

Client: NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DIRECT INSTRUCTION
Project: NIFDI VIDEO
Subject: READING MASTERY TRAINING SERIES (Part 2):
Why is Reading so Hard?
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[TEXT; EXTERIOR]

Students: [YELLING]

Narrator: Most literate adults don't think much about reading.

Parent: Do you know where I found him? You know where he was--

Narrator: It's so effortless it's become automatic.

Parent: Yes, he was. He likes to eat what in the tub? He likes to eat?

Girl Student: Cake.

Parent: He likes to eat cake in a—

Girl Student: Tub.

Parent: In a tub.

Narrator: But to young kids, the task must seem miraculous.

Parent: - - lazy dog.

Narrator: When adults look at text, they see a familiar world—
twenty-six letters that can be rearranged again and again



to make hundreds of thousands of different words. But to a young child it's just squiggles on paper. To a child, a page of text must look rather like this. How would you extract meaning from the squiggles? You might try matching word shapes to pictures and try to memorize them. A little thought, however, shows this won't work. Small changes in squiggle order totally transform a word's meaning.

Narrator: You don't even know whether this language is read left to right or right to left. The only way to learn to read in any language is to relate the squiggles on a page to something every five-year-old child already knows how to do. Speak.

[EXTERIOR]

Narrator: Reading, it turns out, depends on knowing the sounds of speech.

Students: [YELLING]

Narrator: But what exactly are those sounds?

Teacher Ahidiana: Cat.

Teacher Carter: Cat.

Teacher Ahidiana: Dog.

Teacher Carter: Dog.



Narrator: For reading, the important sounds are not words.

Teacher Carter: Big.

Narrator: Rather they are the sounds from which all words are made. Units called phonemes.

Teacher Carter: Man.

Narrator: The word 'man', for example, is made from three phonemes.

Teacher: Mmm-aaa-nnn. Man.

Narrator: The trouble is that in every day speech phonemes are hard to hear.

Teacher Carter: Man. [SLOW MOTION SPEECH]

Teacher Ahidiana: Man. [SLOW MOTION SPEECH]

Narrator: We speak so fast we smudge them together.

Teacher Sayed: She said, *I do not need a car. I need a red hat.*

Narrator: What does all this have to do with reading? Well, decades of research has proved that children who are insensitive to this phonemic structure will have great difficulty reading. Many will fail altogether, so effective reading programs start by building phonemic awareness.

Teacher Ahidiana: Aahh. Get ready.



Students: Aaahh.

Teacher Ahidiana: Yes. Aaahh. Again. Again.

Narrator: Teaching kids the sounds that make up words.

Teacher Carter: Say, rrr-aaa-nnn.

Narrator: And how to blend those sounds together.

Teacher Carter: Get ready.

Students: [UNISON] Rr-aa-nn.

Teacher Carter: Again. Get ready.

Students: [UNISON] Rr-aa-nn.

Teacher Scott: Next. Sound it out.

Narrator: Then these sounds are systematically linked to letters on a page and sounded out.

Teacher Scott: Get ready.

Students: [UNISON] Mmm-aaa-nnn.

Teacher Scott: What word.

Students: [UNISON] Man.

Teacher Scott: Yes. Man.



Narrator: But as anyone will tell you, learning to read English is not quite that simple. Some letters, notably vowels, seem to stand for numerous different sounds. It's enough to give a kid a headache.

Teacher: Old. Hole. Hound. Hoist. Hood. Hot. Cow. Bow. Bough. Bought. Sow. Sow. Hat. Hate. Pan. Pain. Beast. Tread. Steak. Beak. Great.

[ANOTHER CLASSROOM]

Narrator: So to smooth the path to literacy, Reading Mastery has made a few modifications to the familiar English alphabet.

Teacher Hawkins: Opposite of.

Student: Aaaaa.

School Staff: Hay.

Narrator: Drawing a line over a vowel tells the reader there's a long sound.

School Staff: Hat.

Narrator: —rather than a short one.

School Staff: Hole. Hot.

Narrator: By joining certain letter pairs and presenting them as distinct symbols a lot of confusion is avoided.

Student: Er-in-ing.



Narrator: Letters that are silent in words are written small so kids know not to pronounce them. Finally, pairs of letters kids often mix up like B and D and H and N are altered to make them look less alike. And this is what you end up with. Forty sound symbols which turn English into an essentially regular language. While funny looking to adults—

Student: Get ready.

Narrator: —this alphabet makes perfect sense to kids.

Teacher Hawkins: Voice. Big voice. Come on. Get ready.

Girl Student: Get ready.

Students: Dii. Dii.

Teacher Hawkins: Yes. Dii. Good. Thank you.

Girl Student: Get ready.

Students: [UNISON] iiiii.

Teacher Hawkins: Good. Big voice. Well, we've done all those already. Thank you, precious. Give her a hand.

Students: [APPLAUSE]

Narrator: Once children learn these sound symbols within no time they are able to read stories.

Teacher Hawkins: Get ready. What word?



Students: [UNISON] A.

Teacher Hawkins: Touch the next word. Get ready. What word?

Students: [UNISON] A.

Teacher Hawkins: Touch the next word. Get ready. What word?

Student: Fig.

Teacher Hawkins: Get ready.

Students: [UNISON] The old goat had an old coat.

Teacher Hawkins: Again. Get ready.

Student: [READS] The girl got wet.

Teacher Hawkins: Everybody, get ready.

Students: [UNISON] The girl got wet.

Teacher Hawkins: Next. Get ready.

Student: He had a hat.

Teacher Hawkins: Everybody, get ready.

Students: [UNISON] He had a hat.

Student: [READS] The cop said—



Narrator: Within a year, the more advanced groups of Kindergarteners are reading complex stories with understanding and expression.

Girl Student: [READS] He was going out. So there was as the cop went into the shed.

Boy Student: [READS] The Magic Pouch. Did the little girl tell her mother where she was - -

Narrator: Once the kids are confident, fluent readers the props are gradually removed. Joined letters are unjoined.

Boy Student: [READS] The girl's mother looked - -

Narrator: Microns disappear.

Boy Student: He said, *Where did you get* - -

Narrator: Letters take on their traditional size and shape.

Boy Student: [READS] It was on the ground.

Narrator: By the middle of Reading Mastery 2 children are reading perfectly normal text.

Boy Student: [?]

Narrator: Like adults, they will soon become unaware of how they learned to read. They will take their literacy utterly for granted.



Boy Student: [READS] Little pig, little pig! Let me come in. No. No, said the little pig. *Not by the hair of my chinny chin-chin.*

[APPLAUSE; TEXT]

[END]

