2$). These individuals might know a couple hundred consciously-memorized Type 1 sight words, but they don’t have the ability to accurately sound out unfamiliar words or to self-teach. Therefore, their labored reading does not create new sight words automatically, as previously discussed. Their ability to engage with text is severely constrained – as are their educational and vocational prospects.

For this large population of poor decoders, the Simple View yields something like this: $RC = D \times LC = 0.20 \times 0.90 = 0.18$. Their reading comprehension (18%) will be poor indeed. Gough and Tunmer called this condition “dyslexia.” Dyslexics can’t read because they can’t decode.

“We take no position on whether there are one or more ultimate causes of dyslexia. But we suggest that there is a common denominator in every case of dyslexia...”

an inability to decode. This is not to say that we claim to have identified the ultimate cause of dyslexia; for this, one would have to push the question one step back and ask why they cannot decode.”

Gough and Tunmer conceded that the ultimate cause of dyslexia might well be genetic and neurological, but they left open the possibility that dyslexia could also result simply because the individual has never been taught, properly, how to decode.

Less Than Ideal (Poor Language Comprehension)

Reading disability can occur the other way as well. A child can have relatively good decoding skills ($D = 0.9$) but poor language comprehension skills ($LC = 0.3$). This might be the case if the child comes from a disadvantaged background, or if the child has a developmental disorder that compromises LC, or if English is a second language. For him: $RC = D \times LC = 0.90 \times 0.30 = 0.27$. Again, we have a child who can barely read.

And, of course, there are readers who are deficient in *both* decoding and language comprehension. Here the Simple View yields the expected result: $RC = D \times LC = 0.20 \times 0.30 = 0.06$, a child who is nearly illiterate and who needs support with both decoding and language comprehension in order to make progress.

The Simple View asserts only that *both* decoding (D) and language comprehension (LC) are essential to reading. Note that this theory is easily falsifiable. To counter the Simple View, one need only show:

1) There are students with good decoding skills *and* good language comprehension skills, but who nonetheless can't read.

OR

2) There are students who can do one but not the other and yet can still read with skill and understanding.

Whole Language instruction can be viewed as an attempt to falsify the Simple View in the second way. If Whole Language founder Ken Goodman had been correct in his assessment of reading as a *psycholinguistic guessing game*, with little-to-no need of letter-sound knowledge and decoding, Whole Language would have succeeded, at least with children having good language comprehension (LC) skills. Instead, Whole Language failed.

In the more than three decades since Gough and Tunmer proposed the Simple View, no one has been able to prove it false. In fact, experiments show⁴ that the Simple View accounts for nearly all the variation in reading comprehension found in the general population.

I suspect the Simple View will never be falsified because it expresses, in a single eloquent equation, something that is fundamentally common sense: that in order to read alphabetic text, one must be able to transform that text into the sound it symbolizes and then understand the result. Such text, after all, is nothing more than sound that was previously encoded onto paper; decoding it, and understanding it, is reading.

Implications for Reading Instruction

Gough and Tunmer were circumspect about the instructional implications of their model of reading. In fact, they stated explicitly that they “do not wish to discuss the place of decoding in reading instruction.” They were, after all, trying to publish their model at the height of the Whole Language craze. Nonetheless, one can get a hint of what they thought from the following:

“If decoding plays a central role in the reading process, then it seems sensible to give it a comparable place in instruction... If we were to learn that decoding plays no role at all in skilled reading, it does not follow that we should ignore decoding in reading instruction. It might well be that direct instruction in Synthetic Phonics is the fastest route to skilled reading.”

Personally, I think the implications of the Simple View for reading instruction are unavoidable. Consider these two scenarios.

Scenario 1: During the critical first two years of reading instruction, the bulk of time is spent on “invented spellings,” “pretend reading,” rote-memorization of sight words, and lots of guessing. (Children guess the meaning of unknown words based on pictures, context, or the word’s first letter.) When enough sight words have been consciously memorized, analytic phonics is used to have the children analyze those sight words and gradually “discover” the letter-sound correspondences of the code.

Under the best of circumstances, this type of teaching can increase a given child’s decoding score (D) from 0 to near 1 *over a period of about 6 years*. (See, for example, *Words Their Way* by Donald Bear.) At the end of this period, RC will equal LC and the children who remain will be fully capable of “reading to learn.” I say “children who remain” because many children will have given up on reading in the first two years due

to all the tedious sight word memorization and guessing. [Note: What I have just briefly sketched out here is characteristic of today's *Balanced Literacy*.]

Scenario 2: The teacher spends the first two critical years directly and systematically teaching the letter-sound correspondences of the alphabetic code to all students. Such instruction goes by the name phonics-first or *Synthetic Phonics*. From Day 1, students are taught not only the code, but also two critically important phonemic awareness skills: **blending** (for reading) and **segmenting** (for spelling).

In a Synthetic Phonics program, students can reach the ideal ($D = 1$, $RC = LC$) and be on their way to a lifetime of learning, in *two years rather than in six*. In addition, less students will give up on reading because Synthetic Phonics logically explains spellings right from the start – and the hated drudgery of consciously learning sight words is bypassed entirely.

To forestall the criticism that Synthetic Phonics spends two years on decoding (D) while ignoring the child's language comprehension skills (LC), I'll add the following. Every day, a Synthetic Phonics class should be split (roughly) in half – the first part devoted to explicit teaching of the code, and the second to the reading of classic children's literature. The reading, however, is done *by the teacher* for the whole class, and it allows plenty of time for discussion about what was just read. In this manner, both D and LC increase daily, for every child, during the two years required to complete Synthetic Phonics.

If you're interested in learning more about the Simple View, another good resource is Appendix 1 in the *Rose Report*, England's national study on the teaching of early reading.

1. Ken Goodman, *What's Whole in Whole Language* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1986), 37.

2. Frank Smith, *Reading Without Nonsense* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997), 57.

3. Philip Gough and William Tunmer, "Decoding, Reading, and Reading Disability," *Remedial and Special Education* (1986): 6-10.

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.905.7606&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

4. William Tunmer and James Chapman, "The Simple View of Reading Redux: Vocabulary Knowledge and the Independent Components Hypothesis," *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 45(5) (2012): 453-466.

Chapter 4

A Brief History of Reading Instruction

For more than a century, reading instruction has been involved in a high-stakes battle between supporters of two opposing methods for teaching a child to read. While this battle is often characterized as “Phonics” versus “Whole Word,” I think it's more accurate to describe the two methodologies as “Bottom-Up” versus “Top-Down.” (Alternatively, “Parts-to-Whole” versus “Whole-to-Parts”).

Top-down methods start instruction with whole words – typically called *sight words*. The child rote-memorizes a cache of such words based on their visual characteristics rather than on the sound value of their individual letters. The reason I don't like calling this battle “Phonics” versus “Whole Word” is there are several types of phonics that are top-down in their orientation. Analogy phonics, analytic phonics, and onset-rime phonics all require that the child memorize a large collection of sight words before such phonics can commence. (See Chapter 2)

The only bottom-up method that exists is a specific type of phonics called *Synthetic Phonics*. Here instruction starts, not with whole words, but with the most basic sounds in English, called *phonemes*. These phonemes are connected to the letters (*graphemes*) that symbolize them in our alphabetic system. Whole words are then built (bottom-up) by **blending** these individual sounds.

The two methods are not compatible. One starts with the final product (a whole word) and then may (or may not) eventually get down to the phoneme-grapheme level; the other starts with phonemes and graphemes and then builds up to a whole word. Top-down methods stress “meaning” from the start; the bottom-up method stresses knowledge of the code as a necessary condition for reading comprehension. (See Chapter 3 on the *Simple View of Reading*.)

It may surprise some readers to find out that the battle between various top-down methods and synthetic phonics has been going on since the mid-nineteenth century. Here then, is a short history of reading instruction from the viewpoint of one (somewhat biased) observer. (Spoiler: synthetic phonics – the bottom-up method – has been losing this battle for a long time.)

The History

(dates are approximate)

1800 – 1900: Most children who learn to read during the 19th century are taught from either Noah Webster’s *Blue-Backed Speller* or from the famous *McGuffey Readers*. Both sold over 100 million copies, placing them in the same league as the Bible. McGuffey was explicit in his directions to teachers: they could use his primer with what he called the “word” method (top-down), the “phonic” method (bottom-up), or a combination of the two methods. Here’s how McGuffey described¹ these methods:

“The Word Method teaches a child to recognize words as wholes. This method pays no attention to elementary sounds and diacritical marks. After a number of words are taught as wholes, the children are told the names of the letters, and learn to spell.”

“By the Phonic Method, the child is first taught the elementary sounds of letters ; he is then taught to combine these elementary sounds into words. The sound is first taught, and then the character which represents it; the spoken word is learned, and then its written and printed form. This method pays no attention to words as wholes until the elementary sounds composing them are learned.”

“The Combined Word and Phonic Method first presents the word as a whole, and after a number of words are learned in this way, the elementary sounds composing them are taught, with the characters which represent them.”

McGuffey then reveals his bias against a strict Word approach:

“While *McGuffey's Readers* are prepared to meet the demands of each of these recognized methods, they are especially adapted to the Phonic Method and to the Combined Word and Phonic Method, which are the two methods most extensively used by successful teachers of primary reading.”

1900 – 1930: A transitional period. The *Beacon Readers*, an improved phonics series, gradually supplants the *McGuffey Readers*. In the *Beacon Readers*, the sound of individual letters (phonics) is taught from the start, as well as memorization of whole words:

“It should be clearly understood that at first there must be two distinct lines of teaching carried on side by side: (1) the drill upon phonetic lists for the purpose of developing phonetic power in the child; (2) the reading of simple lessons

[stories], mainly by the Word method, until the child's power in phonetics is far enough advanced to enable him to apply it in his reading."²

In 1908, Edmond Huey publishes his book *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, which quickly becomes the manifesto of a growing Whole Word (anti-phonics) movement. Here's an excerpt:

"Even if the child substitutes words of his own for some that are on the page, provided that those express the meaning, it is an encouraging sign that the reading has been real... The shock that such a statement will give to many a practical teacher of reading is but an accurate measure of the hold that a false ideal has taken of us, viz., that to read is to say just what is upon the page, instead of to think, **each in his own way**, the meaning that the page suggests...It may even be necessary, if the reader is to really tell what the page suggests, to tell it in words that are somewhat variant; for reading is always in the nature of translation and, **to be truthful, it must be free.**"³ (emphasis added)

In 1927, a nationally known educator, Dr. Arthur Gates, from Teachers College at Columbia University, joins the Whole Word movement. Writing in *The Journal of Educational Psychology*, he modestly sums up his position this way:

"That it will be the part of wisdom to curtail phonetic instruction in the first grade very greatly is strongly implied; indeed, it is not improbable *that it should be eliminated entirely.*"⁴

By 1930, phonics – meaning explicit teaching of the code – has been abandoned in most of the nation's classrooms.

1930 – 1965: Whole Word becomes the dominant top-down method for teaching reading in the United States. Words viewed as a single unit (or picture) are drilled individually and rote-memorized based on their visual characteristics. Holding up a large flash card with the target word printed on it, the teacher says the word: "horse." The children look at the word printed on the card (which includes a picture if possible) and then they repeat the word each time the teacher says it. The goal is to have the children memorize the word as having a particular shape or contour, rather than to decode the word based on individual letter sounds.

Logically enough, this Whole Word method becomes known as *Look/Say*. Once children learn 30-50 sight words in this manner, they are given repetitive readers consisting largely of these exact words. An unknown word in these readers is accompanied by a picture to allow its identification. The most famous basal reader of

this period is the beautifully illustrated *Dick and Jane* series (*Janet and John* in the UK, *John and Betty* in Australia). See Appendix W for a sampling from a “story” in this series, whose main purpose is to drill 7 sight words.

1955: The Rudolf Flesch book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, becomes a runaway best seller in the US. It's a passionate (and polemic) plea for the elimination of Whole Word memorization and guessing, and for a return to phonics. Flesch sums up his book this way:

“Memorizing or guessing the meaning of whole words is not reading; on the contrary, it is an acquired bad habit that stands in the way of your child's ever learning to read properly... My advice is, teach your child yourself how to read.”⁵

Unfortunately, the phonics program offered by Flesch, taking up the final third of his book, is inadequate. There are only two pages of instructions, followed by page after page of nothing but word lists. The publication of this book ignites the *Reading Wars*, a battle over how to teach beginning reading which, to this day, remains unresolved.

1955: In a self-defensive response to the Flesch book, the education establishment and textbook publishers create the International Reading Association (later rebranded as the International Literacy Association). William S. Gray of the University of Chicago is named the first president. It was Gray who developed the popular Look/Say reading series, *Dick and Jane*, so heavily criticized by Flesch in *Why Johnny Can't Read*. [Future IRA presidents will include such noteworthy names as Kenneth Goodman (1981), co-founder of Whole Language (see below), and Marie S. Clay (1992), founder of Reading Recovery.]

1967: Jeanne Chall's book, *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* is published. In it, Chall, a leading member of the education establishment from Harvard, surveys the scientific studies done on reading from 1912 through 1965. She concludes that "code emphasis," her term for synthetic phonics, produces better results than the Look/Say method in the teaching of beginning reading. She calls for “a correction in beginning reading instructional methods” and then, speaking of phonics, adds:

“The results are better, not only in terms of the mechanical aspect of literacy alone, but also in terms of the ultimate goals of reading instruction – comprehension and possibly even speed of reading. The long-existing fear that an initial code emphasis produces readers who do not read for meaning, or with enjoyment, is unfounded. On the contrary, the evidence indicates that better results in terms of reading for meaning are achieved with the programs that emphasize code right at the start...”⁶

1965 – 1975: Another period of transition. Because of the Flesch and Chall books, and mounting pressure from parents, some schools return to phonics. Most schools, however, stick with the Look/Say method, but they now include teaching a part of the code using “analytic phonics.” This is a top-down form of phonics that can be employed after the child has memorized enough sight words to make it work. So, for example, once the child visually memorizes (as Type 1 sight words) BAT, BOY, and BOAT, the teacher can call attention to these words, and with some prompting, the child will “discover” that all 3 words start with the same sound (“buh”) and the same letter (B). Therefore, B must symbolize the sound “buh.” Once the child knows a sound for all the consonants, her guessing can become more accurate. She can use the unknown word’s first letter to “get her mouth ready” to say the word.

1973: Various researchers propose a *Dual Route* model for turning print into speech. Here is an early expression of the theory by researchers Ken Forster and Susan Chambers:

“The pronunciation of a visually presented word involves assigning to a sequence of letters some kind of acoustic or articulatory coding. There are presumably two alternative ways in which this coding can be assigned. First, the pronunciation could be computed by application of a set of grapheme–phoneme rules, or letter–sound correspondence rules. This coding can be carried out independently of any consideration of the meaning or familiarity of the letter sequence, as in the pronunciation of previously unencountered sequences, such as fitch, mantiness and streep. Alternatively, the pronunciation may be determined by searching long-term memory for stored information about how to pronounce familiar letter sequences, obtaining the necessary information by a direct dictionary look-up, instead of rule application. Obviously, this procedure would work only for familiar words.”

[Note: In the 80s, 90s, and 00s, this theory will be further refined by reading researchers Max Coltheart, Mark Seidenberg, and James McClelland, leading (by 2005) to general acceptance of Coltheart’s *Dual-Route Cascaded* (DRC) model of word recognition.^{7]}

1981: Rudolf Flesch publishes *Why Johnny Still Can’t Read*, again condemning the Whole Word method, as well as the analytic phonics that it now includes. Looking back over the 26 years since he published his first book, he criticizes analytic phonics as being “a minimum of phonics, served up in a look-and-say sauce of context clues and guesswork.”⁸

1981: Theodor Geisel (also known as Dr. Seuss), in an interview for *Arizona Magazine*, discusses how he was limited by his publisher to using 220 specific words from the

Dolch List of sight words when he created *The Cat in the Hat*. Here is what he says about phonics and about having children memorize sight words:

“That was due to the Dewey revolt in the Twenties in which they threw out phonics and went to word recognition, as if you’re reading Chinese pictographs instead of blending sounds of different letters. I think killing phonics was one of the greatest causes of illiteracy in the country.”

1983: Jeanne Chall updates her book as well, examining the scientific research done on reading from 1966 through 1981. She again concludes that Synthetic Phonics, not Whole Word, leads not only to better word recognition but also to better comprehension. She adds that the scientific support for synthetic phonics “seems to be even stronger than it was in 1967.”⁹ Regarding the use of analytic phonics, a practice that has become popular since her first book, Chall states:

“It would seem that many of the characteristics of direct phonics, such as teaching letter sounds directly, separating the letter sounds from the words, giving practice in blending the sounds, and so forth, are more effective than the less direct procedures used in current analytic phonics programs.”¹⁰

1975 – 2000: Under growing pressure from parents, and the weight of the scientific evidence in Jeanne Chall’s books, Look/Say is fully abandoned in the 70s. However, what takes its place is not the Synthetic Phonics championed by both Flesch and Chall. Instead, the Whole Word (top-down) method is *reaffirmed* as a new model for teaching reading appears. It’s called *Whole Language*.

Developed by Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith in the 1970s, Whole Language differs from Look/Say in some fundamental ways. First, it rejects the boring, artificial, and repetitive readers of the Look/Say era, claiming to replace those readers with real children’s stories. (Those stories, however, are read to the children. What the children read initially are repetitive “little books” whose main function is to drill sight words.) Second, phonics, understood as explicit, systematic teaching of the full code, is outright rejected. According to Goodman, “matching letters with sounds is a flat-earth view of the world, since it rejects modern science about reading and writing and how they develop.”¹¹ Frank Smith is just as adamant: “Reliance on phonics – or spelling-to-sound correspondence – is dysfunctional in fluent reading and interferes with learning to read.”¹²

Third, writing is emphasized at the earliest stages of learning to read, even if it requires, as it must, “invented spelling.” Fourth, learning to read is to be as easy and natural as learning to speak. Children will discover the necessary letter/sound

relationships as they read books and express themselves in writing, using their invented spellings. Finally, an unfamiliar word is to be identified, not by sounding it out, but by “asking somebody what the word is” – or by guessing what the word might be using context or “similarity to words that are already known.”¹³

Despite its differences with Look/Say, Whole Language is another top-down approach for teaching reading. In the first couple years of instruction, reading consists largely of memorizing sight words and guessing – with some incidental phonics taught on an as-needed basis. Ken Goodman is famous for his characterization of reading as “a psycholinguistic guessing game.”¹⁴ For Frank Smith, guessing – in the sense of making predictions and thus eliminating unlikely alternatives – “is the most efficient manner in which to read and learn to read.”¹⁵ Whole Language spreads throughout the US at an unprecedented pace, even though there is no research whatever for its effectiveness.

1983: Reading researchers David Share and Anthony Jorm propose their *Self-Teaching Hypothesis* (further elaborated in 1995 by Share). Recognizing that skilled, educated readers have a sight word vocabulary of 60,000 or more words, and that such a feat would be impossible via rote-memorization or contextual guessing, Jorm and Share propose that only the *independent* decoding of unknown words could explain the ability of skilled readers. Such decoding depends on *only two factors*: knowledge of grapheme-phoneme relationships (GPCs) and the ability to blend an unknown word’s individual phonemes into a recognizable pronunciation. Share calls these twin co-requisites the *sine qua non* of reading acquisition.¹⁶ This places Share and Jorm in direct opposition to Whole Language methodology.

1986: Reading researchers Philip Gough and William Tunmer propose their *Simple View of Reading* (see Chapter 3.) Under the Simple View, reading comprehension (RC) is the product of two independent factors: decoding ability (D) and language comprehension (LC). The model states succinctly: $RC = D \times LC$. Decoding thus takes its rightful place as a necessary (though by itself, insufficient) condition for reading comprehension to occur. This places Gough and Tunmer in direct opposition to Whole Language methodology.

1987: Educational leaders in California, through the state’s English/Language Arts Framework, institute a large-scale statewide adoption of Whole Language as the method for teaching beginning reading in the state’s grade schools. Many states follow California’s lead.

1993: The National Assessment of Educational Progress,¹⁷ a federal study doing a state-by-state comparison of reading proficiency, ranks California fourth-graders fifth from the bottom among the fifty states. Three years later, flabbergasted Californians find they are ranked at the very bottom (just behind Mississippi). An astounding 77% of fourth graders are ranked “below grade level.”¹⁸

1998: Reading researcher Linnea Ehri proposes four phases of sight word learning.¹⁹ Her studies reveal that it is only when beginning readers can form “complete connections” between all the letters (graphemes) seen in a word’s written form and all the sounds (phonemes) heard in its spoken form, that sight word learning becomes unconscious and automatic – a process she calls *orthographic mapping*. This re-emphasizes the importance of knowing grapheme/phoneme correspondences and being able to blend (decode) unknown words by sounding them out. Share’s *Self-Teaching Hypothesis* and Ehri’s *Orthographic Mapping* complement each other. Both theories are in direct opposition to Whole Language.

1997 – 2000: The US Congress convenes a National Reading Panel with the mandate to examine all reputable scientific research available on how to teach children to read, and then to determine the most effective method. The Panel’s members examine several hundred studies conducted in the previous 3 decades. After three years of effort, in 2000, the Panel completes its 480-page report, delivering a strong rebuke to Whole Language proponents. It concludes that “systematic” phonics, not Whole Language, is the best method for teaching beginning readers – and that such phonics must be taught explicitly, rather than on a “discovery” or “as-needed” basis. It also concludes that the best time to teach phonics is in kindergarten or first grade (the traditional start of formal reading instruction), *before* a child starts to read by other means.

Because this report is such a thorough rejection of 25 years of Whole Language methodology, I think it best to allow the Panel members to speak for themselves. The numbers after the quote use the pagination found in the Final Report, available online.²⁰

“Systematic phonics instruction makes a bigger contribution to children’s growth in reading than alternative programs providing unsystematic or no phonics instruction.” (2-92)

“The hallmark of systematic phonics programs is that they delineate a planned, sequential set of phonic elements [letter-sound correspondences] and that they teach these elements explicitly... A key feature that distinguishes systematic phonics instruction from nonsystematic phonics is in the identification of a full array of letter-sound correspondences to be taught. The array includes not only the major correspondences between consonant letters and sounds but also short

and long-vowel letters and sounds, and vowel and consonant digraphs (e.g., oi, ea, ou, sh, ch, th)... Learning vowel and digraph spelling patterns is harder for children; therefore, special attention is devoted to learning these relations." (2-99)

The Panel states clearly that systematic phonics instruction is not to commence after children are reading by other means, but rather, at the very start of instruction:

"Phonics instruction, taught early, proved much more effective than phonics instruction introduced after first grade... Phonics instruction produces the biggest impact on growth in reading when it begins in kindergarten or 1st grade, *before* children have learned to read independently." (2-93)

Stating that it is "not sufficient" simply to teach the code, the Panel offers three specific ways to apply code knowledge to reading and writing:

"Programs provide practice in various ways. Phonics programs may teach children **decoding strategies** that involve sounding out and blending individual letters and digraphs... Programs may provide children with text whose words can be decoded using the letter-sound relations ***already taught***. Programs may have children write their own text using the letter-sounds relations ***already taught*** and then have children read their own and others' stories." (2-99) [emphasis added]

Stressing the importance of phonemic awareness (PA), the Panel strongly endorses two types of PA exercises: blending and segmenting. Both are to be done "with letters." The Panel does not endorse any type of "advanced" oral-only PA exercises such as phoneme deletion or phoneme substitution.

"PA training is more effective when it is taught by having children manipulate letters than when manipulation is limited to speech." (2-26)

"Teaching children to manipulate phonemes using letters produced bigger effects than teaching without letters. Blending and segmenting instruction showed a much larger effect size on reading than multiple-skill instruction did." (2-29)

"According to NRP findings, children who received training that focused on one or two PA skills exhibited stronger PA and stronger transfer to reading than children who were taught three or more PA skills." (2-30)

"In the rush to teach phonemic awareness, it is important not to overlook the need to teach letters as well. The NRP analysis showed that PA instruction was *more*

effective when it was taught with letters. Using letters to manipulate phonemes helps children make the transfer to reading and writing." (2-33)

"It is important to note that when PA is taught with letters, *it qualifies as phonics instruction*. When PA training involves teaching students to pronounce the sounds associated with letters and to blend the sounds to form words, *it qualifies as synthetic phonics*. When PA training involves teaching students to segment words into phonemes and to select letters for those phonemes, it is the equivalent of teaching students to spell words phonemically, *which is another form of phonics instruction*. These methods of teaching phonics existed long before they became identified as forms of phonemic awareness training. Although teaching children to manipulate sounds in spoken words may be new, phonemic awareness training that involves segmenting and blending with letters is not. Only the label is new." (2-34)

Contrasted with the above approval of systematic phonics, blending (with letters), and segmenting (with letters), the Panel presents a strong critique of Whole Language:

"Beginning reading programs that do not teach phonics explicitly and systematically may be of several types. In Whole Language programs, the emphasis is upon meaning-based reading and writing activities. Phonics instruction is integrated into these activities but taught incidentally as teachers decide it is needed." (2-90)

"Whole Language teachers typically provide some instruction in phonics, usually as part of invented spelling activities or through the use of grapheme-to-phoneme prompts during reading. However, their approach is to teach it unsystematically and incidentally in context as the need arises... Whole language teachers believe that phonics instruction should be integrated into meaningful reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities and taught incidentally when they perceive it is needed. As children attempt to use written Language for communication, they will discover naturally what they need to know about letter-sound relationships and how letters function in reading and writing." (2-102)

According to its advocates, one of the main advantages for using Whole Language to teach beginning readers is that it results in better comprehension than does a phonics approach. The Panel addresses this fallacy directly. Not only does the evidence show that explicit, systematic, and early phonics results in enhanced reading skill, but also in *enhanced comprehension*:

"The conclusion drawn is that growth in word-reading skills is strongly enhanced by systematic phonics instruction when compared to non-phonics instruction for kindergartners and 1st graders as well as for older struggling readers. Growth in

reading comprehension is also boosted by systematic phonics instruction for younger students and reading disabled students. These findings should dispel any belief that teaching phonics systematically to young children interferes with their ability to read and comprehend text. Quite the opposite is the case.” (2-94)

Unfortunately, the Panel’s 14 experts themselves are divided on many matters of importance in reading instruction. One Panel member goes so far as to publish her own *Minority Review*,²¹ calling the work of her fellow Panel members “unbalanced and, to some extent, irrelevant.” The disagreements result in a final report with a soothing call for “systematic” phonics (a planned, sequential set of letter-sound correspondences taught explicitly) and with an explicit approval of all types of phonics: the bottom-up method that is synthetic phonics, or top-down methods like analytic phonics, analogy phonics, and onset-rime phonics. (2-99) This makes it easy (and utterly predictable) for what happens next: *supporters of Whole Language agree to embrace some ineffective top-down phonics, and they change the name of their method to Balanced Literacy.*

2000 – present: Many members of the education establishment (the ILA, the NCTE, professors in teaching colleges, many school administrators) do not react favorably to the National Reading Panel’s final report. However, the Panel’s multiple recommendations in support of systematic phonics can’t simply be ignored – many parents and legislators are clamoring for a “return to phonics.” What happens is that the name, *Whole Language*, vanishes from the education scene and from education journals. What takes its place is called *Balanced Literacy*. In the UK, the functional equivalent of *Balanced Literacy* is called *Searchlights*.

Balanced Literacy (BL) is nowhere precisely defined, but here are some of its main characteristics and beliefs:

1. Literacy becomes “balanced” when the failed Whole Language method of the 80s and 90s is altered to include some type of phonics. This provides, supposedly, the best of both worlds.
2. Like all top-down methods, BL starts off with memorized whole words (sight words) rather than with phonemes and letters. Any program that uses analytic phonics, analogy phonics, or onset-rime phonics must, by its very nature, be top-down.
3. Proponents of BL expect that children will, over time, *discover* the letter/sound correspondences of the alphabetic code through participation in fun activities like “word sorts.” This enables children to “construct their own knowledge.” (Note: Sorts can only be used when the child has memorized a sizeable number of sight words because such words form the basis of the sorting.)²²

4. Proponents of BL expect and encourage children to guess the identity of unknown words based on pictures, context, or the word's first letter.²³
5. Advocates of BL still believe in "three cueing" in order to identify an unknown word. The three cues are meaning, syntax, and letter-sound correspondences, in that order.²⁴
6. In the early stages of instruction, advocates of BL use "predictable" (repetitive) text, rather than decodable text, thereby giving everyone involved the *illusion* the child is reading. The reality is that the child is merely reciting memorized Type 1 sight words, and guessing. Fourth Grade Slump is the predictable result.
7. BL teachers encourage children to write, using words they have not yet been given the skills to spell. This ensures "invented" spelling and letter-name spelling. These repeated spelling errors prove difficult for children to correct later on.
8. BL programs make use of "leveled" books, thus assuring that children at the lower levels are stigmatized and embarrassed by their supposed lack of skill. It also assures that a great deal of money passes from tax payers, through their schools, to large book publishing companies.

Note: All top-down programs, including Balanced Literacy, are critiqued in Chapter 5.

2005: The Clackmannanshire (Scotland) Report.²⁵ The results of a seven-year study on the effectiveness of bottom-up synthetic phonics in teaching reading and spelling are published by researchers Rhona Johnston and Joyce Watson. Three training programs had been conducted with 300 children for 16 weeks, beginning soon after entry to the first year of formal schooling. For 20 minutes per day, children were taught either: (a) by a synthetic phonics program, or (b) by an analytic phonics program, or (c) by an analytic phonics plus phonological-awareness training program. At the end of the 16-week program, the group taught by synthetic phonics were:

- (a) reading words seven months ahead of the other two groups
- (b) reading seven months ahead for their chronological age
- (c) spelling eight to nine months ahead of the other groups
- (d) spelling seven months ahead for their chronological age

The synthetic-phonics-taught group also read irregular words better than the other groups and was the only group that could read unfamiliar words by analogy. These 300 children were then followed for 7 additional years to see if these gains persisted. They not only persisted, they accelerated. By the end of the children's seventh year of primary schooling, the gains made in reading achievement by the children who had been taught synthetic phonics during their first year had increased six-fold, increasing from seven months to three years and six months ahead of chronological age. The gain in spelling

was 4.5-fold, improving from seven months to one year and nine months ahead of chronological age.

2005: Australia publishes its own national inquiry into the teaching of reading, available online.²⁶ The study closely follows the lead of the US National Reading Panel in that it rejects Whole Language, and in its place, recommends *systematic* phonics. Like the NRP, it also recommends an “integrated” approach to reading instruction that includes the Big Five: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Unlike the NRP however, the Australian study lays blame for the Whole Language disaster, pointing its finger directly at a philosophy of knowledge called *Constructivism*:

“Essentially, the whole-language approach to teaching and learning reflects a constructivist philosophy of learning in which children are viewed as inherently active, self-regulating learners who construct knowledge for themselves, with little or no explicit decoding instruction.” (p28)

“Constructivism is a mixture of Piagetian stage theory with postmodernist ideology that is devoid of evidence-based justification for its adoption as an effective method of teaching... Too many faculties and schools of education in Australian higher education institutions currently providing pre-service teacher education base their programs on constructivist views of teaching.” (pp29-30)

“At the same time as constructivist approaches have been promoted, direct teaching methods have been overtly or covertly criticized and dismissed as inappropriate, with the suggestion that they simply don’t work and are dull and boring for learners. The message that most teachers appear to have absorbed is that all direct teaching is old-fashioned and should be abandoned in favor of student-centered enquiry and activity-based learning.” (p37)

My favorite quote from the Report, however, is this: “In sum, the incontrovertible finding from the extensive body of local and international evidence-based literacy research is that for children during the early years of schooling to be able to link their knowledge of spoken language to their knowledge of written language, they must first master the alphabetic code – the system of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that link written words to their pronunciations. Because these are both foundational and essential skills for the development of competence in reading, writing and spelling, they must be taught explicitly, systematically, early and well.” (p37)

2006: Yet another national inquiry, the *Rose Report*, is published in England.²⁷ Unlike the national reports published in the US and Australia, the *Rose Report* singles out and

fully embraces *synthetic* phonics rather than the more inclusive umbrella term, *systematic* phonics:

“Synthetic phonics is the form of systematic phonics that offers the vast majority of beginners the best route to becoming skilled readers. Among other strengths, this is because it teaches children directly what they need to know, i.e. the four principles set out below, whereas other approaches, such as 'analytic' phonics, expect children to deduce them.” (section 47)

The *Rose Report* is quite specific about what these four principles of synthetic phonics are: “Having considered a wide range of evidence, the review has concluded that the case for systematic phonic work is overwhelming and much strengthened by a synthetic approach, the key features of which are to teach beginner readers:

- **grapheme/phoneme** (letter/sound) **correspondences** (the alphabetic principle) in a clearly defined, incremental sequence
- to apply the highly important skill of **blending** (synthesizing) phonemes in order, all through a word to read it
- to apply the skills of **segmenting** words into their constituent phonemes to spell
- that blending and segmenting are reversible processes.” (section 51)

“The sum of these represent 'high quality phonic work'... High quality phonic work is not a 'strategy' so much as a body of knowledge, skills and understanding that has to be learned. From work considered by this review, the balance of advantage favors teaching it discretely as the *prime approach* to establishing word recognition. This is because successful phonic work for word recognition is a time-limited activity that is eventually overtaken by work that develops comprehension.” (sections 52-53)

The *Rose Report* also devotes an entire section (Appendix 1) to a discussion of the *Simple View of Reading*, a topic inexplicably missing from the national reports of the US and Australia. This report is a game-changer for England. From this point on, reading instruction in England starts to diverge from that of the rest of the English-speaking world. The main reason for this is the *Rose Report* avoids two pitfalls:

1) It opts specifically for the only bottom-up approach to reading instruction that exists: *synthetic* phonics. The reports from the US and Australia, in recommending only *systematic* phonics, left the door wide open for top-down forms of phonics (analytic and analogy phonics) to be grafted onto Whole Language. The result: *Balanced Literacy*.

2) It avoids making the anodyne call for the Big Five (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), focusing attention instead on the *Simple View of Reading*. Those who understand the *Simple View* understand reading comprehension correctly: it's the product of both Decoding and *Language Comprehension*. Recognizing that for most children, Language Comprehension is already age-appropriate, Synthetic Phonics teachers place an early emphasis on Decoding.

2009: Modern brain imaging methods and recent advances in neuroscience are brought into the mainstream with the publication of *Reading in the Brain: The New Science of How We Read* by Stanislas Dehaene.²⁸ While mapping out precisely what happens in the reading brain is still in its early stages, Dehaene's book affirms 3 important points:

First, neuroscience verifies the Dual-Route model for converting print into sound and/or meaning.

"Two information processing pathways coexist and supplement each other when we read. When words are regular, rare, or novel, we preferentially process them using a 'phonological route,' in which we first convert the letter string into a pronunciation, and then attempt to access the meaning of the sound pattern (if any). Conversely, when we are confronted with words that are frequent, or whose pronunciation is exceptional, our reading takes a direct route that first recovers the meaning of the word and then uses the lexical information to recover its pronunciation... Both routes are in constant collaboration and each contributes to the specification of word pronunciation."²⁹

Second, Dehaene's research makes him an unequivocal proponent of using bottom-up, synthetic phonics to teach a child to read. Here's what he says:

"The goal of reading instruction is clear. It must aim to lay down an efficient neuronal hierarchy, so that the child can recognize letters and graphemes and easily turn them into speech sounds. All other aspects of the literate mind depend on this crucial step. There is no point in describing the delights of reading to children if they are not provided with the means to get there... Considerable research converges on the fact that grapheme-to-phoneme conversion radically transforms the child's brain. This process must be taught explicitly. It does not develop spontaneously; it must be acquired. Reading via the direct route, which leads straight from letter strings to their meaning, only works after many years of practice using the phonological decoding route."³⁰

"Only the teaching of letter-to-sound conversion allows children to blossom, because only this method gives them the freedom to read novel words in any domain they choose. It is therefore misguided to pit the intellectual freedom of a

child against rigorous drill. If a child is to learn quickly and well, he must be given well-structured grapheme-to-phoneme instruction. The effort is real, but the payoff in independence is immediate when children discover, often with awe, that they can decode words they never learned in class.”³¹

“Performance is best when children are, from the beginning, directly taught the mapping of letters onto speech sounds. Regardless of their social background, children who do not learn this suffer from reading delays.”³²

“The punch line is quite simple: we know that conversion of letters into sounds is the key stage in reading acquisition. All teaching efforts should be initially focused on a single goal: the grasp of the alphabetic principle whereby each letter or grapheme represents a phoneme... Children need to understand that only the analysis of letters one by one will allow them to discover a word’s identity.”³³

Last, Dehaene is adamant about using *only decodable text* in the early stages:

“At each step, the words and sentences introduced in class must only include graphemes and phonemes *that have already been explicitly taught*. Reading lessons provide little room for improvisation... The words given to beginning readers must be analyzed letter by letter in order to ensure that they do not contain spelling problems that are beyond the child’s current knowledge.” If teachers do not follow this advice, “it can make children think that reading is arbitrary and not worth studying.”³⁴

end history

Some Final Thoughts

With the single exception of England, the landscape for beginning reading instruction worldwide is disheartening: Balanced Literacy, lists of sight words to be memorized, three-cueing, guessing from pictures, guessing from a word’s first letter, guessing what might make sense, invented spellings, reading levels, learning styles, “predictable” books, and, of course, “discovery” learning. Many of the teachers using these techniques know little of reading science for a simple reason: they were not exposed to it during their teacher training.

Reading teachers are far more likely to be familiar with Constructivist authors like Ken Goodman, Frank Smith, Lucy Calkins, Irene Fountas, Su Pinnell, and Jennifer Serravallo than they are to be with serious researchers like Jeanne Chall, David Share,

Philip Gough, Linnea Ehri, Max Coltheart, and Stanislas Dehaene. Few reading teachers are conversant with such essential topics as the *Simple View of Reading*, *Dual-Route Theory*, the *Self-Teaching Hypothesis*, and *Orthographic Mapping*.

Reading researcher Mark Seidenberg, in *Language at the Speed of Sight*, states “there is a profound disconnect between the science of reading and educational practice. Very little of what we’ve learned about reading as scientists has had any impact on what happens in schools because the cultures of science and education are so different.”³⁵ And, of course, **big money** is involved. “Education is a multi-billion-dollar industry involving multiple stakeholders – governments, business, educators, parents, children, taxpayers, unions, interest groups – whose perspectives and interests often conflict.”

In an interview with NPR,³⁶ Seidenberg adds: “The Reading Wars are over, and science lost.” I think, however, this statement may be a bit of hyperbole. Science has not lost in England where, with synthetic phonics and decodable books mandated, reading outcomes continue to improve. Many reformers, myself included, are not ready to concede defeat in this century-old battle between top-down and bottom-up instruction. Given the resources available online, *any* reading teacher or parent wishing to educate him or herself can, with some effort, do so.

According to the US *Nation's Report Card*,³⁷ nearly two out of every three students in grades 4 and 8 do **not** read at a proficient level. Instead, they read at a "basic" level or they're functionally illiterate. Needless avoidable suffering is an affront to everyone. In primary schools around the English-speaking world, this type of suffering is endemic, due in large part to the top-down manner in which so many children are forced to learn the vital skill of reading. The Reading Wars cannot, and should not be over. Reading Science, with more clarity now than it has ever had regarding reading instruction, can't afford to lose this battle; far too much is at stake.

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Chapter 5

Synthetic Phonics versus Balanced Literacy

Words consist of individual sounds, called “phonemes,” which seamlessly blend together when the word is spoken. The word SHEEP, for example, is a blend of three such phonemes: the sound of SH (symbolically /sh/), the sound of EE (symbolically /E/ or “long E”), and the sound of P (symbolically /p/).

So... SHEEP = /sh/ + /E/ + /p/

If you articulate these 3 phonemes, in order, blending them one after the other, you can’t avoid pronouncing the word SHEEP. If, in addition, the word SHEEP is in your spoken vocabulary, you’ve just comprehended, and therefore read, a written (encoded) word. (There are 40 - 44 phonemes in spoken English, depending on where you’re from. For a list featuring US pronunciation, see Appendices P and Q.)

Anyone faced with teaching a child to read must make a fundamental choice. Shall I teach reading as a **top-down** skill, starting with the final product, whole words, and then later have the child *analyze* those memorized words to gradually *discover* the grapheme-phoneme correspondences they reveal? Or shall I teach reading as a **bottom-up** skill, starting, not with memorized whole words, but with simple grapheme-phoneme correspondences, and then have the child *blend* those phonemes to logically *create* whole words?

Advocates of top-down instruction are faced with a dilemma from the very beginning: if the child can’t yet read any words, how can instruction start with whole words? *It’s at this point that the “sight word” becomes a necessity.* It’s a word that must be deliberately rote-memorized by the beginner, based on the word’s visual characteristics rather than on the sound value of its individual letters – something akin to memorizing a phone number or a meaningless password like Sj4h#k.

How are these sight words practiced so they can be remembered? Well, they’re placed on “word walls” where children will see them throughout the day. Children are also given repetitive (“patterned,” “predictable”) books to read. These books are all structured the same way. For example, if the goal is to teach the sight words I, TO, EAT, and LIKE, then each page of the story will have the text “I like to eat X,” where X progressively

changes, as the child turns the pages, from “ice cream,” to “pizza,” to “apples,” to “cake” and so on, for 12-20 pages. By seeing these four words repeatedly on each page, the hope is the child will manage to memorize them.

But how is the child to read what’s being eaten (the ice cream, pizza, apples, and so on)? These are complex words for a beginner, and they appear only a single time in the story. The solution is this: each page has a picture of that exact food. *It’s at this point that “guessing” becomes a method for reading.* Children are actively encouraged to *guess* the meaning of an unmemorized word based on:

- an accompanying picture
- context
- what might “sound right”
- the word’s first letter

Whole Language (1975 – 2000) and Balanced Literacy (2000 – present) have dominated reading instruction in schools, public and private, for nearly half a century. Both are top-down methods that start with sight words, guessing, and “invented” spelling. The main difference between them is that top-down Balanced Literacy includes some top-down phonics.

By “top-down phonics” I mean any type of phonics (e.g. Analytic Phonics, Analogy Phonics, Onset-and-Rime Phonics) that requires the child to master a large number of sight words before the phonics can commence. Analytic Phonics requires something to “analyze.” Analogy Phonics and Onset-Rime Phonics require something from which to “analogize.” That “something,” in all these cases, is sight words. (For a description of these types of phonics, see Chapter 2.)

In contrast to all these top-down strategies, there is one, and only one, bottom-up method: Synthetic Phonics. Because it starts with letters and the sounds those letters symbolize – and then blends those sounds to *create* whole words – there is no need for either sight words or guessing.

Given today’s choice between top-down Balanced Literacy and bottom-up Synthetic Phonics, what should a reading teacher or parent choose? The following will help you decide.

The Four Advantages of Bottom-Up Instruction

Advantage #1: Today, nearly everyone agrees that a child needs Phonemic Awareness (PA) if he or she is ever to become a skilled reader. Illiterate people, both children and adults, usually can't hear individual phonemes in spoken words without specific training. So, what's the easiest, quickest, and most direct way to help a child become aware of the phonemes that make up individual spoken words? It's this: tell the child *directly* what 4 or 5 of them are, and have the child repeat them, in isolation, until she's saying each one accurately. At the same time, show her a letter that symbolizes each one. With these 4 or 5 letter-sound correspondences in place, start showing her how to blend phonemes into whole words.

Example: Teach the 5 phonemes /m/, /n/, /s/, /a/, and /e/ and the letters that represent these sounds: M, N, S, A, and E. [Note: the two vowel sounds are the "short" sounds you can hear at the beginning of the words APPLE and END.] Now show her how to blend these sounds into the words MAN, MAM, MEN, SAM, ANN, NAN, MESS, SASS, MASS, AM, AN, ASS, SEN, SAN, NES, NAS, EM, EN, ES, SEM, MEM, NAM, SESS, NEN, NEM.

Maybe you're thinking: "Hold on Parker, those last 13 aren't even words."

My response:

- True enough. But not too far down the line the child will be faced with reading such words as SENT, SAND, NEST, NASTY, EMber, ENvy, ESSay, SEMi, MEMber, dyNAMic, obSESS, emiNENT, and NEMesis. So, it's hardly a bad thing to have her learn to "read" these 13 word parts now.
- The primary goal here, in the first few weeks of kindergarten, is learning some phonemes, the letters that represent them, and, especially, blending. That *some* of the blends are only parts of words is ok.
- As soon as another 3-4 phonemes are added to the above five, there will be more than enough actual words to deal with.

Once the above is accomplished, in the **first month** of instruction, the child will be reading – not memorizing sight words, not guessing – but genuinely reading. He'll already be starting to glimpse how the whole enterprise works: letters in words stand for sounds and those sounds can be blended to figure out what the word actually says. This is called the *alphabetic principle*.

If the teacher then reverses the above and asks the child to spell a word he has just recently built by blending, the child will likely be able to do so. Spelling is harder than reading. It involves **segmentation**: hearing the word's phonemes, and then attaching the correct letter to each phoneme heard. This task becomes much easier if the child just recently built the word, phoneme by phoneme, by **blending**.

Contrast the above with how Phonemic Awareness *must* be approached using any top-down method. Since top-down methods start with whole words, children must become aware of phonemes by hearing them, not individually, but in spoken words. However, in spoken words, those phonemes are in their *coarticulated* form, that is, they blend and bleed into one another – a fact that makes hearing individual phonemes notoriously difficult for beginners.

Let this sink in for a moment. The bottom-up method, Synthetic Phonics, makes PA as easy as possible by teaching the isolated phonemes directly and then blending the phonemes into whole words. Top-down methods, all of them, make PA as hard as possible by requiring beginners to hear and distinguish phonemes in their coarticulated spoken form.

The result is that PA has become something of an **obsession** in top-down Balanced Literacy. Since so many children are not becoming aware of the phonemes in whole words, elaborate phonemic exercises have been proposed to remedy the situation. These remedies range from pre-phonics *phonological* exercises such as clapping out syllables, rhyming, alliteration, and onset-rime separation, to “advanced” oral-only exercises involving phonemic deletion, phonemic substitution, and even phonemic reversal.

None of this is necessary for a typically developing child in a bottom-up Synthetic Phonics classroom. Such a child will become aware of phonemes because each phoneme is explicitly taught and practiced. Such a child will become aware of the alphabetic principle because blending all through a word is explicitly taught and practiced. Already back in the late 90s, the US *National Reading Panel* cautioned against what it viewed as the “rush” to teach PA apart from blending with letters. It also debunked the notion that PA was a “new” concept:

“In the rush to teach phonemic awareness, it is important not to overlook the need to teach letters as well. The NRP analysis showed that *PA instruction was more effective when it was taught with letters*. Using letters to manipulate phonemes helps children make the transfer to reading and writing.” (2-33)

“It is important to note that when PA is taught with letters, it qualifies as phonics instruction. When PA training involves teaching students to pronounce the

sounds associated with letters and to **blend** the sounds to form words, it qualifies as *synthetic phonics*. When PA training involves teaching students to segment words into phonemes and to select letters for those phonemes, it is the equivalent of teaching students to spell words phonemically, which is another form of phonics instruction. These methods of teaching phonics existed **long before** they became identified as forms of phonemic awareness training. Although teaching children to manipulate sounds in spoken words may be new, phonemic awareness training that involves blending and segmenting with letters is not. *Only the label is new.* (2-34) (emphasis added)

Advantage #2: For any child, reading comprehension, the ultimate goal of all reading instruction, will proceed faster if that child is taught using bottom-up Synthetic Phonics.

[Note: If you’ve read Chapter 3 on the *Simple View of Reading*, this should not be a controversial statement for you. For the sake of efficiency and space, the arguments I made in Chapter 3 are *not* restated here.]

Top-down proponents like to stress the importance of “reading for meaning” right from the start of instruction. They fear an initial focus on blending individual phonemes will produce students who can transform print into sound, yet not understand the sound they’ve just produced. (“Word-calling” or “barking at print” are the pejoratives some of them use.) The fear is unfounded. Unless the teacher has chosen completely inappropriate texts, the beginning reader will be reading material that he would understand if that material were *spoken* to him.

Here’s what renowned Harvard researcher Jeanne Chall found after her comprehensive study of top-down methods versus “code emphasis,” her term for Synthetic Phonics:

“The results are better, not only in terms of the mechanical aspect of literacy alone, but also in terms of the ultimate goals of reading instruction – comprehension and possibly even speed of reading. The long-existing fear that an initial code emphasis produces readers who do not read for meaning, or with enjoyment, is unfounded. On the contrary, the evidence indicates that better results in terms of reading for meaning are achieved with the programs that emphasize code right at the start...”¹

[Note: You may be thinking: well, if both phonemic awareness AND reading comprehension are better served using a bottom-up approach to instruction, the case has been made. But do keep reading. The next two advantages are even more compelling.]

Advantage #3: *Orthographic Mapping* and *Self-Teaching*, both essential abilities for skilled reading, will start developing for most students within the first few months of competent bottom-up instruction. In top-down instruction, such development takes years – or these abilities never develop at all.

[Note: I’ve already discussed both Ehri’s *Orthographic Mapping* and Share’s *Self Teaching Hypothesis* in Chapter 2. Here I wish only to draw out some additional implications.]

You probably noticed in Chapter 2 that both Ehri and Share agree on what is *absolutely essential* in the teaching of reading. For both researchers, it boils down to these two co-requisites:

- **Knowledge of GPCs** (grapheme-phoneme correspondences) and
- **Blending** (the ability to take an unknown word and smoothly combine all its phonemes into a full pronunciation)

The second of these two co-requisites clearly implies the first – and the two of them together constitute decoding (sounding out). **Decoding**, then, is the non-negotiable starting point for skilled reading acquisition – and this is true even though instant recognition of sight words will eventually replace decoding as the reader matures. Here’s Ehri again: “Decoding is supplanted by sight word reading for words that are practiced sufficiently often. The advantage of sight word reading over decoding is that sight word reading operates much faster.” How much faster? “Good readers read sight words as rapidly as they can name single digits, indicating that the words were read as single unified wholes rather than as letters identified sequentially. Unitization is taken to indicate that spellings of sight words are fully bonded to their pronunciations in memory.”²

[Note: There are teachers who try to skip teaching analysis of words on the grapheme-phoneme level and, instead, start with larger units such as onset-rime. Not possible says Ehri: “It is not until beginners are capable of establishing *fully connected* sight words in memory (i.e. at the grapheme-phoneme level) that they can read new words by analogy to known sight words.”³ A teacher who ignores this and tries onset-rime on students *before* they can fully decode unknown words will find her students “mistake the new words for the known words because of shared letter cues; for example, misreading the new word SAVE for the (sight) word they had learned to read, CAVE.”⁴]

Share calls the above two co-requisites the *sine qua non* of reading acquisition because the ability to decode is precisely what allows a novice reader to start the process of self-teaching. He says this about Ehri:

“There is strong support for Ehri’s view that spellings can only be memorized when linked to phonemes detected in pronunciations. The process of letter-by-letter **decoding and blending** (amalgamating) into an integrated spoken unit, or in short, bottom-up decoding, may be ideally adapted for **orthographic mapping**. Spelling, of course, is another such process which obliges the explicit processing of letter order and letter identity.”⁵ (emphasis added)

The example I used at the start of this chapter (involving the letters S, M, N, A, and E), and, indeed, any bottom-up reading program, begins instruction precisely with the co-requisites cited by both Ehri and Share for orthographic mapping and self-teaching to commence: **knowledge of GPCs and blending**.

By contrast, in top-down reading programs, children spend the bulk of first-year instruction (kindergarten in the US) wasting precious time, chiefly by memorizing Type 1 sight words, guessing their way through “predictable” books, and expressing themselves using invented spellings. Judging by the schedule laid out in the popular Balanced Literacy book, *Words Their Way* by Donald Bear,⁶ children won’t “discover” the needed letter-sound correspondences for all-through-the-word blending until 4-5 years have elapsed. Thus, both orthographic mapping and self-teaching get delayed for those 4-5 years.

Worse, many children in Balanced Literacy classrooms *never* get instruction in all-through-the-word blending. These are the children who will go through life as crippled readers, unable to self-teach, unable to do the “mapping” required for automatic sight words to accrue. Some of these kids will end up in the “school-to-prison pipeline” where fully 85% of juveniles who interact with the court system are functionally illiterate. (Sixty percent of the adults in the US prison system are illiterate.)

[Note: So far, I’ve argued that bottom-up Synthetic Phonics provides an enormous dividend for beginning readers in three crucial areas: phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, and orthographic mapping/self-teaching. There is, however, a fourth reason for adopting a bottom-up approach to reading – and I think it’s the most important reason of all.]

Advantage #4: Bottom-up instruction makes the tasks of learning to read and spell *logical* for children. This is no small matter. From the time children first begin to speak, the question they ask most often is *why*? Children need to be given reasons if they’re to make sense of their world. In her book, *Why Our Children Can’t Read*, Diane McGuinness expresses it this way:

“Children, like adults, have problems paying attention to something they can’t do or don’t understand. They have a limited capacity to hold information in mind, and this capacity shrinks to zero when the information makes ‘no sense’.”⁷ (p169)

A child should agree that the letters M-A-N say “man” not because some authority figure says so, but because a knowledgeable teacher carefully leads the child to understand why this fact is logical, rational, and even inevitable. The only way to do this is to start teaching the full code, with blending, right at the start of reading instruction. Then the word MAN is simply the sum of its blended parts:

$$\text{MAN} = /m/ + /a/ + /n/$$

Taught to read in this manner, most children catch on quickly, and they delight in the way the code works. More importantly, they become convinced that reading is rational, worthwhile, easy, and fun. Their mindset becomes “I can do this” rather than “Oh no. Not more sight words!”

Our brains work most efficiently when they can make logical connections. That’s precisely what’s behind Ehri’s prerequisite (above) for orthographic mapping to succeed: once a child can make “complete connections between the letters seen in the written forms of words and phonemes detected in their pronunciations,” sight word learning becomes automatic.

There’s nothing surprising in any of this. We can fill the first 2 years of reading instruction with difficult-to-memorize (Type 1) sight words, with guessing strategies, and with invented spellings. But if we do so, what will happen, *inevitably*, is that many students, among them some of our brightest and most inquisitive boys and girls, will decide that reading is arbitrary and therefore not worth their effort. Since they can’t “figure it out” they’ll lose interest and give up. Some will, understandably, “act out” their frustration. Then, the top-down system responsible for their failure will categorize them as “reading disabled” or “dyslexic.” This is a scandalous situation.

It’s not too difficult to place yourself in the shoes of millions of struggling, frustrated children. Just do the following short exercise.

An Exercise in Top-Down Learning

Memorize these 7 sight words any way you can. (I used a simple substitution algorithm to take you back to the time when you couldn't read):

- bpm means “the”
- qv means “in”
- jwg means “boy”
- bew means “two”
- zqdmz means “river”
- bpmg means “they”
- aie means “saw”

Once you've memorized these 7 sight words, “read” this 8-word sentence:

Bpmg aie bew jwga nqapqvo qv bpm zqdmz.

Let's suppose you've persevered and been successful:

They saw two boys ~~xxxxxxxx~~ in the river.

Now you must *guess* the meaning of that unknown word, nqapqvo. So ask yourself: what could “make sense” in this context? Swimming? Fighting? Wading? Rafting? Peeing? Drowning? You may be getting a tad frustrated at this point. You may be wondering: who in the world would teach beginners to read via sight word memorization and guessing?

Here's where Balanced Literacy books conveniently provide a picture of 2 boys, standing by a river, holding *fishing* rods. “Look at the picture” your teacher tells you, or “Look at the first letter.”

Now, do you feel as though you've done any genuine reading? Based on this exercise, would you conclude reading is a *logical* skill worth your time and effort? Would you like to keep doing this for a year or more?

Conclusion

Advocates of top-down reading instruction have been highly influential in Teacher Colleges, professional organizations (e.g. ILA, NCTE), and school administrations for nearly a century. This education establishment is supported by a multi-billion-dollar publishing industry and its well-paid, enormously popular, yet seriously misguided authors.

If you're a Balanced Literacy teacher, it seems to me that you can remain so *in good conscience* only if one or the other of the following is true:

1) You claim – and you can make the case – that all four of the above advantages of bottom-up Synthetic Phonics are false. I say “all four” because even if only one remains, it still presents a strong case for Synthetic Phonics.

OR

2) You claim there is an advantage of top-down instruction so compelling that it overrides these 4 advantages of bottom-up instruction. (I would certainly like to know what that might be.)

It won't suffice to say that some children do indeed learn to read via Balanced Literacy. Though the statement is true, it's also true that some children would learn to read no matter how inadequate their reading instruction. Snow and Juel's dictum is relevant here: synthetic phonics is “helpful for all children, harmful for none, and crucial for some.”⁸ (I would change that last word to “most.”)

It's time – way past time – to end the needless suffering caused by nearly a century of top-down instruction. Phonemic awareness, reading comprehension, orthographic mapping, and the ability to make the entire enterprise logical for our children, are all substantially enhanced in a Synthetic Phonics classroom.

In addition – and this is no small matter – reading science seems to concur.

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2. Linnea Ehri, “Grapheme-Phoneme Knowledge is Essential for Learning to Read Words in English” in *Word Recognition in Beginning Literacy* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1998), 22.

3. Ehri, “Grapheme-Phoneme Knowledge,” 22

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4. Ehri, "Grapheme-Phoneme Knowledge," 22.
 5. David Share, "Phonological Recoding and Orthographic Learning: A Direct Test of the Self-Teaching Hypothesis," *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 72, (1999): 123.
 6. D. Bear, M. Invernizzi, S. Templeton, F. Johnston, *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2008), 10-14.
 7. Diane McGuinness, *Why Our Children Can't Read: And What We Can Do About It* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 169.
 8. Snow, C. E., & Juel, C. "Teaching Children to Read: What Do We Know about How to Do It?" In M. J. Snowling & C. Hulme (Eds.), *The science of reading: A Handbook* (2005): 501-520.

Chapter 6

This Book's Program

By this point in the book, you are surely aware that the program following this chapter is a Synthetic Phonics program. It has all the defining characteristics I listed in Chapter 2 when I set Synthetic Phonics apart from other types of phonics instruction. Because Synthetic Phonics is a bottom-up approach to reading instruction, it has all the advantages listed in Chapter 5 as well.

Synthetic Phonics programs can differ from each other, not in the defining characteristics I've listed, but in some other less essential areas. These include: the order in which the instructor teaches the full code, how early the topic of **blending** (and therefore reading) is introduced, how and when spelling comes into play, how to handle irregular words, what notation to use for phonemes, when to introduce letter *names*, and how much daily time to reserve for reading **to** the students. How I handle these "less essential" areas is detailed below, and of course in the 17-stage reading program that follows.

Irregular Words

English has more spelling irregularities than most other alphabetic languages. These irregularities complicate the task of teaching someone to read. I estimate, however, that 90% of the words a student will see and use through high school are perfectly regular, based on the phonics I present in this program. That still leaves quite a few irregular words. I examined various lists featuring the 500 most-used words in the English language (easy to find online) and picked out the words that might still be considered irregular, even after having mastered all the phonics presented in this book. I found 50 such words and listed them in Appendix S. If you look at that list, the Tricky 50, you'll see I also provide a spelling that would make these words regular.

When these 50 tricky words first start showing up, in Stage 8 of this program, you'll simply call them to your students' attention. You'll focus, not on the word's irregularities, but on what is *regular* about them. For example, HAVE, ARE, WERE, and GIVE are perfectly regular if we simply drop the final E. Other tricky words are regular in both their first and last letter (COULD, WANT, FRIEND). You'll sometimes ask your students how a tricky word would be spelled if we lived in a perfectly phonetic world. For instance, SAID would be spelled SED in such a utopia.

The only thing you won't do is have your students memorize these 50 words as Type 1 sight words – unless it's unavoidable. It becomes unavoidable when a word is spelled so wildly, given its sounds, there is no choice but to simply memorize it. I count only five such words on the Tricky 50 list: EYE, ONE, ONCE, EIGHT, and OF (I, WUN, WUNS, ATE, UV). (As promised, this phonics program will keep memorization of Type 1 sight words to a minimum!)

What happens when a young reader comes across the occasional irregular word not included among the Tricky 50? Similarly, what happens when she meets a homograph like WIND – a word which has two correct pronunciations and two different meanings? (WIND can be the noun you experience in a storm or the verb you do to a clock). In such cases, she'll improvise. She'll make an educated guess based, first, on her phonics skills, and then on the context of the word. In short, she'll learn from experience doing actual reading.

An Illusion

I've structured this phonics program in such a way, that for the initial stages, you'll be able to teach reading as though English were a perfectly phonetic language: one with no spelling irregularities or exceptions. You'll be able to act as though each letter in the alphabet represents a single sound, and each sound is symbolized by a single letter. This illusion can be sustained until midway through Stage 6, when Q, X, and "silent" letters first appear.

I've done this because, in the earliest stages, it's important that students become firmly convinced reading is easy and logical – and therefore worth their effort. You won't present them with any "complications" until well after they've concluded "Reading is fun," "Reading makes sense," and "By darn, I can do it!" Only when these critically important convictions are firmly entrenched in their minds will you slowly start to reveal the "anomalies" of English. By then, these anomalies will cause your students little concern or confusion because they'll be confident in their reading ability and because they'll understand the overwhelming logic of the alphabetic code.

Letter Names

Some proponents of Synthetic Phonics, especially in England, believe that teaching students the *name* of a letter should be delayed until after students are introduced to the *sound* the letter symbolizes. The thinking is that students can confuse the names of letters (BEE and EFF, for instance) with their sounds (/b/ and /f/). The main researcher in this area is Diane McGuinness. She calls her version of Synthetic Phonics (the one

which delays letter names) “Linguistic Phonics.”¹ McGuinness is adamant: “Phonemes, not letters, are the basis for the code.”² But it seems to me the “basis of the code” is *both* phonemes *and* graphemes, and, more specifically, their assigned correspondences.

In any case, other reading researchers either take no stance on this issue of early letter-name knowledge or they find that such knowledge is actually *beneficial* for beginners.

“There is still, within the educational world, controversy as to whether or not it is confusing for children to be taught both the names and sounds of letters. Those who believe it is confusing often advocate that letter sounds should be taught first, as these are of more direct use in reading. However, the research literature suggests that knowledge of letter names facilitates the learning of letter sounds”.³

“A growing body of research demonstrates reciprocal relations between letter name and sound knowledge and suggests that instruction in letter names may facilitate letter sound learning for those letters whose names also include their sounds (e.g., the /b/ at the beginning of the letter name B or the /f/ at the end of the letter name F), with children using the information contained in the letter names to derive or cue corresponding sounds (e.g., Evans, Bell, Shaw, Moretti, & Page, 2006; Levin, Shatil-Carmon, & Asif-Rave, 2006; McBride-Chang, 1999; Share, 2004; Treiman, Tincoff, Rodriguez, Mouzaki, & Francis, 1998; Treiman, Weatherston, & Berch, 1994).⁴

“The results from the present study confirm that letter names in English do not just provide verbal labels to refer to letters, but provide crucial clues about the sound(s) each letter contains. These results indicate that students take advantage of letter names in inducing letter-sound information, and letter-name knowledge has a large impact on letter-sound knowledge. The probability of knowing letter sounds, on average, increased drastically from 4% when students did not know letter names to 63% when student knew letter names. Although previous studies have shown strong correlations between letter-name knowledge and letter-sound knowledge, the present study adds to researchers’ understanding of the impact of letter-name knowledge on letter-sound knowledge with predicted probability estimates.”⁵

Mark Seidenberg, in *Language at the Speed of Sight*, devotes an entire section to this issue.⁶ He discusses the importance of letter names in helping children with what he calls the “categorization problem.” Many letters, even though they look similar (for example, b and h, or A and H), are different, while many that look different (A, a, a) are in fact the same. What all those differently-shaped A’s have in common is their name: A. “Similarity is important in forming categories, but *names* provide the glue... A

category name makes it easier to form new categories and to assimilate new exemplars into existing categories, overcoming the limits of similarity.... The alphabet song is important because it teaches children the name of twenty-six categories of object. That proves useful as children gather data about [a given letter's] visual properties and sounds.”

I'm agnostic but practical on this issue. My main concern is that instruction be bottom-up. Since Linguistic Phonics fits this description, I regard its proponents as allies in the effort to reform reading instruction. Whether letter names or letter sounds are taught first (or whether they're taught together), children will be better off learning in this manner than if they were in a Balanced Literacy classroom. That said, for *practical* reasons I prefer teaching letter names first. In the US, many children show up in kindergarten already knowing many (or all) of the letter names, due to singing the alphabet song with mom or dad, looking at alphabet books and apps, or watching *Sesame Street* and other educational television. Since such knowledge can't be unlearned, it should be used.

The Synthetic Phonics program in this book teaches letter names first. Parents and teachers can continue to sing the alphabet song with their children, confident they are helping, not hurting, the child's future reading prospects. Linguistic Phonics teachers can easily adapt this book to fit their specialized needs.

The Time Frame

For a teacher who uses this program *exclusively*, an easily achievable schedule for completing it is *two years*. By “exclusively” I mean the teacher does not spend time on activities such as “pretend reading,” “invented spelling,” Type 1 sight word memorization, “guessing” strategies, or any type of “discovery” phonics. This time frame also assumes that the teacher *directly* teaches phonics for about 30 minutes per day.

For a broad spectrum of typically-developing students, the *Basic Code*, stages 1 through 6, can be covered in kindergarten (or its equivalent outside the US). That's the part of the code that can be presented under the above illusion that English spelling is regular. The bulk of the *Advanced Code*, comprising stages 7 through 16, can be covered in Grade 1, the second year of instruction in the US. Under these circumstances, Stage 17 belongs to Grade 2, the “consolidation” year, as newly independent readers and reasonably competent spellers continue amassing Type 2 sight words as they start their transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” This is also the time to focus on any students who have fallen behind.

No student should be promoted to Grade 3 without an ability to read and spell commensurate with the phonics in this 17-stage program. The concern of Grade 3 (and higher) teachers therefore, should not be basic reading instruction, but rather grammar, creative writing, and the investigation of story structure (plot, character, setting, theme). “Leveled books” are neither necessary, nor recommended, at any point in this program.

Motivation

Critics of synthetic phonics have long complained that it’s boring, that it involves tedious drill work, and that a child will lose interest in it long before he or she ever gets to read a simple story or poem. I suppose this might be true if reading was needlessly delayed, if the instruction was unimaginative and humorless, and if the teacher used the entire class time for nothing but repetitive drill work. That will not be the case here. Powerful motivation in this phonics program derives primarily from three factors:

- 1) Genuine reading starts early. It’s not delayed until the middle or end of the program, rather, it starts right at the beginning, in Stage 1. There, with only 8 (of 44) phonemes mastered, students, with your help, will start blending those sounds into words like MOM, MAN, and SUN. And by “reading” I mean decoding the words, not memorizing them as sight words. Based on my experience teaching young children, I can confirm, that once authentic reading begins, motivation is not an issue. A child becomes proud and enthusiastic – perceiving herself as starting to master the skill all the significant adults in her life can do.
- 2) Students begin to understand the logic that underlies the skill of reading. They start to glimpse what linguists call the Alphabetic Principle: written words are distinguishable from one another, not by their overall shape or even by their individual letters, but by the sounds those individual letters symbolize. They begin to appreciate that print is simply coded sound, and that insight makes them eager to learn more about the code.
- 3) In this program, and *in any synthetic phonics program worth mentioning*, you’ll spend significant time each day not only teaching phonics, but also reading classic children’s literature TO your students. You’ll read to them daily, not so they might acquire Type 1 sight words, but so they’ll become enchanted by the stories you tell. You won’t simply read, you’ll facilitate a discussion: “Why do you think Jack did that?” “What do you think the giant will do next?” My recommendation, fully in line with the *Simple View of Reading*, is to take half the time available for Language Arts and devote it to direct phonics instruction, then use the other half to read to your kids and to lead a discussion about the story. Listening to quality literature provides enormous motivation for phonics students. They’ll want to continue their phonics lessons because they wish, one

day soon, to read such stories on their own. Class discussions about quality literature advances the *language* comprehension of all your students.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness has been a hot topic in the education community ever since the US National Reading Panel highlighted its importance in 2000. Illiterate people, both children and adults, are usually unaware of phonemes. This is because in speech, individual phonemes are **coarticulated**, that is, they seamlessly blend into one another. Neither the speaker nor the listener need be aware of them because the brain's Language Center handles these coarticulated phonemes automatically and unconsciously.

However, for skilled reading or spelling to occur, individual phonemes must be brought into full, conscious awareness. Synthetic Phonics does this early, explicitly, and systematically. It *must* do so because Synthetic Phonics depends upon the reader's ability to match graphemes with the phonemes they symbolize. Such matching can't occur until the reader identifies the phonemes. You'll start bringing phonemes to your students' attention in Stage 1 when you teach them that "A says /a/" (the first phoneme in the word APPLE).

The main point I want to make about phonemic awareness is that Synthetic Phonics *starts* with individual phonemes, and then teaches new readers how to **blend** these phonemes into words. Children can't possibly avoid becoming phonemically aware. You'll be training your students to hear phonemes, and to match them with graphemes, throughout this entire program.

The hardest way to teach phonemic awareness is to start with whole words. In whole words, the phonemes, as mentioned above, are coarticulated, making them notoriously difficult for a beginner to pick out. A word like CHANCE, for instance, which can be spoken or heard in a fraction of a second, has 4 phonemes: /ch/ + /a/ + /n/ + /s/. All Whole Word methods must teach phonemic awareness by introducing phonemes that are already in their coarticulated form. This is precisely backwards – and it makes teaching phonemic awareness (and reading) far more difficult than it needs to be.

Spelling

A competent speller is one who can *hear* all the phonemes in a spoken word (phonemic awareness), and then *match* each of those phonemes with an appropriate grapheme. For a Synthetic Phonics student, hearing those phonemes, that is, segmenting a spoken word, is relatively easy. That's because each word he can read he

has personally built from the bottom up. For him, each word begins as a collection of individual phonemes. He then synthesizes those phonemes (hence the name Synthetic Phonics) into a whole word by **blending**. Naturally, if he first assembles a word in this manner, he'll find it easier, upon hearing the word, to take it apart again, phoneme by phoneme, match those phonemes with appropriate graphemes, and thereby spell it.

Oral spelling, of course, requires knowledge of letter names. But whether the spelling is oral or written, it has a positive effect on orthographic mapping. Recall that orthographic mapping, according to Ehri, occurs as a child makes "complete connections between graphemes seen in the written form of words and phonemes detected in their pronunciations." Blending to assemble a word, followed by segmenting in order to spell it, makes explicit *all possible connections* between the word's phonemes and graphemes – in both directions. Adding segmentation and spelling into a synthetic phonics reading program is the surest way there is to kick-start orthographic mapping of Type 2 sight words.

[Note: Spelling begins in Stage 3 of this reading program. Throughout the program, you'll ask students to spell *only those words they can already read.*]

Letter Recognition

There are 52 upper and lowercase letters in our alphabet. Students need the ability to name and distinguish these symbols, one from the other, in order to read and spell phonetically. The ability to *order* these symbols is important as well because many lists, like dictionaries, are in alphabetical order. Finally, students need to be able to pair up every uppercase letter with its lowercase counterpart. This is especially important for those instances when the two letters don't look alike, for example, G and g, or D and d.

Some students will arrive in kindergarten with all the above recognition skills already in place; others will need substantial instruction. Rather than insist all your students be able to identify, order, and pair-up these 52 letters before starting Stage 1, I think it preferable to focus only on the symbols that are actually used in Stage 1, namely, A, E, I, O, U, S, M, N, and their lowercase counterparts. That's only 16 symbols. And since S and s, O and o, U and u, M and m, and I and i are identical (or nearly so), there are really only 11 *different* symbols that students need to master before beginning Stage 1. And note: armed with just these 11 symbols and their corresponding sounds, your students will still be reading by the end of the first stage.

This jump-starting of Stage 1 is advisable because your goal is to get *all* students reading *as quickly as possible*. To wait until all your students master 52 symbols before

beginning Stage 1 would require that reading – which is, of course, the purpose of these symbols – might be too-long delayed. Some of your students may lose interest in the task of letter identification before that task is completed. It will also be a boring slog for those students who already know most of their letters. Actual reading, and understanding the logic behind this skill, is what will motivate your students.

What I'm recommending then, is that you explicitly teach only eight letters before starting Stage 1, four more letters before starting both Stage 2 and Stage 3, a single letter before Stage 4 and Stage 5, and the final 8 letters prior to starting Stage 6. Thus, letter recognition is spread out over the first 6 stages of this program – and during this entire time, your students will be reading, spelling, and gradually learning the code.

While this book does not specifically focus on methods for teaching letter recognition, I believe the most efficient method is to have students first trace the letters, and then later, draw them free-hand on lined paper. All uppercase letters – as well as lowercase letters with stems (b, d) – should sit on a baseline and be 2 spaces high. Un-stemmed lowercase letters (a, e) should sit on the baseline, a single space high. Lowercase letters like p and q should sit on the baseline with their stems drawn one space below the baseline. Give special consideration to lowercase A and G. Students often learn to draw them one way (a, g), only to find them printed another way in most books (a, g). Students need to be familiar with both ways of writing these lowercase letters.

Some Final Observations

In the 17-stage reading program that follows, you won't find a series of carefully scripted lesson plans. Rather, my purpose is to provide you with the *overall structure* and *logical sequence* of a program that uses synthetic phonics *as a method* to teach reading. That said, I do offer hundreds of suggestions for how to present the alphabetic code to students. If you will be teaching a small group (1-3 students), you'll be able to use most of those suggestions as they are. For teaching a larger group, some of those suggestions will need to be adapted, and likely expanded, to work in such an environment.

Whatever the number of children you greet each morning, it's safe to say that you will need to be comfortable taking on a more active teaching role than is perhaps the norm in many of today's classrooms. Presumably, you are an expert reader who already knows the full code (or who will know it by the end of this book). That code is too complex to rely on "discovery" methods. You'll need to teach it explicitly, and you'll need more time for this explicit teaching than standard "mini-lessons" or "word study" blocks provide.

If you're a reading teacher who is eager (or, at least, open) to use synthetic phonics in your classroom, you'll find yourself in one of two situations. I'll call them "ideal" and "real-world." In the *ideal* scenario, you're an autonomous teacher who has full control of the curriculum you use in your own classroom. You don't wish to go the top-down route of sight words, guessing strategies, and Onset-and-Rime phonics. Instead, you want to use this book's 17-stage synthetic phonics from Day 1 with your students.

Under such ideal conditions, this 17-stage program is easily doable in two school years. Upon finishing it, you can expect your students to be independent readers, that is, students who can pick up any children's book they want (within reason), and read it with little or no help. When these students encounter an unknown word, they will **decode** it. If, after pronouncing the word, they still don't know its meaning, they will ask you about its definition or they will look it up in a dictionary. Their spelling won't be perfect, but their mistakes will be *phonetically feasible*: GOTE instead of GOAT, LITE instead of LIGHT. Carefully leveled books with controlled vocabulary will not be necessary, and the stigma attached to the children in the lower reading levels will vanish. Having reached this point, all the machinery of Balanced Literacy (guided reading, independent reading, shared reading, mini-lessons, shared writing, interactive writing, reading and writing workshops, and, of course, your continued interactive read-alouds) will now be much more productive for a simple reason: your students can both read and spell.

Most teachers reading this book, however, will not be in such an ideal environment. If you are among these teachers, your *real-world* situation involves using a method that's been decided for you on the district or state level. That method is likely to be Balanced Literacy or some equivalent top-down approach which dictates, from the start, the use of Type 1 sight words and guessing strategies. If you are one of these teachers, you can still use this book to improve your teaching and to help your students become more competent readers and spellers. You can learn, perhaps for the first time, the complete alphabetic code: how 90 graphemes match up with 44 phonemes. This knowledge will inform your teaching – helping you to better answer student questions and to give more relevant examples – no matter what methodology your school uses. This book will also give you some ideas on how to present some phonics *directly*, rather than through the discovery mode that is so common to Balanced Literacy.

Make the effort to incorporate as much of this book's synthetic phonics into your daily routine as possible by increasing the time given over to whole-class Word Study sessions. Every piece of the alphabetic code that you manage to teach, will make the skills of reading and spelling more logical and understandable for your students. Start this synthetic phonics as early in the school year as possible, because the longer you

present reading as “sight word memorization” and “guessing,” the higher the number of students who will get frustrated and give up.

Over the past 40 years, Whole Word advocates have often cautioned teachers not to teach “decontextualized sounds.” Think about that for a minute. A decontextualized sound is nothing other than a *stand-alone phoneme*. Our whole language is built with these phonemes – and phonemic awareness is critical to becoming a skilled reader and speller. Synthetic phonics starts with these stand-alone phonemes and then blends them into whole words. Teaching the code properly – that is to say, using synthetic phonics – requires that you ignore this long-standing and mistaken admonition. Instead, *celebrate decontextualized sounds* with your students! Kids love making these sounds and they love finding an adult who will make these sounds with them.

Teacher Note: You’re ready to begin Stage 1 of this program as long as all of your students recognize, as a minimum, the *names* of the upper and lowercase versions of the 8 letters that are discussed there (A, E, I, O, U, M, N, S). In Stage 1, you’ll teach your students a single sound associated with each of these 8 symbols.

Topics within stages are divided by horizontal lines. These lines simply signal the next topic. They do not mean all the material between horizontal lines should be done in a single lesson. They are simply logical breaks.

Within each stage, I include some theory about the code, meant only for you, along with practical suggestions for presenting the code to your students.

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1. Diane McGuinness, *Early Reading Instruction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), chapter 5.
 2. McGuinness, *Early Reading Instruction*, 121.
 3. M. Stuart, “Learning to Read: Developing Processes for Recognizing, Understanding and Pronouncing Written Words,” *London Review of Education*, 4(1) (2006): 19.
 4. S. B. Piasta, and R. K. Wagner, “Developing Early Literacy Skills: A Meta-Analysis of Alphabet Learning and Instruction,” *Reading Research Quarterly*, 45(1) (2010): 8-38.
 5. Kim, Petscher, Foorman, and Zhou, “The Contributions of Phonological Awareness and Letter-Name Knowledge to Letter-Sound Acquisition—a Cross-Classified Multilevel Model Approach,” *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(2) (2010): 313-326.
 6. Mark Seidenberg, *Language at the Speed of Sight* (New York: Hachette Group, 2017), 107-109.

A Synthetic Phonics Program

for

Reading and Spelling

Stage 1

Sounds of A, E, I, O, U, M, N, S

Reading Begins

You're ready to get started with this reading program if all your students can identify, minimally, the letters A, E, I, O, U, M, N, and S, as well as their lowercase counterparts. I recommend using terms like "big" and "little" rather than "uppercase" and "lowercase."

It's important to do all 17 stages in order. This synthetic phonics program is *carefully* sequenced; every stage builds on all the previous stages and no stage uses information or knowledge from a future stage. Stages 1 through 6 lay the foundation for everything that follows. In these initial stages, you'll teach individual letter sounds, as well as the critical skill of *blending*.

Teacher Note: For this and the following stages, you'll need a large stack of blank 4 x 6 index cards and a few magic markers. If you're doing this stage with a whole class rather than just a few students, the cards should be larger, perhaps 8½ x 11 inches.

I would like to re-emphasize here what I said in Chapter 6. In these initial stages, you'll be presenting an illusion to your students: that English reading and spelling are regular. In other words, you'll be acting as though each letter in the alphabet symbolizes a single sound, and each sound is spelled by a single letter. You want the learner, especially if the learner is a young child, to conclude that reading is a logical, rational skill – like any skill worth pursuing. Only after he has started reading with some competence and confidence will you gradually start showing him that English has some spelling (and therefore reading) irregularities. In Stages 1 through 6, everything you teach him will be reasonable, logical, and without exception.

Another reminder: daily reading to your students is an important motivational part of this program. Whatever time you have available for language arts, I recommend you devote about half that time to teaching the phonics specified in this book, and the other half to reading high-quality children's literature to your class. Phonics can sometimes be challenging and it often requires significant concentration. On the other hand, the time your students spend listening to your stories is enjoyable and relaxing for them. Your story-telling is not for the purpose of teaching "sight words." Rather, it's to hook your students on the beauty of literature, to enhance their language skills, and to help

engage both their minds and their emotions through active discussions about the book's plot and characters.

First, let's deal with some preliminaries you, as the teacher, need to understand now, and your children will need to understand a little later. All the vowels – A, E, I, O, and U – symbolize two primary sounds: one “short” and the other “long.” (If necessary, review for yourself the list of all 44 phonemes in Table 1.) The other letters of the alphabet, called consonants, have a single primary sound. Of course, that's not entirely accurate. For example, G can have a J sound (GENIUS), C can have an S sound (CITY), and S can have a Z sound (HIS). But these are nuances you'll deal with later. For now, until midway through Stage 6, you'll be acting as though each of the 26 letters of the alphabet symbolizes a single sound. This means that for now, the five vowels will have only their short sound. Long vowel sounds will start appearing in Stage 10.

As the teacher, you need to be clear in your own mind precisely what these five short vowel sounds are before you can teach them to someone else. The consonant sounds are straightforward, but the short vowel sounds can be tricky to master, for you and for your children. (Don't refer to these sounds as “short” with your students. As far as they are concerned, all letters, including the vowels, have only one sound at this point in the program.) Let's look at these short vowel sounds first. You can hear them at the start of the following words:

Vowel	Word	Sound
A	at	/a/
E	end	/e/
I	in	/i/
O	ox	/o/
U	up	/u/

To firmly lock these five vowel sounds in your memory, practice saying them with a CK attached: ACK, ECK, ICK, OCK, UCK. Then begin saying them *without* the CK attached: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/.

These 5 individual vowel sounds are critically important in this and the next 6 stages. As you practice saying these vowel sounds to yourself, notice the shape of your mouth. You'll find the sounds /a/ and /o/ both require a fully-opened mouth. The sound /e/ requires a half-open mouth; both /i/ and /u/ require the mouth to be open only slightly. Once you have these 5 sounds mastered (can you do them backwards? in any order?),

you'll be ready to begin this stage with your students. As you do, remember that the specialized notation using slash marks is not for them – they need only produce the correct sound, verbally, when you ask for it.

In this stage, you'll initially teach your children the sound of 8 letters: A, E, I, O, U, M, N, and S. Why these 8 letters to start? The 5 vowel sounds must be learned at the outset because there is a vowel sound in every syllable of every word. I picked the consonants M, N, and S because their sounds, /m/, /n/, and /s/, are sustainable, just like the sounds of the 5 vowels. Your children can make the sounds of each of these 8 letters for as long as they please, until their breath gives out. This will make teaching the skill of blending much easier. As soon as your children have mastered these 8 sustainable sounds, you'll teach them how to blend those sounds into familiar words such as MOM, MAN, SUN, MESS, SAM, US, and IN. In other words, they'll start reading!

Blending non-sustainable sounds is a little trickier; you'll delay doing that until Stage 2. Examples of sounds that are not sustainable are the sounds of the letters B, D, G, J, K, P, and T.

OK, time to start working with your children. The first goal is to teach them the 5 vowel sounds you just taught yourself. How might you go about doing this? Initially, simply tell them:

“A says /a/”

(Don't show them anything written – simply tell them what A says. You might try this: Dogs say “woof,” cats say “meow,” A says /a/.) Now ask them:

“Does anyone know a fruit that starts with the sound /a/?”

If someone comes up with the word, fine. If not, tell them:

“Apple begins with /a/” (exaggerate the A sound in apple.)

Ask them if they can hear that same A sound, /a/, at the beginning of these words: ALLIGATOR, ACT, ANT, ASK, AFTER, AX, ASHES, ATLAS, ATTIC, ANIMAL, ADD, ANTLERS, ACTION, AFRICA, ALLEY, AMBULANCE, ALPHABET, ASTEROID. You can come up with others if you like; maybe they can too. (Stay away from words that do not have the correct short A sound even though they begin with A – words like AUTO, ALIEN, and AHEAD.) Now ask: “What does A say?” and let *each student*, in turn, answer. (This

allows you to verify correct pronunciation and it allows your students to hear the sound multiple times, thereby thoroughly learning it.)

Next, tell them E says something *much* different from A. Ask if anyone knows what an ECHO is. See if someone can say only the first sound in the word ECHO, namely, /e/. Ask your students if they can hear that same sound, /e/, at the start of these words: ELEPHANT, ENTER, END, ED, ELBOW, EXIT, EXTRA, ESCAPE, ELK, EDGE, ENJOY, ENGINE, ELEVATOR, EMPTY, EVERY, EXERCISE. Once again, let *each child* take a turn articulating this sound while you monitor their pronunciation. Once everyone's got it, review by randomly asking various students: "What does A say? What does E say?"

In a similar manner, teach your students the sounds of I, O, and U. Tell them what these sounds are, and ask if they can hear the sound in some words. Here are suggestions:

- I: in, igloo, iguana, if, imp, itch, insect, inch, ignore, inside, invent, India, Italy, ink, icky, ill
- O: ox, octopus, October, otter, olive, odd, omelet, object, opposite, ostrich, oxygen, opera, obstacle
- U: up, umbrella, ugly, under, uncle, usher, us, udder, ulcer, ump, unfair, unless, ugh!

To review,

whenever you ask them:

"What does A say?"

"What does E say?"

"What does I say?"

"What does O say?"

"What does U say?"

what you want to hear is:

the first sound in the word AT

the first sound in the word EBB

the first sound in the word IN

the first sound in the word OX

the first sound in the word UP

It doesn't matter if this process takes 2 days or 2 weeks. These 5 phonemes are crucial. Everything you'll do with your students through Stage 9 depends on their quick familiarity with these 5 short vowel sounds. Review them with your students throughout the school day. Sometimes ask for these sounds one at a time; sometimes ask for them all at once: /a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/. Don't always do them in the same order. Reverse roles and let them ask you what these letters say. Give an occasional wrong answer and see who corrects you. Sometimes, ask the question *in reverse*: "What letter says /e/?" and

so on. Make it a game and keep it fun, but keep at it until all your students know these 5 sounds cold.

Next, tell your students they need to learn what 3 more letters say – and then they’re going to start reading. That should help keep them motivated! The 3 letters, mentioned earlier, are M, N, and S. Try to keep a single, common word associated with each letter as an aid for your children to remember the correct sound. I suggest the following:

A – apple
 E – elephant
 I – igloo (or iguana)
 O – ox (or otter)
 U – umbrella (or underwear)
 M – man (or moose)
 N – nose
 S – snake

Point out to your children that the *name* of each of these 3 new letters (EM, EN, and ESS) suggests its sound:

EM says MMMMM (M says /m/)
 EN says NNNNN (N says /n/)
 ESS says SSSSS (S says /s/)

Here are some words that have the target sounds:

- S: sun, soup, Santa, sip, step, spin, see, slurp, stick, smile, snot
- M: me, my, mouse, man, map, mad, middle, munch, mist
- N: no, never, new, net, near, nickel, napkin, news, nest

You’ll find your children master these 3 new sounds quickly compared to the 5 vowel sounds. Once you are sure each child knows all 8 sounds, it’s time to start blending and reading!

At this point, not only do your students recognize the upper and lowercase versions of A, E, I, O, U, M, N, and S, they know what these letters “say,” and they know a common word associated with each of them. Next, you’re going to teach them how to

blend the sounds of these 8 letters into one-syllable words. Initially, there are three questions I'd like to discuss with you:

- How many one-syllable “words” can be formed with only 8 letters?
- How many of these “words” are actual words, and how many are only pseudo words?
- Is it worth blending sounds if the result is only a pseudo word?

Mathematically, it's easy to answer the first question. Let's assume a “word” will have this configuration: a consonant sound, followed by a vowel sound, followed by another consonant sound – CVC for short. For the first consonant sound, there are, currently, 4 possibilities: M, N, S, or a blank (no letter at all). For the vowel sound, there are 5 possibilities, and for the final consonant sound, 3 possibilities: M, N, or S. Therefore, the total number of CVC combinations, using these 8 letters, is $4 \times 5 \times 3$, or 60 one-syllable words. I've listed these 60 “words” in Appendix A.

If you look at this appendix, you'll notice about half are actual words (in boldface), and the other half are only pseudo words. However, all 60 are embedded in more complex words. For example, **MUN**, by itself, is not a real word, but it's part of larger words, such as **MUNCH** and **MUNDANE**. In addition, two of the pseudo words (**UN** and **NON**) are important prefixes and one (**NESS**) is an important suffix. So, my answer to the third question (above) is a qualified “yes.” Your students will blend sounds into pseudo words here, in Stage 1, because one of your main goals right now is to give them “blending” practice with sustainable sounds. However, there'll be no need to keep blending sounds into pseudo words after this stage; there will be more than enough real words to keep both you and your students busy!

Appendix A is for you, not for your students. Important note: The actual word **SON** (the opposite of **DAUGHTER**) is not in boldface in the appendix. That's because **SON** is an irregular word. To be regular, it would have to be pronounced as it is in **SONIC** or **SONNET** – with the sound /o/. Instead, as a stand-alone English word, it's pronounced **SUN**. Since you are not dealing with exceptions right now, you want your students to pronounce S-O-N with a short O sound – so it rhymes with **CON**.

In Appendix A, I use a single final S for some of the “words” and a double final S for others. Here's my explanation: I always use a double S if it makes a pseudo word into an actual word – **MESS** and **MASS** for instance. I use a single S when that results in an actual word – **US** and **SIS** for instance. I use **ISS** instead of **IS** because the latter word is irregular (due to the final Z sound). You'll cover the word **IS** in Stage 6. I could have listed either **AS** or **ASS** because both are actual words. But the word **AS**, like **IS**, is

irregular due to the final Z sound. At this point in the program, whichever way you write it for your students (AS or ASS), it should be pronounced like it is in the word PASS – where the S says /s/. Let's get back to instruction...

To start teaching the skill of **blending**, pick words from Appendix A that are already in your children's vocabulary, like MAN, MEN, MISS, SUN, SAM, AM, IN, US, AN, MESS. In fact, you can begin with everyone's all-time favorite word: MOM. (Outside the US, MUM is probably the better word to start!) Using a blackboard, or some paper on an easel, write MOM, but spread the letters out:

M O M

Pick a student and ask her to make the sound of a letter *for as long as you're pointing to it*. (This will be possible for her because all the letter sounds, so far, are sustainable.) When she's ready, point to the first M for about *two seconds*. When time is up, immediately point to the O for another 2 seconds, and then to the final M, for 2 seconds more. So far, so good. Now ask if she's ready to do it a little faster. This time point to each letter for about *one second*. Then ask if she's ready to go even faster. Do it a third time, pointing at each letter for about a *half-second* each. Now ask if she's ready to go *really* fast! When she's ready, sweep your finger smoothly across all the letters, taking only about a half-second for the entire sweep. As she says the word, does she recognize it?

Do the entire exercise again with a second (and even a third) student. Then repeat it with the whole class, doing the exercise in unison. Do the students hear that these 3 sounds, when blended together quickly and smoothly, form the word MOM? Congratulate the class for reading (decoding) their very first word.

Write the word MOM again, 3 times, on the board, but this time in the normal way, reviewing uppercase, lowercase, and mixed case. The board now looks like this:

M O M
 MOM
 mom
 Mom

Make the point that this is the word MOM and it can be written in any of these three ways. They should now be eager to try a new word:

Make a 4th index card. You'll use these index cards later as flash cards for the purpose of review. Use this word in some sentences for your students. Don't write these sentences; do it verbally:

"I would like to have AN apple."

"AN alligator just ran through the kitchen."

"She dropped AN egg on the floor."

In general, if you're not sure your children understand the meaning of a word, discuss it with them and use it in some (amusing) sentences. See if they can come up with their own sentences. At this point you might also tell your students that with an additional N, the word AN becomes a common girl's name: ANN.

Next, do SAM in the usual way, and afterwards, eliminate the S for the word AM. Discuss these two words and use them in sentences as well. Now you have 6 flash cards (7 if you include ANN). Mix them up and see if the class knows all six. Note, your students are not memorizing these as sight words, they're reading them based on their knowledge of the sounds of the component letters. This is precisely what distinguishes Synthetic Phonics from all Whole Word methods.

Over the next period of time (it doesn't matter how long), go through all 60 "words" in Appendix A with your children. Do the words they know first. Then do the words they probably don't know, like SIN, MASS, and NUN. (I sure knew these 3 words in Catholic grade school in the 50s!) This will give you the opportunity to teach your class some new vocabulary. Define words that are new and use them in colorful sentences. Finally, do the pseudo words. If they can read SEN now, in Stage 1, then reading SEND and SENT in Stage 2 will be trivial for them. Similarly, if they can read NUM now, they'll more easily read NUMBER and STERNUM later. When a child reads something that is not an actual word, tell your class a "big" word that *does* use that sound (see Appendix A for suggestions).

Teacher Note: In no stage beyond this one will it be necessary for you to ask your students to read pseudo words. You're doing so here because there are only 60 "words" possible with their current 8-letter toolkit and because the primary skill you're trying to teach in this stage is **blending** individual phonemes. Practicing this skill is independent of whether the result is an actual word. Also, I have shown all 60 "words" are important parts of longer words your children will eventually need to read.

You're done with this stage when your children can read all 60 flash cards without struggling. This will take time. However, the blending skill learned here will be invaluable to what follows. I'll end this stage by trying to anticipate some questions you may have:

- For the time being, O *always* says /o/. Therefore, make sure your students pronounce SON so that it rhymes with CON. The grapheme O actually symbolizes many different sounds (see Appendix Q); you'll deal with all of them later in the program.
- You may find, at some point, it becomes unnecessary to spread out the letters of a word on a blackboard and point to the letters individually. When this happens, simply show the students the word on an index card, written normally, and let them sound out (decode) the word on their own. This is a good sign!
- Both AS and ASS are actual words in English. However, at this point in the program, S says only /s/, not /z/. You can share as many of the multiple meanings of ASS with your children as you see fit: a member of the horse family, a foolish person, slang for buttocks.
- You are purposely avoiding the English words IS and AS (for now) because the S in those 2 words has a Z sound. This is not only an undesirable complication, but it's also a sound you have not yet covered. (You'll do so in Stage 6).
- The two and three-syllable words in the appendix marked as examples are definitely not for your children to read. They are there only to convince *you* that even the pseudo words are worth decoding.
- In the US, the English word ON is actually pronounced /aw/ + /n/, not /o/ + /n/. However, your students have heard and have used this word many times; simply help with the correct pronunciation. You don't want to make this simple word an exception.
- EN and EM are actual words but they are rarely used. Their definitions involve units of measurement in type-setting. I suggest you treat these two words (and ESS) as words that are simply the *names* of the letters N, M, and S (just as SAM and ANN are the names of people).

Stage 2

Sounds of D, G, P, T

Consonant Blends

Your students now know how to spell 8 of the 44 sounds of English. (Alternately, you could say your students now know how to *sound* 8 of the 26 letters in the alphabet.) In addition, they know how to blend these sounds into words they understand. This is already an enormous accomplishment. By any standard, your students are beginning to read.

You'll be adding only 4 new letters (and their sounds) in this stage, but that will greatly expand the number of words your kids can decode. To see why this is so, consider the fact that the 60 "words" in Stage 1 had either the structure VC or CVC (where V stands for vowel sound and C for consonant sound). Now you'll be expanding your students' toolkit to 12 sounds: the 8 already mastered plus 4 new sounds: /d/, /g/, /p/, and /t/. With these 4 newcomers, however, words having *consonant blends* become possible for the first time: 4 beginning blends (SM, SN, ST, and SP), as well as 7 ending blends (ST, SP, MP, ND, NT, PT, and MPT). I've listed all of the consonant blends in Appendix R.

So, besides the simple VC and CVC structures that you covered in the previous stage, you'll now help your students decode more complex structures like CCVC (STOP), CVCC (DAMP), and CCVCC (STAND). You might be wondering how many single-syllable "words" are possible now, with these 4 new letters. Let's do the math again. To begin the word, you can now choose from 7 single consonants, 4 beginning consonant blends, or a blank (total: 12). For the middle of the word, you still choose from among 5 vowels. For the end of the word, you can pick from 7 single consonants and 7 ending consonant blends (total: 14). Therefore, the total number of possible "words" expands to $12 \times 5 \times 14 = 840$ possibilities! This is a huge jump from the 60 possible words in Stage 1.

This math dictates that I not attempt to list all possible "words," including pseudo words, as I did in the previous stage. If you look at Appendix B, you'll see I list only that subset of these 840 possibilities that are actual words. There are about 160 of them. So, in this stage, you'll gradually be adding up to 160 new words to your stack of index cards. The reason I say "up to" 160 is that your students can master the new sounds and the new consonant blends in this stage without covering every single word in Appendix B. You may wish to eliminate some of the more obscure words like TAD, SOD,

and SUMP. Doing so will not have any serious effect on the learning process. I hope, however, you'll use this opportunity to continue expanding your students' vocabularies.

You probably noticed none of these 4 new sounds are sustainable. Therefore, the method from the previous stage, of pointing to a letter for a second or two while a student makes its sound, won't work here. That's okay. It simply means you'll now start teaching the topic of blending in a different manner.

What, exactly, does a consonant like D say? Well, it symbolizes the first sound you can hear in each of the following words: DAN, DEN, DIP, DOT, DUG. What is that sound? Traditional phonics holds that "D says duh," but that's neither accurate nor helpful. "Duh" is the combination /d/ + /u/. To teach your students that D says "duh" is useful if the word they're trying to decode is DUCK. However, if the word is DAD, DECK, or DOUGHNUT, "duh" is unhelpful, even misleading.

Let's plan to deal with this problem directly. With non-sustainable sounds starting to appear, I suggest you now start teaching your class that *to decide how to pronounce a consonant, they should always look at the vowel that follows it*. In other words, don't ask your students "what does D say?" because D's sound can't be sustained and it's difficult to answer such a question accurately. Instead, ask "what are the sounds of D?" The answer you want is /da/, /de/, /di/, /do/, and /du/ – the D sound blended with each of the 5 short vowel sounds your students already know so well. (I am using /da/ as shorthand for /d/ + /a/; /de/ as shorthand for /d/ + /e/, and so on.)

The idea here is that when a student attempts to decode a word like DEN, she won't think "duh + eh + nnn" (trying to blend 3 sounds, one of which, "duh", is incorrect), but simply "/de/ + /n/." Since she already knows the 5 short vowel sounds, /a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/, it's a simple *additional* step to ask her for those 5 sounds with the D attached to them: /da/ /de/ /di/ /do/ /du/. You'll see how easy this will make the blending your kids must do later on in this stage. Keep in mind, that at this point in the program, /do/ is not to be pronounced as in the sentence "DO your work," but as it is in the word DOT, with a short O sound. The word DO is irregular and it will be covered later.

Ok, let's get back to your students. In this stage, they first need to understand the difference between a vowel and a consonant. After reviewing the 5 vowel sounds with them, tell them A, E, I, O, and U are the most important letters in the alphabet. Allow them to examine a book (or magazine or newspaper) and ask them to look at as many words as they please. Do they see why these 5 letters are so important? If not, help them out: (almost) every word they see has at least one of these 5 letters. They are the most-

used letters (and the most-used sounds) in our language. Tell your students we call them **vowels**. Let them look again at the flash cards from Stage 1 to verify that all the words they can already read have a vowel.

Explain that all the other letters in the alphabet are called **consonants**. Remind your students that they already know the sounds of 5 vowels and 3 consonants. Then let them know what’s coming next: the 4 new sounds of the consonants P, T, D, and G.

Teacher Note: One might think that to teach a child that D+O says /d/ + /o/, as in the word DOT, only to later teach him D+O says /d/ + /ew/, as in DO YOUR WORK, will cause confusion. That has not been my experience. In any case, *many* graphemes have more than one sound. D+O says /d/ + /o/ in many words such as DOCK, DON, DOT, DOLLAR, DOMINATE, DODGE, DOFF, and ADOPT. D+O also commonly says /d/ + /O/ (long O) in words like DONOR, DONUT, DOMESTIC, DONATE, DOSE, AVOCADO, TORNADO, and TORPEDO. In fact, the *least* common way to pronounce D+O is /d/ + /ew/ as in the common English word DO. The word DO is an exception that will be covered in Stage 8. The mismatch between the sounds and the letters in the word DO is serious enough that DO is on the Tricky 50 list in Appendix S.

Start your students off with the letter P. Tell them you’ll say some words that start with the P sound and they should listen closely. As you speak these words, exaggerate the sound of P: PICKLE, POT, PENCIL, PAN, PINK, PRETZEL, PIZZA, PEE, PUZZLE. Next, tell them you have 5 words that start and end with P: PEP, POP, PEEP, PUMP, POOP. Now ask them: What do you think P says?

Their responses are likely to be a combination of the P sound and some vowel. If someone says “peh,” tell him that sounds like P with an E attached: /pe/. If someone else says “puh,” tell her that sounds like P with a U attached: /pu/. It’s difficult to isolate the P sound from the vowel sound that follows it. As you and your students try to do so, the sound of P becomes almost inaudible – like a puff of air. Discuss this fact with your class, as well as the fact that the P sound, unlike the M, N, and S sounds, is not sustainable. (We can’t hold on to it. It quickly disappears!)

Now, hold up an index card with the 5 vowels spread out from left to right:

a e i o u

Reviewing, ask for all five sounds. Your students are experts on these by now, so their verbal response is: /a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/. Now hold up a second index card with the following written on it:

pa pe pi po pu

Ask: “What does P say with the vowels attached?” or “What are the 5 sounds of P?” What you want to hear, of course, is /pa/ /pe/ /pi/ /po/ /pu/. Help your students get to the 5 correct sounds. They simply need to attach that puff of air – the P sound – to the vowel sounds they already know. Give everyone a turn and correct any child who says any of these sounds using 2 syllables, for instance, “puh, eh” instead of simply /pe/ for the second one. What you want to hear is PAT, PET, PIT, POT, PUTT – but without that final T sound. (Reminder: /a/ is the first sound in “apple,” not the sound you hear in the word PASTA.)

Once all your students are comfortable with the 5 sounds of P, prepare similar index cards for M, N, and S:

ma me mi mo mu
na ne ni no nu
sa se si so su

M, N, and S are the consonants you did with your class in Stage 1. Their sounds are sustainable. However, going forward, you want your students to *habitually* notice the vowel following the consonant before deciding how to articulate it, even when the consonant is sustainable.

When you hold up the M card, ask a student for *all* the sounds of M. What you want to hear is /ma/ /me/ /mi/ /mo/ /mu/ (MAD, MED, MID, MOD, MUD – but without the final /d/ sound). Coach your students as much as necessary to get to this point. It shouldn’t take long. Note: ME, of course, is an English word, but that is *not* the pronunciation you want here. Here you want /m/ + /e/: the sound of the word MET but without the T. You’ll get to the word ME in Stage 7. Next, do the same with the N and S cards you prepared above. Stay with it until your students can respond with the correct sounds:

/na/ /ne/ /ni/ /no/ /nu/ and /sa/ /se/ /si/ /so/ /su/

Same word of caution here: NO and SO are English words. Nonetheless, the pronunciation you want here should use the short O sound – as in the words NOD and SOD – but without the D.

Next, what you did above with the letter P, you must do with the remaining 3 letters: D, G, and T (DEE, JEE, and TEE). For D and T, the *name* of the letter suggests its sound; for G, that's not the case. Take all the time you need. Choose some good words that start with these letters in order to introduce your students to the new sounds. Here are some suggestions:

- G: girl, goose, gift, gum, get, gap, gas, grief, game, God, giggle, gust, gal (but not GEM or GYPSY or any other word where the G has a J sound! You won't cover that situation until Stage 16).
- D: dog, dad, dirt, danger, Dan, doughnut, dinosaur, dip, don't, damp, done, dead.
- T: Tom, tap, tender, tip, tree, turtle, toy, tent, trip, top, taste, tooth, tub, tiny, two.

Once you've introduced each of these new sounds, prepare index cards similar to the ones you did above:

ga	ge	gi	go	gu
da	de	di	do	du
ta	te	ti	to	tu

As you hold up each card, once again ask for the 5 sounds of the letter. Just as before, note that GO, TO, and DO are actual English words. For now, however, your students should pronounce all of them with a short O sound (as in GOT, TOT, and DOT). The English words GO, TO, and DO are exceptions and you'll deal with them later.

Your students shouldn't need these specially prepared 5-sound cards for long. It's easy, throughout the school day, to simply ask your students for all the sounds of any of the consonants already covered. Again, encourage them to quiz you as well. You are finished with the above when your children know the 5 sounds of each consonant covered so far: M, N, S, D, P, T, and G. Take all the time you need.

Now, look again at Appendix B. Initially, focus only on the CVC words with your students; you'll do the VC words and the consonant blends later. There are about 90 such CVC words. (Notice that words in Appendix B, like PASS and PUTT, are listed with the CVC group instead of the CVCC group. That's because SS and TT are not blends. They represent a single sound. All the words in the CVC category have exactly 3 sounds.) Eliminate some words if you wish, and then place the remaining words on index cards as before: lowercase on one side and upper on the other. Now you're ready to focus once again on blending, but in a manner different from what you did in Stage 1.

Hold up one such card for a student volunteer – let’s say it’s the card with PET written on it – but hold it in such a way as to hide the T with your finger. The student (I’ll call him Matt) should say /pe/ as a single syllable, correctly blending /p/ and /e/. (This is precisely what you and your class were doing earlier when you practiced the 5 sounds of P.) Your job now is to make sure Matt produces the correct single-syllable sound. Now take your finger off the T and ask him to read the whole word. What does he do?

- Does he read the word PET and recognize it? If so, congratulate him and see if he can use the word in a sentence.
- Does he not recognize the word because he holds the PE sound too long before he adds the sound of the T, making it sound like a two-syllable word? (He can do this because the E sound is sustainable.) Tell him to speed it up!
- Does he say PET smoothly as a single pulse of sound, but still look confused? Define the word PET for him! Tell him he’s done it!

Discuss what just happened with your class: Matt correctly pronounced the P sound by looking at the vowel that followed the P. Then he simply added on the /t/ sound to read the whole word. Easy, right? Place the PET card where everyone can see it and ask for another volunteer. (Shawna enthusiastically waves her hand.) Show her the card with POT written on it – again hiding the T. Once Shawna correctly pronounces /po/ as a single syllable, let her read the whole word. Place the POT card next to the PET card.

You could similarly do PIT, PAT, and PUTT with other students. (You may need to define PUTT!) By the end of this session, you could have these 5 cards neatly lined up so that every student can see them. Let each student take a turn reading the 5 cards, but between each reading, rearrange the order of the cards. (This forces each student to look carefully at the vowel.)

Next class, let’s assume you pick the card with MUD written on it. Show it to your volunteer with the D covered. Stay with her until she says /mu/ as a single syllable (/m/ + /u/). Then reveal the D and she should read the whole word: MUD.

Plan, at least initially, to go through all the CVC words from Appendix B in the above manner. I say “initially” because at some point, it should become clear that many of your students no longer need you to hide that last letter. They can simply read the whole word at once, the way you and I do. I suggest you start testing this theory after 20 words or so. Hold up the card with the next new word, but this time *without* the last letter hidden. Ask some brave volunteer if she can simply do all the blending silently, in her head, and then say the entire word as a single pulse of sound. If an individual has

trouble with this, simply go back to hiding the last letter with your finger in order to help her out.

Each day, review the stack of Stage 1 and Stage 2 cards that your students have already successfully decoded. Until they can read the whole CVC word as a single pulse of sound, the blending should always be CV + C: the first consonant and vowel as a single sound, blended with the final letter. Define and discuss words as necessary, and have your children use the word in a sentence to be sure they understand it. Take the time to build vocabulary.

When you finish with the CVC words in Appendix B, do the 10 or so VC words next. Three of them are high-frequency words: UP, AT, IT. These 3 words (plus DID) combined with US, AM, AN, IN, and ON from Stage 1, give your kids 9 of the most frequent words in English. High-frequency words are always boxed in the appendices. In doing these short VC words, you don't have to hide the last letter. Since these words start with a vowel, a student can hold that initial sound for as long as he wants. When he gets tired of holding it, he need only make the sound of the second letter. Tell him to speed up and he'll be saying the word automatically!

Finally, you can focus on the consonant *blends* in Appendix B. Your students are ready to do these only if they have reached the point of being able to handle most of the CVC words in Appendices A and B *without* the help of you covering up the last letter. In other words, your students can read these CVC words like you and I read them – not as fast certainly, and with some hesitancy no doubt – but they can read most of these words as a single, smooth sound.

If your students are not yet at this point, delay moving on until they master this skill. You have over 100 CVC (and VC) words on index cards from Appendices A and B. Keep reviewing these with your class. Perhaps, more importantly, keep reviewing the 5 sounds of each of the consonants M, N, S, P, T, D, and G.

For the consonant blends in Appendix B, you'll be hiding letters with your finger again – but in a different manner than above. Place these words on flash cards as usual. Keep the double blends (CCVCC) for last. Explain to your children that they have not yet blended two *consonants* together (and that they must learn this because it happens a lot!). Two consonants that flow together easily are S and T. Can any of your students figure out how ST might sound?

Ask for a volunteer who wants to try reading a 4-sound word. (Every word up to this point has had only 2 or 3 phonemes.) Pete volunteers. Have a word ready to go from the beginning ST group in the appendix (there is an ending ST group there as well). Let's say you pick the word STEP. Show Pete the word, but with the S covered by your finger. Now, for him and his classmates, it's simply another run-of-the-mill CVC word. At this point, all your students should be good at these, so Pete reads TEP. Now reveal the S and ask him to read the entire word smoothly and quickly: STEP. If he doesn't recognize the word, it's because he's holding the S sound too long.

Next, have another student do the same with the word STOP. Have her first read the CVC word TOP. Once she does, reveal the S: STOP. Do your students see how easily S and T blend together? Tell them most consonants do not blend nicely at all. Have some fun with your students trying to blend MN or DG – it can't be done without inserting a vowel. Finish up the ST group with other students. Do the other groups of *beginning* blends (SM-, SN-, and SP-) in the same manner. As you go through these 4 groups of words, start probing to see if your students really need you to hide that initial S in order for them to read the word. They should not need that help for too long. There are some amusing words in these 4 groups that should make your students laugh: SPIT, SPAT, SNIT, SNOT.

For the various groups of *final* blends in Appendix B, do the *opposite* of the above. Let's say you pick the word SEND from the -ND group. Now, cover the *final* letter, D, so the student volunteer can again focus, just as above, on the simple CVC sound, SEN. (This is one of the pseudo words from Stage 1.) Once she reads SEN, uncover the last letter: SEND. Help by covering letters with your finger only if a student needs this aid. Discuss unfamiliar words and use them in sentences to help build vocabulary. Cycle through all the ending blends in the same manner. Over time, you'll notice your students starting to get good at this.

Finally, tell your children there can be consonant blends at *both* ends of a word! Such words have 5 separate sounds. They should find this exciting! There are 7 such words in the appendix. Take one of them, STAMP for instance, and hide *both* the S and the P with your fingers. Have a student read the CVC pseudo word: TAM. Show the S and he reads STAM – now show the P: STAMP. Do it the other way as well. After he reads TAM, show the P: TAMP. Then show the S: STAMP. It works either way. Enjoy the other six! For that single example of a three-letter consonant blend, TEMPT, start by showing the first 3 letters, then add P, then add the final T.

Since you'll continue using this stage's methodology through Stage 7, let's take the time to sum it up:

- Using the flash cards you've been creating, spend the first 5-10 minutes of each lesson reviewing words your children already know how to decode.
- Introduce the new consonant sound by saying words beginning with that sound, as you did with the letter P above.
- Make sure your students can express the new consonant sound properly with each of the 5 short vowels, for example: /pa/ /pe/ /pi/ /po/ /pu/.
- Go to the appropriate appendix and begin with the CVC words, transferring each of them to their own flash cards. If a student has trouble with a CVC word, hide the *last* letter with your finger and help him read the CV part of the word as a single syllable. Thus, the vowel always informs how the beginning consonant is articulated. Once he does that, reveal the last letter and he should be able to read the entire word.
- Do the VC words. You don't need to hide letters for these short words.
- Do the consonant blends: CCVC, CVCC, or CCVCC. If a student is having trouble with these words, allow her to see only the CVC part of the word. Once she reads that properly, show the other letter(s).
- Hide letters only if a student is having trouble. The goal is to have students read without help; do whatever you can to move them toward this goal as soon as possible.

Stage 3

Sounds of B, F, C/K

Spelling Begins

During this stage, you'll be adding 4 new letters and 3 new sounds to your students' phonics toolkit. In addition, you'll start asking them to spell simple words they can already read. Let's discuss the spelling first. It's possible to teach children to read without ever once asking them to spell something. To do so, however, would be to waste a wonderful opportunity to provide them with an additional important skill. Spelling (segmenting) also has the advantage of reinforcing for your students the "complete connections" between phonemes and graphemes needed to initiate *orthographic mapping*. (See Chapter 2.) I strongly recommend you now start to include daily spelling practice.

The Spelling Corner: Since you're teaching your students to read phonetically, teaching them to spell is an easy and valuable add-on to this program. Reading and spelling are reverse processes. As your kids spell, they encode sound into text; as they read, they decode text back into sound.

The spelling can be done orally or by having your students write the words on paper. When you ask them to spell a word like PET, for instance, speak it normally, and then, if you think it necessary for some students, exaggerate the two sounds (/pe/ + /t/) as you repeat the word. You can even ask your kids to spell the sound /pe/ first. Once they get it (PE), ask for the spelling of the full word, PET. As you start out, keep to the simplest VC and CVC words in your stack of flash cards. Then, as your students begin to get better, start including the CCVC and CVCC words. If necessary, help them with the blends in a step-by-step manner: "Can you spell TAM? Now can you spell TAMP? Now can you spell STAMP?" When you ask them to spell words like PASS, do they include the second S?

Ask your students to spell *only the words they've already decoded*. Here in Stage 3 then, you'll ask your children to spell words only from Stages 1 and 2. Going forward, the words you use for spelling practice should always lag one stage behind the new words and sounds that are currently being studied. While working through Stage 4, you'll ask students to spell Stage 3 words, and so on.

Before presenting the new letters and sounds to your students, let's discuss the letters C and K because these 2 letters have an unusual relationship. They often have the same sound, /k/, when they start a word: CAB, KEG, KID, COB, CUB. Note that when the vowel is E or I, the letter K is used to start the word, not C. In English, when C is followed by E or I, the C has an S sound, as in CITY or CENTER. If you were to spell KID with a C you would have to pronounce it SID as in the words LUCID and PLACID. This is a complication you'll handle later (Stage 16). For now, you still wish to sustain the illusion that English is 100% regular. Note that when the sound /k/ comes at the end of a word, C and K are used *together* to symbolize it: BACK, DUCK, NECK, KICK.

Ok, let's get back to reading instruction. Explain to your students the letters C and K have the same sound. Undoubtedly, some bright kid will want to know "why?" At this point, you can say that you don't know, or you'll explain later, or you can tell your class the truth: the few people who could read and write in the past, pretty much spelled words any way they pleased. Then, in 1806, Noah Webster published his first dictionary. In it, he attempted to reform and standardize English spelling. Some of his suggestions were accepted (CENTER instead of CENTRE, PLOW instead of PLOUGH), and some were not (TUNG instead of TONGUE, WIMMEN instead of WOMEN). One of the innovations that was accepted was the manner in which C and K now interact. Whatever you say, leave the fact that C can sometimes symbolize /s/ for Stage 16.

The name of the letter K (KAY = /k/ + /A/) suggests the sound of both C and K. Here are some words you can use to introduce the new C/K sound: CAT, KETTLE, KIT, CORN, COB, CUT, CRAB, CREEPY, KEEP, COIN, KID. Here are some words that have the same C/K sound at the end: DUCK, BACK, QUICK, LICK, NECK, CLOCK.

Once all of your students are happily making K sounds, ask for someone to state the 5 sounds of K when a vowel is attached. The answer you want, of course, is /ka/ /ke/ /ki/ /ko/ /ku/. After a number of students successfully reproduce these 5 sounds, ask for the 5 sounds of C. The answer you want is again /ka/ /ke/ /ki/ /ko/ /ku/. Remind students that the sound of a consonant is influenced by the vowel that follows it. This may be an appropriate time to review the 5 sounds of the earlier consonants from Stages 1 and 2.

Now do the same for the letters F (EFF = /e/ + /f/) and B (BEE = /b/ + /E/). Again, the *names* of these two letters suggest the *sound* of the letters. Here are some words for introducing the sounds to your children:

- F: fix, fat, fun, frog, friend, farm, fart, feet, fog, fire, stuff, puff, cliff, life, laugh
- B: boy, box, bed, bean, bite, bug, bag, bone, brown, job, rib, gab

Once your students know the 5 sounds of C/K, F, and B, ask them which of these new sounds is sustainable. (Only F's sound is sustainable.) Take some time now to review all the consonant sounds to date. This is important because the new words in Appendix C mix all those consonant sounds together. Before asking your children to start reading those words, make sure they are confident about the 5 sounds of each of these consonants: M, N, S, D, G, P, T, F, B, and C/K.

Approach the new words in Appendix C much as you did in the last stage. (See the summary in the box at the end of Stage 2). Take special note of the following:

- A few words have an exclamation point. I call them "excitement marks" with my students and tell them it means they should read the word with emotion.
- Point out that words starting with the sound /k/ sometimes use C and sometimes use K – but a word ending in the sound /k/ is always spelled CK.
- CK is not a blend; it spells a single sound: /k/. In that sense, it's similar to SS.
- Once you finish Appendix C with your students, they'll already be able to read over 300 words!
- Final F sounds in a word are usually spelled FF, just as final S sounds were spelled SS in Stage 1.
- Upon finishing Stage 3, take the 300 or so index cards you've made from the words in appendices A, B, and C and review them with your students. If you notice any problems, go back and spend time with that issue.
- The only new consonant blends in this stage are the beginning blends SK- and SC-, and the ending blends, -SK, -CT, and -FT.
- I placed CANT, without an apostrophe, in the appendix. You'll cover contractions (with proper apostrophes) in Stage 16. Until that time, I see no harm here; it's a word kids use all the time, and it's perfectly phonetic.

Stage 4

Sound of L

You'll be adding only a single letter and sound in this stage. That's because the letter L adds 13 new consonant blends: 7 beginning blends (BL, CL, FL, GL, PL, SL, SPL) and 6 ending blends (LT, LF, LM, LP, LD, LK). If you examine Appendix D, you'll see this single sound, /l/, adds 150 more words your children, with a little practice, will easily read.

The Spelling Corner: Spelling during this stage should focus on words from Stage 3. Remind your class that words ending in the sound /f/ are spelled FF, words ending in the sound /s/ are usually spelled SS, and words ending in /k/ are spelled CK. Expect spelling mistakes on words beginning with the sound /k/: should they be spelled with a C or a K? At this point, you could accept either spelling or, preferably in my view, you could share this simple rule with your kids: use K when the following vowel is E or I.

Let's get started. The name of the consonant L (ELL = /e/ + /l/) suggests its sound. Introduce it by asking your students to listen to some L words: LOVE, LAUGH, LACE, LICORICE, LIKE, LIP, LAP, LATER, LITTLE, SPILL, FILL, BALL. Once they are accurately producing this phoneme, ask if someone can explain where the tongue must be in order to correctly make the sound. (The tip of the tongue must be touching the upper front teeth.) Ask if the sound is sustainable. Now get a volunteer to produce the 5 sounds of L when a vowel is attached: /la/ /le/ /li/ /lo/ /lu/. (LACK, LECK, LICK, LOCK, LUCK without the final K sound.) Make sure each student gets a turn. Engage additional students by reviewing the 5 sounds of all the other consonants that were covered in previous stages.

Now transfer the CVC words in Appendix D to flash cards. Can your students read most of them without the help of covering the last letter with your finger? Point out that words ending in the L sound, /l/, are usually spelled LL (similar to SS and FF).

There are a lot of consonant blends in Appendix D. Weed out the more obscure words if you like, and then, using the template at the end of Stage 2, see how your students do. Point out how easily the L sound blends with many other consonants. Only if necessary should you use your fingers to hide letters on the flash cards. SPLINT is an unusual word with a CCCVCC structure. Use your fingers to hide letters, showing only

the CVC part of the word: LIN. Then reveal the other 3 letters, one at a time. Define the word SPLINT, discussing when it's necessary to use one.

Teacher Note: At some point, perhaps as early as this stage, but certainly in one of the following stages, it's going to become clear to you that it's no longer necessary to transfer *every single word* in the appendix to its own individual flash card. Flash cards are useful and desirable only for as long as your students need you to help them by covering some letters with your fingers.

Once your kids no longer need that help, it will be more efficient to transfer whole groups of related words, at once, to a blackboard or easel for decoding. For instance, in this stage, you might transfer all the BL blends in Appendix D to the blackboard at a single time – and then have students take turns decoding the words, just as you were doing with the flash cards. You need to make this call.

Also, going forward, I'll stop using the phrase “blackboard or easel.” I'll simply say “blackboard,” by which I mean “any medium you choose,” as long as it allows all your students to easily view the words or sentences to be decoded.

Teacher Note: Word Walls are commonplace in reading classrooms. But from a Synthetic Phonics viewpoint, there is no reason for any word that is decodable to be on a Word Wall – and that includes every word your kids have seen so far. Walls should feature words that are in some way “tricky” or irregular. Going forward, I'll mention the words that I believe merit the special attention of placement on a Word Wall.

Stage 5

Sound of R

Just as you did in Stage 4, you'll be adding only a single letter and sound in this stage. That's because R, like L, blends with so many other consonants. In this case, there are a total of 26(!) such blends: 10 beginning blends (BR, CR, DR, FR, GR, TR, PR, SCR, SPR, STR) and 16 ending blends (RB, RD, RF, RG, RK, RL, RM, RN, RP, RT, RST, RCH, RSH, RTH, RVE, and RSE).

For now, however, you'll only do the 10 beginning blends with your students. This is because, when R follows a vowel, it *automatically* changes the sound of the vowel. You can hear this for yourself if you compare the vowel sound in each of the following pairs of words:

cat	car
hen	her
sit	sir
not	nor
fun	fur

For the first word in each of the above pairs, the vowel has the short sound that you and your students have been working on since Stage 1. However, for the second word in each pair, not a single vowel has its short sound. When R follows a vowel, you get some new vowel sounds that are neither short nor long. These new sounds, /ar/, /or/, and /er/, are among the 44 unique phonemes of English listed in Table 1 and in Appendix P. You'll cover these new sounds, and the above *ending* blends, in Stage 12. So why aren't /ir/ and /ur/ included on the list of the 44 English phonemes? They're not unique. You can verify this fact for yourself by noting that HER, SIR, and FUR all rhyme. The sounds, /ir/ and /ur/, are indistinguishable from /er/.

The Spelling Corner: Spelling should now focus on the L words from Stage 4. Remind students that most words ending in the sound /l/ are spelled LL. Also, the blended sound /k/ + /l/ is always spelled CL (CLASS, CLAP), not KL. As usual, if a student has trouble spelling a blend (like PLANT), ask her to spell only the CVC part of the word (LAN). Then ask her to spell PLAN, and finally, PLANT.

Look at Appendix E. There aren't a lot of CVC words, but there are 120 words that begin with new R blends or end with blends your students have already seen. To introduce this new sound, have your students listen for it in words like RUN, RIP, RED, RUG, ROCK, RAILROAD, READ, REACH, ROPE, RAIN, RAKE, RIDE. Once everyone is pronouncing /r/ correctly, ask if the sound of R is sustainable. Get them to describe how the lips must be puckered to produce this sound. Also, get the 5 sounds of R from a volunteer: /ra/ /re/ /ri/ /ro/ /ru/. Once everyone can accurately articulate these 5 sounds, they should be able to read the 20 or so CVC words in the appendix without too much difficulty. Just help with new vocabulary.

The consonant blends are going to take some time. If some of your students are struggling with these words, you have no choice but to move slowly, covering letters with your finger in order to isolate the CVC sound existing in every one of them. There's no rush. The goal is to have all your students achieve mastery.

Teacher Note: Here's something you may find interesting. For each of the 5 pairs of words at the beginning of this stage, the initial consonant is the same, but the vowel sound following that consonant is different. Now, note the shape of your mouth and lips as you prepare to say the word HEN. Do the same for the word HER. Note that even though both words start with the same phoneme, /h/, your mouth and lips are in a radically different configuration for these 2 words, even before you make a single sound. Amazing, no? The same is true for each of these 5 pairs of words.

This phenomenon is not due to the presence of the R (compare HIM and HOT and you'll notice it as well). Instead, it's a tribute to the speed and power of the human brain. For skilled readers, the brain registers every letter in a word at once, matches the letters with appropriate sounds, and then, on an unconscious level, gets our mouth, lips, and tongue ready to *coarticulate* the 3 phonemes into a single pulse of sound: HOT.

This is one of the main reasons you've been training your students to look at the vowel following a consonant before deciding how to pronounce that consonant. You're training them to do *consciously*, something that will soon become utterly *automatic* for them. This is a good example of the power of phonics!

Stage 6

Sounds of H, J, Qu, V, W, X, Y, Z

One sound in each of the prior two stages and now 8 sounds in a single stage! As you probably recognize, these are among the less frequent consonant sounds in the English language. Some of these letters are restricted to only the beginning or end of a word: English words don't end in J, Q or V, and only a few obscure words start with X. While many words end in Y, you'll postpone looking at them until Stages 12 and 13 because, for those words, Y acts as a vowel, not as a consonant: BOY, DAY, EARLY. Similarly, in Stage 12, you'll see that a final W also acts as a vowel: LAW, FEW, COW, SNOW. H is an important and frequent letter, but this is due to its combined sound with S (SHIP), with C (CHIP), and with T (THINK). These two-letter combinations (SH, CH, and TH), called digraphs, will be covered shortly, in Stage 7.

By postponing all the above complications until later stages, you'll be able to sustain the illusion that English spelling is regular through most of this stage. The topics you'll teach here include:

- Words that begin with H, J, V, W, Y, and Qu
- Words that begin or end with Z
- Words that end in X
- Some new beginning consonant blends: SW, TW, DW, SQU
- Words that start with WR, WH, or KN (these are not blends)
- Four high-frequency words in which a final S has a Z sound

The Spelling Corner: During this stage, focus spelling practice on the words from Stage 5. Remind your students these will all be R words – so they can expect lots of beginning R blends. Consider doing related words together: have a student spell RUM, and then other students can spell RUMP, GRUMP, and TRUMP. Follow the spelling of RAN with RANT and then GRANT. Tell students that you're going to have them spell three words that differ only in the vowel: TRICK, TRACK, TRUCK and RAMP, ROMP, RUMP. By doing such spelling exercises, you're teaching beginners to listen closely to individual sounds, and you're increasing their phonemic awareness.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, X does not have a unique sound; it's simply shorthand for the *ending* consonant blend KS (SIX = SIKS, FOX = FOKS). Also, the letter Q, always accompanied by U, is simply an alternate way of spelling the *beginning* consonant blend

KW (QUIZ = KWIZ, QUEST = KWEST). Because neither X nor Qu spell a single phoneme, they are not graphemes.

The consonant combinations WR, WH, and KN are not blends because each of them spells only a single sound:

- For WR, the W is silent. WR says /r/ (WRIST = /r/ + /i/ + /s/ + /t/).
- For WH, the H is silent. WH says /w/ (WHEN = /w/ + /e/ + /n/).
- For KN, the K is silent. KN says /n/ (KNOB = /n/ + /o/ + /b/).

Let's discuss how you might approach the above topics with your students. Ignoring Q and X for the time being, you can start this stage by introducing your kids to the sounds of 6 new letters: H, J, V, W, Y, and Z. Here are some suggested words to help in that process:

- H: hat, hot, hello, happy, hen, hippopotamus, hope, hug, hip
- J: jelly, juice, jet, jar, jam, Jack, Jill, job, jug, jazz, jerk
- V: van, vest, very, vine, visit, vanilla, voice, volcano
- W: wet, win, worm, wing, walnut, wipe, wise, wall, week, west, William
- Y: yard, yellow, yes, yell, year, yawn, yuck, yodel, yum
- Z: zoo, zebra, zipper, zero, zest, zap, zone, buzz, fizz, snooze, sneeze, jazz

As is true in the case of most letter names, the names V (VEE), J (JAY), and Z (ZEE) suggest the sound of the letter. (The names of the other 3 letters are no help whatsoever!) As usual, make sure your students can give you the 5 sounds for each of these 6 new consonants:

/ha/ /he/ /hi/ /ho/ /hu/
 /ja/ /je/ /ji/ /jo/ /ju/ ...and so on.

When you're sure your kids know these sounds thoroughly, do the CVC words from Appendix F with them, followed by the consonant blends. I think you know the drill by now. Once your students can read all the words on the first page of the appendix, continue with what is below.

With the Z sound fresh in their minds, you're now going to introduce 4 key words that have a slightly different spelling than your kids might imagine. Write the following on a blackboard:

ISS HISS ASS HASS

ASS and ISS are from Stage 1, HISS is the sound of a snake, and HASS, though a pseudo word, should now be readable. Once your kids can read all these words, tell them you're going to drop an S from each of them and form 4 new (and really important!) words. Your blackboard now looks like this:

ISS HISS ASS HASS
IS HIS AS HAS

Explain that for these important words, the final (single) S has a Z sound. Knowing this odd fact (or so it must seem to your class!), get individuals to identify these 4 words. Have students use each of these new words in sentences. You might also discuss how odd it is that these 4 new words are not spelled IZZ, HIZZ, AZZ, and HAZZ – as JAZZ and BUZZ were just spelled earlier in this stage. Further, for the earlier important word, US, in Stage 1, the S says exactly what we would expect: /s/. Explain that sometimes, English spelling is a little tricky. These are high-frequency words that show up everywhere; make sure your students know them well. (These 4 key words are the first words that I would place on a Word Wall.)

The only topics remaining in this stage are grouped together in the box marked “Some Anomalies” in Appendix F. You’ve now reached the point where you can no longer sustain the illusion that English is a regular language, with a simple one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. Just above, you showed your children that S can have a Z sound. Next, you’re going to show them other oddities in the code: not only “silent” letters, but also a Q that sounds like the blend KW, and an X that sounds like the blend KS. Reading is about to become more interesting and more challenging!

But look how far you’ve brought your students with this carefully constructed illusion. They can each read over a thousand words, and better yet, they’re convinced reading makes sense and is rational, and better still, they’re sure they can do it and it’s fun! They’re adept at blending sounds. Looking at some complications and anomalies now will barely slow your class down. It’s time to start showing them all the complexities of the English language.

Let’s continue with the box marked “Some Anomalies” in Appendix F. From your students, get the names of the only 2 letters in the alphabet that have not yet been

discussed: X and Q. To help them master the sound of X, write the following word on a blackboard.

FOK

They should be able to read this simple CVC construction. Now write it again with an S and let someone read the word:

FOK
FOKS

Do they recognize the word? After agreeing with them that it's a small, furry animal, tell them the little critter *could* be spelled this way – perhaps *should* be spelled this way – but, in fact, it's incorrect. It's spelled FOX. Write it as well:

FOK
FOKS
FOX

Explain that, in English, X is often used to take the place of the KS blend. In other words, for reading purposes, X = KS. You might take a moment to help your kids *spell* the name of the letter X: EKS. Now they can see the name of the letter (EKS) suggests the letter's sound (/k/ + /s/). Help each of your students pronounce KS correctly. It's a little tricky to get that sound isolated.

Now do the above FOX exercise again, but with MIK, MIKS, MIX and with SIK, SIKS, SIX. Then place all the X words from the appendix on index cards (or on the blackboard) and see if your kids can read them without the above help. You may have to define some of these words for them. For the words, NEXT and TEXT, it might be helpful if you initially hide the final T with your finger.

If a student asks *why* English replaces KS with X, congratulate him for asking such an excellent question, and then do one of 4 things:

- Admit you don't know.
- Tell the class it's time for lunch.
- State that English is sometimes unfathomable. We must learn to live with these charming oddities!
- Tell the truth. Many Greek words end with a /k/ sound. Often, these words have an S added in order to form the past tense. The Greeks invented X to take the place of, what was for them, a common ending sound: /k/ + /s/.

It's important for your students to know X does not *always* replace KS. Write this word on the board:

STIX

Given what they have just done, they'll probably read it correctly and say STICKS. Now give them the bad news: the correct spelling is STICKS, not STIX. In this word, we do not replace the KS with X.

STIX
STICKS

Someone should now ask the obvious question: When can X replace KS, and when can it not do so? The simplest answer is that we can't use X to form the *plural* of something. (You'll need to define "plural" here as "more than one"). Tell them English uses S, not X, to form the plural and give them some examples: POT/POTS, HAT/HATS, LIP/LIPS, and STICK/STICKS – not STIX!

Now ask: which is correct? ROX or ROCKS? Discuss why the second is correct: since ROCKS is plural, meaning "more than 1 rock," X can't be used. Other examples you can use are CLOX, FLOX, and FIKS. (All 3, of course, are spelled incorrectly.) If your students still seem a little confused, admit that this entire X situation is (let them read it):

COM-PLEX

Next, move on to the last letter: Q. To help them master the sound of Q, show them this word on a blackboard: WIT. Your kids should be able to read this simple CVC construction. Now write the word again, but with a K at the beginning and let them read it:

WIT
KWIT

Do they recognize this common word? Now give them the surprising news: no word in English starts with the spelling KW (or CW). If an English word starts with the blended sound, /k/ + /w/, the correct spelling is QU:

WIT
KWIT
QUIT

Acknowledge that this is a perplexing situation in English – but we’re stuck with it. Point out that Q is always attached to its buddy, U, and that QU is the correct spelling of the sound /kw/. In other words, for reading purposes, QU = KW.

Do another example with them. Write WACK on the board and let them read it. Then write it again, but with a beginning K: KWACK. Do they recognize the word? When they do, see if you can get the correct spelling from one of your students:

WACK
KWACK
QUACK

To combine the last two lessons, show your kids the following on a blackboard:

DUX KWACK
DUX QUACK
DUCKS KWACK
DUCKS QUACK

After agreeing that all 4 phrases say the same thing, discuss which one is correct and why. (The last one is correct because no English word starts with KW and because X can’t be used to form the plural of DUCK. (Boston Red Sox fans will undoubtedly disagree!)

Now place the dozen or so QU words from the appendix on index cards (spelled correctly) and see if your students can read them without the above help. You’ll likely need to define some of these words for them. If a student has trouble with any of these words, SQUID for instance, replace the QU with KW on the card: SKWID. Then cover the SK with your finger and let her read the CVC word WID. Uncover the K: KWID. Uncover the S: SKWID. Define the word (if needed) and remind the class that in English, QU always replaces KW.

Note: If a student asks *why* English replaces KW with QU, this time the truthful answer is more complicated. Basically, it’s the fault of the Romans. In Latin, U is a semi-vowel, meaning, that at the start of a word, U acts as a consonant rather than a vowel. In this situation, it’s sound value is /w/. For the /k/ sound, Latin uses Q if it comes before the sound /w/, and C otherwise. Thus, for Romans, /k/ + /w/ was spelled QU.

Next, you're going to introduce your students to "silent" letters. This is a large topic. As you know, a silent E at the end of a word often changes that word's pronunciation and meaning. (Your students will see this in Stage 10). What you're after here is the less frequent situation of silent letters at the *beginning* of a word. Start by showing your students the word WRIST. It's likely they won't be able to read it. Discuss with them the fact that WR can't be a consonant blend because there is no way to blend those 2 individual sounds: /w/ + /r/. Have your kids try to do so if you need some comic relief. Now, hide the W with your finger and ask for a volunteer to read the word: RIST. Let the volunteer show the class his or her WRIST.

Acknowledge that the spelling *should* be RIST, but, in fact, it's WRIST. The W is "silent." You might appreciate how odd this must seem to beginning readers. If a letter is silent, why use it in the first place? Worse yet, RIB, like WRIST, is another body part that starts with an R sound. Why isn't it spelled WRIB? (If anyone asks this question, I can't help you!) Happily, there are only a few words that start with the sound /r/ yet begin with W. Discuss the other 3 examples (for now) that are in the appendix and then sum it up: for reading purposes, WR = R.

Do KN as you did WR. KN can't be a blend because the sounds of these two letters don't flow together unless a vowel is placed between them. Show your class the word KNOB on the board and tell them, once again, the first letter is silent. If necessary, hide the K with your hand. Once you get a student to read it, see if you can get someone to use the word in a spoken sentence, for example, "To open a door, turn its knob." So, for reading purposes, KN = N. Have your children read the other 4 examples in the appendix. Let them know there are only a few words that have a silent K. (KNIFE, KNAVE, and other such words will show up when you cover long vowel sounds in Stage 10.) Compare the two words NOT and KNOT with your class, making sure they understand the 2 different meanings. Point out that two of the 5 words in the appendix (KNOB and KNOCK) involve doors.

The third and final example, WH, is a little more common than the other two – and in this case, it's the *second* letter, not the first, that is silent. Place the following words on the blackboard and have some students try to read them:

WHEN WHIP WHIM

W and H can't be blended. To be consistent with what just happened above, a volunteer is likely to assume the first letter again must be the silent one. If he does, he will read

HEN, HIP, and HIM. If this happens, congratulate him on his clever decoding skills, but remind him he already knows (from earlier in this stage) how to spell HEN, HIP, and HIM. Explain that, in the case of WH, it's the *second* letter that is silent. Now ask him to try again. Hide the H if necessary and help with the meaning of WHIM. Have others in the class read the rest of the WH words in the appendix. (You might point out that, for some reason, many of these WH words are great sound effects: WHAM! WHACK! WHOMP! WHUMP! WHAP!) So, for reading purposes, WH = W.

Note: These sound effect words are examples of **onomatopoeia** – definitely not a word I would introduce to my students! (I wonder if any other English words have 4 consecutive vowels!?)

You've arrived at the point where your students know a sound for every letter in the alphabet. Not only that, they can blend these sounds into hundreds of words – words they fully comprehend. Look at that stack of flash cards! To finish this stage, sum up all the anomalies. You might prepare 5 index cards as follows:

SIX QUIT WRIST WHEN KNOCK

On the back of each of these cards, write the incorrect, but phonetic spelling:

SIKS KWIT RIST WEN NOCK

Let your students see the back of the card only if they need help to pronounce the word. You might also consider placing these 5 words on your Word Wall to remind your kids of these 5 special situations. I would spell the word correctly, but with the phonetic pronunciation right next to it: SIX (SIKS), and so on.

As a final exercise before moving to Stage 7, pick 3-5 words from each of the 5 groups listed as “anomalies” in the appendix, write them on index cards, shuffle them, and then use them to conduct fast-paced drills. Stay with this topic until it is clear that your students know these 5 not-so-logical pronunciations.

Stage 7

Sounds of CH, SH, TH

Forming the Plural

Let's take stock. You and your students have now studied all 26 letters of the alphabet. Those letters have provided a spelling for 23 of the 44 phonemes listed in Table 1. (As you've seen, the letters C, Q and X only provide alternate spellings: C is an alternate spelling for /k/ or /s/, QU is an alternate for /k/ + /w/, and X for /k/ + /s/.) That leaves 21 phonemes still to be studied, but no remaining single letters for symbolizing those sounds. So now, you and your students are going to begin a new phase in your study of phonics. Since there are more sounds (44) in English than there are letters (26) to spell them, the remaining sounds will have to be symbolized by pairs of letters called digraphs. A **digraph** is an alternate name for a two-letter **grapheme**. Like all graphemes, digraphs spell a *single* phoneme. As such, a digraph is different from a **blend**.

Let's look at an example. In the word STOP, ST is a consonant **blend**. Both sounds in the blend, /s/ and /t/, can clearly be heard when you say the word aloud. Now compare this word to SHOP. In the word SHOP, the SH is a consonant **digraph**. When you say this word, neither /s/ nor /h/ can be heard. Instead, you hear a new, single sound: /sh/. The sound /sh/ is one of the 44 phonemes listed in Table 1. To spell this phoneme, the digraph SH is used. Note that while STOP and SHOP both have 4 letters, SHOP has only 3 phonemes:

STOP = /s/ + /t/ + /o/ + /p/	(ST is a blend)
SHOP = /sh/ + /o/ + /p/	(SH is a digraph)

You certainly won't need to get this detailed with your students. In fact, I suggest you not use the word "digraph" with them at all. In its place, I recommend you use the term "**two-fer**," as in "two letters fer one sound." The main point you'll need to emphasize with your students is that two-fers are something new – they're not blends. Instead, they must be read as a two-letter unit that symbolizes a *single* sound.

In this stage, you and your students will encounter 3 important two-fers: SH, CH, and TH. None of these two-fers are blends of the 2 letters that compose them. Rather, they spell 3 brand-new sounds: /sh/, /ch/, and /th/. These phonemes are among the 44 unique, indivisible sounds of the English language.

The Spelling Corner: Spelling practice can now focus on all those new sounds represented by the letters H, J, V, W, Y, Qu, X and Z from Stage 6. Do the easy CVC words and consonant blends first. Stay with those words for students who find the spelling challenging. For those who find spelling easier, focus on the words in the box labeled “Anomalies” in Appendix F. Caution them that you’re going to ask for spellings of words with “silent” letters. Be sure everyone can spell the 4 high-frequency words IS, HIS, AS, and HAS.

Start your children with the two-fer SH. Ask them if they want to learn a new sound. When they enthusiastically respond that they do, place your finger up to your lips and tell them SHHH! Once it’s quiet, repeat the sound, /sh/, and then let them know that /sh/ is precisely the new sound you want to cover. Have them listen for that sound in some words: SHIP, SHOP, SHOE, SHELF, SHOUT, SHORT, SHEET, SHARK, SHIVER, SHUT, BUSH, FISH, TRASH. Then ask them to produce the sound themselves, again letting each child have a turn. Once everyone can accurately produce the sound, ask someone if he thinks it’s sustainable. (This one is.)

Present your class with a dilemma: “How can we spell this new sound if there are no letters left?” (Remind them they have already studied the sound of every letter in the alphabet.) If anyone suggests S, tell him that’s the sound of a snake: SSSSS. Verbally contrast the two sounds /sh/ and /s/ – they are clearly different: SIP, SHIP.

Discuss with your class that one of the problems with English (there are many!) is that it has more sounds (44) than letters (26). So now they must start placing 2 letters together, as a unit, to spell a single sound. Repeat the sound, informing them that it is spelled SH, and then write it on the blackboard. Explain that SH is not a blend because the two sounds, /s/ and /h/, can’t be blended. (Let them try to blend S and H; it won’t work!) Here is where you can tell your class that since SH is not a blend, you’re going to call it a **two-fer** because it’s “two letters fer one sound.”

Have students review the 5 sounds of S and the 5 sounds of H. Then ask if someone can say the 5 sounds of the new two-fer, SH. What you want to hear is /sha/ /she/ (as in SHED) /shi/ /sho/ /shu/. Spell these 5 sounds on the blackboard:

SHA

SHE

SHI

SHO

SHU

Now have each student read the 5 sounds of SH right from the board. When you’re convinced all your kids know these 5 sounds, add some letters to make full words on the board:

SHACK SHED SHIP SHOP SHUT

Have different students read each word. Help if necessary by covering the last sound of these 5 CVC words with your fingers. In the case of SHACK, this means covering CK. Note that I'm still referring to these 5 words as CVC. Each of them consists of a single consonant sound, followed by a vowel sound, followed by another single consonant sound (CVC). You may also wish to discuss with your class the following 3 words which clearly show the difference between the sounds of S, H, and SH: SIP, HIP, and SHIP.

Once your students know the 5 sounds of SH and can read the above 5 words, it's time to look at the 50 SH words in Appendix G. There you'll find a mix of simple CVC words, and words which include the various blends your kids have already encountered. (I'm no longer separating simple CVC words from consonant blends in the appendices.) I would transfer most of these words to flash cards. Two-fers are new for your students and you may have to hide letters a lot, at least for awhile, in order to help them with the decoding. Don't be in a hurry. This is an important new topic and more two-fers are on the way.

Teacher Note: Here's an example of faulty instruction. A child is having trouble reading the word SHACK, so the teacher hides the S and the student reads the CVC word HACK. The teacher then reveals the S. The mistake? HACK has a clear H sound; SHACK has no H sound whatsoever. The teacher separated a digraph. Digraphs (two-fers) like SH have a single sound. They can never be separated. Had the word been BLACK, separating the B from the L would be no problem. BL is a blend; SH is a digraph.

SQUISH is a difficult word. If necessary, replace the QU with KW (SKWISH) and hide the leading SK. Once the student reads the CVC blend, WISH, uncover the K (KWISH), the S (SKWISH), and then rewrite the word as SQUISH, reminding the student, that in English, the KW blend is always spelled QU.

Next, focus attention on the digraph CH. This time, simply write CH on the board and tell them it's another example of a two-fer. Let your students try to blend the sounds /k/ and /h/ – it won't work. Tell them CH spells another new sound and they should listen for it at the beginning of these words: CHIN, CHEST, potato CHIP, CHEW, CHILD, CHEAP, CHASE. This sound is also at the end of the words ITCH, SCRATCH, MUNCH, and RICH. It's at both ends of the word CHURCH. Get a volunteer to state the 5 sounds of CH: /cha/ /che/ /chi/ /cho/ (as in CHOP) /chu/ (as in CHUMP). Spell them on the blackboard:

CHA

CHE

CHI

CHO

CHU

Now have each student read the 5 sounds of CH right from the board. When you're convinced all your kids know these 5 sounds, add some letters to make full words on the board:

CHAP

CHECK

CHILL

CHOP

CHUG

Have different students read each word. You might also add the words CAT, HAT, and CHAT to the blackboard – words which clearly show the difference between the sounds of C, H, and CH. Also, compare and contrast word pairs like CHIN/SHIN, CHOP/SHOP, and CHIP/SHIP so that your kids hear and see the difference between these 2 new sounds and their spellings.

There are 4 different groupings involving CH in the appendix. Again, be careful not to separate the C from the H when doing these with your kids. If someone is having trouble with the CVC word CHICK, for example, hide the CK with your finger, thus revealing only the CV part of the word. If someone is having trouble with CHAMP, hide the P and show just the CVC word CHAM – then reveal the P.

Two of the groups in the appendix involve new consonant blends: -TCH and -NCH. If a child is having trouble decoding a word in these groups, DRENCH, for instance, go back to basics. Progressively show the child RE (CV), REN (CVC), RENCH (CVCC), and finally DRENCH (CCVCC). In addition, be aware of this GLITCH in English spelling: SUCH, MUCH, DUTCH, and HUTCH all rhyme. Yet a T occurs in some of the spellings but not in others. Can you hear the phoneme /t/, separate from the phoneme /ch/, in any of these words?

Now, compare the two words WHICH and WITCH with your students, defining both, and acknowledging they have identical sounds but different spellings and meanings (thus they are homophones). Also point out that WHICH, like WHEN, is a question word, an **interrogative** – and both have a silent H. Post these two question words together on your Word Wall where students will see them often. You'll be adding about 6 more interrogatives as this reading program continues. All the interrogatives are important words.

The two-fer TH is trickier than either SH or CH. If necessary, go back to Chapter 1 and review (for yourself) the fact that TH spells 2 different sounds: one voiceless, /th/, and the other voiced, /TH/. You'll explicitly teach your students the voiceless sound,

although *the appendix has both*. Should you make this voiced/voiceless distinction explicit with your beginning readers? I've never done so. Young children pronounce the words THINK (voiceless TH) and THEM (voiced TH) without any trouble. Simply help with the correct pronunciation as they decode each TH word in the appendix. Even if a child pronounces the word THEM with the voiceless TH, he would still be quite close to the correct pronunciation – and he would probably recognize the word in context.

If you *do* wish to deal with this issue explicitly, I would first have your students compare /s/, which is voiceless, to /z/, its voiced counterpart. This would allow you to make the point that some sounds need voicing while others do not. Then demonstrate for them how the two-fer TH can go either way: voiced (as in THIS) or unvoiced (as in THIN). Once they understand that TH can be spoken in 2 different ways, it will make sense to them, when they decode a word like THIS, if you tell them “Give the TH a little voicing.” Just be aware that for about 75% of the TH words that your children will see when reading, the TH will be voiceless.

Back to instruction: tell your class you have one more two-fer. Write it out and show it to them: TH. Here are some words to introduce the (voiceless) sound: THIN, THICK, THUD, THINK, THING, THAW, THREE, THRILL, BATH, BOTH, WITH, EARTH, TOOTH. Once you're sure everyone can accurately produce the 5 sounds of TH, /tha/ /the/ (as in THEFT) /thi/ /tho/ /thu/, compare and contrast the words TUG, HUG, and THUG. You might also use THIN/CHIN/SHIN to compare and contrast the 3 new sounds of this stage. Then do the TH words in Appendix G. THRIFT is a tricky word (6 letters, 5 sounds). You can progressively do: RI (CV), RIF (CVC), RIFT, THRIFT if anyone has trouble. I have many words boxed as high-frequency words in the TH group. Note that most of these have the *voiced* TH sound.

<p>Teacher Note: If a word ends in TH, the TH is usually <i>voiceless</i>. A word that ends in THE, on the other hand, is usually <i>voiced</i>. Compare: BATHE and BATH, TEETHE and TEETH, SOOTHE and SOOTH, BREATHE and BREATH, CLOTHE and CLOTH. Your students are not yet ready for this distinction due to the fact that many of these words have long vowels. These will be covered in Stage 10.</p>

Next: In Appendix G, you'll find two groups of rhyming words: the E/EE group and the ALL group. The E/EE group has over a dozen one-syllable words that end in either one or two E's. They all rhyme and they all have the long E sound: /E/. This sound is new for your children. What you have taught them up until now is “E says /e/.” You may wonder why I want to deal with this group now, rather than wait until Stage 10 when I cover all the long vowel sounds. My reason is that in Stage 8, you'll have your

children read lots of complete sentences. The E/EE group has numerous high-frequency words that will make the task of constructing decodable, full sentences much easier. In addition, this group is a stand-alone group in English. For most words ending in E, the E is silent. So this group can logically be covered almost any time. Finally, even the youngest learners already know the meaning of most of these words.

Don't present these words to your class in the normal way, on flash cards. Since they rhyme and have the same structure (CV or CCV), present them *as a group*. Simply write them out on a blackboard and show all of them to your class at once. These are the first words they're seeing (so far) that *end* in a vowel. Tell them, for short words ending in E or double E, E does not say /e/, rather, E says its own name. Discuss this with your class a little. This is their first hint that a single letter, in this case the letter E, can spell 2 different sounds: /e/ or /E/.

Read the first word for them: BE. Contrast it with BED. Can they hear the different sound of E in these two words? Use the word in a few spoken sentences: "Would you rather BE inside or outside today?" "BE quiet!" "Will you BE my friend?" Now, have a volunteer read the second word (HE), reminding him that the whole group rhymes. Can he use the word in a sentence?

As you continue down the list, picking a different student for each word, talk about what it means for words to rhyme (same ending sound, but different beginning sound). Define any word your students don't know and discuss the difference (in meaning) between BE and BEE. It should go quickly once they catch on. Tell your kids that if they forget, and say these words with the wrong E sound, /e/, none of them are actual words! (Try it with them! Have them read the whole list with the sound /e/ instead of /E/.) So, it's easy to remember this little group.

Let's talk about that tricky last word in the group: THE. It could be pronounced like all the rest of them, with a long E sound, but that's not the way most people pronounce this word in the US. Most people pronounce it as /TH/ + /u/ (voiced TH plus short U). Your students have already used this word a million times; now they see how to spell it. Simply acknowledge the slight sound difference. You might also speak a few phrases where the word THE is pronounced *both* ways, depending on the word that follows:

- THE eye of THE tiger
- THE apple on THE floor
- THE umbrella in THE corner

Next, a BIG step for your kids: Write the following sentences on the board and ask various students to do the reading. These sentences highlight the E/EE group and they should be decodable for your kids. Nonetheless, take your time here. This reading of full sentences is new for your students and it foreshadows what's coming next in Stage 8.

- THE bag is on THE desk.
- Mom [or Mum] is on THE bed.
- Help ME with this job.
- Did HE help his dad?
- Will SHE sit with ME?
- WE SEE THE dog PEE on THE TREE.
- HE fell on his KNEE.

I would also present the ALL words from Appendix G as a group. I didn't include these words back in Stage 4 when you and your class studied the L sound because, in this group, A spells /aw/, not /a/. Think how the word BALL rhymes with CRAWL and is a homophone with BAWL. Discuss with your children the fact that the A does indeed sound a little different in this group from what they're used to. Tell them what the first two words in the group say and allow different students to read the rest of the group on their own, using the fact that all the words rhyme. (You may want to consider placing the E/EE and ALL groups on your Word Wall.)

Last, show your students what happens when we add an S to a word. We add an S for two reasons: first, to change a noun from singular to plural (BELL, BELLS) and second, to make a verb agree with its subject (I TELL, HE TELLS). The only complication is whether that final S is voiced, /z/, or unvoiced, /s/. A handy rule is that if the original word ends in P, T, K, or F, an added S keeps the sound /s/: (CAPS, ANTS, ROCKS, SURFS). In all other cases, an added S has the sound /z/: (BAGS, HOGS, NODS, BALLS, CANS, HAMS, JARS, COWS, PLAYS). Surprisingly, a final S says /z/ more often than it says /s/.

I don't think it's helpful to share this rule with your students. Most children will pronounce the final S correctly without ever knowing the rule. If a child does have trouble with this, simply correct her pronunciation and tell her that sometimes, it just sounds better if a final S says /z/. In Appendix G, I have two groups of words ending in S: one group has the S sound, the other has the Z sound. Do them separately with your children, make flash cards, and then mix the cards together and see how they do.

There is one complication I should mention here. If the original word ends in S, X, Z, CH or SH, you can't simply add an S. Instead, you must add ES, and the resulting new word has *two* syllables (KISSES, BOXES, FIZZES, PEACHES, DISHES). You'll cover this complication in Stage 9, after you introduce two-syllable words. For now, let's keep it simple as possible.

Stage 8

Reading Sentences (Part I)

During this stage, your students will begin reading full, grammatically correct sentences. Don't worry about spelling practice; you can resume spelling again in Stage 9. Your goal here is to provide sentences that are within your students' ability to decode. In doing so, you'll be providing them with the opportunity to review all the sounds in the previous stages, and more importantly, you'll be enhancing their motivation and self-confidence.

At this point, you've introduced your class to 27 of the 44 sounds of English. These include the 5 short vowel sounds and 22 consonant sounds: /b/ /d/ /f/ /g/ /h/ /j/ /k/ /l/ /m/ /n/ /p/ /r/ /s/ /t/ /v/ /w/ /y/ /z/ /sh/ /ch/ /th/ and /TH/. Therefore, you must be careful about the sentences you ask them to read. The words in those sentences should have only the 27 sounds your students have already learned. There can be no two-syllable words or long vowel sounds for the simple reason that you have not yet formally taught those concepts. There can be no vowel two-fers (EA, OI, OU, and so on) for the same reason. In short, the sentences must be "decodable." I spoke of decodable text in Chapter 2, but I'll define it again here: text is decodable for a child if she has already been taught the letter-sound relationships necessary for her to fully **decode** the text without guessing.

It's not easy to construct full decodable sentences with only 27 sounds at one's disposal. To make the task easier, I need you to teach your class 12 of the 50 irregular words I first spoke of in Chapter 6. Being able to use these 12 irregular, high-frequency words will make the task of constructing decodable text much easier – both for me, and for you (should you decide to construct additional sentences). You'll teach the other 38 irregular words in Stages 11 and 14. Once your children master these 12 words, they'll be ready to read the sentences later in this stage.

Tricky Words (12)					
you	do	her	they	my	to
who	our	their	your	have	from

Let me be specific about the criteria I used in writing the decodable sentences you'll find below. This list should be helpful if you choose to make up some decodable sentences on your own.

- All words should be one syllable.
 - All vowels should have their short sound (exception: the E/EE group and the ALL group from Appendix G).
 - Any word from the above Tricky Words (12) group is allowed.
 - Interrogatives: when, which, who.
 - Conjunctions: but, and.
 - Any subject pronoun: I, you, he, she, it, we, they.
 - Any object pronoun: me, you, him, her, us, them.
 - Possessives: my, your, yours, his, her, hers, our, ours, their, theirs.
 - Prepositions: to, in, with, on, at, from, off, up.
 - The 4 special words from Stage 6: is, his, as, has.
 - Numbers: three, six, ten.
 - Any word from Appendix A through Appendix G.
 - Any word from these appendices with an S added to form the plural, or to have a verb agree with the subject.
-

Before having your students tackle the decodable sentences that follow, they must learn the above 12 tricky words – plus the words “I” and “a”. I’m not counting the words “I” and “a” among the tricky words because they’re too trivial. Let’s dispense with these familiar words right away.

Ask if anyone in the class can name the two shortest words in our language. Whether anyone can name them or not, write them down and tell your students how to say them. “I” says its own name and is always uppercase. It’s the word we use when we speak about ourselves. Most children are already quite familiar with this word! In the word “a,” the A does not say its own name; instead, it has the short U sound your students already know: /u/. That sound is also present in the word THE. In fact, if pronounced as most people speak in the US, the word “a” rhymes with “the.” How weird is that? Tell your class that's why it's tricky!

Next, point out that “a” or “an” usually come before a **noun**: a person, a place, or a thing – usually, something we can touch. Write these examples on a blackboard and allow various students to read them:

a bag	a flag	an egg	a cat	a dog	a ball
an ox	a brick	a duck	a tree	an ant	a stick

These nouns are all from earlier stages. Ask if anyone sees why “an” is used sometimes instead of “a.” If no one answers, tell them “an” is used if the following noun starts with a vowel. It just sounds better.

Now let them know that “I” is usually followed by a **verb**: an action word. Write these examples:

I swim	I fall	I yell	I run	I help	I see
I hug	I ask	I pee	I call	I slept	I jog

Again, allow various students to read each one. Help as necessary. Tell them that by placing the word “I” in front of these verbs, we know exactly who is doing the action. Now have students read each of the following as you write them:

I swim	he swims
she swims	we swim
I yell	he yells
she yells	we yell

Emphasize that in each case, we know exactly who’s doing the swimming and the yelling. Easy, right? Emphasize that a verb following SHE or HE usually has an S to make it sound better.

With the simple words “I” and “a” out of the way, focus next on the above 12 tricky words. This will take some time – likely a few days. I would certainly feature these 12 “Tricky Words” on your Word Wall. Explain to your students why you are calling these words “tricky”: the spelling and the sound don’t quite match. Yet all 12 are common words that kids use all the time when they speak.

Focus first on the word HAVE with your class. Cover the E with your finger and ask a student to read it. It has a silent E – no big deal. Now write a few sentences that use the word HAVE on a blackboard and let various students read them:

- We HAVE a cat.
- I HAVE a ball.
- I HAVE a rash on this leg.

You don't want your students to blindly memorize these tricky words. Instead, you want students to use all the phonetic hints these words do possess. The word HAVE is on the tricky list simply because of the silent E. Tell your kids it ought to be spelled HAV, but for some reason, no English words end in V!

Focus next on the word HER. Does anyone recognize it? Write HIM next to it and tell the class that one word is for boys and the other is for girls. You can also point out that the H and the R sound like they should, but the E does not have the normal E sound: /e/. Nor does E say its own name (like in SHE). As above, write some sentences and let students read them:

- This is HER desk.
- HER name is Jan.
- I see HER red hat.
- HIS cat ran up the tree. (contrast HIS and HER as opposites)

Next: the word FROM. It's almost perfectly phonetic. Only the vowel is a little off. Give your students some sentences to read and they may get it without help:

- This gift is FROM mom.
- That ball is FROM Dan.
- We ran FROM that big dog!

Tell your kids this word wouldn't be tricky at all if it were spelled FRUM. Acknowledge that strange spellings sometimes happen in English; when they do, we've got to learn the word anyway!

Next, focus on 4 tricky words together: TO, DO, YOU, and WHO. Tell your class these 4 words rhyme, just like the words HE, ME, BE, and SHE rhymed in Stage 7. Does anyone recognize them? Let them know that the word starting with W is a question word (like WHEN and WHICH) and then have them attempt these sentences:

- WHO is that kid? That kid is Jack.
- WHO is tall? I am tall.
- WHO is small? Pam is small.
- WHO slept in this bed? Chuck slept in that bed.

Compare the word WHO with the other 2 interrogatives they already know:

- WHO is that kid? That kid is Rick.

- WHICH hat is his? The black hat is his.
- WHEN did she HAVE HER nap? She had HER nap at three.

Point out that the H is silent in WHICH and WHEN, but in the tricky word WHO, the W is silent! In fact, WHO is tricky for 2 reasons: The W is silent and the O has an /ew/ sound, like in MOOSE. Now remind your class that the other 3 words rhyme with WHO. So, they must also have an /ew/ sound! Can they decode them now, based on their first letter? Use each in a simple sentence for students to read:

- Pass the cup TO me.
- Hand the stick TO Fred.
- Can YOU see me? I can see YOU.
- I can DO that job!
- DO YOU HAVE a dog? Yes, I DO.

Five tricky words to go.

To introduce THEY to your class, do what you were doing earlier, but this time with *all* the subject pronouns: I, you, he, she, it, we, they. Write this:

I swim.	You swim.	We swim.
He swims.	She swims.	They swim.

Can any of your children figure out the word THEY in this context? If not, just tell them what the word is, and point out that the TH is perfectly phonetic (regular) but the EY is wacky. It's the EY that makes this a tricky word. Define it for them: WE means a group that includes me; THEY means a group that does not include me. These 6 important words tell us *who does the action*. Do the above exercise with as many verbs as necessary (JOG, HUG, HELP, CALL, SEE, ASK) until everyone is comfortable with all 6 subject pronouns.

The 4 remaining tricky words are all possessives. These 4 words, along with HIS and HER, tell us *who the thing (noun) belongs to*. Write this for your class:

his ball	her ball
my ball	your ball
our ball	their ball

These last 4 words are difficult, yet your kids must master them. Point out that YOUR is pronounced like YOU, but with the R sound, /r/, at the end. For the word MY, at

least the M sound is what we expect. For THEIR, the TH and the R sounds are fine; in fact, this word is pronounced like THEY, but with /r/ attached. The only phonetic sound in the word OUR is the final R. (OUR will turn out to be perfectly phonetic once your students study the OU two-fer in Stage 12.) Repeat the above exercise with lots of nouns until your children are comfortable with all 6 possessives. Other nouns you might use are: DOG, HAT, FROG, BUG, TUB, SNACK, GIFT, and many more.

Teacher Note: You're taking two ever-so-slight liberties here. The word YOUR is not really pronounced as YOU + /r/. In reality, YOUR has a new phoneme in it: YOUR = /y/ + /oor/ (see Table 1). There are only 5 other common one-syllable words that have this new phoneme and they will all be covered in Stage 14: SURE, CURE, PURE, LURE, and POOR. Same thing for the word THEIR. It's not really pronounced as THEY + /r/. It, too, uses a new phoneme: THEIR = /TH/ + /air/. I will say more about the phoneme /air/ in Stage 10.

Don't let your kids attempt to read the sentences below until they know these 12 tricky words thoroughly. They must simply recognize them, using all the phonetic hints these words do possess. Here is the final test of proficiency: place these 15 words on flash cards (the 12 tricky words plus "the," "I," and "a") and see if each student can quickly recognize the words. A student should be able to read all 15 words, in any order, in under a minute.

Assuming your children have mastered the above 12 tricky words, it's time for them to read some more sentences. This is a significant step. The sentences are grammatically correct and each expresses a complete thought. Your students should be able to decode them AND understand their meaning. As your class works through these sentences over the next days (or weeks), use this opportunity to teach them some of the basic "mechanics" of sentences:

- Sentences always start with an uppercase letter.
- Sentences express a complete thought.
- Sentences end with a period, a question mark (?) or excitement mark (!).
- Sentences use commas wherever there is a pause in the flow of speech.
- All sentences have a verb (an action word).
- Words in sentences are separated from each other by spaces.
- We always read from top to bottom and from left to right.
- The names of people start with an uppercase letter.

Teacher Note: It would be most helpful if each of your students were given a copy of the 90 decodable sentences below. That way, they could check off the sentences as they successfully decode and understand each one. They could also take the sentences home to show their families their progress.

The sentences are printed in a large font and spread out a bit. Maybe you can simply photocopy them for your kids.

If you're going to do these sentences with a class of 20 or more students, you'll have to decide what will work best for you. Here are my suggestions:

- Ask for a volunteer to read the first sentence and be slow to help with the decoding. If a student struggles with a particular word, write it on the board and cover up parts of the word with your hand, as needed, in order to isolate the CV or CVC part of the word in question.
- Once the sentence is correctly decoded, discuss it. Point out the “tricky” words. When a word ends in S does the S say /s/ or /z/?
- Make sure all students understand the *meaning* of each word.
- Change the sentence slightly, keeping the criteria I listed at the start of this chapter in mind. Now ask a different student to read it. For example, the first sentence could be changed to “I will run with my dad” or “I will swim with her cat.”
- Don't expect your kids to race through these sentences. As beginners, they must take time to “sound out” (decode) the words based on their phonics skills from Stages 1-7. Don't let a student skip words and *never allow guessing*.
- The following day, start by having different students review each of the sentences that have already been decoded to date.
- Take as much time as you need with these sentences; you need not adhere to anyone's schedule but your own. Mastery – not speed – is the key.

When you finish this stage, your children will be novice readers by anyone's standards. And this is true even though your kids know only 27 of the 44 sounds in the English language. They're not yet fluent, but each day they will become more so. Sensing the magnitude of their own accomplishment and hearing your well-deserved praise, how can they not want to learn the rest of the code?

Decodable Sentences

I will sit with my mom.

We will swim in the pond.

You can sit with me.

They can sit in the grass.

He sits on the rug.

She stands on the wall!

I run with my small dog.

We ran up the hill to catch Jill.

You cant run with a cat! (proper contractions come in Stage 16)

They can run with us.

He went up the steps.

She jumps on the rug.

An egg is on my dish.

Is that an egg on your dish?

Their dog smells bad!

Our cat naps in the sun a lot!

Her glass has a crack in it!

His dog is a Pug. (get a picture of one from the Internet)

Who is that lass? That lass is Jill. She is three.

Who is that lad? That lad is Sam. He is six.

Who is that tall man? He is my dad.

Which plant is his? The plant on the desk is his.

Which hat is hers? The hat in the red box is hers.

When will we have lunch? We will have lunch at three o'clock.
(help with o'clock as needed.)

When will she have her nap? She will have her nap at ten o'clock.

This is my pet frog. I call him Fred. He has bumps on his skin!

This is my cat. I call her Fluff. She sits on my lap.

Is this your glass of milk? Yes, you bet! Thats my glass of milk!
(proper contractions come in Stage 16)

We can smell the trash in the bin. It smells bad!

I had lunch with mom and dad at 11 o'clock.

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch their dog.

Did you have a snack? Yep, I had a snack with Kim.

Did you have a hot dog with your lunch? Yes. In fact, I had 2 hot dogs – with ketchup!
(help with 'ketchup' as needed.)

My dog lifts his leg and then he pees on trees!

That frog jumps from the log into the pond.

I see you, but you cant see me!

Do you have my ball? Your ball is in the hall.

She sits on the rug. I will sit next to her.

We sat on a brick wall. Dan fell off and cut his leg!

That dog just bit me! I am sad and mad!

She has her red dress on and she fell in the mud!
Is her dress a mess?

The ants ran from the tree to their nest in the wall.

Who is that next to him? Thats his dad.

I will toss the ball to you. Hit it with your bat and then run fast!

A duck, on its back, will quack up!
Is that a jest? You quack me up!

A rich man has lots of cash to stash!

Will you help me lift this bench? I am glad to help you!

Thats a bug on your rug!

I wish I had a fish on my dish.

That duck is stuck in the muck, Chuck!

When I gulp my milk, Mom tells me to sip it.

You can jog with me, and then you can swim with them.

Help me get that cup. Its up on the top shelf.

He will be as tall as his dad.

Ed slept on a cot, but we slept in our bed. Our bed has a quilt on it.

If you grab a crab, it will pinch your hand!

You have a rash on your leg. It must itch a lot. Do you scratch it?

When I see my mom, I will kiss her! Then she will be glad.

Ben, when did your hen get free from its pen?

Do you see that lass who sits in the grass? She is my pal.

Sam spits in the grass. Yuck!

He yells when he gets mad.

When I pass gas, it smells bad!

Mom calls me to have lunch with her. Then she hugs me.

Its fun to sit on a branch in an elm tree!

A small hen is a chick.

A small dog is a pup.

A small bed is a crib.

A small lunch is a snack.

A big cup is a mug.

She went to the vet to pick up her sick dog.

Who is in the bath tub? Sam is in the bath tub. He is a mess! He fell in a ditch!

I splash in the bath with my red duck.

We went on a trip with my mom. We had such a blast!

Can you pick me up? Yes, I can – and I will not drop you.

Spell sad. Ok. S – A – D.

Spell mad. M – A – D.

Spell bad. B – A – D.

I am glad that you can spell this well!

A hen clucks. A duck quacks. A kid yells, and trash smells.

That big dish fell off the shelf by itself! I did not do it!

If you tell fibs, I cant trust you.

I help my mom: I dust the shelf and I mop the deck!

They went to the shop to get milk and snacks.

Fred and Ted fled on their red sled.

When will she call me? She will call you at ten o'clock.

Which kid hid my squid? Sid did. Sid hid your squid in that can with the lid.

Get your cup and I will fill it to the rim with pop.

Did she swim at camp? Yes, and then she slept in her tent!

It is rash to stash cash in the trash!

We will cuss and fuss if we miss that bus, Gus!

Which tree has a nest in it? That big elm tree on top of Moss Hill.
The nest has three robins in it!

Stage 9

Sounds of NG, NK

Multi-Syllable Words

The next new sound you'll introduce to your students is spelled by another consonant two-fer: NG. But unlike the sounds of SH, CH, and TH, it's difficult to pronounce this new sound /ng/ in isolation from other sounds. Your kids have heard /ng/ hundreds of times because it occurs in such familiar words as SING, BANG, LONG and STUNG. However, if you try to pronounce the exact sound these 4 words have in common, you'll find it's an elusive sound.

You can avoid this difficulty with your students by attaching short vowel sounds to /ng/ right from the beginning. While /ng/, alone, may be difficult to hear and pronounce, /i/ + /ng/ = ING is easy. Therefore, you'll practice this sound with words having the spellings: ING, ANG, ENG, ONG, and UNG.

The Spelling Corner – As a reminder: throughout this stage, you should practice spelling with words from Stage 7 (and Appendix G). These are the words with the digraphs SH, CH, and TH. Do the simple CVC words first, and whenever you can, build on the simpler word. For example, after a student spells LUSH, ask about FLUSH and BLUSH; after ASH, ask students to spell SMASH, CRASH, and TRASH. Don't neglect to include some words from the E/EE and the ALL groups.

Start with the ING sound – one of the more common word endings in the English language. Ask a child to say the word SING but without the initial S sound (don't write it yet). Help out if necessary. This isolated ING sound, /i/ + /ng/, is what you want all your kids to hear and to say. Now let them see how to spell this sound. Write ING on the blackboard. Point out that the I sound, /i/, can easily be heard, but the sounds, /n/ and /g/, can't be distinguished. That's because those two sounds are not there! NG (like SH, TH, and CH) is a two-fer. Just as SH is not a blend of /s/ + /h/, NG is not a blend of /n/ + /g/. NG spells a new sound.

Once your kids are comfortable with the ING sound, write an S in front of the ING on the blackboard. Get a student to read it. Write RING and WING below SING and have other students read those as well:

SING
RING
WING

Now add a T to SING, a B to RING and an S to WING:

SING → STING
RING → BRING
WING → SWING

Allow other kids to decode those words too. In Appendix H, you'll find more ING words, and at the end of that list, a review of important subject pronouns and possessives. Do these with your students in any way you see fit.

Teacher Note: The /ng/ sound is one of three nasal sounds in English. Take a moment to go back and look at the 44 sounds in Table 1. Note that you can pronounce any of these sounds perfectly well with your nose pinched shut – except for /m/, /n/, and /ng/. These 3 sounds require air to exit the nose. You and your kids can have some fun trying to say various NG words in this stage with your noses pinched shut.

Next day, review ING with your class and then write ANG on the blackboard. Can anyone pronounce it correctly? Give them a hint: they need only take the sound of ING and replace the initial /i/ with /a/. If necessary, have a student say the word BANG but without the B sound. Let each student say both sounds: ING and ANG. When everyone seems comfortable with ANG, have them read the 9 ANG words you'll find in the appendix. It would also be helpful to mix the ING and ANG words together on flash cards, and see how your class does.

With ING and ANG fresh in their minds, write UNG on the blackboard and ask if someone can pronounce it. A student need only take the pronunciation of either ING or ANG and change the initial sound to /u/. There are 8 UNG words in the appendix.

Similarly, do ONG and ENG with your children. There are no English words of consequence that end in ENG. I suggest you write ENG on the board, get the correct sound, and then add the two-fer TH at the end: ENNGTH. Once your students have that pronunciation, the two words, LENGTH and STRENGTH, from the appendix should become decodable. These two words are phonetic but they are difficult at first. Once you finish the NG groups, have your students review the 5 sounds of NG: ANG, ENG, ING, ONG, UNG. You could also give them some new sentences to read:

- Our KING is a STRONG man.
- I SANG a SONG with my mom.
- That bee STUNG my leg!
- Who RANG that bell?
- If you step in DUNG, you will be sad.

Of course, you can make up your own sentences for your students whenever you wish. Just be sure to stick to the criteria listed in Stage 8 plus any new words and sounds you are working on here in Stage 9. You don't want to confuse your students with text that is not yet decodable for them.

The NK groups in Appendix H are next. Before you discuss this topic with your kids, note that NK is something of an anomaly in English. It does not spell a unique phoneme so it is not a grapheme (or two-fer). But neither is it a normal blend. Most blends simply combine the sounds of their component letters. For example, SP = /s/ + /p/. But NK is not a combination of /n/ + /k/. Instead, NK = /ng/ + /k/. Consider the word THINK. You don't say THIN and add a K sound; you say THING and add the K sound. In other words, THINK = THING + /k/. Using our notation:

THING = /th/ + /i/ + /ng/ while THINK = /th/ + /i/ + /ng/ + /k/

Here are other examples:

RANK = RANG + /k/ KINK = KING + /k/
 DUNK = DUNG + /k/ CLINK = CLING + /k/

The question is, how should you present all this to your students? I suggest you place the word STINK on the blackboard and ask if anyone can read it. They'll probably have some difficulty because NK is not a reasonable consonant blend in English. The sounds /n/ and /k/ do not easily flow together. After discussing this with the class, write the following under the word STINK:

STINK
 STINK = STING + K

If necessary, explain the meaning of the symbols = and +. Now ask a volunteer to pronounce this new mystery word by saying STING and immediately adding the K sound: /k/. Does he get it? Here are other word pairs you can do with additional

students. Have a child read the first word, and then repeat it with an added K sound, to read the second. Help with the meaning of the words as needed.

WING/WINK	SING/SINK
BRING/BRINK	BANG/BANK
SANG/SANK	FLUNG/FLUNK

Your kids will probably find this pretty interesting. You want them to learn, that when reading, they should always handle NK in the following manner (show this to them):

ANK = ANG + K
 INK = ING + K
 ONK = ONG + K
 UNK = UNG + K

Have your students compare the 5 sounds of NG (ANG, ENG, ING, ONG, UNG) with the 5 sounds of NK (ANK, ENK, INK, ONK, UNK). There are about 50 NK words in Appendix H. You can make up individual flash cards or you can place these words in groups on the blackboard and have your kids read them in that manner. When you finish the NK groups, mix up some NG and NK flash cards and make sure your students can read them competently.

Before moving on to Stage 10, there are a few more topics to address. Your students need to understand that not all words are short, one-syllable words. To that end, you'll need to define "syllable" in a way they can understand. Then you can give them some practice in decoding two-syllable words on their own.

The number of syllables is different from the number of sounds (phonemes). The word CAT has 3 phonemes but it's a single syllable – a single pulse of sound. The word CHILLY has 6 letters, 4 phonemes (/ch/, /i/, /l/, /E/) and 2 syllables (CHIL, LY). The problem here, is how to explain **syllable** to your students. My Merriam-Webster dictionary defines syllable as "a unit of pronunciation having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants, forming the whole or a part of a word." I like this definition – but not for children.

I suggest a different approach. Point out to your kids that most of the words they have looked at so far (the words in Appendices A through G) have only 2 to 5 letters each. They're "small" words. Tell them it's now time to start looking at some BIG words – words that have two parts. That should get their attention! Note: For the following

you'll need to prepare a large flash card in advance. On it, write the following word with the letters spread out a bit:

P U M P K I N

Don't let your students see this card ahead of time. When you're ready, use a blank index card (you've got lots of those!) to cover KIN. Now ask a student to read what she can see: PUMP. Tell your class: "PUMP is only the first part of this word – now here is the second part." Slide the index card over to cover PUMP and ask another student to read what he sees. He should say KIN. Now take the card away and ask him to read the whole word. This word is likely in your children's vocabulary and they should now recognize it: PUMPKIN. Emphasize that this word has 7 letters and two "parts" and point out that each "part" has its own vowel. These "parts" are called "syllables." So, define "syllable" for your class in one (or both) of these ways:

- Syllable - The number of "parts" in a word (with each part having a vowel)
- Syllable - The number of grunts you hear if you say the word with your mouth closed, as though you are humming. Try it! Your kids will enjoy it!

They should be eager to do this again. Continue the game with the following words from Appendix H, covering one part and then the other. Each time they get the complete word, point out how each syllable (or part) has its own vowel. (Don't use the slash mark with your kids. That's just my way of saying how I would separate one part from the other.)

V A N / I S H
B A S / K E T
C O N / T E S T
C H I C / K E N
I N / S E C T

Ask them if they would like to try some *three*-part words: (Who could say no?)

F A N / T A S / T I C
P U N / I S H / M E N T
D I F / F I / C U L T
E X / P E C / T E D
A S / T O N / I S H

The multi-syllable words in Appendix H use only the 28 sounds your students already know. Most are words they should recognize once they decode them.

You shouldn't need to present every multi-syllable word in Appendix H as you did above, covering parts of each word with an index card. Once your kids catch on to this new idea of words having more than a single syllable, test how they do simply reading the entire word, written normally, on a flash card. Nor is it necessary to do *all* the multi-syllable words in Appendix H. You're already at the point where your children can read far more words than you can list. (Think about how amazing that fact is!) Simply pick 20-30 words from Appendix H that are likely in their vocabularies and put those words on flash cards. Help as needed and teach some new vocabulary. Note: future word lists will now routinely have some multi-syllable words included.

Now that your class is familiar with two-syllable words, you can finish up what you began in Stage 7. Back then, I said that if a word ends in S, X, Z, CH, or SH, forming the plural can't be done by simply adding an S. Instead, you must add ES. This creates a second syllable where the final S always has a Z sound. There is a group of such words in Appendix H. I don't think it will require much time to do these with your class.

Your students can add their newly-learned suffix, ING, to many of the words in Appendices A through G. There is a simple rule governing the spelling:

If a *single* consonant follows the vowel, double it and add ING (WIN, WINNING).

If 2 consonants follow the vowel, just add ING (MELT, MELTING; SING, SINGING).

There are some groups in Appendix H that show both of these situations. You and your students can examine these words together.

Stage 10

Long Vowel Sounds

Now it's time to focus on the 5 *long* vowel sounds. Learning which spellings can symbolize these new sounds will enable your students to read thousands of additional words. Recall from Chapter 1 that only 4 of the 5 long vowel sounds are unique. Long U is simply a blend of 2 phonemes already listed in Table 1: /y/ + /ew/.

The Spelling Corner – The words you spell with your children during this stage should now come from Stage 9. Start with the simplest one-syllable NG and NK words. If those get easy for your kids, move on to some two-syllable words. Remind them: each syllable must have a vowel. Start with the easier ones (EXIT, SUNSET, SICKNESS, CONTEST) and then move to the words having double consonants in the middle (HAPPEN, MUFFIN, SWIMMING). Remind them that when adding ING to a word having only a single consonant after the vowel, they must double the consonant.

As you begin this stage, review with your students what the vowels are, and why they are the most important letters: every word and every syllable must have one. Point out that all the two and three-syllable words recently studied in Stage 9 had a vowel in each syllable. Now let them know there is *another* reason vowels are so important: each vowel can spell a second sound! This complicates things a little. Up until this moment, you have given your kids the impression that each vowel makes a single sound, so this new revelation may cause some confusion for a while. Briefly review the short vowel sounds your class already knows: /a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/.

So, what is the *other* sound a vowel can make? Tell them that each of the 5 vowels can sometimes *say their own name*: /A/, /E/, /I/, /O/, /y/ + /ew/. You might remind them that they have already seen this occur in the E/EE group back in Stage 7: ME, BE, SHE, TREE, and so on. What's new in this stage is that *all* the vowels can do what E did in Stage 7.

Start with an example like this one: Say the word TAP and have a student spell it. Write the spelling on a blackboard. Now tell your class you want to spell the word TAPE. They know what TAPE is; they have probably used it in arts and crafts many times. Ask them what letter the word TAPE should start with, given its initial sound. They'll probably agree that the answer is T. Write a second T under the T of the word TAP on the board. Now ask what letter the word TAPE should end with, given its final sound.

They should agree the answer is P. Write a second P under the P of the word TAP. Now ask your class what vowel they can clearly hear in the middle of the word TAPE: A. Write that letter as well. The blackboard now looks like this:

T A P
T A P

Does your class see the problem? How can we have the same spelling for the words TAP and TAPE? Emphasize that for one of these two words (the top one), the A says what it has always said up until now: /a/. But in the second word, A says its own name: /A/. The problem is, how can we tell them apart? If A can make 2 different sounds, how do we know when A says /a/ and when A says /A/? Having set up this dilemma, you can now show your class the solution. Write an E at the end of the second word:

T A P
T A P E

Problem solved! The E makes no sound but it lets us know that the earlier (preceding) vowel says its own name. The silent E is a signal to us; it tells us A says its own name, /A/, rather than /a/.

Beginners are likely to find this confusing for a while, so you can do another example, this time ending up with:

P I N
P I N E

Tell your kids that the sounds /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/ are called **short** vowel sounds, while /A/, /E/, /I/, /O/, and /y/+ew/ are called **long** vowel sounds.

Teacher Note: I am using the correct notation with you. It's not for your children. When dealing with them, simply say what the long and short vowels sounds are.

The long sound of a vowel is precisely the name of that vowel. Explain that the words “short” and “long” have nothing to do with duration of the sound – they are simply traditional terms, used by teachers since just after the Big Bang.

Now ask a student: What *two* sounds does A make? The verbal answer you want, of course, is /a/ and /A/. Ask another student for the 2 sounds of O, and so on. Keep

asking various students until everyone has it. Then make it a little trickier: Ask various students for just the long (or just the short) sound of any of the 5 vowels.

When you are sure your students know the long and short sound of all 5 vowels, write the following on the blackboard.

MAD	MADE
PET	PETE
FIN	FINE
NOT	NOTE
CUB	CUBE

Get 10 different students to read these 10 words. For each student, ask if the vowel is short or long. If long, ask how they know. You want your students to see how the silent E (an unpronounced E) changes both the sound and the meaning of the word, like magic! Point out how easy the long vowel sound is: the vowel says its own name! Make sure your kids understand the meanings of all 10 words.

Over the next few days, test their understanding of this important new concept, by writing out the following words in a single column on the board:

win	hat	man	glob	van	scrap	mop
rip	cod	grim	cut	rod	cop	slop
Jan	bit	kit	spit	shin	mad	glad
fat	mat	pan	hid	dim	spin	fad
quit	Tim	gal	strip	snack	back	lick

Now, one at a time, go back up to the top of your column, and across from the word WIN, write WINE. Pick a student to read both WIN and WINE, defining words as necessary. Continue down the column, writing the same word, but now attaching an E. Each time, let a different student read both words. The board will look like this:

win	wine	
hat	hate	
man	mane	
glob	globe	(and so on...)

Emphasize how easy short and long vowels really are. You might also discuss with your class that this is not their first example of a “silent” letter: in WHEN, the H is silent; in WRIST, the W is silent. Even though the final E is silent, it plays a key role: it’s a signal to the reader that the earlier vowel should say its long sound instead of its short sound. Note: for the final 3 words in the box above, drop the C when you add the E.

Now take a look at Appendix J. There, I have grouped words by long vowel, and within each group, I have rhyming subgroups. Once your children have caught on to the fact that a silent E makes the earlier vowel “long,” they may be able to read these new words quite rapidly. You may need to spend more time here on the *meaning* of words rather than on their *decoding*.

Teacher Note: I’ve structured this stage so that you’ll be teaching 4 new phonemes *explicitly* and 2 *implicitly*. The 4 explicit ones are /A/, /E/, /I/, and /O/. The 2 phonemes covered implicitly in this stage are /air/ and /ear/. (See Table 1.)

My thinking is this: There’s only an ever-so-slight difference (in sound) between the phoneme /air/ and the phoneme *blend* /A/ + /r/. HAIR or HARE, for example, can reasonably be coded as /h/ + /air/ (2 phonemes) or as /h/ + /A/ + /r/ (3 phonemes). Your children, and indeed many literate adults, can’t hear the difference between /air/ and /A/ + /r/.

Accordingly, I think it easier to have beginners decode a word like SHARE just as they would approach words like SHAME, SHAKE, and SHADE: the silent E at the end of the word makes the preceding vowel long. While a professional linguist might not like treating the phoneme /air/ as equivalent to /A/ + /r/, you’re not training professional linguists. Treating /air/ as equivalent to /A/ + /r/ simplifies things for you and your kids.

If you’re thinking that /air/ might be equivalent to /A/ + /er/, that’s not exact either. LAIR = /l/ + /air/ (1 syllable), while LAYER = /l/ + /A/ + /er/ (2 syllables).

I can (but I won’t) make the exact same argument for treating the phoneme /ear/ as functionally equivalent to /E/ + /r/. In short, just do this stage as outlined and have your kids decode the words that end in an R sound just as they would decode *any other word* in appendices J and K. The sound /r/ sure does complicate things, no?

Teacher Note: A word about flash cards. You might judge it unnecessary here to make any flash cards at all. Your students might be able to simply look at the rhyming subgroups and read all the words at once. Use your judgment going forward and use flash cards only when you think they will help. If you do use them, you can't hide the final E with your finger. Your students need to see that letter right from the start.

The long E group has fewer words than the others. That's because long E is usually spelled in a different manner, something you'll teach your children a little further below. Also, let's discuss the long U sound. Sometimes, like the other long vowels, U says its own name: /y/ + /ew/:

CUBE = /k/ + /y/ + /ew/ + /b/
 MUTE = /m/ + /y/ + /ew/ + /t/

At other times, however, that subtle /y/ sound is missing:

TUBE = /t/ + /ew/ + /b/
 FLUTE = /f/ + /l/ + /ew/ + /t/

You'll cover the latter case in Stage 12 when you look at the various spellings of the sound /ew/. Either way, however, long U is not a unique sound in English. It's always equivalent to /y/ + /ew/ or to /ew/ alone. (This discussion of long U is only for you; you need not bring it to your children's attention.)

The word USE in the long U group merits some special attention. It can be pronounced with the S symbolizing either /s/ or /z/. It makes a difference with the word's meaning. You can USE the following sentences to demonstrate the difference to your students. Just speak these sentences; they are not yet decodable:

- We USE a brush to clean our teeth. (/y/ + /ew/ + /z/)
- What's the USE of talking to that dog? He never listens! (/y/ + /ew/ + /s/)

A good test of Appendix J mastery is to take 2 words from each rhyming subgroup and put them on flash cards. Mix up the cards and see if your kids can read them competently. You don't want to be in the position where your students need rhyming in order to read well.

Next, you and your class will investigate another way English spells long vowels. So far, your students have not encountered any *vowel* two-fers, that is, two consecutive

vowels making a single sound. Yet there are 4 vowel two-fers that rather reliably spell a long vowel sound:

- AI spells /A/ (example: TRAIL)
- EA and EE both spell /E/ (examples: CHEAT, STREET)
- OA spells /O/ (example: BOAT)

Teacher Note: When discussing these new vowel digraphs with your class, keep using the term “two-fer” rather than “digraph,” just as you did in Stage 7 with the consonant digraphs SH, CH, and TH. The essence of a two-fer is two letters for one sound.

When the above vowel two-fers occur, the first vowel is long and the second is silent. There are many examples of this in Appendix K. You can describe this situation to your children as follows: “When two vowels go walking, the first does the talking.” This traditional rule is useful because your students will likely remember it, due to the rhyme. In Appendix K, you can see how many common and important words have “two vowels walking.” The danger with this rule is that a child may try to apply it to other vowel digraphs, where it doesn’t work at all: OO, OI, AU, OU for instance. More about this later.

As you have your students decode the words in Appendix K, do them in the order indicated: long O words first, then long E, and finally, long A. I say this because the word OATMEAL, for instance, in the long E group presupposes the word OAT from the long O group.

Have your students pay close attention to the 16 words in the appendix that I have marked as “EA exceptions.” Most of them are familiar words and they clearly do not obey the “two vowels walking” rule. It’s safe to say that nearly every rule one might think of has exceptions when pronouncing English words. Nevertheless, some are worth mentioning, like this “two vowels go walking” rule, because they can help beginners decode a lot of new words despite the inevitable exceptions. In the material ahead, I’ll mention some other rules as well. In each case, I’ll list the most common exceptions.

The test for mastery here is the same as above: place 7-10 words from each of the four groups (OA, EA, EE, and AI) on flash cards and mix them up. Can your students read the words competently when they are mixed?

I also recommend you place the 16 EA exceptions from the appendix on flash cards and practice them with your children. Note that for eight of these exceptions, the correct

way to pronounce the word is to let the second vowel “do the talking.” The other eight are pronounced as if the A were not there.

To finish this stage, you and your kids can practice adding S (or ES) and ING to some of these new long vowel words. There is a small section for each of these tasks in Appendix K. The only new wrinkle is this: if a word ends in a silent E, drop the E before adding ING.

Stage 11

Reading Sentences (Part II)

Let's return to reading full sentences. These decodable sentences will be more complex than those your children read in Stage 8 because these sentences now include all the material from Stages 10 and 11, as well as some new tricky words. Here are the criteria I used for constructing these new sentences:

- All the previous criteria from Stage 8, *plus* the following:
- Two syllable words are now okay.
- All the words on the Tricky Words (31) list below.
- The /ng/ sound and the NK blend from Stage 9.
- All the long vowel sounds and their spellings from Stage 10.
- Present, past, and future conjugations of the irregular but common verbs: to be, to do, to say, to go, to come, to have, to give. Also, the perfect and progressive forms of these verbs.
- New interrogatives: what, where.
- New numbers: one, five, seven, nine, eleven, twelve, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, nineteen, one hundred.
- New preposition: of.
- New conjunction: because.
- Suffixes: S, ES, ING, FUL, MENT, LESS, NESS.

This is a lot of new material for sentence construction! As you can see, the following Tricky Word list repeats the 12 words from Stage 8, so there are “only” 19 new words here. They’re all important for fluent reading.

Tricky Words (31)					
you	do	her	they	my	to
who	our	their	your	have	from
are	was	were	say	says	said
go	goes	come	give	what	where
one	of	been	does	gone	because
		done			

Your first goal in this stage is to help your students learn the above 19 new tricky words. (This could take awhile.) I recommend you place all 19 of them on your Word Wall the day before you intend to introduce them. Have your students look at all 19 at once. Let them know that these words are “tricky,” just like those 12 words back in Stage 8. (Those 12 words should already be on your Word Wall.) Also tell them that, except for the 2 words that start with O (OF and ONE), the *first* letter in each word is perfectly regular, meaning, it provides the correct first sound for the word. Finally, tell your kids these are all common words – words they use every day. Do your kids recognize any of them?

Write the words GIVE, DONE, GONE, COME, ARE, and WERE on your blackboard. Cover the final E with your hand and maybe your kids will be able to identify some of them now. Remind your students that, normally, the silent E would make the prior vowel long. But these are tricky words – so *none* of these vowels have their long sound. Write some sentences on a blackboard for your kids to decode, and it’s likely they will start to figure out what these 6 words are in context:

- GIVE me a drink.
- Will you GIVE me a hand with this job?
- Have you DONE your job yet?
- Is she DONE with her bath?
- They have all GONE to the game.
- The cake is GONE! Who ate it?
- COME here you rascal!
- Will you COME home with me?
- The kids ARE running in the grass. (action occurring now)
- The kids WERE running in the grass. (action already occurred)

Teacher Note: You might try having your children initially read all the above sentences *exactly* as they are spelled. So, for instance, the first sentence, “Give me a drink,” would be read having GIVE rhyme with FIVE. If you do this, many of the kids in your class will recognize the word GIVE and then pronounce it accurately: /g/ + /i/ + /v/.

Make the following points with your students as they take turns reading the above sentences:

- GIVE should rhyme with FIVE and DIVE, right? But it doesn’t. Given its actual pronunciation, it ought to be spelled GIV, but it isn’t. That’s why it’s on the Tricky Word list.

- DONE should rhyme with BONE and CONE. Given the way we pronounce it, ask a student how DONE should be spelled: DUN.
- Given their spelling, DONE and GONE should rhyme, but they don't. Don't ask how GONE should be spelled – you haven't yet discussed its middle phoneme: GONE = /g/ + /aw/ + /n/.
- COME should rhyme with HOME or it should be spelled CUM. Because it does neither, it's a tricky word!
- ARE is pronounced the same as the name of the letter R.
- WERE rhymes with an earlier tricky word: HER.

There! Six tricky words already introduced. Place each on a flash card for review purposes later on. Thirteen more to go.

Next, without telling your students what the words say, write DOES, WAS, and BECAUSE on the blackboard. Make the point that these words should not rhyme, but, despite their weird spellings, they do. That's because they're tricky. Use the first 5 sentences below to help your kids decode DOES. Help them correct the third sentence. Once they know how to pronounce DOES, ask how it ought to be spelled: DUZ.

Now, remind your kids that the other two words rhyme with DOES. Using that information, can they figure out the final 4 sentences? Help as needed. How should these words be spelled? (WUZ and BECUZ.)

- I do my job.
- We do our job.
- She do her job. → She DOES her job.
- You have a big dog. DOES he bite?
- DOES a chicken have lips? DOES a snake have hips? I think not!
- Mom WAS glad to see me. She gave me a big hug and kiss.
- I WAS not home when you came to see me.
- I need a bath BECAUSE I stink!
- He feels hot BECAUSE he is sitting in the sun.

Next, tell your class, that among the 10 tricky words remaining, there are 2 more question words that belong with the 3 they already know (WHEN, WHICH, and WHO). Write WHAT and WHERE on the blackboard. Can they figure out what these two words are in the context of some sentences?

- WHAT is your name? My name is Kate.

- WHAT time is it? Its five o'clock.
- WHERE is my dog? I need to feed that mutt!
- WHERE is my hat? Its beginning to rain.

Discuss how these new question words would be spelled if they were better behaved: WUT and WARE (or WAIR).

BEEN would be perfectly phonetic if the reader were British, but in the US, most people pronounce this word in a slightly different manner: BIN. See if your kids can recognize this word in the following sentences:

- WHERE have you BEEN? I need your help.
- You rascal! Have you BEEN hiding from me?
- It has BEEN quite hot! WHERE is my fan?

Do the words ONE and OF together. These are two (of the three) most outrageous, non-phonetic, yet common words in the English language! (You'll cover EYE later.) Make fun of how these 2 words are spelled and your students will remember them forever. Despite the ridiculous spellings, let your kids try these sentences:

- ONE of my socks is missing!
- ONE cupcake plus ONE cupcake makes 2 cupcakes!
- Do you think OF me when I am GONE?
- I think OF you all the time BECAUSE I like you!
- ONE OF my best pals is Dave.

Discuss how these wacky words should be spelled: WUN and UV.

Since GO and GOES both involve motion, do these together. Tell your kids that unfortunately, GO does not rhyme with TO, DO, and WHO from the tricky word list in Stage 8. You can simply tell them: the O is long in this case.

- I GO home.
- You GO home.
- She GO home. → She GOES home.
- They GOES home. → They GO home.
- WHERE did she GO? I need to speak with her.
- I hope I can GO with you!
- He GOES to sleep at ten o'clock.

- She GOES shopping when she needs bread.

How should GOES be spelled in order for it to be phonetic? GOZE.

The last 3 words you need to introduce are certainly related. Write SAY, SAYS, and SAID on the board and tell your kids that all 3 words involve someone speaking. Try these sentences:

- I SAY: go to bed!
- You SAY: go to bed!
- She SAY: go to bed! → She SAYS: go to bed!
- WHAT did you just SAY? I SAID I do not need a nap!
- Can you GO with me? Yes, my dad SAYS that I can!
- She SAID I broke the glass, but Mike did it, not me!
- Dad SAYS he will GO with me.
- Mom SAYS I can have an extra cupcake to take along with me.

SAY is spelled exactly as it should be spelled, and it will become perfectly phonetic in Stage 13. SAYS and SAID, on the other hand, should be spelled SEZ and SED.

Before proceeding to the new decodable sentences below, take whatever time is necessary to make sure your students have mastered all 31 of the above tricky words. They are among the most frequently-used words in the English language. Shuffle the flash cards containing these words and practice with your kids until they know these words thoroughly. If a child has trouble with a given word, point out all the phonetic hints that might help her. When you are sure everyone is ready, continue on to the following sentences.

Use the same procedure you used in Stage 8. There is one new feature in these sentences that was not present in the earlier ones: quotation marks. Simply explain the use of these to your children as they come up. Again, no guessing or skipping over words. Make sure they understand whatever they read. Have fun!

Decodable Sentences**to be**

I am in the kitchen.

We are in the kitchen.

You are at the bus stop.

They were on the train.

He is from Spain.

She is from Canada.

I was brushing my hair.

We were at the picnic.

She was on a hike.

He was with his mom at the fair.

Where have you been? I have been riding my bike.

to go

I go to the dentist.

We go to the ball game.

She goes to sleep at nine o'clock.

He goes to the store when he needs a treat!

They went up the stairs.

She went to get a bath.

Are you going to eat lunch with me?

Where have they gone? They have gone fishing at the lake.

to give

Can you give me a hand? Yes, I am glad to help you.

Did you give a dime to Ted? I gave Ted five dimes!

Will you give me a ride home?

Rain gives me a chill!

That bug gives me the creeps!

He is giving his mom help cleaning the kitchen.

Has she given you a reason for being this late?

to come

They come from the state of Texas. She comes from Alabama.

He came into the kitchen to eat salad and roast beef.

Where did you come from? I just came from the basement.

He comes home on his bike.

She is coming home with her skates.

to say

I say you are cheating! Well, I say you are quite wrong to think such a thing!

What did they say? They said they are going to the beach.

He says he is feeling ill.

She says its time to eat lunch.

He says he will not go with me.

Ann said: "I think I will have a cup of tea, toast, and three eggs."

Mike said: "I need help cleaning these dishes!"

to do

Who do you think you are Mac?

Does a fish ride a bike? Does a hen take a hike?

Do you dream when you sleep? Do you moan when you weep?

Did the boat float, or did it sink to the bottom of the lake?

What have you done? I have made a cake!

Gail, you look pale. Did you see a whale?

What is your name? My name is Steve.

Will you teach me to read? That's what I am doing pal!

Thank you! You are welcome!

I have been in the kitchen baking bread with mom.

One thing I like to do is eat a fine meal.

Do you mean mac and cheese?

Yes! That meal can't be beat!

I must be getting sick. I keep sneezing and snot keeps dripping from my nose! Yuck!

I just got a drink at the kitchen sink.

Where is our dog? I have a big bone to give him!

If you mix red paint with white paint, you will get pink paint.

That junk in the trunk stinks. What is all that stuff?

I went home because it was late.

The boat sank because it hit a rock. The rock made a hole in the bottom of the boat.

Does the rain in Spain fall on the plain, Jane?

The sailboat at the dock was rocking in the breeze as the tide came in.

“What is she drinking?” said Ted.

“She is drinking tea with lemon,” said Linda.

“Mom! The mailman is here. He says he needs to speak with you.”

I hear the train as it glides along the railroad track.

Does he wish to go swimming with us?

Yes, he does. He likes to swim.

I smile when I am glad. I yell when I am mad. I hide when I am bad.
I sob when I am sad.

The king and the queen, sitting on their thrones, drank wine and ate roast chicken at their wedding feast.

I must clean the kitchen. Can you give me a hand?

Yes, I will help you.

Where have you been?

I have been shopping. I have cake, bananas, and pretzels to share with you. Yum!

Are you done with your cake? If you are, I will finish eating it. I hate to see it go to waste!

“Eat your ham and egg sandwich and drink that milk,” said mom. “Then you will get big and strong.”

Where is my jump rope? Did you take it?

Not me, Pal!

What are you wearing on your head?

These are earmuffs!

What do you like to eat?

I like pancakes and milk when I wake up – and mac and cheese with a hot dog at lunch time!

Stop all that groaning and moaning! You made that mess! Cleaning it up will not take you long at all!

We saw a cricket, a frog, a rabbit, and a snake in the grass!

What reason do you have for yelling? Are you in pain?

A cut-up peach on top of hot oatmeal, with cream, is a great breakfast!

Stop tipping that chair back! You will fall on your head and crack your skull!

“Gimme more cake!” said James.

“Did you mean to say, Can I have more cake, please?” said mom.

Can I please taste your wine, dad?

Yes, in sixteen years you can taste my wine!

Brush your teeth before you go to bed, ok?

All of them mom?

Yes dear, please brush *all* of them.

“The chain came off my bike while I was riding! Will you help me fix it?” said Meg.

“We will fix it in no time at all,” said dad.

I like pears, apples, and bananas – but not grapes!

Where is Kim?

She is sitting in the shade near that pine tree.

“Dad, where do children come from?” said Sam.

“It beats me,” said Dad. “Go ask your mom. Perhaps she can explain it to you.”

Keep that gate shut! If you do not, my dog will escape.

When I inhale, I fill my lungs with fresh air!

A bee stung me three times on my knee!
That's bad luck!

Toss the ball to me again! This time I will catch it!

"Time to get a bath," said mom. "You are not going to bed until you are clean."

"A bath! You must be joking!" said Melvin. "I just had one last week! Must I use soap? Can it wait until next month?"

"Up the steps!" said mom.

Some optional math follows. The word MINUS has a long I.

This is math:

If you add three dimes to six dimes, you will have nine dimes.

Three plus six is nine ($3 + 6 = 9$)

Nine minus three is six ($9 - 3 = 6$)

Nine minus six is three ($9 - 6 = 3$)

One plus six is seven ($1 + 6 = 7$)

Seven minus one is six ($7 - 1 = 6$)

Seven minus six is one ($7 - 6 = 1$)

Three plus seven is ten ($3 + 7 = 10$)

Ten minus three is seven ($10 - 3 = 7$)

Eleven minus five is six ($11 - 5 = 6$)

Five plus six is eleven ($5 + 6 = 11$)

Ten plus six is sixteen ($10 + 6 = 16$)

One plus three plus five plus six is fifteen
($1 + 3 + 5 + 6 = 15$)

+ means “plus” or “add”

– means “minus” or “subtract”

= means “is”

Gosh! I think I like this math stuff!

Stage 12

More Vowel Sounds

So far, you and your class have covered 34 of the 44 phonemes in the English language. In this stage, you'll teach 8 more to your kids: all of them vowel sounds and all of them spelled with various two-fers. This stage, then, is a lengthy one. You can hear these 8 new sounds in the following words:

/ew/	stew, moon, glue
/oo/	good, took, could
/oy/	toy, coin
/ow/	cow, out
/aw/	law, fraud
/ar/	car, park, are
/er/	her, bird, turn
/or/	store, north

Note that all these sounds are different from both short vowel and long vowel sounds. They're unique sounds, and all of them are listed in Table 1. The above list also shows there are multiple spellings for each of these sounds.

The Spelling Corner – Pick words from Stage 10 to spell with your students. Ask for the spelling of words from Appendix J for a few days. These are words where the vowel is long, due to a silent E at the end of the word. Then switch to words from Appendix K where vowels are long due to “two vowels walking.” As your students get good, alternate between the two appendices.

Be on the look-out for “good” mistakes. For example, you ask a child to spell the word CAME and he answers K-A-I-M. This is a good mistake because, phonetically, he's correct. AIM and MAIM are both spelled similarly. It shows great understanding, but in practice, it's still wrong. He chose the wrong alternative for spelling both /A/ and /k/. Congratulate him for his ingenuity, but correct his spelling.

Look at Appendix L where I have words categorized according to these 8 vowel sounds. Note first, I have listed 4 different spellings for the sound /ew/: OO, EW, UE, and U-E. Examples using these spellings are ZOO, CHEW, BLUE, and JUNE. Your

students have already seen multiple spellings for a single sound, particularly for some of the long vowel sounds. Long A, for instance, can be spelled by attaching a silent E to a word (GAME) or by combining A with I (RAIN). The sound /ew/, however, is in a class by itself. Take a moment and look it up in Appendix P. There you'll find a total of 10 spellings for this one phoneme!

A judgment call is needed here between two competing values: being complete, but avoiding needless complexity for the beginning reader. Here is what I have done in this case. I cover the four most important spellings of /ew/ in Appendix L. Your kids saw the O spelling (TO, DO, WHO) and the OU spelling (YOU) in the Tricky Word list back in Stage 8. No other common words have the O spelling, and the only other common words with the OU spelling are GROUP, SOUP, and YOUTH. Only five common words have the UI spelling: FRUIT, JUICE, BRUISE, CRUISE, and SUIT. (You can mention FRUIT to your children in this stage; you'll cover JUICE in Stage 16 when you teach how C can have an S sound.) The OE spelling (SHOE) and the OUGH spelling (THROUGH) are covered as exceptions or as "tricky" words in upcoming stages.

When you get a chance, look at Appendices P and Q together. They have similar information, but from opposite perspectives. Appendix P looks at the code from an encoding (spelling) perspective: hearing sounds, how might they be symbolized by letters? Appendix Q looks at the code from a decoding (reading) perspective: seeing letters, how might they be replaced by sounds? More succinctly: Appendix P is "How to Spell a Sound"; Appendix Q is "How to Sound a Spelling." Much can be learned about the code and its complexities by studying these two appendices. They are only for you, not for your students. You'll continue presenting the code to your class as you've been doing, in a gradual, systematic, and logical manner throughout these 17 stages.

Time to get your class started with the /ew/ sound: ZOO without the Z. Tell them you will all spell the word MOON together. Ask a student what sound she can hear at the beginning of the word. When she answers /m/, the two of you can agree the first letter should be M. Write the M on the board. Ask another student about the sound at the end of the word. When he tells you /n/, write the N, leaving space for the spelling of the vowel sound that must be in the middle:

M N

Now ask your students: what is the vowel sound in between the M sound and the N sound? (Remind them: all words have vowels.) Help them to isolate the /ew/ sound. Once everyone can make the sound correctly, have a discussion: it must be a new vowel

sound! Trouble is, we're out of vowels to spell the sound! In fact, the 5 vowels are already over-worked: they each make both a short and a long sound.

So how are your students supposed to spell this new sound? Tell them, fortunately, the problem has already been solved: this new vowel sound, /ew/, is spelled with a double O. Now add the OO in the space between the M and the N and let them see it: MOON. Emphasize these points: double O spells this new single sound, just as CH and SH spelled a single sound back in Stage 7. So, OO is another two-fer: two letters for one sound – in this case, /ew/. CH and SH are *consonant* two-fers; OO is a *vowel* two-fer. Below where you have written MOON, write some similar words and get a different child to decode each one:

MOON
SOON
SPOON
BALLOON
TOOTH
BOOTH
GOOF

This new sound undoubtedly fascinates your kids, so over the next few days, have them decode the OO words at the start of Appendix L using any method you choose. They can now see how the word YOU ought to be spelled: YOO. That's why YOU is tricky! Give special attention to TOO in this group, and compare it to the word TO (covered in Stage 8). These words sound the same, but they are spelled differently. Discuss the 2 meanings with your class. Also, once a child decodes the word COOL in the appendix, write SCOOOL on the board and have her read that as well. Tell her that SCHOOL is an irregular word (it has a silent H) and then write it correctly on the board as well.

Once you've completed the OO group with your class, remind them that long A has two different spellings: A-E (MADE) and AI (RAIN). Long E does too: EE (SEEK) and EA (MEAT). Well, /ew/ has *four* different spellings! They have seen the first one: OO. Now they must learn the other three! Write the following 2 sentences and have students read them:

- Her NOO bike just came from the bike shop.
- His BLOO hat was on a chair in the kitchen.

Once these sentences are decoded, congratulate the class, and then tell them /ew/ is indeed spelled OO if that sound is in the *middle* of a word, for example, BROOM. But if the sound /ew/ comes at the *end* of a word, as it does in these 2 sentences, it is

spelled EW or UE. (The words TOO and ZOO are obvious exceptions to this generalization.) Re-write the 2 above sentences correctly and then add 2 more:

- Her NEW bike just came from the bike shop.
- His BLUE hat was on a chair in the kitchen.
- The witch FLEW on her BROOM stick in the land of Oz.
- SUE ate her lunch with a SPOON.

So, OO, EW, and UE are all two-fers for the same sound, /ew/. Let your class ponder these sentences for awhile and then get to work on the EW and UE word groups in Appendix L. If a student notices that LEWD and CRUEL ought to be spelled LOOD and CROOL (given the above rule), he or she is perceptive indeed!

Comment on the fact that the two boxed words, NEW and KNEW, are pronounced the same way. Discuss their different meanings and remind your kids they have seen silent K before: KNOCK, KNOB, KNOT, KNIFE. Also, compare the earlier tricky word, DO, with both DEW and DUE. You can put these sentences on the board:

- I DO my job.
- The DEW is on the grass.
- Mom is DUE home SOON.

The last spelling (for now) of /ew/ once again involves silent E. In these words, the /ew/ sound is again in the middle of the word, yet it is not spelled OO. Another quirk of English! Pick some students to decode these two sentences:

- Where is my TOOB of tooth paste?
- It helps to be NOOD when taking a bath!

Tell the class TOOB and NOOD ought to be spelled this way (think of NOODLE) – but they're not. Rewrite them correctly and let your students study the spellings:

- Where is my TOOB of tooth paste?
- It is best to be NOOD when taking a bath!
- Where is my TUBE of tooth paste?
- It helps to be NUDE when taking a bath!

When these words are spelled correctly, the work your kids did in Stage 10 would indicate a long U sound. But the long U sound (YEW) is difficult to make when it follows /t/ or /n/. Have your students try to pronounce these 2 words with a long U; it is

difficult to do! The sound /ew/ is close to long U, but not exact. (Compare TUBE and CUBE: sometimes /ew/ sounds better and sometimes /yew/ sounds better!)

Now do the list of U-E words in the appendix. For all of them, the U says /ew/. If you have a calendar nearby, show them the month of JUNE. The 5 boxed words with the heading “/y/ + /ew/” in the appendix do have the long U sound. Cover these 5 words, or omit them, as you see fit.

The next task is to teach your students the sound /oo/ as in the word BOOK. As the teacher, you need to hear how different OO sounds in a word like BOOK compared to MOON. OO is a correct spelling for 2 entirely different sounds, /ew/ and /oo/:

- MOON = /m/ + /ew/ + /n/
- BOOK = /b/ + /oo/ + /k/

Since this new sound /oo/ is also spelled with the two-fer OO, there will be plenty of room for confusion here. Before moving on, make sure *you* can hear, and accurately produce, these two different vowel sounds.

Once you're ready, tell your students you will all spell the word BOOK together. Ask a student what sound she can hear at the *beginning* of the word. When she answers /b/, agree with her that the first letter should be B, and write it on the board. Ask another student about the sound at the *end* of the word. When he tells you /k/, write the K, leaving space for the spelling of the vowel sound in the middle:

B K

Now ask them: what is the vowel sound between the B sound and the K sound? Help them to isolate the /oo/ sound. Once everyone can make the sound correctly, discuss it: it must be another new vowel sound!

So how can they spell this one? Here, you must give them the bad (or at least, confusing) news: this new sound is *also* spelled with a double O, just like the /ew/ sound in MOON. Now add the OO in the space between the B and the K and let them see it: BOOK. Then write some similar words below the word BOOK and have different students decode them:

BOOK
LOOK
COOK
TOOK

Emphasize that the two-fer, OO, has two different sounds, just as each of the single vowels has two different sounds. For example, just as E says both /e/ and /E/; OO says both /ew/ and /oo/. No big deal. Compare the two sounds of OO side by side with your students:

BOOK	MOON
LOOK	SOON
COOK	NOON
TOOK	SPOON

For amusement, see if your students can pronounce these 2 columns of words with the wrong OO sound, for example, pronouncing BOOK as /b/ + /ew/ + /k/. Eight unrecognizable “words” will result. They can always recall the two sounds of OO by remembering the phrase GOOD FOOD. (Given their spelling, these two words should rhyme; clearly they don’t.) Now work through the OO words in the appendix starting with TOOK and BOOK. I have 2 exceptions listed in the appendix: FLOOD and BLOOD. They have neither the /ew/ nor the /oo/ sound. Instead, they have an /u/ sound:

BLOOD = /b/ + /l/ + /u/ + /d/
FLOOD = /f/ + /l/ + /u/ + /d/

Make your kids aware of these two exceptions; both are common words.

Teacher Note: COULD, SHOULD, and WOULD rhyme with GOOD. They ought to be spelled COOD, SHOOD, and WOOD. Alas, these words are “tricky.” You’ll deal with them in Stage 14. Here is an interesting aside just for you as the teacher. The words BULL, FULL, and PULL should also be in this /oo/ group, along with WOOL. All 4 words rhyme. Note the difference in vowel sound between these words and the following three: DULL, GULL, and HULL. The latter 3 are spelled correctly because their vowel sound is /u/. So why aren’t BULL, FULL, and PULL spelled logically, like WOOL, with the double O? Answer: Those spellings are already taken by the words BOOLEAN (a type of logic), FOOL, and POOL. These words, of course, have the /ew/ sound.

I suggest the following test before moving on. On index cards, write 5-6 double O words with the /oo/ sound, 5-6 double O words with the /ew/ sound, and the words BLOOD and FLOOD. Shuffle the cards and see how your students do. (You'll test the other spellings of /ew/ (EW, UE, and U-E) a little further below.)

Next, tell your class you will all spell the word BOY together. Ask someone for the initial sound and then write the correct letter on the board: B. Now ask for the next (and final) sound in the word BOY. Here your goal is to get all your kids correctly pronouncing the next new phoneme, /oy/. Since all words have a vowel, /oy/ must be a vowel sound! The word BOY ends in a vowel sound. Contrast /oy/ with the 2 new vowel sounds you just covered: /ew/ and /oo/. It's clearly a new sound. Now, just tell your kids: /oy/ is spelled by a new two-fer, OY. Finish spelling the word BOY on the blackboard and add some additional words next to it, defining them as necessary. Have various students read all four:

BOY TOY SOY COY

Emphasize that each of these words has only two sounds: the initial consonant sound plus the OY sound. OY, like SH and OO, is a two-fer, not a blend. As part of a two-fer, the sound of Y here is nothing like its sound in the words YELL and YES. OY, like all two-fers, must be recognized, at a glance, as a special letter combination that makes a single sound, in this case, /oy/.

The sound /oy/ is spelled OY if that sound occurs at the *end* of a word, as above. If it occurs in the *middle* of a word, /oy/ is usually spelled OI. Write these 4 words beneath the four you've already written:

BOY TOY SOY COY
BOIL TOIL SOIL COIL

Have students read the 4 new words. Stress that OI is simply a second spelling (a different two-fer) for the sound /oy/. So, OY at the end of a word, and OI in the middle of a word, both say /oy/. While COYN and JOI might be perfectly readable, COIN and JOY are the correct spellings.

Teacher Note: Proceed slowly. There is plenty of room for confusion here. Earlier, the single two-fer, OO, spelled two different sounds: /ew/ and /oo/. Now a single sound, /oy/, is being spelled by two different two-fers: OY and OI.

Now have your class work through the OY and OI word groups in the appendix. If you must hide parts of a word to help a student decode it, don't split the O from the I (or the O from the Y). For example, you could gradually uncover the word POINT this way: POI (CV), POIN (CVC), POINT (CVCC).

Reminder: The earlier rule, "when two vowels go walking, the first does the talking," does not work with any of the new vowel combinations in this stage. Remind your students when that rule *does* work: only for the 4 vowel combinations AI, EA, EE, and OA (see Stage 10).

Next, tell your class you will all spell the word NOW together. Ask someone for the initial sound and then write the correct letter on the board: N. Now ask for the next (and final) sound in the word NOW. Here, your goal is to get all your kids correctly pronouncing the next new phoneme, /ow/. It's the sound we make when we suddenly feel some pain: OWWW! Like /oy/, this is another new vowel sound – and it's spelled by a new two-fer: OW. Finish spelling the word NOW on the blackboard and add some additional words next to it, defining them as necessary. Have various students read all five:

NOW COW HOW BOW POW!

Emphasize that there are only two sounds in these words: the initial consonant sound and the vowel sound, /ow/. As part of a two-fer, the sound of W here is nothing like its sound in the word WISH. The OW letter combination, another two-fer, makes a single sound, /ow/, just as OY, above, made the single sound /oy/.

In the *middle* of a word, /ow/ is usually spelled by the two-fer OU instead of OW. (You'll see in the appendix there are quite a few exceptions to this particular rule.) Write some examples for your class to see, beneath the above words. Knowing that OU also says /ow/, see if you can get various students to decode these 5 new words:

NOW COW HOW BOW POW!
 NOUN COUCH HOUND BOUND POUND

If necessary, show HOUND gradually: HOU (CV), HOUN (CVC), HOUND (CVCC).

When your students are ready to decode the words in the appendix, do the OW words first. They are a little easier than the OU words and they involve only 3 rhyming groups. Try writing each rhyming group on a blackboard at once. If a student has trouble with

any word, take the time to write the word on an index card and hide parts of it with your finger to help him along. Don't be in a hurry – some of these words are quite difficult for a beginner.

I have 4 exceptions listed in this category: GROUP, SOUP, YOUTH, and TOUCH. Tell your class the first 3 words ought to be spelled with OO instead of OU – that should allow your kids to identify all three. OU is an uncommon spelling for /ew/. TOUCH is a real odd ball. Tell your children to ignore the O and it becomes perfectly phonetic: TUCH.

Teacher Note: At this point, you may want to take some time to review *all* the two-fers your students have seen so far. As you write each one on the board, ask various students to make the correct sound: CH, SH, TH, OO (has 2 answers), EW, OY, UE, OU, OI, OW. Review as necessary. I recommend a special “two-fer section” on your Word Wall where each two-fer is embedded in a simple word, as an aid to remembering its pronunciation. For example: CHIN, SHIN, THIN, ZOO/FLEW/BLUE, GOOD, BOY/BOIL, COW/COUCH.

Next, tell your class you will all spell the word JAW together. Ask someone for the initial sound and then write the correct letter on the board: J. Now ask for the next (and final) sound in the word JAW. Here, your goal is to get all your kids correctly pronouncing the next new phoneme, /aw/. It's the sound we make when we see a cute baby or puppy: AWWW! Like /oy/ and /ow/, this is another new vowel sound – and it's spelled by a new two-fer: AW. Finish spelling the word JAW on the blackboard and add some additional words next to it. Have various students read all five:

JAW LAW PAW FLAW SAW

Compare the /aw/ sound to /ew/, /oo/, /oy/, and /ow/ with your class. They should all agree that it's a new vowel sound. When the sound /aw/ occurs in the *middle* of a word, it's usually spelled AU instead of AW. Write the following:

JAW LAW PAW FLAW SAW
 JAUNT LAUNCH PAUL FLAUNT SAUNA

Help with both pronunciation and meaning as necessary. (These words are harder than most!)

When you're ready to do the AW and AU words in the appendix, do the AW words first – they are easier, more common, and more amenable to rhyme. The AU group does not have many common words. You may want to pick and choose which ones you want

to present to your class. Don't forget to add PAW/PAUL to your Word Wall's "two-fer section." (see box above)

The words listed in the appendix as "other" all have one thing in common: the letter A followed by an L. You presented one of these groups to your children back in Stage 7 (the ALL group) because it had so many common words. Having a single A, all these words look like they should have the short A sound: /a/. However, in English, when the letter A is followed by an L, the A more commonly says /aw/ rather than /a/. (Exceptions: Alabama, alfalfa, allergy, Algebra, alimony.)

Time to Evaluate: You and your children have just finished covering 5 new vowel sounds – and 4 of them had multiple spellings. You can sum all this up in a (hopefully) amusing manner for your kids. Write the following sentences and let your kids read them (with some help as needed):

4 /ew/ sounds, 4 spellings:	Sue threw a prune in the lagoon.
4 /oo/ sounds, 1 spelling:	Look! That crook took my book!
4 /oy/ sounds, 2 spellings:	That boy enjoys his coins and toys.
5 /ow/ sounds, 2 spellings:	Wow! How loud that brown cow MOOS!
5 /aw/ sounds, 3 spellings:	Paul saw a small ball in the hall.

A more serious test: Take 3 common words from each of the 11 spellings, place them on flash cards, shuffle them, and see how your kids do. If you notice any significant weaknesses, take the time to go back and review.

The R-controlled vowel sounds, /ar/, /or/, and /er/, occur in thousands of common words. My experience is that children have less trouble with these sounds than with the above five. As teacher, note for yourself how the sound of the vowel reverts to its short sound in each of the following pairs of words, once you remove the R: CART – CAT, PERT – PET, BIRD – BID, SHORT – SHOT, and BURN – BUN.

Do /ar/ first with your kids. Say, but don't yet write, the word CAR. To spell this word, ask a student for the first sound he hears. He should reply /k/. So, the first letter in the spelling should be C or K. Write the C on the board and stop. Now ask another student to say CAR but without the C sound. Help her, if needed, to isolate the sound

/ar/. Discuss this sound with your class. This sound is identical to the *name* of the letter R. Could this be the spelling? (write the R next to the C)

CR

If your kids seem okay with this spelling, remind them: all words must have a vowel. CR, alone, is simply the initial blend in words like CREEP, CRIB, and CRAB. CR can't be the way to spell CAR. Do they hear any short vowel sounds (/a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/) in this word? No. Any long vowel sounds? No. So simply inform them: /ar/ is a new sound and it's spelled AR. Cross out CR and write it correctly:

~~CR~~
CAR

Emphasize the following points with your students. AR is another two-fer: the two letters make a single sound: /ar/. AR is not a blend of either one of A's sounds (/a/ or /A/) with /r/. (Note: The letter R and its sound, /r/, are tricky in English: R is the only consonant that always changes the sound of a single-letter vowel if it follows that vowel.) Write some words under the word CAR, and have students read them:

~~CR~~
CAR
CART
FAR
FART
FARM
BAR
BARK
BARN

Next, do the AR words in Appendix L with your kids. Transfer problem words to an index card and hide letters with your finger only if needed.

Teacher Note: The exceptions in the AR group, WAR and WARM, are actually pronounced WOR and WORM. Looking ahead, the 5 exceptions in the OR group are actually pronounced WERD, WERK, WERST, WERLD, and WERM. Thus, all the exceptions in this part of the appendix should be in the following group.

Next up: the new sound /or/. Tell the class you want their help in writing the full sentence, "I have a new toy for you." All these words, except the word FOR, are

decodable, or they were on a previous tricky word list. Allowing them to help as much as possible, get the following written:

I HAVE A NEW TOY YOU.

Now ask them: how shall we spell the word FOR? You should be able to get the initial F from a student. Add it to your sentence:

I HAVE A NEW TOY F YOU.

Now get your students to say FOR, but without the F sound. Once they have correctly isolated the /or/ sound, ask them how they think it should be spelled. (Remind them that the sound /ar/, above, was spelled AR.) If someone gets it, fine; if not, tell them it's spelled with a new two-fer: OR. Complete the sentence:

I HAVE A NEW TOY FOR YOU.

Teacher Note: You might think that /or/ is not a unique phoneme – that it's really just the blend /O/ + /er/. But /O/ + /er/ is slightly different from /or/. Think of the word pairs MOWER and MORE, or LOWER and LORE.

As you did earlier with AR, discuss this new two-fer with your children. It has a single sound – and that sound is *not* a blend of /o/ and /r/ or /O/ + /r/. Write these words (and pseudo words) under FOR and see how they do:

I HAVE A NEW TOY FOR YOU.
 FORT
 COR
 CORN
 SOR
 SORT
 NOR
 NORTH

In the appendix, there are two spellings listed for the sound /or/: OR and ORE. In the ORE spelling, the final E is silent.

Teacher Note: The phoneme blend /O/ + /r/ is *nearly* identical to /or/, just as the phoneme blend /A/ + /r/ is *nearly* identical to /air/ and /E/ + /r/ is *nearly* identical to /ear/ (see the boxed Teacher Note in Stage 10).

The last sound in this admittedly lengthy stage is /er/. In this case, your kids already know (from Stage 8) an important word with this sound: HER. It turns out HER is not a tricky word at all. In fact, it's perfectly phonetic. I included it on the first tricky word list solely because I wanted to have all the possessives (my, your, yours, his, her, hers, our, ours, their, theirs) for early sentence construction.

Given that your students already know the word HER, I suggest you approach this final sound as follows. Ask if they remember how to spell HER from Stage 8. (It's probably on your Word Wall.) Write it on the board. Beneath it, write the word without the H:

HER
ER

Get a student to pronounce the pseudo word ER by dropping the H sound from HER.

So, just as the sound /ar/ is spelled AR, and /or/ is spelled OR, /er/ is spelled by the two-fer ER. Point out that the sound of the vowel in HER is neither short nor long. (It's impossible to pronounce HER with a short E – and if a student pronounces it with a long E, she will say the word HERE.) ER is another two-fer: a unique sound in English. This sound, and its spelling, ER, are found in thousands of words. Under the words HER and ER on the blackboard, write the following pseudo words:

HER
ER
TER
MER
FER
PER
VER

After students read these pseudo words, go back and add some letters to make each of them an actual word. Then have some kids read them again:

HER
ERNEST
BUTTER

SUMMER
FERN
PEPPER
CLEVER

Before doing the /er/ words in the appendix, share this weird fact with your kids: ER, IR, and UR all spell /er/. In other words, for reading purposes, ER = IR = UR. Write these words on the board: HER, SIR, and FUR – and tell your class that they rhyme. After getting students to read SIR and FUR, do the exercise again with PERCH, BIRCH, and CHURCH. You can also use JERK, IRK, and LURK or BERT, DIRT, and HURT.

In the appendix, I have the words separated into ER, IR, and UR groups. Many of the words in these groups are boxed as high-frequency words, so give them special attention. Do the groups one at a time with your kids. Note that the word GIRL could just as well have been spelled GERL or GURL. Only practice and experience will allow your students to master the correct spelling of a word when there is more than one possible phonetic spelling.

I would now add these words to the “two-fer section” of my Word Wall: CAR, HORN, and HER/SIR/FUR. I might also include the following “facts” on my Word Wall: WR = R, WH = W, KN = N, OO = EW = UE, OY = OI, OW = OU, AW = AU, and ER = IR = UR. (In Stage 15, you’ll add PH = F.)

Teacher Note: Back in Stage 5, you’ll recall that you put off dealing with 16 *ending* blends involving the letter R: RB, RD, RF, RG, RK, RL, RM, RN, RP, RT, RST, RCH, RSH, RTH, RVE, and RSE. Do you have to do these now? Good news! They’re already done! If you look at the AR, OR, ER, IR, and UR word lists in Appendix L, you’ll see that you and your kids just covered all these ending blends.

Stage 13

Words Ending in Long Vowel Sounds

Y as a Vowel

Your students have now studied 42 of the 44 phonemes in the English language listed in Table 1. Only /oor/ and *voiced* /SH/ remain. However, your children have not yet seen all the ways in which those sounds can be spelled. They saw in Stage 10 that they could spell /E/ as EE (MEET) or as EA (SEAT). They saw in Stage 12 that they could spell /ew/ as OO (MOON), as UE (BLUE), or as EW (GREW). In this stage, they'll study new spellings for *all* the long vowel sounds. These new spellings occur when the long vowel sound is at the *end* of a word. They'll also see how the letter Y sometimes acts as a stand-alone vowel rather than as a consonant.

The Spelling Corner – As you work through this stage with your kids, choose words from Stage 12 for your spelling practice. As you recall, most of the sounds in that stage have two (or more) spellings; that will make spelling more challenging now. Remind students that the spelling of a vowel sound often differs, depending on whether that sound is at the end, or in the middle of a word.

Don't expect perfection. Even phonics-trained children need years of reading and orthographic mapping in order to become good spellers. The ER/IR/UR group is especially problematic. If a child spells CHURCH as CHERCH (rhymes with PERCH) or as CHIRCH (rhymes with BIRCH), praise her for her phonetic ingenuity, but then correct HER/HIR/HUR.

Start by reviewing with your class the two spellings they know for long A: A-E (as in BAKE) and AI (as in SAIL). Explain that these spellings are used when the long A sound occurs in the *middle* of a word. If the long A sound occurs at the *end* of a word, something that has not yet happened, they must spell it with a new two-fer: AY. Write these 5 words on the board as examples:

BAY

SAY

JAY

RAY

PLAY

Have some students decode these words. The first 4 have only 2 sounds each. Once your students are comfortable with these words, you can review the OY sound by writing these five words as well:

BAY	SAY	JAY	RAY	PLAY
BOY	SOY	JOY	ROY	PLOY

Easy, right? OY says /oy/ while AY says /A/. In Appendix M, I have the most common AY words listed. The spelling of WEDNESDAY is slightly irregular given its pronunciation: /w/ + /e/ + /n/ + /z/ + /d/ + /A/. Otherwise, I don't see any problematic words on this list. When finished, your students will have 3 spellings for the sound /A/: A-E, AI, AY.

Review the 2 spellings your class has for /O/: O-E (HOME) and OA (BOAT). Explain that these spellings are used when the long O sound occurs in the *middle* of a word. If /O/ occurs at the *end* of a word, there are *three* additional ways to spell it. You'll find these 3 spellings (O, OW, and OE) in Appendix M. Focus first on the O words. Have your class compare the first 3 words there (GO, NO, SO) with the 3 exceptions at the bottom of that column (TO, DO, WHO). GO, NO, and SO are spelled correctly; TO, DO, and WHO are irregular – that's why they were tricky words back in Stage 8. All 6 should rhyme, but they don't. Have your students decode the remainder of this O list. When finished, they'll have 3 spellings for /O/: O-E, OA, and O.

The OW spelling of /O/ will cause some confusion for a while. Your class just saw, in Stage 12, that the two-fer, OW, was a spelling for /ow/. Now they need to learn that OW is also a common spelling for /O/. I recommend that you list both sounds of the two-fer, OW, side by side for your children so that they can see (and hear) for themselves, that this two-fer, just like OO in the previous stage, has two different sounds. Write the following:

OW!	Long O
cow	low
how	slow
vow	blow
now	know
chow	snow
wow	mow
plow	glow
brow	crow
pow!	flow
bow	bow
town	grown

This is enough to confuse anyone! The only thing to do is to point it out explicitly to your kids. You can have some fun with these 22 words by having students pronounce them *the other way*. In most cases, the result is not a word. Note, however, if the first sound is /n/, the resulting word can be pronounced either way: NOW, KNOW. And, of course, BOW can be pronounced both ways: BOW of a ship, BOW and arrow. I would write these 22 words on flash cards along with the six words NO, GO, SO, TO, DO, and WHO. Mix the 28 cards and use them to practice with your kids until they are confident. Having passed this test, they should have no major problems reading the other words in the OW list in Appendix M. Pay special attention to KNOW, KNOWS, OWN, and KNOWN – four important, high-frequency words.

The last spelling of long O is the least important one: OE. You can see in the appendix there are only about a half-dozen words in this group. The most important one is GOES. Your students already know it as a tricky word from Stage 11. TOE, TOES, and the exception, SHOES, are also words your kids should know.

Before going any further, let's discuss the most versatile letter of all: Y. Uniquely, this letter can act either as a consonant or as a stand-alone vowel. At the beginning of a word, Y usually acts as a consonant (exception: YVONNE). It has the sound your children already know in words like YES, YARD, and YELLOW. At the end of a word,

however, Y always acts as a vowel. As a stand-alone vowel, Y has 2 possible sounds: /E/ (CANDY) and /I/ (CRY).

W, too, sometimes acts as a vowel – in the word LAW for instance. But, in that word, AW is a digraph (a two-fer); the W is inseparable from the vowel A. Likewise, in the words BOY and DAY, OY and AY are digraphs; the Y is inseparable from the vowel preceding it. The letter Y, however, by itself, often acts as a vowel. In the word CANDY, Y is the only vowel in the second syllable; in CRY, Y is the only vowel.

Here are two useful facts you'll be teaching your students shortly. First, for any one-syllable word in which Y is the only vowel, Y says /I/. Examples: MY, CRY, TRY. Note: BOY and DAY do not violate this rule because Y is not the only vowel in those words. Second, for *nearly* all multi-syllable words ending in a stand-alone vowel Y (thousands of words), Y says /E/. Check out the appropriate sections in Appendix M for yourself.

Getting back to instruction, review the consonant Y with your students by having them read a few words that start with Y: YES, YARD, YAWN, YUCK, and YELLOW. Also, remind them that every syllable in every word must have a vowel. Now give them some surprising news: Y can sometimes act as a vowel! It's the only letter in the alphabet that can act either as a consonant or as a stand-alone vowel. In fact, they've already seen this happen with one of the tricky words they already know. Can anyone remember which one? (MY in Stage 8). In the word MY, the letter Y clearly has the long I sound.

It turns out that MY is not a tricky word at all. There are lots of one-syllable words in English just like MY. Here is where you should cover the words in the appendix starting with the words MY, BY, and WHY. Knowing that Y can act as a vowel that spells /I/, they should be able to read these 16 words with little trouble. (They all rhyme with MY). Acknowledge that the U in BUY and GUY is a little weird. Also, explain the difference between BY and BUY. Add the new interrogative, WHY, to your growing list of "question words" on your Word Wall. (WHEN, WHICH, WHO, WHAT, HOW, and WHERE are already there.)

Once your kids are comfortable with the above, place the 4 IE words from the appendix on the board. IE is a rare spelling of /I/, but these are 4 common words your kids should know. (In a more rational world, these 4 words would be spelled PY, DY, LY, and TY.) Now your children have 3 ways to spell /I/: I-E (HIDE), Y (MY), and IE (PIE).

Review with your students the 3 spellings they have (so far) for /E/: EE (SPEED), EA (HEAT), and E-E (STEVE). These spellings are used when the long E sound occurs in the *middle* of a word. However, if the long E sound occurs at the *end* of a word, there are three additional ways to spell it, two of which will be new for your class. You already looked at one of these spellings back in Stage 7 where you studied the E/EE group of rhyming words. I have reproduced that group here, in Appendix M. Simply do a quick review of these short words. This time I included some two-syllable words as well.

Now tell your class there are two *new* ways to spell the long E sound when it occurs at the end of a word – and they both involve the letter Y acting as a vowel. Write these 2-syllable words and ask various students to read them:

TOASTEE
CANDEE
SLEEPEE
STORMEE

They can probably read these, given that you just reviewed the E/EE group of words. Tell them, that for BIG words (2 or more syllables), English uses Y instead of EE at the end of a word. Now write the correct spelling next to these 4 words:

TOASTEE	TOASTY
CANDEE	CANDY
SLEEPEE	SLEEPY
STORMEE	STORMY

Let your students study the correct spelling for awhile. Then review what they have recently seen: for small, one-syllable words (MY, FLY, CRY) a final Y says /I/. For multi-syllable words, a final Y says /E/.

Spend as much time as necessary having your students decode the large group of words in the appendix that start with the word BELLY. I purposely made this a large group. It acts as a good review of many of the sounds you've already covered – and most of the two-fers are represented in this list. I picked words whose meanings should be known to most children.

Teacher Note: The rule for this section is as follows: *for two (or more) syllable words, an ending Y nearly always says /E/*. There are 7 exceptions listed at the end of the Y group in the appendix. Note that, apart from JULY, these exceptions are all verbs. They are not the only exceptions. Consider this related group of words (all verbs, and all ending in IFY): TERRIFY, HORRIFY, UNIFY, MODIFY, NOTIFY, VERIFY, VILIFY, CLARIFY, DIGNIFY, FORTIFY, TESTIFY, SATISFY, JUSTIFY, QUALIFY, and SIGNIFY. For all these IFY verbs, ending Y says /I/.

My advice is to cover only the 7 exceptions I have listed in the appendix. Most of these IFY words are uncommon. They can (and will) be learned, that is to say, they will be self-taught, in the course of day-to-day reading.

In longer words, a final /E/ sound is sometimes spelled with the two-fer EY rather than with Y alone. Do this group (starting with the word KEY) as well. This is not a common situation. In reading these words, your students can simply pretend the E is not there. If they do so, these words could have been in the large group of Y words that your class just finished. You can decide if you want to cover the 5 words listed as “exceptions” in this group. One of them, THEY, was already covered as a tricky word back in Stage 8. The other 4 exceptions are not common.

Before moving on, do the following short exercise with your students as a review. The three groupings, below, show how Y acts *with* a vowel, or *as* a vowel, in one-syllable words. Paired with O or A, Y is part of a two-fer: an unbreakable unit that makes a single sound. Have various students read through these groupings, first vertically, and then horizontally:

Long A	OY	Long I
day	boy	my
pay	toy	by
play	soy	cry
stay	coy	why
say	joy	try
way	ploy	fry
may	Roy	dry

Easy, right? In multi-syllable words, ending Y says /E/. In single-syllable words, an ending Y falls into one of the above 3 groups.

Adding the suffix, ING, to words that end in Y is simple: tack it on! Do the appropriate words in the appendix labeled “Adding ING.” These should be easy for your kids.

Adding the suffix, Y, to a word usually changes it from a noun (SOAP) to an adjective (SOAPY). Adding the suffix, LY, usually changes an adjective (LOUD) to an adverb (LOUDLY). Look in Appendix M at the groups labeled “Adding Y” and “Adding LY.” If you examine those sections together, you’ll notice:

- Often, a Y can simply be added to a word without any changes.
- If the original word ends in a silent E, drop the E before adding Y.
- If the original word has a single, short vowel followed by a single consonant, double the consonant and add the Y.
- Like ING, LY can usually be tacked on without any other changes.

Do each of these sections, one at a time, with your students, explaining the “rules” as you go. Students, in general, won’t remember rules, but by having them decode enough words, the rules will become second nature.

Forming the plural of words ending in Y, AY, or OY is simple: if the only vowel in a word (or syllable) is Y, we make that word plural by changing the Y to an I and adding ES. In all other cases, simply add an S. In all cases, the final S has a /z/ sound. Doing these words from the appendix should go quickly with your class.

In multi-syllable words, one syllable is usually stressed (accented, emphasized) more than the other(s). Give your children some examples of this phenomenon by placing these two lists on the board. The accented syllable is in uppercase:

First syllable stressed	Second syllable stressed
CARton	carTOON
BUTton	balLOON
FLOWer	aWAKE
KITten	beTWEEN
GIVen	supPORT
MOMmy	deMAND
FOGgy	aVOID

If a child has trouble hearing the syllable that is being accented, pronounce the word the other way: kitTEN, for instance. It sounds weird, right?

Speak some longer words and see if your kids can tell you which syllable is accented: aMERica, PUNishment, ENemy, umBRELLa, kangaROO, volunTEER, baNAna, SUpercaliFRAGilisticexpialidOCious. You can easily include more words if your students need extra practice.

The Schwa Sound

Finally, discuss with your class how the above syllable accenting affects the sounds of the vowels in the *unstressed* (unaccented) syllables. Since “schwa” is such a goofy name, call this phenomenon **Lazy Vowel** with your children. Of the 20 vowel sounds in the English language (see Table 1), the three that require the least effort to pronounce are /i/, /u/, and /er/. To make those 3 sounds, you barely need to open your mouth.

It turns out, that in countless English words, the vowel-sound in the *unstressed* syllable, *no matter how that vowel sound is spelled*, defaults to either /u/, /i/, or /er/. I first discussed this phenomenon in Chapter 1 where I gave three examples of each of these defaults. If necessary, go back and review those examples. If you take a word like AFRAID or AGAINST and try to give the initial A the same short A sound as in APPLE, you’ll get an awkward result. Try it.

If you look in Appendix M, you’ll find many examples of Lazy Vowel; it’s a common occurrence in *unaccented* syllables. After explaining Lazy Vowel to your students, do the first group in the appendix with them (the group labeled A = /u/). Note that both A’s in AMERICA are lazy because the accent in this word is on the second syllable. I include PIZZA in the appendix as well. The spelling is hopelessly non-phonetic (should be PEETSA) but every child needs to recognize this word! This Lazy Vowel phenomenon commonly occurs in words ending in AL or EL. In both cases, the final sound degenerates into a simple “ULL.” Do those words in the appendix with your students as well.

While many cases of Lazy Vowel involve vowels defaulting to /u/, I have included two other groups of words in the appendix where the unstressed vowel defaults to /i/ or to /er/. Compare how SENT is articulated differently in the words CONSENT and ABSENT. In the word ABSENT, the second syllable is unstressed and the actual pronunciation is /a/ + /b/ + /s/ + /i/ + /n/ + /t/.

This whole Lazy Vowel phenomenon is easy to understand: why make the effort to properly pronounce a vowel in an unaccented syllable? Just mumble /u/ or /i/ or /er/ and be done with it. It makes our speech more efficient. I wouldn't make a big deal out of this topic. If a child insists on pronouncing these words phonetically, without defaulting to Lazy Vowel in the unstressed syllable, that's fine. It won't affect his reading in any significant way. It's just something beginning readers should know Uh/BOUT.

Teacher Note: Lazy Vowel clearly makes spelling more difficult. The student hears the default sound (/u/, /i/, or /er/) and then spells the word based on what she hears: MOUNTIN instead of MOUNTAIN, DOCTER instead of DOCTOR. This is why orthographic mapping is so important. Once a word has been mapped as a sight word, its correct spelling becomes automatic.

Stage 14

Reading Sentences (Part III)

This is the final time your students will be restricted to reading carefully constructed decodable text. The next time they see full sentences (Stage 17) they'll be independent readers – able to read unrestricted text from any age-appropriate book. You're getting close to the finish line. In this stage, along with the new sentences and tricky words, you'll introduce your students to a new phoneme, the 43rd or penultimate one: /oor/. You can hear this phoneme in the words POOR and SURE.

During this stage, your children will complete their study of the 50 most-used *irregular* words in the English language. You started this process when you introduced 12 tricky words to them in Stage 8. You added 19 new words in Stage 11. Below, you'll find the final 19 tricky words (including the word SURE) that will get the total to fifty. In this current list, both the previous lists are included.

Tricky Words (50)					
you	do	her	they	my	to
who	our	their	your	have	from
are	was	were	say	says	said
go	goes	come	give	what	where
one	of	been	does	gone	because
		done			
two	would	there	some	whose	four
could	move	put	want	eight	should
woman	once	love	watch	above	only
		sure			

Looking over this list, you can now see it has five words that have recently become perfectly phonetic. HER and OUR became phonetic in Stage 12; MY, GO, and SAY did the same in Stage 13. In addition, FROM, BEEN, BECAUSE, and SAID are almost perfectly phonetic. Eleven of the words on this list are simple to recognize if one simply ignores the final E: HAV, GIV, AR, GON, WER, DON, SOM, COM, GON, ABOV, and LOV.

Many of these words are among anyone’s list of the 100 most-used words in the English language. I have included one such list in Appendix U, from the Oxford English dictionary. If you examine that list, you’ll see that 75% of the words are perfectly phonetic. The ones that are not, are included in my Tricky 50 list. The claim is often made (www.highfrequencywords.org) that knowing the 100 most-used words in English will give the reader access to approximately 50% of the text she’ll ever be required to read. Whether the claim is true or not, the 50 words I have singled out as “tricky” are indeed important for your students’ reading fluency.

Here are the criteria I used in constructing the sentences following later in this stage:

- All the previous criteria from Stage 8 and Stage 11 plus...
- Any word on the above Tricky 50 list.
- Any word having one of the new 8 vowel sounds covered in Stage 12.
- Any word ending in a long vowel sound, including all the spellings from Stage 13.
- Any interrogative.
- Any preposition.
- Any word that is phonetic based on what we have already covered.
- The spelled form of any number from 1 to 999,999.

Post the 19 new words on your Word Wall and label the entire group “The Tricky Fifty.” On a blackboard, write out the names of the numbers from one to ten that your students can already read. The board should look like this:

1 – one	2 –	3 – three
4 –	5 – five	6 – six
7 – seven	8 –	9 – nine
10 – ten		

Tell your students that the names of the missing numbers are among the new tricky words on the wall and that they should try to figure it out for themselves. If they need help, provide some phonetic hints: the number 2 starts with the /t/ sound, 4 starts with an /f/ sound, and 8 ends with a /t/ sound. Once they have picked out the correct words, make the following points:

- TWO is the only TW word in English with a silent W (compare TWIST, TWIG, TWEET, TWEEZERS). It seems crazy this word has a W until you consider the words TWIN, TWENTY, and TWICE. Discuss the difference in meaning between TO, TWO, and TOO with your kids.

- Given its spelling, FOUR ought to rhyme with OUR, but it doesn't. Given its pronunciation, it ought to be spelled FORE, but it isn't. That's why it's tricky.
- EIGHT is one of the goofiest spellings in English. The only phonetic thing about it is the final T. It ought to be spelled ATE, but unfortunately, that spelling is already taken. Discuss the difference in meaning between ATE and EIGHT.

Next, tell them there are 3 words that rhyme among the new tricky words. Let them pick out WOULD, COULD, and SHOULD based on their similar spellings. (Note: if they pick out MOVE, LOVE, and ABOVE, tell them you'll do those a little later!) With COULD, SHOULD, and WOULD written on the board, tell your students they all rhyme with GOOD. Now your kids SHOULD be able to read them. The following sentences may help them understand the subtle differences in the meanings of these 3 words:

- WOULD you swim with me? (Are you willing to?)
- COULD you swim with me? (Are you able to?)
- SHOULD you swim with me? (Is it wise to?)

Ask how these 3 words SHOULD be spelled (WOOD, COOD, SHOOD). Their OU spelling (with a silent L!) is what makes them tricky. Thirteen words to go.

Ask them what the opposite (or complement!) of MAN is. If they don't know the word, tell them what it is and let them search for it on your word wall. They should notice that the word MAN is part of the word WOMAN. Help with the correct pronunciation if necessary. It ought to be spelled WOOMIN – with the two-fer, OO, corresponding to /oo/, not /ew/. Have your kids try to pronounce this word with a short O or a long O – that will quickly demonstrate why it's "tricky." (The fact that the second, unstressed syllable in WOMAN is pronounced MIN is another example of Lazy Vowel.) Let them read the following:

- That WOMAN across the street is my moms sister.
- Where is the WOMAN who lost her purse? Tell her I found it!

Teacher Note: I suggest you take some time here to discuss the *plural* of WOMAN. Just as MEN is the plural of MAN, WOMEN is the plural of WOMAN. WOMEN, like WOMAN is irregular: it should be spelled WIMMEN given the way it's pronounced.

Next, tell your kids there are 3 other words on the wall that ought to rhyme, and let them pick out MOVE, LOVE, and ABOVE. Have them pronounce these words as though they were regular (so that they rhyme with COVE and STOVE). Doing so results in 3

nonsense words. Point out that if they rhymed with COVE and STOVE, they wouldn't be tricky. Does anyone recognize LOVE if you hide the E? Write these sentences for them to read:

- Mom, I LOVE you so much!
- He LOVES to go to the zoo!
- We LOVE milk and cake!
- The ground is below. The sky is ABOVE.
- My nose is ABOVE my mouth.

Okay, so LOVE and ABOVE do rhyme with each other. Can anyone tell you how they ought to be spelled? (LUV and ABUV) Now, ask them if they think the third word (MOVE) also rhymes. Get them to see that it can't rhyme because MUV = /m/ + /u/ + /v/ is not a word. Let them read these sentences:

- MOVE your bike! Its blocking the steps!
- When did you MOVE here with your family?

So how would the word MOVE be spelled if we all lived in Phonicsville? MOOV. Nine tricky words to go.

Tell them there is another question word to go with the ones they already know (WHEN, WHICH, WHO, WHAT, WHERE, HOW, WHY). Can they pick it out? Compare WHO and WHOSE side-by-side with your class. These words sound identical except that the additional S in WHOSE has (as is often the case) a Z sound. Here are some sentences for them to read:

- WHOSE cat is in our tree?
- WHOSE book is this? Its Mikes book.
- WHOSE hat is on the desk? That hat belongs to Beth.

Have someone tell you how it ought to be spelled: HOOZ. Add WHOSE to the Word Wall with the other interrogatives.

Write the word PUT on the board and remark that if it rhymed with NUT and CUT, it wouldn't be a tricky word. Here are some sentences to help your kids figure out the word from context:

- For the last time, PUT your toys away!
- Do not PUT your finger in your nose. Its rude!

- PUT the dog outside. She needs to pee.

PUT rhymes with FOOT and SOOT, so it ought to be spelled POOT.

COME is a tricky word from Stage 11. One of the remaining words rhyme with it. Let them pick it out.

- May I have SOME more milk?
- SOME dogs bark too much!
- SOMETHING is wrong with my bike.

SOME should be spelled SUM. Take time to discuss the difference between the words SOME and SUM. Six tricky words to go.

Write WANT on the board. It's a tricky word, so your kids should not expect it to rhyme with GRANT and CANT. Maybe they can figure it out from context:

- Mom, I WANT to go to the store with you!
- Do you WANT more jelly on your toast?
- WHY are you yelling? WHAT do you WANT?

So, it's tricky because it ought to be spelled WUNT (rhymes with BUNT and STUNT).

Write the word THEIR on the board and ask someone to read it. It's from the first Tricky Word list in Stage 8. Tell them: in the five words remaining, there is one that is pronounced exactly the same as THEIR. (Not a rhyming word, but an exact equivalent.) When they pick it out, agree that this is an unusual thing in English: two words spelled differently, sounding the same, but with different meanings. (Like SUN and SON, or TWO and TOO.) Use these sentences:

- Your book is over THERE on the shelf.
- THERE goes my sister! Do you think she saw us?
- THEIR cat ran away yesterday!
- THEIR apartment is on Tenth Street.

Both words are pronounced as THARE (or THAIR). Discuss these two homophones with your class. THEIR indicates *possession*: their dog, their yard, their food. THERE indicates the *position* of something (or someone). It's the opposite of HERE:

- HERE is your cup; I have it in my hand.

- Your cup is up THERE on the top shelf.

Your kids already know the tricky word ONE from Stage 11. From the 4 tricky words remaining, they should pick out the one that is likely to be pronounced in a similar manner: ONCE = ONE + /s/. Now have them read the following:

- ONCE upon a time, a witch rode her broom stick in the land of Oz.
- When frying an egg, you SHOULD flip it ONCE in the pan.
- You may go out to play ONCE you have eaten.

They should suspect WATCH will not rhyme with MATCH or CATCH because it's a tricky word. If they don't recognize the word, have them read the following sentences, pronouncing WATCH in a way that *does* rhyme with MATCH. I think they'll then recognize the word:

- WATCH out Mac! You nearly ran into me!
- Would you like to WATCH a show with me?

To be regular, WATCH would have to be spelled WAWCH or WAUCH.

The next word, SURE, is something special. It's a tricky spelling of a new phoneme for your students: /oor/. There are only 5 other common one-syllable words that contain this phoneme: POOR, LURE, CURE, PURE, and YOUR.

Write SURE on the board. Ask how it would be pronounced if it were *not* tricky. You should be able to lead your kids to something approximating the word SEWER. Now have them read the following sentences using that pronunciation. They should then be able to figure out the *correct* pronunciation in context.

- Do you WANT to come with me? SURE I do!
- Are you SURE you saw him at the park?
- I SURE hope the rain stops soon!

So here is the unusual case of S saying /sh/ instead of /s/. Mention that there is another common word where a beginning S says /sh/. Write SUGAR on the board and see if anyone can figure it out. SUGAR should be spelled SHOOGER (rhymes with BOOGER).

On the board, under the word SURE, write the 5 other words that contain the phoneme /oor/: POOR, LURE, CURE, PURE, and YOUR. Tell your class that all these

words rhyme and let them figure out what the others are. Note (for yourself) that CURE and PURE both have a subtle /y/ sound: CURE = /k/ + /y/ + /oor/, PURE = /p/ + /y/ + /oor/. POOR and LURE do not: POOR = /p/ + /oor/, LURE = /l/ + /oor/.

Point to that last remaining tricky word and say “Uh oh! ONLY one word left!” (If necessary, stress the word ONLY as you repeat the sentence.) Now have them read some sentences using this last word:

- I am ONLY six, but I have a big sister who is ten.
 - Am I the ONLY one in this room who can speak French?
 - We need ONLY FOUR things in life: food, shelter, LOVE – and a dog!
-

Introducing these 19 new tricky words was a challenge, but the payoff will be substantial. Your students have now been exposed to the 45 most common, but phonetically irregular, words in the English language. I say 45 instead of 50 because, as I mentioned earlier, 5 of the words are now perfectly phonetic: HER, OUR, MY, GO, and SAY. Knowing these 45 words will be beneficial going forward because it will enable your kids to devote more mental energy to comprehension and less energy to decoding.

While the following exercise will take some time, it will improve your children’s reading fluency. Before allowing them to read the decodable sentences below, prepare a special deck of flash cards containing all 45 Tricky Words. On one side of the card, print the word as it is actually spelled; on the other side, print the word as it phonetically ought to be spelled. See the box below.

Motivate your students by telling them these flash cards have the trickiest words in our language. When they know these words perfectly, they’ll be “expert” readers. When you practice with them, show only the side with the correct spelling (DOES). Show the phonetic side of the card (DUZ) only if the child needs help. Caution: In the phonetic spellings, OO can say either /ew/ or /oo/, just as it does in GOOD FOOD. When each of your students can go through the entire group in under 3 minutes, they’re ready to tackle the decodable sentences which follow.

Correct Spelling	Phonetic Spelling	Correct Spelling	Phonetic Spelling
above	abuv	said	sed
are	ar	says	sez
because	becuz	should	shood
been	bin	some	sum
come	cum	sure	shoor
could	cood	their	thair
do	doo	there	thair
does	duz	they	thay
done	dun	to	too
eight	ate	two	too
four	for	want	wunt
from	frum	was	wuzz
give	giv	watch	wawch
goes	goze	were	wer
gone	gawn	what	wut
have	hav	where	wair
love	luv	who	hoo
move	moov	whose	hooz
of	uv	woman	womin
once	wuns	would	wood
one	wun	you	yoo
only	oonly	your	yoor
put	poot		

Decodable Sentences

I am proud that I can read!

The cow in the barn is mooing loudly. Maybe someone should milk the poor beast!

There is a toilet in our bathroom and a stove in our kitchen. These two rooms have a sink too!

Dad took my sister to the doctor because she has the flu.

Would you get a broom and help me clean this floor?

If you are thirsty, drink some lemonade.

Pass the salt and pepper please.

There is a bird chirping and singing in our birch tree. I think its a blue jay.

I just saw a shark in the surf!

Holy mackerel!

Not a mackerel, dude, a shark!

Do you want to throw a football around with me?

Here the river is wide and shallow, but up ahead, it grows narrow and deep.

That girl with a balloon is my sister. Her name is Emma.

My birthday is September 8. I am four. I was born on a Thursday.

Ben said, "Mom, do you love me?"

Mom said, "Oh Ben! I love you very much!"

"How much?" said Ben.

Then mom spread her arms far apart and said, "This much!"

My dog is in the back yard. He likes to play in the grass.

Mom says I must eat good food if I want to grow big and tall.

This rain is awful; I am sopping wet! Do you have a towel for me to dry off? Thanks!

I will get some flowers from our garden and put them in a vase.

Whose bike is on the porch? It should have a lock on it to keep it safe.

Where did this dirt on my shirt come from? I think a bird was at fault!
Yuck!

When you eat, do you prefer a fork, a spoon, or a knife?

That boy standing there by the window took my book!

Yesterday was Sunday. I went to church with momma.

Dad did not like that new brand of beer. He threw the brew down the drain in the sink.

My brother put his computer on the shelf above his desk.

Its not polite to burp or fart in public!

Would you help me with my work? Its too difficult for me to do alone!

Could we have some popcorn for our snack?

I saw them at the playground. They were having a great time playing on the swing!

Do you have any more candy? Will you give me some?

Do you think we should go with Paula to the park?
No, we should stay home. Its too late to go out.

“What food do you like the best?” said Robert.

“I like pizza and meat balls best of all!” said Martha.

The woman sitting over there on the couch is my mother.

We are having corn on the cob, pork chops, and salad for dinner.

I cant swim with you now. I must watch my sister until my dad gets home.

The picnic will not happen this afternoon. I am sure its going to rain!

Is it true that Luke lost one of his new blue shoes?

Yes, but Sue found it outside.

A storm blew in from the west. There was some thunder and some hail.

There are only four girls in the van. Where are the other two girls?

Paul says that August is a hot month. Is that true?

Do you have any coins?

I have only eight dimes and four pennies.

Would you like to join our group? We read books together every Friday afternoon.

Do not spoil the party by being a grump!

“Why are you crying?” asked mom.

Sue said, “I am crying because I fell off my bike and hurt my elbow.”

Do you enjoy playing with that boy? His name is Roy.

Heck no – he annoys me! He is too loud and he acts like a clown.

When lost in the woods, its a good plan to go north, south, east, or west.

I saw a hawk flying over our house.

“Billy, do not try to sit here and eat with such dirty hands!” said mom.

“Go clean them – and use some soap!”

Who broke this window?

Sandy did. Its her fault. She threw the ball too hard. I could not catch it.

Hey Joe! Let me see your broken toe. How did it happen?
I was walking in bare feet and I hit my toe with a door. Ouch!

“Do you understand what will happen to you if you pick your nose in public?” said Aunt Bertha.

“Yes, I do,” said LeRoy, “I will have a clean nose!”

Tell me a joke.

OK. When does a car have too much gas?

Answer:

(Caution: silent W in ‘answer’)

When three kids are in the back seat.

Tell me another.

Why did the banana go to the doctor?

Answer: It did not peel well.

Do you know that if a duck flies upside down, it will quack up?

“Hey mom. Will the pie be very long?”

“No dear,” said mom, “the pie will be very round.”

Why are two and four afraid of seven?

Answer: Because seven eight nine. Get it??

Knock, knock!

Who is there?

Justin.

Justin who?

Just in time for dinner!

Why do the French like to eat snails?

They cant stand fast food!

<p>Teacher Note: A few nursery rhyme snippets...</p>

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
 Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
 All the kings horses and all the queens men
 could not put Humpty together again!

Are you sleeping? Are you sleeping? (feel free to sing!)
 Brother Jon, Brother Jon?
 Morning bells are ringing! Morning bells are ringing!
 Ding, dang, dong. Ding, dang, dong.

Handsome Boy Blue, come blow your horn!
 The sheeps in the meadow, the cows in the corn!
 Where is the boy who looks after the sheep?
 He is under a haystack, fast asleep!
 Will you wake him?
 No, not I! For if I do, he is sure to cry!

O, where have you been,
 Billy Boy, Billy Boy?
 O, where have you been,
 Charming Billy?
 I have been to seek a wife,
 She is the joy of my life,
 She is a pretty girl
 Who will not leave her mother.

Baa, baa, black sheep,
 Have you any wool?
 Yes, sir, yes, sir,

Three bags full:
 One for the master,
 And one for the dame,
 And one for the lovely girl
 Who lives down the lane.

Teacher Note: What follows is optional. Do it only if you're interested.

Do you know what numbers come after 10?
 Yes, I do:

11 – eleven	16 – sixteen
12 – twelve	17 – seventeen
13 – thirteen	18 – eighteen
14 – fourteen	19 – nineteen
15 – fifteen	20 – twenty

But what comes after 20?
 Its easy:

21 – twenty-one	26 – twenty-six
22 – twenty-two	27 – twenty-seven
23 – twenty-three	28 – twenty-eight
24 – twenty-four	29 – twenty-nine
25 – twenty-five	30 – thirty

Say, I think I see a pattern here! Is the next number 31 (thirty-one)?

Yes indeed! Here are the important numbers you will need to go all the way to 100 (one hundred):

40 – forty
50 – fifty
60 – sixty
70 – seventy
80 – eighty
90 – ninety
100 – one hundred

But what comes after one hundred?

It all starts again: one hundred one (101), one hundred two (102), one hundred three (103) and so on – all the way to two hundred (200).

Then all the way to three hundred (300) and four hundred (400)?

Yes.

But what comes after nine hundred ninety-nine (999)?

One thousand (1000), one thousand one (1001), one thousand two (1002), and so on.

Do the numbers ever stop?

Nope. They go on forever! To infinity!

Stage 15

Unusual Spellings

Open and Closed Syllables

During this stage you'll be focusing your children's attention on some unusual spellings of the sounds /aw/, /I/, /f/, and /ch/. You'll teach some common word families that, when mastered, will make independent reading much easier. You'll also show your students how to analyze multi-syllable words in a way that will minimize pronunciation errors. Specifically, this stage includes:

- The -LE family (BOTTLE, SNUGGLE, WAFFLE).
- The irregular, but common, IGH, OUGH, and AUGH families (MIGHT, BOUGHT, CAUGHT).
- The PH spelling of /f/ (PHONE, GRAPH).
- The -TION family (ACTION, MENTION).
- The T spelling of /ch/ (FIXTURE, POSTURE)
- About two dozen words where the vowel, unexpectedly, has a *long* sound (COLD, FIND, WILD).
- The difference between open and closed syllables.

The Spelling Corner – The spelling you do with your kids should now come from Stage 13 and Appendix M. These are tricky words for beginners because most of the long vowel sounds have two or more plausible spellings. When you ask a child to spell SLOW, for instance, does he say S-L-O, S-L-O-E, or S-L-O-W? (All these answers are phonetically correct, but only one is ultimately correct.) Remind students that a long A sound at the end of a word is always spelled AY. For a long E sound at the end of a word, the number of syllables helps to decide if the word should end in E (FREE) or Y (BELLY). A long I sound at word's end is spelled Y (MY, CRY) but there are 4 exceptions: PIE, DIE, LIE, and TIE.

Throughout this stage, you'll be working with word lists in Appendix N. If you look there now, you'll see that in the first group, the Giggle Group, all the words end in LE. What I've listed there is only a tiny sampling of the more than 3000 such words in the English language. Note that for all the words in this group, the correct spelling could have been EL instead of LE: APPEL, NOODEL, SIMPEL, PICKEL, and so on. In fact, that's exactly how a whole group of similar-sounding words were just spelled in

Appendix M, for example, CAMEL, TUNNEL, SHOVEL, and NICKEL. In other words, the entire GIGGLE Group is simply that many more examples of Lazy Vowel – a topic just discussed in Stage 13. The final sound for every one of these new words is ULL, the sound you can hear in the words DULL, HULL, and GULL.

To present the above to your class, first get them to pronounce /u/ + /l/ correctly. Do this by having them read the rhyming words GULL, HULL, and DULL (a bird, a ship's bottom, the opposite of sharp). With everyone sure of the sound of ULL, tell your kids that lots of two and three-syllable words end with this exact sound – but the spelling is LE instead of ULL. Put this list of words on the blackboard. On the left is the correct spelling; on the right is the way to say the word.

giggle = gig + GUL
sniffle = snif + FUL
puddle = pud + DUL
apple = ap + PUL
pebble = peb + BUL
puzzle = puz + ZUL
chuckle = chuc + KUL
turtle = tur + TUL
jungle = jung + UL

In pronouncing each of these words, a student need only read the first syllable, and then add something that rhymes with “ULL.” The E is silent. In short, at the *end* of a word, LE is equivalent to UL: PICKLE = PIC/KUL. Point out that as they say each word, their tongues end up touching the back of their upper teeth. They'll probably find this fun!

Once they seem to be catching on, do the GIGGLE Group in the appendix. If anyone has trouble with the three-syllable words listed there, like POSSIBLE, help out by splitting the word up: POS/SI/BLE. When finished with this group, tell your kids that their phonics skills have now added another 3000 or so words to their I-can-read list!

The next topic, the GH groups in the appendix, will present more of a challenge for your students. The spellings there are horrendous. If brewers can market their beer phonetically as LITE, why must the rest of us spell it non-phonetically as LIGHT? I would

tell you to skip the whole group, but it has far too many important and common words. I've divided them into 5 sub-groups in Appendix N. Four sounds, already introduced, will now get alternate spellings:

- IGH spells /I/
- AUGH and OUGH both spell /aw/
- EIGH spells /A/
- GH spells /f/

Start this new topic by asking your class to use their knowledge from Stage 10 to spell the word BITE. When a student answers correctly, write it on the board. Now ask someone else to spell the rhyming word LIGHT. At this point, she ought to spell it LITE. Write it down as well:

B I T E
L I T E

Let your class know that the second spelling *ought* to be correct, but this is an example of one of the trickiest spellings in English. Now spell it correctly:

B I T E
L I T E
L I G H T

Emphasize that while BITE is correct, LITE is not. Since the combination, IGH, represents a single sound in the word LIGHT, this is your students' first (and only) example of a *three-fer*: three letters making a single sound! IGH spells long I.

Teacher Note: Some folks consider DGE a three-fer for /j/ (as in BADGE) and TCH a three-fer for /ch/ (as in MATCH). I think it's an open question as to whether the phoneme /d/ can be heard in BADGE or whether /t/ can be heard in MATCH. In any case, it's too subtle to worry about in the context of beginning reading instruction.

Now discuss the spelling of FIGHT: should it be FITE (like BITE) or FIGHT (like LIGHT)? Don't keep them in suspense; let them know *nearly all* the words ending in the sound "ITE" are spelled with this new three-fer. Now place the other IGH words from the appendix on the board and let various students decode them. At the end of this list you and your students can marvel at how the words BITE, KITE, and SPITE escaped this spelling madness!

As if three-fers weren't bad enough, your kids are now faced with some awesome *four-fers*! Do the AUGH and OUGH word groups in the appendix together because these are both alternate spellings for the same sound: /aw/. Here's what you might do with your class. Ask them to spell the word TAUGHT, as in "I taught my dog a new trick." If necessary, help them isolate the 3 sounds: /t/ + /aw/ + /t/. As they replace each of these sounds with appropriate letters, write their answer on the board. Given what you did in Stage 12, your students should end up with one (or both) of two phonetically correct alternatives:

T A U T T A W T

Either of these is a great answer. The word TAUGHT *should* be spelled in one of these 2 already-established ways. Now write the correct spelling:

T A U T T A W T
T A U G H T

Let your students ponder this ugly spelling for a moment. Then point out that in this correct spelling, the 2 T's make perfect sense, but the vowel sound, /aw/, is spelled differently from what they learned in Stage 12: AUGH instead of AW or AU. In other words, AUGH must be a *four-fer* for the sound /aw/. Tell your kids that AUGH and OUGH are *both* alternate spellings for the vowel sound /aw/ and write some additional words for them to decode:

T A U T T A W T
T A U G H T
C A U G H T
B O U G H T
F O U G H T

There are only 3 four-fers in English – and your class just met 2 of them. Now do the remainder of the OUGH and AUGH words in the appendix. Here it might be more helpful to transfer these words to index cards where initially, they could be written this way: S-OUGH-T, D-AUGH-TER, N-AUGH-TY, and so on. In each case, the middle part of the word is read as /aw/. Help with definitions of these words as necessary.

Reviewing, the sound /aw/ now has 4 correct spellings: AU, AW, AUGH, and OUGH. Compare: FAULT, LAW, TAUGHT, and SOUGHT.

There is one more four-fer and then your class is done with them. Ask if they can remember how to spell the number 8 from the Tricky 50 list in Stage 14. (If you have a Word Wall, this should be easy.) Write it on the board: EIGHT. Since EIGHT has only 2 sounds, /A/ and /t/, EIGH must be another spelling of long A. In other words, EIGH must be another four-fer – one that spells /A/. The word EIGHT is not alone in having this weird spelling. Write these words under the word EIGHT, lining them up nicely:

E I G H T
 W E I G H T
 W E I G H
 S L E I G H
 N E I G H (The sound a horse makes)
 N E I G H B O R
 F R E I G H T

With some help, your kids should be able to decode these new words. Make sure they understand the difference in meaning between the above words and the words ATE, WAIT, WAY, SLAY, and NAY.

At this point, you've already done all the EIGH words in the appendix except for the word HEIGHT. This would be pronounced HATE if your students used the word EIGHT as a guide. It's actual pronunciation is HITE – a spelling that would have been perfectly reasonable. Reviewing, your students now have 4 spellings for the sound /A/: A-E, AI, AY, and EIGH. Compare: SALE, SAIL, SLAY, and SLEIGH.

There is one last listing in the GH Groups in the appendix. The five words there all have the spelling OUGH or AUGH, yet now these spellings do *not* say /aw/. What these 5 words *do* have in common is the fact that GH spells /f/. Place these 5 words on the board:

ROUGH
 TOUGH
 ENOUGH
 LAUGH
 COUGH

Let your kids know that for these 5 words, GH is a two-fer for the sound /f/. That alone may be enough for students to identify some of them. You could also say that these

words are such oddballs that you're going to spell them as they *should* have been spelled, that is, phonetically:

ROUGH	(RUFF)
TOUGH	(TUFF)
ENOUGH	(ENUFF)
LAUGH	(LAFF)
COUGH	(CAWFF)

Once your students realize what these words actually are, point out that the first 3 rhyme, and GH spells /f/ for all of them. These are some of the craziest spellings that exist in English, yet they are all common words; your students need to master them. Perhaps make up some humorous sentences for them to read – sentences that might help them remember these words:

- I may be ROUGH and I may be TOUGH, but I think I have had ENOUGH of these silly spellings!
- To spell the word LAFF as L-A-U-G-H is INSANE!
- If you COUGH something up, spit it in the sink or toilet!

Note: Two other common words that would normally be covered here, THOUGH and THROUGH, will be covered in Stage 17.

Time to evaluate. When you think your kids have mastered the words in the GH groups, put the most common of these words on flash cards, shuffle them, and see how your children do. This is a TUFF test. Take your time here and be sure your students can decode most of these words – they occur frequently in children's books.

After the GH groups, the PH group will be easy. Whether this two-fer is at the beginning of a word, in the middle, or at the end, it always has the sound /f/. There are some amusing words in this group that should make the task of remembering how to pronounce PH an easy one. With the substitution of F for PH, all the words are surprisingly phonetic. I would simply place them on the board, tell the kids that PH is a two-fer for /f/, and see how they do.

I think the hardest word on the list is SPHERE. If necessary, write SFERE on a flash card and hide the S: FERERE. Once the child reads it, show the S: SFERE. Now substitute the PH for the F: SPHERE.

Next up: some words which simply don't follow the rules. In the appendix, I call them the WILD group since WILD is one of the words listed there. All the phonics to date would suggest the vowels in the WILD Group should have their short sound. Nevertheless, all these vowels are long. If all these words ended in E, like they once did in OLDE English, a CHILDE would FINDE MOSTE of them trivial. Even though that final E has long since vanished, they must still recognize these two dozen common words.

Simply show your kids this group of words with the caution that *all* the vowels are long; they shouldn't have too much trouble. Point out that the word WIND can be said with a long I, or a short I, but the meaning changes with the pronunciation. (The word BOTH should also be mentioned here because it too, is an outlier. It's not pronounced like CLOTH, BROTH, and MOTH.) Point out that FROST, COST, and LOST are not on the list because they are pronounced exactly as we would expect, with a short O.

Now, focus your children's attention on a common suffix that is always pronounced in a manner at odds with its spelling: TION. (Over 2500 English words end in this suffix.) If you think about words like ACTION, FICTION, and ADDITION, it becomes apparent that TION is pronounced "SHIN" (or, perhaps, "SHUN," depending on where you live). What is most unusual in this situation is that T says /sh/. (That the vowel in this unstressed suffix is pronounced /i/ or /u/ is just another example of Lazy Vowel.) In Appendix N, I have included a list of words that should get your kids accustomed to reading this common word ending. The key here, is that they do not try to sound out this suffix phonetically; they must simply recognize it and think: SHIN. Use flash cards and go slowly; many of these words are two (or more) syllables. Define them as necessary.

Next, look at the TURE family of words in the appendix. If you think about how you pronounce words like FIXTURE and PASTURE, you can hear that TURE does not rhyme with PURE and CURE. Instead, TURE is pronounced /ch/ + /er/, or simply "CHER". With this understanding of how to read TURE, the words in this group are surprisingly phonetic. If necessary, with a word like SIGNATURE, hide the TURE part of the word and let the student read SIGNA. Then he simply needs to add the sound "CHER" to read the entire word. Kids will likely need help with some definitions even after successfully decoding some of these words.

In multi-syllable words, each syllable has a vowel. Often, these are stand-alone vowels that can have *either* their short or long sound. So now you can show your kids some general strategies for deciding how to pronounce these vowels. For example, the words HABIT and BASIC are both two-syllable CVCVC words. Yet in one, the A is long, and in the other, short. Why? A related question is this: in longer words, how does the reader figure out syllable boundaries?

It turns out there are some general rules that can help a beginning reader in this regard. Here is a summary of the most helpful rules:

- *Open* syllables end in a vowel (CCV, CV, V) and typically have a *long* vowel sound: BA/SIC. BA is an open syllable. SIC is not.
- *Closed* syllables end in a consonant (CVC, VC) and typically have a *short* vowel sound: HAB/IT. Both HAB and IT are closed syllables.
- Syllable boundaries usually occur between consecutive consonants: BUT/TER and MAS/TER. Note how this rule keeps us from reading MASTER as MA/STER. (In MA/STER, the A would have a long sound because MA is an open syllable.)
- Syllable boundaries never split consonant digraphs (SH, CH, TH, NG) because digraphs produce a single sound. So, the word BISHOP can't be read as BIS/HOP. However, that still leaves two possibilities: BI/SHOP (long I) or BISH/OP (short I). Here, only more reading experience can help – and the fact that BI/SHOP is not a word.
- Common prefixes (DE, DIS, EM, IM, IN, IR, MIS, NON, PRE, RE, SUB, UN) and common suffixes (ED, ER, ES, EST, ING, FUL, LESS, LY, MENT, NESS, OUS, Y) are always their own syllable and they obey the above rules for open and closed syllables.
- TION and TURE (covered above) are always their own syllable.

The above guidelines are for you. I believe, however, that your children can understand the open/closed distinction and the necessity of splitting a word at two consecutive middle consonants (unless those consonants form a two-fer).

Teacher Note: These guidelines are not perfect. A beginner trying to read words like HOTEL or COMET for the first time could still misread them as HOT/EL (short O) and CO/MET (long O). If these words are already in the beginner's *speaking* vocabulary, such mistakes will be minimized. These mistakes will also decrease with time and reading experience.

In Appendix N, you'll find some groups of words that will help your students decode open and closed syllables. Don't think your kids must master all these words before moving on. There are too many. Do some now, from each group, until they get the hang of it – and then come back later, as needed, for more practice. In the first group, the initial syllable is closed. In the second, the initial syllable is open. In the third group, you'll find a more challenging mix. Be sure your students understand that for open syllables, the vowel is long, and for closed, the vowel is short.

I think you should present these words – at least initially – as I have them in the appendix: already split into syllables. This will help your students learn the open/closed distinction and it will make their decoding easier. Naturally, your kids won't have this aid when they're reading independently. Nonetheless, this experience of reading words that have been divided for them will still be a useful one: their confidence will keep growing and they'll be learning to view longer words as the sum of pieces (syllables) that are individually manageable.

They'll also be learning that faced with an unknown word, multiple pronunciations are often possible. Later on, when they come across a word like MOMENT, for example, they'll try decoding it as both MOM/ENT (short O) and MO/MENT (long O). When one of the pronunciations matches a word in their *speaking* vocabularies, they'll know which one to pick.

Teacher Note: Open and closed syllables are not infallible. For instance, in the appendix I did IN/VES/TIG/A/TION instead of IN/VES/TI/GA/TION. I did so to keep a short I in the 3rd syllable. Yet the second way of dividing the word seems more natural to me. It helps to understand that Lazy Vowel trumps all rules. The 3rd syllable in INVESTIGATION is unstressed – therefore its vowel is going to be pronounced /u/ or /i/ no matter what.

Stage 16

Soft C, Soft G, Contractions

There are only a few more phoneme-grapheme relationships that your students need to learn in order for them to reasonably set out on their own as independent readers and spellers. These topics include:

- The vowel Y in the *middle* of a word: what is its sound?
- Alternate sounds for some consonants. Your students have already seen that S often spells /z/. But in addition, C can spell /s/ (CITY), and G can spell /j/ (GENTLE). What rules govern this behavior?
- Contractions. As soon as your kids open a book, they'll run into words like DON'T and HAVEN'T. You need to teach them what these are and how to pronounce them.
- Thousands of words end in E. When is that E silent? What does the silent E tell a reader about the word to which it is attached?
- The vowel digraphs IE and EI: how should your students handle these two-fers? What sounds do they symbolize?

The Spelling Corner – Many Stage 15 words are not easy words to spell. Do what you can, but realize that your children have years to work on their spelling. It might be best to start with words from the WILD group in Appendix N: they're common words with relatively easy spellings. After that, see how they do with some of the easier words in the GIGGLE group – words like APPLE, BOTTLE, and NOODLE.

If you ask your students to spell some of the words from the GH group, remind them that these are among the trickiest spellings in the English language. They should expect the three-fer, IGH, and the four-fers AUGH, OUGH, and EIGH. Start with one of these words, NIGHT for instance, and once they get it, stay with other words that rhyme with NIGHT. If a child hears a word ending in "SHIN," does she remember to spell it as TION? Emphasize that nearly every word having the sound /f/ is spelled with F, not PH. A child should use PH only if she is sure that PH is the correct spelling. Such assurance comes when the word has been orthographically mapped.

If you ask them to spell some of the multi-syllable words, clearly pronounce each syllable so they can determine whether the syllable is open or closed.

You and your kids have already investigated the letter Y when it occurs at the *beginning* of a word as a consonant (Stage 6), and at the *end* of a word as a vowel (Stages 12 and 13). If Y appears in the *middle* of a word or syllable, it should be read as a vowel having the sound /I/ or /i/. Look at the two word groups I have prepared in Appendix O. In one group, the Y spells long I, in the other, short I.

Present the first group to your class, informing them that Y says /I/, just as it does in the words MY and DRY. Also mention that there are 2 animals (PYTHON and HYENA) to be found within the group. The words in the group almost perfectly follow the rules for open and closed syllables. If your kids imagine each Y as the letter I, the words are surprisingly phonetic. Help with syllable boundaries (if needed) by splitting the words up, for example: ty/phoon and an/al/yze.

When you present the second group of words, let them know that Y can also symbolize the sound /i/. (This is the fourth sound of Y. Compare: YES, MY, CANDY, and MYTH.) There is also another animal (LYNX) to be found in the group. If a particular student needs help, you can again write these words in a manner that helps with syllable boundaries: symp/tom and hyp/no/tize, for instance. Your kids may have trouble with the word LYNX. You can rewrite it, replacing the Y with I, and the X with KS: LINKS. It's perfectly phonetic:

$$\text{LYNX} = \text{LINKS} = /l/ + /i/ + /ng/ + /k/ + /s/$$

Your students have already seen how to use S (or ES) to form the plural. They have also seen that it's common for S to have a Z sound. In Appendix O, I have a group of words that have nothing to do with the plural, yet the S sounds like a Z. Make sure they can read and pronounce these words correctly. The group reviews many "tricky" words that your kids already know.

The letter C symbolizes two phonemes – phonemes already symbolized by the letters S and K. When C is followed by A, O, or U, it has a K sound. You already covered this with your students in Stage 3. However, when C is followed by E, I, or Y, it has an S sound. *Hard C* refers to its K sound, while *soft C* refers to its S sound. In Appendix O, I have included some of the more common words where a soft C is required. There are no exceptions to this soft C rule: CE, CI, and CY should all be pronounced as though they were written as SE, SI, and SY:

CENTER = SENTER

CITY = SITY

CYNIC = SINIC

Happily, this rule makes hundreds of additional words phonetic.

After explaining to your kids when a soft C is required, practice with the appropriate group in the appendix. Initially, the words rhyme, but not for long. If necessary, replace the C with an S in some of the words (EX/SEPT) as a temporary reading aid. Point out that the silent E in a word like BOUNCE has nothing to do with making a prior vowel long. It's there solely to make the C soft.

There is a parallel situation with the letter G. G has its *hard* sound, /g/, when it's followed by A, O, or U, and its *soft* sound, /j/, when it's followed by E, I, or Y. In Appendix O, you'll find a sampling of such words. In this case, there *are* some common exceptions to the rule. I include them at the end of the list. Here are some things to note as you and your kids work through this soft G list:

- The silent E in a word like CAGE serves two functions: it makes the A long and the G soft.
- The silent E in a word like PLEDGE is there only to make the G soft. The other E has its short sound.
- In the word, ORANGE, the NG is not acting as a two-fer. The word needs to be read in a way that interprets GE as a unit rather than NG. Orange = /or/ + /i/ + /n/ + /j/. Lazy Vowel is at work in the second syllable.
- There are other Lazy Vowel examples in this list: ORIGINAL, GENERAL, and even the word SAUSAGE (/s/ + /aw/ + /s/ + /i/ + /j/).
- The word GIRL is only an apparent exception to the soft G rule. The letter I in this word is an inseparable part of the two-fer IR. As such, it should not change the pronunciation of the G from hard to soft. Still, the spelling, GURL, would have been a more logical choice (rhymes with CURL).
- Words that end in NGER (like FINGER, ANGER, HUNGER, and LONGER) are not exceptions because both NG and ER are inseparable two-fers in such words. The E in these words has no effect on the G; instead, it's an integral part of the R: ER = /er/.

Once again, you can temporarily replace the G with a J if it helps your students to read some of these words: MA/JIC, JI/GAN/TIC. Soft C and soft G occur frequently in English. Once you and your children finish this section, they'll be able to decode hundreds of additional words.

Countless English words end in the single vowel E. I estimate a final E is silent 99% of the time. Your children already know most of the important *exceptions* to this rule, namely, the one-syllable words in the E/EE group from Appendix G: ME, WE, SHE, HE, THE, and so on. Apart from these few exceptions, final E's are nearly always silent. This is a useful rule for the beginning reader. Up until this stage, you have deliberately given your kids the impression that silent E has only one purpose: to make the other vowel in the syllable long. In this current stage, you are expanding the role of silent E: attached to a C or a G, a final E causes a *soft* sound.

If you look in the appendix, you'll see there are some additional roles of silent E. I have 9 categories there, labeled A through I, with examples in each category. The category descriptions are given below. The goal here is to show your kids that a silent E at the end of a word can have many meanings. The categories in the appendix are as follows:

- A. The E makes the prior vowel in the syllable long. This is the most important, and the most common role of a final E.
- B. The E makes the prior C soft. It may, or may not, also make the prior vowel long.
- C. The E makes the prior G soft. It may, or may not, also make the prior vowel long.
- D. All English syllables must have a vowel.
- E. English words don't end in V.
- F. English Words don't end in U. (The main exceptions are MENU, TOFU, FLU, GURU, and of course, YOU.)
- G. Nouns that are singular, yet end in S, could cause confusion. A final E announces that the word is singular and it prepares the word for the second S that will make it plural (HOUSE/HOUSES).
- H. Some words end in E for no apparent reason whatsoever! Your kids have already seen many of these listed as tricky words.
- I. Worse still, in some words, a final E is utterly misleading as to how the word should be pronounced: it would seem to indicate a long vowel when, in fact, the vowel stays short. (Note: these are all examples of Lazy Vowel.)

These 9 groups will provide some beneficial review for your students and help them become better at decoding words when a final E is present. Go through the groups one at a time, explaining each category as you go.

Next up are the two-fers IE and EI. I postponed these until now because many EI words (like RECEIVE) use the soft C sound you just introduced to your students. Here's a pleasant fact about these two digraphs: with few exceptions, they both symbolize /E/.

Look at the lists I've provided in the appendix. Note how consistently the sound of both EI and IE is long E. This is another useful rule for a beginning reader. You have already covered nearly all the exceptions to this rule:

- The EIGH group from Appendix N (EIGHT, WEIGHT, and so on) where EI is part of a four-fer.
- The small, IE group from Appendix M: TIE, DIE, LIE, and PIE.

Of the other exception words listed in Appendix O, FRIEND and THEIR are the most important. Ask your kids how FRIEND ought to be spelled (FREND).

As you practice these words with your kids, point out how many of the words have a soft C sound, and how many end in silent E simply to keep the word from ending in V. Note that the E at the end of HYGIENE and CAFFEINE serves no purpose whatever, and that for the rhyming words, SHRIEK and SHEIK, one uses IE and the other uses EI.

It's time to deal with contractions. They pop up everywhere so it's a good idea to cover them now – otherwise they will confuse and frustrate your kids as they set out on their own in Stage 17. I have 33 of the most common contractions listed in Appendix O. There are nearly 100 contractions in English, but many are obscure: MIGHT'VE for example. To motivate this topic with your students, write the following on the board:

He is eating.
She is sleeping.
We are playing.

Have various students read these 3 simple sentences. Now, focusing on the first sentence, have a student read it repeatedly, but each time a little faster. As he does so, can the class hear how the two words, HE and IS, start coming together? Explain that when we speak, we often say: "He's eating" instead of "He is eating". Now write "He's eating" across from "He is eating." on the blackboard:

He is eating.	He's eating.
She is sleeping.	
We are playing.	

Let them study the blackboard for a while; this is a novel (and weird) topic for them. Point out that HE'S is called a **contraction**: a combination of two words into one. A

contraction is a short-cut method of both speaking and writing – and such contractions are everywhere. Point out how the word IS is partially gone. The S is still there, but something called an **apostrophe** has taken the place of the missing I. Also, point out that the original sentence has 4 syllables while the short-cut sentence has only three. If spelled like it sounds, we would write HE’S as HEEZ. Write HEEZ in parentheses on the board. Make sure your kids understand this equivalency: He’s = He is. (These 33 contractions may be another candidate for your Word Wall.)

Now, do the same thing as above with the other two short sentences. As you do so, make these points:

- SHE’S, sounds like SHEEZ, and it’s short for SHE IS. The apostrophe again takes the place of I in this example.
- WE’RE, sounds like WEER, and it’s short for WE ARE. The apostrophe takes the place of A in this example.

When finished, the blackboard will look like this:

He is eating.	He’s eating. (HEEZ)
She is sleeping.	She’s sleeping. (SHEEZ)
We are playing.	We’re playing. (WEER)

Make sure your kids can read all 6 sentences correctly. Now make 3 flash cards – one for each of the above contractions. On one side, write the contraction (SHE’S) and on the other, write what it’s short for (SHE IS). You’ll be using these to review shortly.

Before moving on, point out how awesome are the new words CONTRACTION and APOSTROPHE. Both words are perfectly phonetic given the phonics and rules that have already been covered – including the interpretation of open and closed syllables, and Lazy Vowel.

Ok, that was an elaborate introduction to three of the contractions listed in the appendix. Now you can speed things up a bit. There are 7 contractions that involve the word WILL. Write out these 6 short sentences on the board:

I will go with you.
 You will go with me.
 He will go with us.
 She will go with us.

They will go with us.
We will go with them.

Have students read each one and then tell them that the *first two words* in each sentence have a contraction. If they read the sentences rapidly, can anyone guess what the contractions might be? One at a time, go back and write the same sentence, but now with the contraction, each time emphasizing the correct pronunciation. (I would include the phonetic pronunciation in the parentheses.)

I will go with you.	I'll go with you. (ILE)
You will go with me.	You'll go with me. (YOOL)
He will go with us.	He'll go with us. (HEEL)
She will go with us.	She'll go with us. (SHEEL)
They will go with us.	They'll go with us. (THAIL)
We will go with them.	We'll go with them. (WEEL)

Have various students read all 12 sentences while you monitor their pronunciations. Do they see that the apostrophe takes the place of WI in each case?

Now ask your class this: what if everyone in these 6 sentences wanted to stay home? In other words, how would we *negate* these 6 sentences? See if you can lead them to the correct contraction, WON'T (will not). The correct pronunciation is WOANT.

I will go with you.	I'll go with you.	I won't go with you.
You will go with me.	You'll go with me.	You won't go with me.
He will go with us.	He'll go with us.	He won't go with us.
She will go with us.	She'll go with us.	She won't go with us.
They will go with us.	They'll go with us.	They won't go with us.
We will go with them.	We'll go with them.	We won't go with them.

Now make 7 new flash cards to go with the 3 you made earlier.

Now that your students know contractions can be used to negate things, you can do the other 13 negating contractions *as a large group*. (I leave it to you to decide whether you want to include the slang contraction AIN'T for AM NOT. AIN'T is perfectly phonetic, and it rhymes with PAINT.) Write these on the board:

She is not going with us.
 He can not go with us.
 I do not want to go.
 She does not want to go.
 We are not going.
 She could not go.
 He would not go.
 I should not eat so fast.
 We did not sleep well.
 I have not seen her today.
 He has not had his bath yet.
 She was not home.
 They were not sleepy.
 I am not sleepy!

Make it a game. Underline the two words that will get a contraction and see if students can guess what that contraction might be. After all, they probably use many of these contractions in their day-to-day speech:

She <u>is not</u> going with us.	She isn't going with us. (IZINT)
He <u>can not</u> go with us.	He can't go with us. (CANT)
I <u>do not</u> want to go.	I don't want to go. (DOANT)
She <u>does not</u> want to go.	She doesn't want to go. (DUZINT)
We <u>are not</u> going.	We aren't going. (ARNT)
She <u>could not</u> go.	She couldn't go. (COODINT)
He <u>would not</u> go.	He wouldn't go. (WOODINT)
I <u>should not</u> eat so fast.	I shouldn't eat so fast. (SHOODINT)
We <u>did not</u> swim today.	We didn't swim today. (DIDINT)
I <u>have not</u> seen her today.	I haven't seen her today. (HAVINT)
He <u>has not</u> had his bath yet.	He hasn't had his bath yet. (HAZINT)
She <u>was not</u> home.	She wasn't home. (WUZINT)
They <u>were not</u> sleepy.	They weren't sleepy. (WERNT)
I <u>am not</u> sleepy!	I ain't sleepy! (AINT)

Make up 13 more flash cards – 14 if you did AIN'T – and take a well-deserved break.

Do the last 10 contractions as a group, just as you did above. By the end of this final exercise, the blackboard will look something like this:

<u>Let us</u> go to the game today!	Let's go to the game today! (LETZ)
<u>I am</u> not sleepy yet!	I'm not sleepy yet! (IME)
<u>It is</u> not polite to pick your nose.	It's not polite... (ITS)
<u>He is</u> here! <u>I have</u> seen him!	He's here! I've seen him! (IVE)
<u>They are</u> coming to the game.	They're coming... (THAIR)
<u>They have</u> had enough!	They've had enough! (THAVE)
<u>Who is</u> that lady in the blue dress?	Who's that lady... (HOOZ)
<u>We have</u> had a great time today!	We've had a great... (WEEV)
<u>You are</u> my best friend!	You're my best friend! (YOOR)
<u>You have</u> been a big help today!	You've been a big... (YOOV)

Make up your final 10 flash cards and add them to the deck. For the next few days, review all 33 contractions using the flash cards. When you practice with your kids, show them one side, and have them predict the other (in both directions). Make sure they are pronouncing the contraction correctly. Once you're convinced they know their contractions, it's time to move on to the last stage in this reading program.

Stage 17

Independent Reading

For your students, this stage marks the pivotal transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” It is unlike the previous stages in that *daily formal instruction in phonics is no longer a requirement*. Furthermore, this stage never really ends as long as “reading to learn” remains a priority in an individual’s life.

If you look at appendices P and Q, you’ll see you’ve already taught your students 95% of the code that is there. You’ll present the final 5% over these next few months, but at a more leisurely pace. What your children need now, more than anything else, is to read, but in a supervised setting.

Along with lots of reading opportunities and continued spelling practice, instruction in basic grammar and creative writing can now get underway. (These topics are beyond the scope of this book.) At this point, all the techniques of Balanced Literacy (guided reading, independent reading, shared reading, small-group strategy lessons, whole-class minilessons, shared writing, interactive writing, reading and writing workshops) *may* be the best tools for moving forward. The difference now, however, is that these techniques will be used on children who can read and spell. The writing will not involve “invented spellings,” but rather phonetic spellings, where mistakes, when they occur, will still be readable: “I went HOAM with my FRIEND.” And the reading will depend neither on Type 1 sight words nor on guessing strategies.

You can teach the few phonics topics remaining (see “Completing the Code” below) over the next few months as your students become more fluent and confident readers. Here are my recommendations for the *immediate* future:

- Teach your children how to use a dictionary by having them search for words they already know.
- Let them pick their own age-appropriate books. I wouldn’t worry too much about whether books are at the “right” level. If a book is too easy for a child, or too difficult, she’ll quickly get bored and put it down. Within reason, allow her to be the judge.
- As much as possible, have kids read aloud in your presence. This allows you to monitor their reading and to see if there are any unexpected problem areas. Find

a balance between intervening too fast, in order to help, and allowing a child to become frustrated. If a book is clearly too difficult for a student, help him switch to one which will allow more success.

As you listen to your students read, there are at least five ways things can (and will) go wrong:

- 1) She reads a word incorrectly because she forgets something she already learned: that AI says /A/, for example, or that GE says /j/, or that SAID is one of the Tricky Words, so it doesn't rhyme with MAID.
- 2) He reads a word phonetically, but nonetheless incorrectly, because the word does not follow standard phonics rules: BALLET, CHOIR, COLONEL.
- 3) She accents the wrong syllable: CON/ceal rather than con/CEAL.
- 4) She divides a multi-syllable word incorrectly: BON/US (short O) instead of BO/NUS (long O).
- 5) He pronounces a word correctly but it's not in his speaking or listening vocabulary, so he misses the main idea of the sentence.

Deal directly with situation #1 by reviewing whatever phonics she has forgotten. If, for example, she reads DEAD incorrectly, as /d/ + /E/ + /d/, remind her that DEAD is one of the exceptions to the "two vowels walking" rule. If the word were BEAD or PLEAD, her pronunciation would be correct. Also, it's unlikely the word DEED will make sense in the context of the sentence if the actual word is DEAD.

Situation #2 is more problematic. Tell him he is correct with his phonics, but CHOIR, for example, is one of those words in English that doesn't follow the rules. See if he can correct himself, by looking at the word within the context of the sentence. If that doesn't work, encourage him to look it up in a dictionary. This is preferable to simply telling him what the word is, for two reasons. Looking up CHOIR will reinforce its odd spelling. It will also encourage him to be less dependent on you. I find it's a good exercise to ask, once the word is identified, how the word should have been spelled in order to be considered phonetic: QUIRE (or KWIRE).

Situation #3 is a common mistake which will naturally decrease over time as reading fluency and vocabulary grow. Remind the student that English is an accented language and have her try accenting the word in a different way. Maybe she'll then recognize it. Show her there are some words that can be accented either way, but the meaning changes with the accenting:

OB / ject	or	ob / JECT
REB / el	or	re / BEL
PER / mit	or	per / MIT
REF / use	or	re / FUSE

Situation #4 is also a common mistake for beginning readers. Just review open and closed syllables (Stage 15) and then have her try again with the word's syllables divided in a different way.

Emphasize situation #5 as a valuable learning opportunity. Reading will quickly increase a child's vocabulary as long as he doesn't skip over the unknown word. As in situation #2, he should first try to figure out what the correctly-decoded word might mean from its context. Then he should consult a dictionary to see if his contextual guess is correct. You might consider having kids collect the words that represent new vocabulary for them, keeping the words in a personal folder with an accompanying definition. Encourage your kids to review their individual "new word" list each day. Tell them they can take a word off that list only when they are sure they have mastered its meaning.

Continue reading to your class on a regular basis even though your kids are now reading on their own. As you discuss the story, point out any unusual rule-breaking words that are not among the 50 Tricky Words your kids already know. Familiarize yourself with the phonics topics that remain (see below) so that when one of those topics comes up naturally during your reading, you can cover it at that time. The topic most likely to come up first is the one I call "Other Vowel Combinations."

As your students start reading silently, remind them not to skip over words they don't know. Encourage them to use the dictionary or to ask you for the meaning. You can also show them how to type a word whose meaning is unknown, LOLLYGAG for instance, into an internet search window to get an online definition: "fool around, dawdle." Doing so will often provide the child with the correct pronunciation as well – as long as the child clicks on the sound symbol next to the word. Whenever a child finishes her silent reading of a book, get her to talk about it, so you can gauge her comprehension.

Completing the Code

50 Irregular Words

If you look at Appendix S, you'll find my *final* version of the Tricky 50 irregular English words. I know what you're thinking. Wasn't that the final version you saw back in Stage 14? Well, I did remark at the time that the words HER, OUR, MY, GO, and SAY had become wholly phonetic. Rather than simply take these five words off the list, making it the Tricky 45, I think it more helpful to replace them with 5 relatively important words that are not wholly phonetic: EYE, NONE, FRIEND, THOUGH, and THROUGH.

I leave it to you to introduce these 5 new tricky words to your students and to add 5 new cards to the deck you used for practice in Stage 14. Use the full deck once a week to keep reviewing these 50 high-frequency words until everyone in your class knows all of them cold.

Other Vowel Combinations

If you look back at the vowel digraphs (two-fers) you covered in the previous stages, you'll find these: AI, EE, EA, OA, OO, UE, OI, OU, AU, OE, IE, and EI. Each of these produces a single sound. There are, however, other vowel combinations. I don't mean AA, II, UU, AE, and AO – no common words have these spellings. But that still leaves EU, IO, EO, IU, UI, UA, and IA. Only one in this last group, EU, is a digraph. If you look at Appendix T, you'll see it's an uncommon two-fer in English. Its sound is either /y/ + /ew/ or /ew/. Those 11 words are all I could find and none of them are likely to show up in a child's book. Skip this digraph or cover it – as you see fit.

The key thing to understand about the other 6 new vowel combinations (IO, EO, IU, UI, UA, and IA) is they are *not* two-fers. This implies both letters make a sound, and therefore a syllable boundary occurs *between* each of these pairs of vowels. This will be something new for your students.

Discuss the IO group first. Since a syllable boundary occurs between the I and the O, the I will be in an open syllable. Your students should therefore expect a long vowel sound and that's what they get: either long I or long E. The O will be long or short, depending on whether it's in an open or closed syllable. There are some common words here. I didn't include any words ending in TION because that's the special sound ("SHIN") you already covered in Stage 15. There are many words that end in IOUS as

well, but you'll cover those in the OUS group further below. The main point to stress here is that IO is not a two-fer, so both vowels make a sound. Note that in some of the IO words, REGION for example, the second syllable is dominated by Lazy Vowel: /r/ + /E/ + /j/ + /i/ + /n/.

There are no surprises in the EO group: both letters make a sound and the E is long. In a few of the words, like DUNGEON for example, the 2 sounds of EO nearly merge into what sounds like a short I: DUN / GIN. This is another example of Lazy Vowel. As expected, the G in DUNGEON has its soft sound.

In the IU group, I have included only a small sampling of the hundreds of words that end in IUM. The letter I has a long E sound in an open syllable while the U is short because it's in a syllable closed by the M. Be aware of the soft C in CALCIUM and the soft G in GERANIUM.

Cover the next 2 groups together: UA and UI. I have eliminated from these groups, words like QUAKE and QUIT where the U is an integral part of the Q, making the side-by-side vowel structure only apparent. With Q words accounted for earlier, the UA group is perfectly well-behaved. U has its long sound, /y/ + /ew/, or, in some cases, simply /ew/. In the words spelled with AL, the AL has the lazy ULL sound your kids first saw in Stage 13. In TRUANT and in LANGUAGE the final vowel defaults to a lazy /i/:

/t/ + /r/ + /ew/ + /i/ + /n/ + /t/
/l/ + /a/ + /ng/ + /g/ + /w/ + /i/ + /j/.

In the UI group, the words in the first box are what your students might expect at this point. There are only a few common words there. In the second boxed group (FRUIT, JUICE and others), you see yet another (infrequent) spelling of the sound /ew/. For these 6 words, UI is acting as a two-fer, producing a single sound. We may prefer the spelling FROOT JOOSE, but we must deal with the language we have. In the third boxed group of UI words, the U is silent. It's there simply to keep the G from going "soft." The word GUESS, for instance, without that silent U (GESS) would have to be pronounced JESS, as in DIGEST. Cool, right? There are only a few words where this phenomenon occurs.

The entire IA group is what your students should expect: a long vowel sound (E or I) on the open side of the syllable divide, and a short vowel sound on the closed. The words listed are only a small sampling of such words. Note: for words ending in IA, the sound of the A defaults to a lazy /u/.

Past Tense

Take a few moments to remind your students that a verb is the action word in a sentence – the word describing what the person, animal, or thing is doing. That action can be going on right now:

I scrub the floor.

She jogs with her dad.

He plays with his brother.

The boat floats in the lake.

Often, however, the action occurs in the past. To indicate the past, we usually add D or ED to regular verbs:

I scrubbed the floor yesterday.

She jogged with her dad.

He played with his brother last week.

The boat floated in the lake.

The following rules for adding D or ED are complex. They are for you, not for your students.

- If the verb already ends in E, simply add the D (LOVE, LOVED)
- If the verb has a vowel digraph (OA, EE, AW, and so on), simply add ED (CHEER, CHEERED)
- If the verb has a single vowel followed by a single consonant, double the final consonant and add ED (WAG, WAGGED).
- If the verb ends in the sound /sh/, /ch/, /s/, /k/, /p/, or /f/, the added D or ED will have a /t/ sound (KISS/KISSED, NURSE/NURSED).
- If the verb ends with a /d/ or a /t/ sound, adding D or ED will create a second syllable (FLOAT, FLOATED).
- If the verb ends in the single vowel Y, change the Y to I and add ED (MARRY, MARRIED).

Rather than expect your kids to remember all this (they won't), do the various groups in Appendix T where I have examples of each of the above 6 situations. You can choose whether or not to explain the rule that governs the group. I would simply practice with each group separately, monitoring pronunciations, and making sure each past tense verb remains a single syllable (except in the one group where it doesn't!)

Comparative and Superlative

The rules for forming comparative and superlative are similar to the above rules for forming past tense – especially for when to double the consonant. Here, too, we change Y to I before adding ER or EST.

fat – fatter – fattest
 sweet – sweeter – sweetest
 rainy – rainier – rainiest

Start by giving a concrete example. We use a word without a special ending, TALL for instance, to describe a *single* child: Dave is a TALL boy. We add the ending ER to compare two children: Dave is TALLER than Sheila. And we add the ending EST to compare 3 or more children: Dave is the TALLEST kid in his class. Here is another example:

North Dakota is a COLD state.
 North Dakota is COLDER than Oklahoma.
 Alaska is the COLDEST state in the country.

Sum it up: when describing a single noun (person, place, thing), use neither ER nor EST; when comparing two nouns, use the ending ER; when comparing 3 or more nouns, use the ending EST. Once your class understands the concept, practice with the triplets I've provided in the appendix.

Additional Word Families

Look in the appendix at the -OUS, -SION, -SURE, -CIAL, and -TIAL families. Many of the words in these families will be unfamiliar to a young child even though he or she may well be able to accurately pronounce them. They all have difficult spellings. You may wish to pick and choose which words to cover in each group.

Place the words you want to do from the OUS group on the board. I'll assume JOYOUS is one of the words. Next to it, write the way JOYOUS is pronounced:

JOYOUS JOY-ISS
 NERVOUS NER-VISS (and so on)

Explain the while JOYOUS is the correct spelling, JOYISS is the correct pronunciation. (Let them know it's really nothing more than Lazy Vowel from Stage 13.) With the understanding that OUS = ISS, have your students decode the other words in the list.

Similarly, do the IOUS, UOUS, and CIOUS groups from the appendix. As you did above with JOYOUS, re-write the words from these groups in a manner that will explain their pronunciations. Here are my suggestions for getting started with each of these groups:

for the IOUS group:	OBVIOUS	OB-VEE-ISS	
	VICTORIOUS	VIC-TOR-E-ISS	(and so on)
for the UOUS group:	STRENUOUS	STREN-U-ISS	
	TENUOUS	TEN-U-ISS	(and so on)
for the CIOUS group:	PRECIOUS	PRE-SHISS	
	FEROCIOUS	FER-O-SHISS	(and so on)

As you practice these groups with your students, emphasize the fact that OUS consistently says ISS. (You might consider placing this fact, OUS = ISS, on your word wall.) Teach some new vocabulary by defining unknown words and then having students come up with sentences that use the new words.

In the first SION group, SION says "SHIN." As you recall, that's identical to the sound of TION in Stage 15. (Compare: ACTION and MISSION.) This should be a fairly easy group to do with your kids. Explain that SION, like TION, says SHIN. Then let them read the words from the blackboard.

In the second SION group, as well as in the SURE group, you and your class finally encounter the 44th and final phoneme of English. That sound (see Table 1) is *voiced* SH, symbolically, /SH/. I first discussed this unusual sound back in Chapter 1. It can clearly be heard in the word ASIA: /A/ + /SH/ + /u/. Even though it's the voiced equivalent of /sh/, it is never spelled SH. If you look over the 2 groups of words with asterisks in the appendix, you'll notice this sound occurs in such common words as PLEASURE and DECISION.

Before you do these voiced SH groups with your students, get them to accurately produce the voiced sound in isolation. To do this, start by having them review the *unvoiced* sound that they have been making since Stage 7. That should be easy. Once they are making the unvoiced sound, /sh/, tell them to keep the shape of their mouths unchanged, but now add some voicing. (Demonstrate it yourself, going from /sh/ to /SH/ for them.) If a child is having trouble with this new sound, have him say TREASURE. This word has 2 syllables; the second syllable starts with the sound in question.

Now place the words MISSION and VISION on the board. Compare and contrast their sounds this way:

MISSION	MIS-SHIN	← shin is <u>unvoiced</u>
VISION	VI-SHIN	← shin is <u>voiced</u>

Once all your students can pronounce both words correctly, place other *voiced* SION words on the board under the word VISION and help with pronunciations as necessary.

Do the same with the SURE group. Have your students compare the *second* syllable of FLASHER (unvoiced SHER) with the *second* syllable of PLEASURE (voiced SHER). When all your kids can pronounce these two words correctly, introduce the SURE group this way:

FLASHER	FLA-SHER	← sher is <u>unvoiced</u>
PLEASURE	PLE-SHER	← sher is <u>voiced</u>
TREASURE	TRE-SHER	← sher is <u>voiced</u> (and so on)

In the final two groups, CIAL and TIAL are both spellings for the same sound: “SHULL.” Think of the word DULL and then replace D with SH: SHULL. All the words in these final two groups can be pronounced with the final syllable, “SHULL.” This is, once again, nothing other than Lazy Vowel. What is unusual in these two groups is that in the one, C says /sh/, and in the other, T says /sh/. Simply have your students equate both CIAL and TIAL with “SHULL”:

FACIAL	FA-SHULL	PARTIAL	PAR-SHULL
SOCIAL	SO-SHULL	ESSENTIAL	ES-SEN-SHULL

(and so on)

The Mute Group

You've arrived at the last phonics topic in this book. What better (and easier) way to end than with the Mute Group! Gathered at the end of Appendix T are some of the weirdest spellings in the English language. Happily, the number of words is quite manageable. Eleven small groups, each having a letter that simply shouldn't be there: a letter that is mute. Two of the groups, K and W, provide review, but the other 9 are new. Have fun with these words. Show the groups, one at a time, to your students and see if they can simply read the words once you tell them which letter is silent.

THE END

Your feedback would be much appreciated.

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Printed copies are available at Amazon.

Thank you.

Appendices

Appendix A

Here are the 60 “words” that can be formed from the letters A, E, I, O, U, M, N, and S. **Boldface** indicates a real word, a person’s name, the name of a letter, or an important prefix or suffix.

Note: In these early stages, you are treating English as though it has no irregularities. Therefore, be careful with the words SON, IS, and AS. These are irregular words in English. At this early point in the program, they should be pronounced as they are in the words SONIC, HISS, and ASTEROID.

Word	Example	Word	Example	Word	Example	Word	Example
mass	mascot	sass	sassy	nas	nasty	ass	asteroid
mess	message	ses	sesame	-ness	nest	ess	escape
miss	mistake	sis	sister	nis	tennis	iss	hiss
moss	mosquito	sos	isosceles	nos	nostril	oss	ostrich
muss	musty	sus	suspense	nus	bonus	us	fuss
mam	mammal	Sam	sample	nam	dynamic	am	amuse
mem	member	sem	seminar	nem	nemesis	em	empty
mim	mimic	sim	simple	nim	nimble	im	improve
mom	mommy	som	somber	nom	nominate	om	omelet
mum	mumble	sum	summer	num	number	um	umbrella
man	manage	san	sandal	Nan	banana	an	antique
men	mention	sen	sentry	nen	continent	en	enjoy
min	minimum	sin	sincere	nin	tannin	in	insect
mon	monsoon	son	sonic	non-	nonsense	on	moron
mun	munch	sun	sunset	nun	enunciate	un-	unwrap

Appendix B

VC stands for vowel-sound/consonant-sound.

CVC stands for consonant-sound/vowel-sound/consonant-sound.

VC	CVC						
	PT	PG	PN	TG	TM	DG	DN
up	pat	peg	pan	tag	Tim	dig	Dan
at	pet	pig	pen	tug	Tom	dog	den
it	pit	gap	pin	get	mat	dug	Don
add *	pot		pun	got	met	God	Ned
Ed	putt *	PS	nap	gut	mitt *		nod
id	tap	pass *	nip		mutt *	DS	
odd *	tip	pus		TS	Matt	sad	GS
egg *	top	sap	TD	toss *		Sid	sag
ug!		sip	tad	sat		sod	gas
	PD	sup	Ted	set	TN		Gus
	pad		Todd *	sit	tan	DM	
	pod		dot		ten	dam	GM
	dip	PM		GN	tin	dim	mug
		Pam	PP	gun	nut	mad	gum
	DD	map	pap	nag	net	mid	Meg
	dad	mop	pep	nog +	not	mud	
	did		pip				
	dud		pop	GG	TT		
			pup	gag	tot		
				gig			

* These words are still considered CVC (or VC) because double consonants like SS, TT, and DD make a single sound. Double consonants are not blends.

+ Technically not a word but you can combine it with EGG and she'll have her first two-syllable word!

Note: Boxed words are important, high-frequency words.

Consonant Blends

CCVC stands for a word with a beginning consonant blend.

CVCC has a final consonant blend.

CCVC and CVCC				CVCC
ST-	SN-	-MP	-NT	
stem	snap	imp	ant	stamp
Stan	snip	ump	mint	stomp
stun	snit	sump	pant	stump
step	snot	pomp	punt	stand
stop	snag	pump	tent	stunt
stud	snug	temp	tint	spend
		damp	dent	spent
SM-	-ST	dump	sent	
smug	mast	tamp		
smog	mist			
	must			
SP-	nest	-ND	-PT	
span	past	and	apt	
spin	pest	sand	opt	CVCC
spun	test	end		tempt
spat	dust	send	-SP	
spit	gust	mend	gasp	
spot		pond		
sped		tend		
spam				

Appendix C

VC	CVC							
	BF	BT	BG	BN	FG	KP	KD	KM
ebb	buff *	bat	bag	ban	fig	cap	kid	Kim
if	fib	bet	beg	Ben	fog	cop	cod	Mack
off		bit	big	bin	gaff *	cup	cud	mock
ick!	KB	but	bug	bun	guff *	pack	deck	muck
ack!	back *	tab	gab	nab		pick *	Dick	Mick
	buck	tub		nub		peck	dock *	
	cab		BS		FS	puck	duck *	KN
	cob	BD	bass	FP	fuss			can
	cub	bad	Bess	puff		KT	KS	kin
		bed	boss		FN	cat	kiss	nick
	BP	bid	bus	FT	fan	kit	cuss	neck *
	bop	bud	sob	fat	fin	cot	sack	con
	pub	dab	sub	fit	fun	cut	sick	
		Deb				tack	sock *	
	KF		BM	FM	FD	tick	suck	KG
	cuff *	BB	bam!	fem	fad	tock		keg
		Bob	bum	miff *	fed	tuck	KK	cog
		bib	mob	muff *	doff *		kick	

* Words ending in FF or CK are CVC words because both FF and CK make a single consonant sound.

Note: Boxed words are important, high-frequency words.

CCVC and CVCC					CCVCC
ST-	SC-/SK-	SM-	-SK	-PT	scamp
stab	scab	smack	bask	kept	skimp
stub	skiff	smock	task		scant
staff	scoff		tusk	-CT	
stiff	skip		desk	act	
stuff	scat	-ST	disk	fact	
stack	skit	best	dusk	pact	
stick	scam	bust	mask	tact	
stock	skim	fast	ask		
stuck	scum	fest		-FT	
	scan	fist	-SP	aft	
SP-	skin	cast	cusps	gift	
speck	skid	cost		daft	
			-ND	deft	
-NT	SN-	-MP	band	sift	
bent	snob	bump	bend	soft	
bunt	snub	camp	bond		
font	sniff		fond		
cant *	snack		fund		

* Contractions, with proper apostrophes, will be covered in Stage 16.

Appendix D

VC	CVC		Consonant Blends					
ill	LP	LD	still	lend	flab	slap	elm	clasp
Al	lap	lad	spell	lint	fluff	slip	helm	clamp
	lip	led	spill	left	flack	slop	kelp	cleft
LL	lop	lid	smell	lift	fleck	slit	gulp	flint
lull	pal	doll	skill	loft	flick	slot	pulp	clump
	pill	dull	skull		flock	sled	milk	flask
LG				blab	flag	slid	sulk	gland
lag	LF	LM	last	blob	flap	slam	silk	glint
leg	fell	Mel	list	bluff	flip	slim	film	plump
log	fill	mill	lost	black	flop	slum	pelt	plant
lug		mull	lust	block	flat	split	silt	slump
gal	LK		lisp	bled	fled			slant
gill	lack	LN	lamp	blog	floss	pluck	melt	slept
gull	lick	Nell	limp	blip		plug	felt	splint *
	lock	null	lump	blot	slab	plop!	belt	elk
LB	luck	nil	land	bless	slob	plot	tilt	Clint
lab	kill			bliss	slack	plod	self	splat!
lob	cull		club	blam!	slick	plus	elf	spilt
bell			cliff		slug	plan	cult	
bill	LS		click	clot			golf	
	lass		clock	clad	glib	bland	gulf	
LT	less		cluck	class	glob	blend		
let	loss		clog	clam	glop	blond		
lit	sell		clap	clan	glut	blast		
lot	sill		clip		glad	blest		
tell	Sal				glass	blimp		
till					glum	blunt		

* A CCCVCC word!

Appendix E

CVC		Consonant Blends					
rib	ram	brass	drug	grid	scram	rest	crest
rob	rim	brim	drum	grab	scrap	rust	crust
rub	rum	bran	drat!	grub	scrub	rasp	crisp
ref	ran	brat	dress	gruff	scrod	ramp	cramp
rack	Ron	Brad	drip	Greg	stress	romp	crimp
Rick	run	bred	drop	grill	strap	rump	crump
rock	rat	brick	drab	grass	strip	rant	crept
rag	rot	brag	drag	grin	struck	runt	craft
rig	rut		drill	grim		rent	
rug	red	crass		grip	frost	rend	primp
rap	rid	cross	fret	grit	frump	rapt	prompt
rip	rod	cram	Fred	grad	frisk	risk	print
Russ	riff	crap	frock	gram	frock	raft	scrimp
	rem	crop	Fran			rift	script
		crud	frill	trot	grump		sprint
		crab	frog	trod	grand	draft	
		crib		track	grant	drift	trill
		crack	press	trick	grunt	dreck	trust
		crick	prim	truck	graft		tramp
		crock	prom	tram	grasp		tromp
			prep	trim		strand	trump
			prod	trap	brunt	strict	trend
			prick	trip	brisk	strum	tract
			prig	trek	brand		

Appendix F

CVC				Consonant Blends	
van	jab	buzz *	hot	swim	went
vat	Jeb	fizz	hog	swig	wept
vet	Jeff	fuzz *	hut	swell	welt
vim	job	Liz	had	twin	weld
Val	Jack	razz *	hid	twig	spritz
win	Jill		hub	twit	dwelt
wet	jock	yes	huff	twist	yelp
wit	jig	yum!	hack	zest	hump
wed	jog	yen	heck	jest	hand
web	jug	yip	hick	just	hint
wick	jam	yet	hag	jump	hunt
wag		yuck!	hug	jilt	husk
wig	Jim	yell	hiss	vast	heft
well	Jan	yack	ham	vest	hilt
will	Jen		hem	vamp	helm
	jet	hat	him	vend	help
Zen	Jed	hit	hum	vent	held
zap!	jot	hell	hen	west	hulk
zip	jut	hill	hip	wisp	hasp
zit	jazz *	hull	hop	wimp	hemp
zig-zag	jell			wind **	Swiss
Zack				wilt	swag
				wend	swept

* A CVC word because ZZ symbolizes a single sound: /z/.

** Pronounce this with a short I rather than a long I.

Note: Boxed words are important, high-frequency words.

S says /z/			
as	is	has	his

Some Anomalies					
QU = KW	X = KS		WR = R	WH = W	KN = N
quit	ox	sex	wrap	when?	knot
quiz	ax	six	wreck	whip	knack
quilt	box	lax	wrist	whim	knit
quick	fax	tax	wren	whiz	knob
quip	fix	wax		wham!	knock
quest	fox	pox		whiff	
quell	max	vex		whump!	
quack	mix	flex		whap!	
squid	nix	text		whack!	
squint	sax	next		whisk	
squish	hex	tux		whomp!	
	flax				

Appendix G

SH			CH			TH	
SH-	-SH	-SH	CH-	-TCH	-NCH	TH-	THR-
ship	ash	brush	chap	batch	inch	thus	throb
shop	cash	crash	chip	botch	bunch	that	thrift
shack	dash	crush	chop	catch	lunch	thump	thrill
shock	dish	fresh	check	ditch	hunch	theft	thrust
shed	fish	bash	chick	fetch	munch	thick	thrash
shall	gash	gush	chuck	hatch	pinch	thug	thrum
shell	rash	hush	chill	latch	punch	them	thrall
shin	lash	sham	chin	match	ranch	than	
shun	lush	brash	chat	pitch	stench	then	
shot	mash	Josh	chum	patch	branch	thin	
shut	mush		chest	stitch	brunch	thud	
shaft	sash	clash	champ	snatch	crunch	this	
shift	wish	flash	chimp		drench		
shelf	Welsh	flesh	chump	snitch	French	-TH	
	squish	flush	chant	sketch	quench	bath	
	hash	trash	chug	scratch	trench	Beth	
SHR-	gosh!	plush		crotch	scrunch	math	
shred	rush	slash	-CH	crutch	flinch	path	
shrub	stash	slush	much	itch	finch	wrath	
shrug	splash		such		wrench	with	
shrill	smash		rich	witch *		smith	
shrimp	blush		which *	Dutch		fifth	
			belch	blotch		sixth	
				clutch		tenth	
				glitch		broth	
				stretch		moth	
				notch		cloth	
				hutch		filth	
				etch		depth	
				wretch		width	

* Discuss the difference

Two Special Groups		Final S says /s/		Final S says /z/	
E/EE	ALL				
		snacks	nuts	cans	drums
be	all	hats	plants	balls	beds
he	ball	lips	tents	eggs	bugs
me	call	pets	pests	bells	stands
she	fall	chicks	gifts	hens	ends
we	hall	quits	fists	kids	pigs
see	mall	rocks	stamps	twigs	hands
three	tall	pots	bumps	thrills	shells
tree	stall	lamps	gulps	swims	smells
pee	wall	ducks	puffs	fins	runs
bee	small	helps	ships	cobs	webs
glee	squall	jumps	cups	nods	grins
knee		maps		sees	trees
spree				bags	tubs
fee				spuds	
flee				is	his
free				as	has
the **					

** Usually pronounced /TH/ + /u/

Appendix H

ING	ANG	UNG	ONG	ENG
king	bang	dung	long	length
ring	gang	hung	song	strength
sing	rang	sung	wrong	
wing	sang	flung	strong	
thing	slang	strung	throng	
fling	fang	stung	bong	
string	hang	lung	prong	
swing	pang	swung	gong	
bring	clang	clung	Hong Kong	
sting	ANK	INK	UNK	ONK
sling	bank	fink	bunk	bonk
ding	drank	blink	dunk	honk
cling	rank	brink	gunk	wonk
ping	sank	drink	junk	conk
wring	tank	kink	punk	plonk
spring	yank	link	sunk	zonk
I sing.	thank	pink	chunk	
He sings.	blank	rink	stunk	
They sing.	crank	sink	trunk	
You sing.	prank	slink	clunk	
We sing.	spank	stink	drunk	
She sings.	stank	think	flunk	
my ring	dank	wink	hunk	
our ring	plank	ink	plunk	
your ring	flank	mink	shrunk	
their ring		shrink		
her ring		clink		
his ring				

Some decodable multi-syllable words					
seven	consent	exist	liquid	present	sickness
eleven	backpack	fastest	magnet	punish	solid
belong	bandit	finish	mattress	puppet	sunset
nothing	banish	sandwich	melted	rabbit	talent
hundred	basket	gossip	muffin	rapid	radish
absent	biggest	habit	napkin	restful	chipmunk
fungus	British	hottest	panic	robin	vanish
difficult	bucket	illness	picnic	rocket	tennis
comet	cabin	insect	planet	rubbish	himself
elastic	Wisconsin	fragment	planted	sadness	expect
electric	often	limit	plastic	racket	address
blinking	chicken	event	pocket	visit	abolish
fantastic	combat	ticket	sinking	English	jacket
halibut	comment	timid	disrupt	bashful	invent
ketchup	complex	topic	banana	publish	diminish
minimum	contest	relax	basketball	children	selfish
maximum	cricket	drinking	benefit	splendid	begin
public	dentist	pumpkin	cabinet	tantrum	goblin
vivid	discuss	drumstick	dustpan	enchant	upset
lament	exit	disgust	bathtub	within	reckless

Adding ES creates a second syllable*			
box	boxes	glass	glasses
fox	foxes	branch	branches
dish	dishes	fizz	fizzes
wish	wishes	dress	dresses
brush	brushes	splash	splashes
flush	flushes	scratch	scratches
fix	fixes	catch	catches
kiss	kisses	bench	benches
crash	crashes	lunch	lunches
itch	itches	munch	munches

* The final S says /z/

Adding ING to words			
sit	sitting	kiss	kissing
dig	digging	wish	wishing
swim	swimming	fish	fishing
skip	skipping	thrill	thrilling
fib	fibbing	flush	flushing
run	running	plant	planting
jog	jogging	stand	standing
grin	grinning	grasp	grasping
drip	dripping	sketch	sketching
spit	spitting	belch	belching
chop	chopping	twist	twisting
fix **	fixing	pitch	pitching
mix	mixing	dump	dumping

** X is never doubled because it already stands for 2 consonants: KS.

Note: When adding ING, double a single consonant following the vowel. If you don't, the vowel becomes long (compare BIDDING and BIDING). You'll deal with long vowels shortly.

Appendix J

/A/						
bake	came	ale	crane	ape	ate	fade
make	game	bale	mane	gape	date	jade
lake	same	gale	pane	tape	fate	made
take	tame	male	sane	drape	hate	wade
snake	lame	pale	wane	grape	late	shade
quake	blame	sale	plane	escape	mate	blade
brake	flame	tale	Jane	shape	rate	glade
cake	shame	whale	insane	scrape	crate	trade
wake	name	stale	lane	cape	gate	grade
fake	became	scale			slate	spade
flake	frame	Yale	bare	Dave	state	
sake		exhale	dare	gave	plate	knave
shake	craze	female	fare	pave	skate	square
mistake	faze	inhale	mare	rave	Kate	
cupcake	gaze		rare	save		bathe
	haze	chase	share	wave		clothe
	maze	base	flare	shave	haste	
	raze	vase	glare	brave	waste	
	blaze	case	stare	grave	paste	
	glaze	erase	scare	slave	taste	
	graze		spare	behave		

/E/						
here	Pete	theme	Steve	meme	these	Steven
complete	concrete	extreme	athlete	compete	fete	excrete
stampede	severe	crème	serene	impede	Eve	millipede

/U/						
cube	cute	fume	muse	use	dispute	amuse
puke	mute	volume	compute	fuse	excuse	perfume
rebuke	refute	legume	mule	abuse	confuse	commute

/I/						
dime	hide	life	file	fire	bite	dive
lime	ride	rife	mile	tire	white	hive
mime	side	wife	pile	wire	kite	jive
time	tide	strife	tile	shire	mite	live
chime	wide	knife	vile	spire	rite	chive
grime	glide	fife	smile	ire	site	thrive
slime	bride		while	retire	trite	five
crime	pride	dine		hire	spite	drive
	stride	fine	pipe	admire	smite	strive
bike	slide	line	ripe	desire	quite	
dike	divide	mine	wipe	inspire	write	
hike	inside	nine	gripe			wise *
like		pine	swipe			rise *
Mike	tribe	wine	snipe	strike		prize
pike	scribe	vine	stripe	spine		size
spike	bribe	shine				
dislike	describe	swine				

* A final S can have a Z sound

/O/						
joke	dome	abode	tote	bone	cope	rose
poke	home	code	wrote	cone	mope	chose
woke	Rome	mode	smote	hone	dope	hose
yoke		node	dote	tone	hope	close
spoke	dole	rode	quote	clone	pope	doze
bloke	hole		vote	drone	rope	froze
choke	mole			scone	scope	pose
broke	pole	cove	lobe	stone	slope	suppose
smoke	role	stove	globe	throne	grobe	nose
stoke	sole	drove	robe		trope	oppose
stroke	stole	trove	strobe			those
	whole	rove	probe			

Appendix K

/O/		/E/					
OA		EE			EA		
boat	hoax	deed	steel	steer	bead	jeans	seat
float	coax	feed	kneel	queer	lead	lean	cheat
goat	load	heed	eel	sneer	plead	mean	treat
coat	road	need	beef	peer	read	clean	each
gloat	toad	seed	reef	beet	knead	bean	beach
bloat	moat	bleed	beep	feet	leak	cheap	peach
cloak	oath	breed	deep	meet	beak	leap	reach
soak	coach	creed	keep	sweet	bleak	ear	teach
oak	roach	freed	peep	sheet	speak	dear	heap
oat	poach	greed	seep	fleet	squeak	fear	feast
goal	topcoat	speed	weep	tweet	deal	smear	peak
coal	unload	weed	sheep	greet	heal	gear	weak
foam	croak	mEEK	steep	sleet	meal	near	sneak
loam	toasting	seek	sleep	street	real	rear	tea
roam	loafing	week	creep	keen	seal	tear	sea
loan	throat	sleek	beer	teeth	steal	clear	pea
moan	toast	creek	deer	green	squeal	hear	beast
groan	roast	feel	jeer	seen	beam	year	least
oar	coast	heel	leer	teen	cream	wheat	yeast
roar	boast	keel	cheer	queen	team	eat	east
soar	oaf	wheel	squeeze	peek	dream	beat	season
soap	loaf	peel	freeze	cheek	gleam	neat	reason
board		jeep	breeze	sweep	steam	defeat	oatmeal
hoard		deem	sneeze	Greek	stream	heat	seacoast
		seem	geese	degree	scream	meat	ease *
		teem	cheese *	sleeve	heave	grease	tease *
		breech	leech	speech	leave	release	please *
					weave	increase	decrease

* A final S can have a Z sound

/A/					
AI					
raid	rain	stair	trail	quaint	affair
afraid	vain	fair	flail	saint	detail
laid	chain	hair	quail	paint	attain
paid	train	lair	jail	pigtail	raisin
braid	sprain	pair	mail	bait	sailboat
aid	drain	chair	nail	wait	obtain
maid	brain	flair	pail	strait	refrain
repaid	strain	air	rail	trait	explain
gain	stain	ail	frail	remain	complain
lain	Spain	snail	hail	aim	railroad
slain	plain	fail	waist	maim	maintain
main	grain	sail	faith	claim	raincoat
pain	again	tail	mailbox	repair	airline

16 EA exceptions	
/e/	/A/
dead	bear
head	tear
bread	wear
instead	pear
read *	swear
threat	break
sweat	steak
meant	great

* Discuss the two pronunciations of this word

Adding S or ES		
likes	bites	needs
makes	prizes *	sleeps
grapes	chokes	peaches *
skates	ropes	cleans
saves	snores	beasts
bikes	dozes *	roaches *
hides	supposes *	seas
wipes	mules	trains
tires	uses *	flashes *

* Requires an extra syllable because the last sound in the original word is /s/, /z/, /ch/, or /sh/

Adding ING			
bake	baking	moan	moaning
take	taking	weep	weeping
skate	skating	toast	toasting
share	sharing	feed	feeding
bike	biking	speak	speaking
hike	hiking	dream	dreaming
ride	riding	rain	raining
slide	sliding	sail	sailing
smile	smiling	wear	wearing
bite	biting	pee	peeing
write	writing	see	seeing
behave	behaving	flee	fleeing
puke	puking	speed	speeding
rise	rising	soak	soaking

Appendix L

		/ew/			/oo/	/oy/	
OO		EW	UE	U-E	OO	OY	OI
moon	moo	blew	true	tube	took	boy	boil
soon	mood	chew	glue	nude	book	joy	soil
spoon	tooth	brew	flu	dude	hook	soy	coil
croon	booth	crew	Sue	prude	cook	toy	oil
goon	pool	dew	blue	rude	crook	coy	spoil
lagoon	poop	flew	due	include	brook	Roy	toil
loon	spooF	grew	clue	Duke	shook	ploy	foil
noon	root	knew	untrue	Luke	nook	cloy	roil
balloon	scoop	new	avenue	flake	look	annoy	broil
groom	shoot	stew	cruel	June	rook	enjoy	coin
boom	boot	threw		prune	good	busboy	join
doom	too	strew		tune	wood	convoy	groin
loom	tool	slew		dune	stood	decoy	loins
room	troop	Jew		flute	hood	destroy	poison
zoom	zoo	Jewish		brute	foot	employ	joint
broom	boo!	screw		salute	soot	loyal	point
food	hoof	news		costume	wool	royal	appoint
fool	raccoon	shrew		consume		alloy	void
goo	bloom	lewd		pollute	except:	boycott	droid
goop	proof	drew		crude	flood	ahoy!	avoid
hoop	gloom			conclude	blood	troy	devoid
hoot	roof						hoist
loop	scoot		/y/ + /ew/				moist
loot	drool		few	rescue			foist
snoop	kook		tissue	value			exploit
buffoon	saloon	pooch	fuel				toilet
baboon	igloo	groove					oink
goof	spook	ooze					
boost	cool	choose					
moose	goose	loose					

/ow/			/aw/		
OW	OU		AW	AU	Other
cow	round	out	jaw	haul	
bow	found	pout	raw	maul	-ALT
how?	ground	rout	saw	Paul	salt
now	hound	scout	law	laud	halt
vow	mound	shout	paw	fraud	malt
chow	pound	spout	flaw	fault	
brow	sound	stout	draw	vault	-ALK
plow	bound	trout	claw	taut	walk
wow!	wound	sprout	thaw	taunt	stalk
ow!	loud	lout	straw	haunt	talk
pow!	cloud	clout	slaw	jaunt	chalk
yow!	proud	devout	lawn	flaunt	
allow	count	about	pawn	aunt	
	mount	couch	yawn	daunt	-ALL
brown	fount	pouch	fawn	gaunt	ball
crown	south	grouch	dawn	launch	fall
down	mouth	slouch	crawl	haunch	all
drown	oust	crouch	brawl	exhaust	hall
frown	joust	ouch!	bawl	August	call
gown	roust	astound	shawl	sauna	tall
town	foul	around	sprawl	because *	small
clown	noun	amount	hawk	assault	wall
owl	our	discount	gawk	autumn **	stall
howl	sour		awful	augment	mall
growl	flour	except:	outlaw	applaud	
fowl	dour	group	spawn	cause	
prowl	devour	soup		clause	
cowboy		youth		gauze	
crowd		touch		applause	

* Not so tricky after all!

** Silent N prepares for “autumnal”

/ar/			/or/			
AR			OR			ORE
jar	farm	harp	or	orbit	actor	bore
far	fart	harsh	nor	stubborn	cantor	gore
arch	arctic	lard	for	forget	captor	core
arm	hard	march	cord	port	condor	lore
art	harm	larva	lord	minor	doctor	more
bar	lark	marsh	ford	major	horse	pore
barf	mark	park	dorm	worn	comfort	chore
bark	dart	part	form	moron	corncob	shore
barn	March	start	storm	effort	corner	sore
car	market	scarf	born	harbor	north	tore
card	cartoon	scarlet	corn	morning	forth	spore
cart	tar	shard	horn	sort	porch	wore
chard	target	shark	morn	short	scorch	store
charm	tart	sharp	torn	snort	color	snore
chart	yard	smart	thorn	airport	author	score
dark	yarn	spark	fort	formal	discord	explore
starch	harpoon	star	export	escort	absorb	before
apart	alarm	quart	import	New York	coral	ignore
snarl	carve	starve	valor	sailor	dork	adore
Carl	bard	alarm	victor	pork	moral	implore
arc	arcade	carp	sport	stork	gorilla	restore
arrive	artist	carpet	scorn	savor	forest	
arsenic		charcoal	organ	afford	orb	
			mortal	door *	cork	
				floor *	fork	
	except:			except:		
	war		word	worst	worm	
	warm		work	world		

* OOR is an uncommon spelling for /or/

/er/						
ER			IR		UR	
after	hotter	cover	smirk	dirt	turn	hurl
under	smaller	monster	squirm	first	burn	turd
never	bigger	oyster	chirp	whirl	spurn	surf
over	smarter	fern	birch	sir	burst	turf
her	softer	stern	birth	stir	church	curl
hers	faster	verb	girth	third	burp	burger
other *	taller	booger	mirth	thirst	slurp	curt
brother *	darker	finger	irk	girl	hurt	purse
mother *	harder	expert	shirk	skirt	blurt	blur
sister	liver	computer	shirt	squirt	lurk	slur
tower	butter	internet	quirk	flirt	curb	concur
shower	river	disaster	firm	bird	spurt	purr
flower	farmer	corner	direct	squirrel	lurch	fur
power	carpenter	silver	twirl	swirl	burner	churn
number	wonder	permanent	smirch	confirm	disturb	curve
perch	destroyer	term		fir	survive	curse
asteroid	lever	September			cur	blurb
otter	perk	sneakers			suburb	burnt
herd	jerk	thunder			absurd	burden
nerd	clerk	tender			duress	unfurl
hunger	permit	blister			incur	nurse
dinner	insert	ladder			occur	current
twerp	verse	nerve			curtail	curtain
perform	serve	observe				
toaster	barber	anger				
singer		thinker				

* The O in these 3 important words is closer to an /u/ sound.

Appendix M

/A/			/O/			
AY			O	OW		OE
away	pay	Norway	go	arrow	minnow	doe
bay	play	dismay	no	below	mow	foe
day	player	betray	so	blow	narrow	hoe
decay	ray	saying	also	borrow	pillow	Joe
delay	runway	playing	pro	bow	row	toe
essay	say *	staying	metro	bowl	shadow	oboe
gay	slay	Monday	cargo	burrow	shallow	woe
gray	spray	Tuesday	jello	crow	show	goes
hay	birthday	Wednesday	hello	elbow	slow	tiptoe
hurray!	stay	Thursday	loco	glow	snow	
yay!	stray	Friday	bingo	flow	sow	
lay	sway	Saturday	banjo	grow	sparrow	except:
may	today	Sunday	buffalo	grown	stow	shoe
nay	tray	okay	mango	hollow	swallow	canoe
May	way	blue jay	oregano	know	throw	
maybe	repay	clay	pesto	low	tow	
fray	layer	array	condo	mellow	widow	
subway	holiday	display	tempo	knows	willow	
pray	mayhem	portray	motto	own	window	
prayer	slay		torso	known	yellow	
spray	stingray		poncho	growing	billow	
			going	knowing	sorrow	
			jumbo	showing	bellow	
			yo-yo	following	fellow	
			except:	snowing	follow	
			to			
			do			
			who			

* SAY is no longer a “tricky” word.

/I/		/E/				
Y	IE	Y			EY	E/EE
my	pie	belly	greedy	screwy	key	be
by	die	any	grouchy	silly	monkey	he
why?	lie	angry	grumpy	skinny	donkey	me
cry	tie	berry	hairy	sleepy	money	we
try		bloody	happy	stinky	honey	she
fly		bossy	hungry	snowy	valley	fee
fry		bumpy	injury	soapy	turkey	bee
shy		candy	itchy	softly	trolley	knee
sky		chewy	jelly	sorry	hockey	pee
sly		comedy	jolly	speedy	barley	see
spy		creamy	jumpy	starry	whiskey	flee
dry		creepy	kitty	sticky	kidney	glee
ply		curly	lousy	story	chimney	tree
spry		daddy	lucky	study	goopy	agree
guy *		daily	mainly	stuffy	parsley	three
buy *		dearly	many	sunny	alley	free
		dirty	mommy	thirsty	jockey	coffee
		easy	thirty	goofy	homey	toffee
		enemy	nasty	toasty	volley	disagree
		every	nippy	tricky		degree
		fairly	noisy	tummy		employee
		family	party	ugly		foresee
		foggy	penny	very		referee
		funny	puppy	cloudy		levee
		fussy	rocky	yummy		spree
		fuzzy	rusty	forty	except:	
		pity	sadly	fifty	obey	
			except:		prey	
		July	defy	supply	grey	
		reply	deny	apply	hey!	
			multiply		they	

* slightly irregular

Adding ING					
try	trying	dry	drying	hurry	hurrying
cry	crying	say	saying	play	playing
fly	flying	stay	staying	study	studying
fry	frying	stray	straying	annoy	annoying

Adding Y to a short vowel word			
sun	sunny	fish	fishy
fun	funny	rock	rocky
pig	piggy	smell	smelly
mom	mommy	stick	sticky
dad	daddy	slush	slushy
sex	sexy *	fuzz	fuzzy
fog	foggy	mess	messy
mug	muggy	hand	handy

* Never double X. It already represents KS.

Adding Y to a long vowel word			
shine	shiny	foam	foamy
smoke	smoky	soap	soapy
haze	hazy	toast	toasty
grime	grimy	weep	weepy
slime	slimy	sleep	sleepy
scare	scary	sneak	sneaky
shade	shady	rain	rainy

Adding LY to a word			
safely	widely	rudely	loosely
loudly	timely	lonely	bravely
lately	freely	likely	closely

Forming the Plural; Subject-Verb Agreement							
Change Y to I and add ES				Simply add S			
candy	candies	dummy	dummies	pay	pays	annoy	annoys
belly	bellies	fifty	fifties	day	days	monkey	monkeys
story	stories	jelly	jellies	play	plays	turkey	turkeys
penny	pennies	body	bodies	pray	prays	kidney	kidneys
party	parties	bunny	bunnies	stay	stays	destroy	destroys
twenty	twenties	fly	flies	tray	trays	decay	decays
kitty	kitties	try	tries	boy	boys	delay	delays
guppy	guppies	cry	cries	toy	toys	spray	sprays

The Schwa Sound (also known as Lazy Vowel)

Lazy vowels defaulting to /u/							
A = /u/			AL = "ULL"		EL = "ULL"		
panda	flora	abide	pedal	dismal	camel	channel	
vanilla	about	adore	royal	mortal	tunnel	snorkel	
extra	adapt	adult	animal	arrival	squirrel	gavel	
zebra	adopt	agree	normal	comical	travel	rebel	
Nebraska	aloof	avoid	dental	metal	vowel	barrel	
alarm	apart	ajar	floral	central	towel	funnel	
along	awake	alone	medical	survival	axel	gospel	
adorn	abuse	aware	hospital	medal	chapel	marvel	
amend	appoint	arrest	sandal	formal	novel	shovel	
umbrella	momma	America	equal	signal	damsel	pretzel	
afraid	attach	pizza *	festival	carnival	panel	hazel	
acclaim	amaze	plaza	mental	loyal	nickel	level	
annoy	parka	around	several	petal	grovel	vessel	
arrive	soda	abort			morsel	tinsel	

* very irregular!

Lazy vowels defaulting to /i/					
cotton	Boston	kitten	shorten	payment	prudent
carton	bitten	listen	given	thousand	sudden
button	fasten	rotten	nervous	kitchen	skeleton
mountain	item	talent	pavement	student	atlas
fountain	enemy	element	absent	happen	lemon
focus	gallon	evident	garment	ribbon	pelican

Lazy vowels defaulting to /er/					
altar	lunar	molar	polar	solar	vicar
collar	cougar	dollar	mortar	pillar	stellar
vulgar	cheddar	regular	odor	actor	color
donor	humor	honor	alligator	mayor	favor
rigor	razor	vigor	tumor	tutor	author
vapor	doctor	cursor	fervor	sailor	monitor

Appendix N

The Giggle Group					
giggle	jiggle	drizzle	puddle	kettle	tinkle
apple	juggle	eagle	purple	kissable	example
babble	cuddle	fickle	puzzle	little	fizzle
battle	snuggle	fiddle	riddle	lovable	sniffle
beetle	needle	fixable	rubble	marble	startle
bottle	nibble	feeble	sample	middle	sizzle
bubble	doodle	wobble	gobble	mumble	humble
buckle	nipple	wiggle	handle	struggle	tumble
bumble	noodle	ankle	simple	tackle	uncle
bundle	nuzzle	possible	muffle	tattle	waffle
candle	battle	visible	mingle	temple	jungle
cattle	paddle	gargle	people *	terrible	huggable
chuckle	pebble	hassle	knuckle	tickle	huddle
cripple	pickle	poodle	crumble	saddle	topple

* Slightly irregular - just hide the O.

The GH Groups					
IGH = /I/		AUGH = /aw/	OUGH = /aw/	EIGH = /A/	GH = /f/
night	fright	caught	ought	eight	rough
light	delight	taught	bought	weight	tough
might	tonight	daughter	sought	freight	enough
right	lightning	naught	fought	sleigh	laugh
sight	thigh	fraught	thought	weigh	cough
tight	sigh	naughty	brought	neigh	
fight	high	haughty	wrought	neighbor	
slight	except:	distraught			
flight	bite				
bright	spite			except:	
plight	kite			height	

PH = /f/					
phone	humph!	Ralph	elephant	prophet	phonics
phase	phew!	orphan	phantom	triumph	pamphlet
oomph!	graph	telephone	nephew	Philip	sphere
phooey!	dolphin	alphabet	emphasis	phrase	

The Wild Group			
IND	ILD	OST	OLD
bind	mild	most	old
find	wild	ghost	cold
mind	child	post	fold
blind		host	hold
grind			sold
wind			told
kind			gold
behind			scold
	both		bold

TION = "SHIN"		TURE = "CHER"	
action	direction	rupture	mixture
mention	caution	nurture	lecture
fiction	portion	fixture	texture
fraction	election	capture	fracture
addition	condition	posture	literature
subtraction	infection	pasture	vulture
multiplication	attention	culture	rapture
question *	tradition	picture	stature
ambition	invention	feature	creature
section	suction	mature	moisture
affection	adoption	venture	overture
option	potion	puncture	furniture
edition	motion	departure	adventure
connection	lotion	signature	sculpture
junction	notion		

* "CHIN" rather than "SHIN"

First Syllable Closed				
din/ner	com/plete	des/cribe	mis/lead	im/press
sup/per	prob/lem	des/pise	sub/ject	in/sult
lad/der	com/mon	des/pair	sub/way	in/sist
dus/ty	per/haps	per/fect	sub/mit	in/spect
trav/el	dif/fer/ent	thir/teen	dis/as/ter	in/stinct
chil/dren	ex/am/ple	or/bit	fan/tas/tic	fif/ty
hel/lo	en/ter/tain	ov/en	dis/like	un/kind
nap/kin	hun/dred	emp/ty	dis/cuss	un/like
mis/ter	loud/ly	pub/lish	dis/rupt	un/do
con/test	dis/tant	in/spire	dis/pute	con/tain
trum/pet	con/stant	sep/ar/ate	dis/gust	kin/der/gar/ten
tun/nel	div/ide	en/joy/ment	dis/turb	in/ter/es/ting
les/son	sub/tract	his/tor/y	bur/den	un/der/stand
nev/er	fes/tiv/al	val/en/tine	fig/ment	but/ter/fly
bet/ter	ad/ven/ture	fing/er	com/ment	hos/pit/al
mom/my	im/por/tant	sup/pose	com/et	ill/ness
dad/dy	how/ev/er	bot/tom	sing/ing	dis/cov/er
hap/pen	sev/er/al	straw/ber/ry	num/ber	vow/el

First Syllable Open				
la/dy	po/ta/to	na/ture	cre/a/tion	pi/lot
la/zy	ba/sic	mo/tion	ro/ta/tion	fla/vor
la/ter	hu/man	sta/tion	re/peat	bo/nus
ti/ny	pre/pare	va/ca/tion	be/tween	fi/nal
o/pen	pre/tend	na/tion	re/lax	be/hind
pa/per	pre/dict	lo/tion	u/nit	e/qual
pro/vide	re/lax	vi/bra/tion	u/nite	fa/tal
tu/lip	re/fute	e/mo/tion	o/dor	re/quire
so/lar	no/ble	tri/umph	e/vil	to/ma/to
pho/to	de/ny	re/mark	i/vy	re/mind
de/pend	de/coy	be/yond	ba/con	fre/quent
de/sire	de/lay	re/main	gra/vy	be/neath
to/tal	ta/ble	mo/ment	i/tem	re/quest
ri/val	ho/tel	thou/sand	ma/ple	e/qua/tor

Mixed Syllables	
vol/ca/no	ex/act/ly
e/lec/tric	in/for/ma/tion
mel/o/dy	ev/er/y/one
an/at/o/my	de/jec/ted
Hal/lo/ween	dis/be/lief
ar/gu/ment	un/der/wear
choc/o/late	e/quip/ment
co/op/er/ate	in/ves/tig/a/tion
e/vap/or/ate	con/grat/u/la/tions
in/stru/ment	op/por/tu/nit/y
rep/re/sent	vo/cab/u/lar/y
pre/ven/tion	al/lig/a/tor
cu/cum/ber	com/mu/nit/y
re/mem/ber	con/stel/la/tion
par/tic/u/lar	ca/lam/it/y
tem/per/a/ture	con/stip/a/tion
lo/co/mo/tive	Oc/to/ber
cal/cu/la/tor	No/vem/ber
ed/u/ca/tion	ap/pli/ca/tion
ev/er/y/thing	dic/tion/ar/y
con/so/nant	con/sti/pa/tion

Appendix O

Y = /I/			Y = /i/		
style	hyphen	tyke	crystal	lyrics	syllable
type	hydrant	tyrant	cryptic	myth	synthetic
hype	dynamic	hybrid	nymph	mystery	system
analyze	dynasty	dynamite	syrup	hypnotize	symptom
hyena	python	hyper	lynx	rhythm	symbol
typhoon	nylon	hydrate	lynch	physics	analysis
tycoon	pylon	typhoid	lymph	typical	tryst

S often spells /z/					
nose	abuse	pause	use	is	whose
rise	cause	suppose	his	refuse	these
hose	tease	expose	as	always	please
rose	close	compose	was	those	has
wise	accuse	praise	does	chose	choose
pose	oppose	cheese	goes	dispose	raise
prose	advise	excuse	says	disclose	enclose

C can spell /s/ (Soft C)					
ice	space	circle	certain	since	reduce
nice	face	citrus	cents	wince	produce
rice	lace	city	succeed	mince	decide
spice	place	cycle	ceremony	sentence	mercy
twice	brace	cyan	fascinate	princess	exercise
vice	trace	cell	icy	recess	lettuce
dice	cereal	celebrate	spicy	except	literacy
mice	cents	cigar	fancy	bounce	pencil
lice	accent	cymbal	Nancy	pounce	sauce
price	celery	cynic	dance	notice	December
slice	cement	cyclone	glance	choice	simplicity
ace	center	cider	chance	rejoice	service
grace	concentrate	circus	prince	cylinder	force
race	magnificent	central	process	faucet	peace
pace	necessary	exciting	absence	fence	embrace

G can spell /j/ (Soft G)			
age	huge	large	college
cage	refuge	charge	courage
page	merge	orange	manage
rage	emerge	gym	sausage
sage	range	gyp	lounge
stage	change	gypsy	sponge
wage	strange	rigid	ginger
image	urge	gender	Ginny
engage	purge	gin	gel
package	virgin	urgent	gently
garbage	verge	general	original
damage	fudge	gentle	gesture
passage	judge	gem	gigantic
average	grudge	germ	giant
cabbage	nudge	gene	allergy
village	edge	gibberish	tragic
voyage	pledge	energy	logic
savage	ledge	stingy	imagination
luggage	dodge	apology	refrigerator
advantage	lodge	magic	intelligent
digit	badge	gyrate	agency
agile	agenda	agitate	emergency
except:			
gill	gift	get	give
girl	giggle	gimmick	tiger

Silent E categories				
A	B	C	D	E
home	nice	stage	pickle	have
mistake	space	image	noodle	give
five	embrace	damage	struggle	move
mule	chance	huge	rattle	love
arrive	prince	change	snuggle	above
case	choice	fudge	rubble	twelve
wise	spice	manage	bottle	glove
sale	disgrace	sponge	drizzle	nerve
Steve	sauce	orange	purple	reserve
game	fence	college	temple	involve
time	practice	garage	terrible	resolve
F	G	H	I	
true	house	breeze	climate	
blue	mouse *	sneeze	private	
due	moose	are	accurate	
clue	goose *	one	deliberate	
glue	horse	were	delicate	
recue	corpse	awe	opposite	
subdue	nurse	come	definite	
tissue	spouse	some	estimate	
avenue	curse	done	volatile	
argue	eclipse	giraffe	chorale	
continue	promise	medicine	literate	

* The plural, of course, is mice and geese.

IE and EI both spell /E/				
IE		EI	diminutives	plurals
grief	cookie	receive	doggie	sixties
thief	movie	conceive	Mollie	ladies
chief	believe	deceive	Tommie	armies
brief	relieve	receipt	Maggie	babies
belief	achieve	perceive	Susie	cookies
relief	piece	conceit	Katie	bodies
field	niece	ceiling	oldie	bunnies
yield	shriek	either	softie	pennies
shield	fiend	neither	kiddie	goodies
wield	cashier	leisure	cutie	candies
hygiene		seize		
		weird		
		caffeine		
		deceit		
		sheik		
		protein		
except:				
stein	reign	feint	their *	vein
veil	view	heir		

* An earlier tricky word

33 Common Contractions		
Contraction	Short for	Phonetic
aren't	are not	ARNT
can't	can not	CANT
couldn't	could not	COODINT
didn't	did not	DIDINT
doesn't	does not	DUZINT
don't	do not	DOANT
hasn't	has not	HAZINT
haven't	have not	HAVINT
he'll	he will	HEEL
he's	he is	HEEZ
I'll	I will	ILE
I'm	I am	IME
isn't	is not	IZINT
it's	it is	ITS
I've	I have	IVE
let's	let us	LETS
she'll	she will	SHEEL
she's	she is	SHEEZ
shouldn't	should not	SHOODINT
they'll	they will	THAIL
they're	they are	THAIR
they've	they have	THAVE
wasn't	was not	WUZINT
we'll	we will	WEEL
we're	we are	WEER
weren't	were not	WERNT
we've	we have	WEEV
who's	who is	HOOZ
won't	will not	WOANT
wouldn't	would not	WOODINT
you'll	you will	YOOL
you're	you are	YOOR
you've	you have	YOOV

Appendix P

The Code: Spelling

Encoding Sounds (Phonemes) into Letters (Graphemes)

Sound		Possible Letters			
1	/A/	a-e* (made) ea (great)	ai (sail) eigh (eight)	ay (stay) ey (they)	a (nation) ei (vein)
2	/a/	a (hat)			
3	/E/	ee (week) e (me)	ea (heat) ei (receive)	y (candy) e-e* (theme)	ie (field) ey (key)
4	/e/	e (bed)	ea (bread)	ai (said)	
5	/I/	i-e* (time) ie (pie)	i (tiny)	y (cry)	igh (high)
6	/i/	i (sit)	y (myth)		
7	/O/	o-e* (hope) oe (toe)	oa (boat) ough (though)	o (go)	ow (snow)
8	/o/	o (got)	a (father)		
9	/u/	u (nut)	oo (blood)	o (from)	ou (rough)
10	/ew/	oo (moon) u (student) ou (you)	ew (grew) o (do) ough (through)	u-e* (prune) ui (fruit)	ue (blue) oe (shoe)
11	/oo/	oo (book)	u (pull)	ou (could)	
12	/oy/	oi (soil)	oy (joy)		
13	/ow/	ou (loud)	ow (cow)		
14	/aw/	au (fraud) augh (taught)	aw (lawn) ough (bought)	a (ball)	o (dog)
15	/ar/	ar (car)			
16	/or/	or (corn)	ore (store)	our (four)	oor (door)
17	/er/	er (perch)	ir (birch)	ur (church)	
18	/ear/	ear (dear)	eer (deer)	ere (here)	
19	/air/	air (fair)	are (fare)	ear (pear)	
20	/oor/	ure (sure)	oor (poor)		

* The hyphen stands for any consonant.

Sound		Possible Letters			
21	/b/	b (bat)			
22	/d/	d (dog)	dd (add)		
23	/f/	f (fun)	ph (phone)	ff (stuff)	gh (rough)
24	/g/	g (gift)	gu (guest)	gh (ghost)	gg (egg)
25	/h/	h (happy)			
26	/j/	j (jar)	g (germ)		
27	/k/	k (keep)	c (cat)	ck (pick)	ch (school)
28	/l/	l (lake)	ll (bell)		
29	/m/	m (man)			
30	/n/	n (net)	kn (knife)	gn (gnat)	
31	/p/	p (past)			
32	/r/	r (run)	wr (write)		
33	/s/	s (sleep)	c (city)	ss (kiss)	
34	/t/	t (top)	ed (picked)	tt (mutt)	
35	/v/	v (van)	f (of)		
36	/w/	w (wish)	wh (white)		
37	/y/	y (yellow)			
38	/z/	z (zipper)	s (hands)	zz (jazz)	
39	/sh/	sh (ship)	t (action)	s (mission)	c (special)
40	/SH/ *	s (vision)	z (seizure)		
41	/ch/	ch (chin)	t (nature)		
42	/th/	th (thank)			
43	/TH/ *	th (mother)			
44	/ng/	ng (sing)			

* Voiced version of the sound (see Chapter 1)

Appendix Q

The Code: Reading

Decoding Letters (Graphemes) into Sounds (Phonemes)

Letter	Possible Sounds			
a	/a/ (apple)	/A/ (paper)	/aw/ (ball)	
b	/b/ (boy)			
c	/k/ (cat)	/s/ (city)	/sh/ (precious)	
d	/d/ (dog)			
e	/e/ (enter)	/E/ (me)		
f	/f/ (fan)	/v/ (of)		
g	/g/ (get)	/j/ (energy)		
h	/h/ (hat)			
i	/i/ (in)	/I/ (title)	/E/ (stadium)	
j	/j/ (jam)			
k	/k/ (kiss)			
l	/l/ (lip)			
m	/m/ (mat)			
n	/n/ (nap)			
o	/o/ (box)	/O/ (bonus)	/aw/ (dog)	/ew/ (do)
p	/p/ (pickle)			
qu*	/k/+w/ (quit)			
r	/r/ (run)			
s	/s/ (sit)	/z/ (pans)	/sh/ (tension)	/SH/ (vision)
t	/t/ (top)	/ch/ (future)	/sh/ (action)	
u	/u/ (up)	/y/+ew/ (cube)	/ew/ (rude)	/oo/ (pull)
v	/v/ (van)			
w	/w/ (win)			
x*	/k/+s/ (box)			
y	/y/ (yell)	/E/ (candy)	/I/ (fly)	/i/ (myth)
z	/z/ (zip)	/SH/ (seizure)		

* Not a grapheme because it symbolizes more than one phoneme.

Letters	Possible Sounds		
ai	/A/ (sail)	/e/ (said)	
air	/air/ (fair)		
ar	/ar/ (far)		
are	/air/ (care)	/ar/ (are)	
au	/aw/ (fraud)		
aw	/aw/ (lawn)		
ay	/A/ (pay)		
ch	/ch/ (chip)	/k/ (school)	
ck	/k/ (stick)		
dd	/d/ (add)		
dge	/j/ (badge)		
ea	/E/ (seat)	/e/ (head)	/A/ (great)
ear	/ear/ (dear)	/air/ (pear)	
ed	/d/ (called)	/t/ (picked)	
ee	/E/ (keep)		
eer	/ear/ (beer)		
ei	/E/ (receive)	/A/ (vein)	
er	/er/ (her)		
ere	/ear/ (here)	/air/ (there)	
ew	/ew/ (new)	/y/+ew/ (few)	
ey	/E/ (key)	/A/ (they)	
ff	/f/ (stiff)		
gg	/g/ (egg)		
gh	/g/ (ghost)	/f/ (laugh)	
gn	/n/ (gnat)		
ie	/E/ (brief)	/I/ (pie)	
igh	/I/ (sight)		
ir	/er/ (dirt)		
kn	/n/ (knee)		
ll	/l/ (bell)		
ng	/ng/ (sing)		

Letters	Possible Sounds		
nk*	/ng/+/k/ (sink)		
oa	/O/ (boat)		
oe	/O/ (toe)	/ew/ (shoe)	/u/ (does)
oi	/oy/ (boil)		
oo	/ew/ (moon)	/oo/ (good)	/u/ (blood)
or	/or/ (corn)		
ore	/or/ (store)		
oor	/oor/ (poor)		
ou	/ow/ (cloud)	/oo/ (could)	/ew/ (you)
ow	/ow/ (cow)	/O/ (snow)	
oy	/oy/ (toy)		
ph	/f/ (phone)		
ps	/s/ (psychic)		
sh	/sh/ (ship)		
ss	/s/ (mess)		
tch	/ch/ (batch)		
th	/th/ (thin)	/TH/ (these)	
tt	/t/ (mutt)		
ue	/ew/ (blue)	/y/+/ew/ (cue)	
ui	/ew/ (fruit)	/i/ (build)	
ur	/er/ (church)		
ure	/oor/ (lure)		
wh	/w/ (when)		
wr	/r/ (wrist)		
zz	/z/ (jazz)		

* Not a grapheme because it symbolizes more than one phoneme.

Letters	Possible Sounds		
a-e*	/A/ (bake)		
e-e*	/E/ (theme)		
i-e*	/I/ (time)		
o-e*	/O/ (stone)		
u-e*	/ew/ (tune)	/y/ + /ew/ (cute)	
augh	/aw/ (caught)		
eigh	/A/ (eight)	/I/ (height)	
ough	/aw/ (thought)	/O/ (though)	/ew/ (through)

* The hyphen stands for any consonant.

The following common letter strings are phonetically irregular. The beginning reader should master these 14 pronunciations. Many of these are good examples of Lazy Vowel (see Stage 13). None of these letter strings are graphemes.

Letters	Possible Sounds	
-ind	/I/ + /n/ + /d/ (find)	/i/ + /n/ + /d/ (wind)
-ild	/I/ + /l/ + /d/ (child)	/i/ + /l/ + /d/ (build)
-ost	/O/ + /s/ + /t/ (most)	/aw/ + /s/ + /t/ (lost)
-old	/O/ + /l/ + /d/ (cold)	
-le	"ull" (bubble)	
-ous	"iss" (joyous)	
-ious	/E/ + "iss" (curious)	
-cious	"shiss" (precious)	
-tion	"shin" (fraction)	
-sion	"shin" (mission)	/SH/ + "in" (vision)
-sure	"sher" (pressure)	/SH/+/er/ (measure)
-ture	"cher" (future)	
-cial	"shull" (facial)	
-tial	"shull" (partial)	

Appendix R

Consonant Blends

31 Beginning Blends			45 Ending Blends		
bl	pl	spl	ct	mp	rb
br	pr	spr	dth	mpt	rd
cl	sc	shr	ft	nth	rf
cr	sk	sph	fth	nch	rg
dr	sl	squ	x = ks	nk	rk
dw	sm	str	lt	nt	rl
fl	sn	tr	lf	nd	rm
fr	sp	tw	lm	ngth	rn
gl	sw	thr	ln	pth	rp
gr	st	scr	lth	pt	rt
	qu = kw		lp	tch	rch
			lsh	xt	rsh
			ld	sp	rth
			lk	st	rve
			lch	sk	rst

Appendix S

The Tricky 50

Correct Spelling	Phonetic Spelling	Correct Spelling	Phonetic Spelling
above	abuv	put	poot
are	ar	said	sed
because	becuz	says	sez
been	bin	should	shood
come	cum	some	sum
could	cood	sure	shoor
do	doo	their	thair
does	duz	there	thair
done	dun	they	thay
eight	ate	though	tho
eye	I	through	throo
four	for	to	too
friend	frend	two	too
from	frum	want	wunt
give	giv	was	wuz
goes	goze	watch	wawch
gone	gawn	were	wer
have	hav	what	wut
love	luv	where	wair
move	moov	who	hoo
none	nun	whose	hooz
of	uv	woman	woomin
once	wuns	would	wood
one	wun	you	yoo
only	oanly	your	yoor

In the above phonetic spellings, OO sometimes spells /oo/ and sometimes spells /ew/, just as it does in GOOD FOOD.

Appendix T

EU = /ew/ or EU = /y/ + /ew/				
eulogy	neuter	feud	leukemia	queue
eunuch	neuron	sleuth	deuce	eureka!
pseudo				

IO	EO	IU	UA	UI	IA	
lion	eon	opium	usual	ruin	friar	mania
radio	video	odium	dual	fluid	liar	via
riot	rodeo	sodium	actual *	truism	dial	petunia
idiot	meow	podium	jaguar	bruin	trial	giant
audio	peony	medium	sexual	suicide	vial	Maria
scorpion	peon	radius	truant	intuit	denial	dialog
biopsy	yeoman	genius	ritual *	genuine	jovial	piano
axiom	meteor	helium	nuance	tuition	trivial	aviation
ravioli	stereo	calcium	mutual *	penguin	material	utopia
violin	nucleon	premium	sensual		maniac	pliable
biology	galleon	aquarium	gradual	fruit	fiasco	diatribe
carrion	jeopardy	stadium	factual *	juice	phobia	amphibian
champion	theology	delirium	virtual *	suit	diary	burial
chariot	surgeon	tedium	punctual	bruise	media	medial
Ohio	dungeon	geranium	annual	cruise	anemia	menial
studio	theorem	aluminum	casual	recruit	diagram	median
cardio	geometry	gymnasium	persuade		diamond	alias
violent	luncheon		language	guide	diaper	pariah
million	deodorant		valuable	guess	Georgia	bacteria
onion				guilt	genial	Louisiana
opinion				guitar	bias	California
union				guile	avian	aviator
region				disguise	familiar	deviate
				guest	diagonal	brilliant

* The T has a /ch/ sound, as in Stage 16

Forming the Past Tense					
Add D		Add ED		Double the Consonant	
smile	smiled	play	played	beg	begged
love	loved	stay	stayed	wag	wagged
close	closed	enter	entered	tag	tagged
pee	peed	scream	screamed	grin	grinned
use	used	snow	snowed	jog	jogged
die	died	plow	plowed	grab	grabbed
lie	lied	rain	rained	brag	bragged
share	shared	foam	foamed	rub	rubbed
behave	behaved	moan	moaned	fib	fibbed
dine	dined	jeer	jeered	pin	pinned
describe	described	cheer	cheered	rob	robbed
snore	snored	dream	dreamed	drum	drummed
chuckle	chuckled	clean	cleaned	hum	hummed
giggle	giggled	boil	boiled	stun	stunned
		join	joined		
ED says /t/		2 Syllables		Change Y to I, add ED	
flush	flushed	nod	nodded	carry	carried
kiss	kissed	wait	waited	hurry	hurried
check	checked	skate	skated	cry	cried
sip	sipped	chat	chatted	fry	fried
laugh	laughed	float	floated	try	tried
fish	fished	melt	melted	copy	copied
pinch	pinched	end	ended	envy	envied
leak	leaked	wilt	wilted	bully	bullied
splash	splashed	yield	yielded	empty	emptied
soak	soaked	fade	faded	marry	married
skip	skipped	trade	traded	tarry	tarried
sniff	sniffed	taste	tasted	comply	complied
cough	coughed	waste	wasted	worry	worried
bake	baked	toast	toasted	imply	implied
chase	chased	greet	greeted	reply	replied
look	looked	shout	shouted	rely	relied
crash	crashed			supply	supplied

Comparative and Superlative					
hot	hotter	hottest	shady	shadier	shadiest
tall	taller	tallest	sunny	sunnier	sunniest
smart	smarter	smartest	dirty	dirtier	dirtiest
soft	softer	softest	messy	messier	messiest
small	smaller	smallest	hard	harder	hardest
wet	wetter	wettest	easy	easier	easiest
ripe	riper	ripest	brave	braver	bravest
sweet	sweeter	sweetest	cheap	cheaper	cheapest

The OUS Family			
OUS = "iss"	IOUS = /E/ + "iss"	UOUS = /U/ + "iss"	CIOUS = "shiss"
joyous	obvious	strenuous	precious
enormous	previous	arduous	gracious
nervous	serious	incongruous	luscious
jealous	curious	conspicuous	vicious
famous	envious	continuous	spacious
scandalous	various	fatuous	atrocious
fabulous	hilarious	ingenuous	conscious
dangerous	furious	innocuous	delicious
numerous	tedious	sensuous	ferocious
ravenous	odious	sumptuous	malicious
hazardous	studious	virtuous	pernicious
poisonous	victorious	voluptuous	suspicious
generous	hideous	ambiguous	
odorous	nefarious	tenuous	
perilous	notorious		
rigorous	glorious		
barbarous	copious		
zealous	spurious		
callous	delirious		
pompous	dubious		
raucous	melodious		
gorgeous	devious		

In column 2 and column 3, the 44th (and final) sound of English finally appears.
It's the voiced version of /sh/, symbolically, /SH/.

SION = "shin"	SION = /SH/ + "in"	SURE = /SH/ + "er"	CIAL = "shull"	TIAL = "shull"
tension	vision *	measure *	facial	partial
mansion	decision *	treasure *	racial	martial
pension	collision *	pleasure *	social	spatial
mission	version *	closure *	crucial	essential
session	illusion *	leisure *	glacial	potential
passion	division *	exposure *	special	torrential
omission	explosion *	composure *	official	initial
expansion	occasion *	fissure *	financial	credential
admission	confusion *	seizure *	artificial	prudential
expression	conclusion *			
compassion	invasion *			
permission	aversion *			
	fusion *			
	erosion *			

* The S in these words has the same sound as the S in the word ASIA.

The Mute Group					
mute B	mute C	mute G	mute H	mute K	mute L
bomb	scissors	sign	ache	knew	half
comb	science *	assign	chaos	knave	calf
dumb	ascend	design	Christmas	knee	folk
doubt	descend	gnat	character	knife	yolk
lamb	scent	gnaw	chord	knit	caulk
thumb	scene	gnarly	echo	knob	
crumb	muscle	gnash	orchid	knock	
climb	scintillate	cologne	school	knuckle	
numb	czar	gnome	ghost	knight	
mute N	mute P	mute S	mute T	mute W	
autumn	psalm	aisle	castle	wrap	
solemn	pseudo	debris	fasten	wrath	
column	psych	island	hustle	wreck	
condemn	pneumonia	isle	listen	answer	
damn	coup	Illinois	moisten	wretch	
hymn	raspberry		nestle	wrist	
	cupboard		whistle	wrong	
	receipt		wrestle	sword	
			jostle	two	

Appendix U

The 100 Most Frequent English Words

Rank	Word	Rank	Word	Rank	Word	Rank	Word	Rank	Word
1	the	21	this	41	so	61	people	81	back
2	be	22	but	42	up	62	into	82	after
3	to	23	his	43	out	63	year	83	use
4	of	24	by	44	if	64	your	84	two
5	and	25	from	45	about	65	good	85	how
6	a	26	they	46	who	66	some	86	our
7	in	27	we	47	get	67	could	87	work
8	that	28	say	48	which	68	them	88	first
9	have	29	her	49	go	69	see	89	well
10	I	30	she	50	me	70	other	90	way
11	it	31	or	51	when	71	than	91	even
12	for	32	an	52	make	72	then	92	new
13	not	33	will	53	can	73	now	93	want
14	on	34	my	54	like	74	look	94	because
15	with	35	one	55	time	75	only	95	any
16	he	36	all	56	no	76	come	96	these
17	as	37	would	57	just	77	its	97	give
18	you	38	there	58	him	78	over	98	day
19	do	39	their	59	know	79	think	99	most
20	at	40	what	60	take	80	also	100	us

Source: *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (11th edition, 2006).

Given the phonics presented in this program, only the 23 boxed words could be considered slightly irregular.

Appendix W

Dick and Jane

Here is an excerpt from *We Look*, one of the many Dick and Jane stories that children read in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. Each page of *We Look* has from 1 – 10 words on it and includes an attractive illustration of the children, their pets, and their toys. Chapter headings are underlined:

Look

Look, look.

Oh, oh, oh.

Oh, oh.

Oh, look.

Jane

Oh, Jane.

Look, Jane, look.

Look, look.

Oh, look.

See Jane.

See, see.

See Jane.

Oh, see Jane.

Dick

Look, Jane.

Look, look.

See Dick.

See, see.

Oh, see.

See Dick.

Oh, see Dick.

Oh, oh, oh.

Funny, funny Dick.

Sally

Look Dick.

Look Jane.

See Sally.

Oh, oh, oh.
Oh Dick.
See Sally.
Look Jane.
Look Dick.
See funny Sally.
Funny, funny Sally.¹

There are 75 words here, but only 7 different words. This kind of repetition is necessary if children are to memorize words as pictures rather than read them phonetically by sounding them out.

¹ *We Look* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1956). Reprint (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1984), 5-20.

Appendix Y

Over 400 Rimes

ab	alp	ar	ay	edge	elsh	erve
abe	alt	arsh	aze	ee	elt	esh
ace	am	art	azz	eece	em	esk
ack	ame	arth	e	eech	eme	ess
act	amp	arve	ea	eed	emp	est
ad	an	ase	eace	eef	empt	et
ade	ance	ash	each	eek	en	etch
adge	anch	ask	ead	eel	ence	ete
afe	and	asp	eaf	eem	ench	eth
aff	ane	ass	eak	een	end	eve
aft	ang	ast	eal	eep	ene	ew
ag	ank	aste	ealth	eer	enk	ex
age	anse	at	eam	eece	ense	ext
aid	ant	atch	ean	eet	ent	ey
ail	ap	ate	eap	eeth	enth	ib
aim	ape	ath	ear	eeve	ep	ibe
ain	apt	aud	earth	eeze	ept	ice
aint	ar	aught	ease	eft	er	ick
air	arb	aul	eash	eg	erb	ict
aise	arch	ault	east	eigh	erch	id
aist	ard	aunch	eat	eight	erd	ide
ait	are	aunt	eath	elch	ere	idge
ake	arf	ave	eave	eld	erge	ie
ale	arge	aw	eaze	elf	erk	iece
alf	ark	awk	eb	elk	erm	ied
alk	arm	awl	eck	ell	ern	ief
all	arn	awn	ed	elm	erp	ield
alm	arp	ax	ede	elp	ert	ies

Rimes (continued)

ife	ipe	oad	oint	ool	ost	ub
iff	ipt	oaf	oise	oom	ot	ube
ift	ir	oak	oist	oon	otch	uce
ig	irch	oal	oke	oop	ote	uch
igh	ird	oam	old	oor	oth	uck
ight	ire	oan	ole	oose	ouch	uct
ike	irm	oap	olk	oost	oud	ud
ild	irp	oar	oll	oot	ouge	ude
ile	irst	oard	olt	ooth	ough	udge
ilk	irt	oast	om	oove	ought	ue
ill	irth	oat	ome	ooze	oul	uff
ilm	ise	oath	omp	op	ould	ug
ilt	ish	oax	ompt	ope	ounce	uge
ilth	isk	ob	on	or	ound	uice
im	isp	obe	ond	orch	ount	uild
ime	iss	ock	one	ord	oup	uit
imp	ist	od	ong	ore	our	uke
in	it	ode	onk	orge	ouse	ulch
ince	itch	odge	onse	ork	oust	ule
inch	ite	oe	ont	orm	out	ulf
ind	ith	off	onth	orn	outh	ulk
ine	ive	oft	oo	orse	ove	ull
ing	ix	og	oob	orst	ow	ulp
inge	iz	oice	ooch	ort	owd	um
ink	ize	oid	ood	orth	owl	umb
inse	izz	oil	oof	ose	own	ume
int	o	oin	ooge	osh	owse	ump
ip	oach	oink	ook	oss	oy	un

Rimes (continued)

unce	unt	ure	urse	usk	ute
unch	up	urf	urst	usp	ux
und	ur	urk	urt	uss	uy
une	urb	url	urve	ust	uzz
ung	urch	urn	use	ut	y
unk	urd	urp	ush	utch	ye

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