



Sight Method of Teaching Reading Causes Dyslexia

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) recently held its annual conference in San Diego on November 12-15. According to the IDA, "Dyslexia is a language-based learning disorder. Its causes are still not completely clear." But I beg to differ. The cause of dyslexia is quite clear, and I can prove it.

First, what is dyslexia? The dictionary defines it as an "impairment of the ability to read." It is a fancy term for reading disability or functional illiteracy.

Professional parents prefer the term "dyslexic" when referring to their own children who are "too smart to be that dumb." "Dyslexia" implies some deep-seated psychological or genetic problem, while "reading disability" implies stupidity. There are millions of functional illiterates in America who are not stupid but somehow think they may be. Why weren't they able to learn to read? It's a question that haunts them for their entire lives.

Believe it or not, the ability to read would not be a problem in America if the progressives hadn't pulled a fast one on the unsuspecting citizens of this great nation. They took it upon themselves, in the pursuit of a utopian dream, to attempt to change American society from a competitive, dog-eat-dog capitalistic system into a peaceful, serene, noncompetitive society where all were economically equal, wearing the same utilitarian clothes, living in uniform public housing, and obeying the laws and regulations of a benign bureaucracy which put them to work in a planned economy. In such a society, the government would own everything including the souls of its citizens. The dream of utopia has always captured the minds of those who hate reality but would love to govern others.

The progressives were a peculiar bunch. They were members of the Protestant academic elite who no longer believed in the religion of their fathers. They put their new utopian faith in science, evolution, and psychology. Science explained the physical world, evolution explained the origin of living matter (the first living entity crawled out of the primal ooze), and psychology permitted the scientific study of human nature and suggested ways of controlling the behavior of human beings.

In 1898, their leader, John Dewey, hatched a long-range plan for the socialists to take over America for its own good. The plan was to use the public schools of the nation to train American children to adopt the precepts of future utopian living. The key to the program was in primary education, where children were taught the three Rs. In an essay entitled "The Primary-Education Fetish," Dewey launched an attack on the traditional 3 Rs, which he claimed perpetuated the abhorrent capitalistic, individualistic system. The only way to utopia was the destruction of that system and its replacement by a new





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enlightened form of instruction.

The key to the progressive curriculum would be a new way of teaching reading: a sight method that teaches children to read English as if it were an ideographic system such as Chinese. The method had been used before experimentally in the primary schools of Boston in the 1830s and '40s and proved to be a disaster. But that's what Dewey and his progressive colleagues wanted. By 1933, the new look-say program, "Dick and Jane," was ready for the public schools. Since the country was in the Great Depression, initially few schools could afford the new books. But by 1950, the new reading program was in virtually all the schools of America.

What the new program actually did was switch the learning process from mastering the *word* to mastering the *image* — an impossible task. As Dewey had written in 1897 in his *Pedagogical Creed*, "I believe that the image is the great instrument of instruction." Not the *word*. This contradicts centuries of teaching experience when pictures were not used in teaching reading. Also, mastering the word was in keeping with the miracle of creation. St. John writes in the Bible, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Dewey's Creed was a repudiation of the Word. Phonetic reading was based on the word, not the image. Conversely, sight reading is based on the image, not the word. It uses the right brain to perform the functions of the left brain, thus impairing brain function. Neural imaging actually shows the dysfunctional brains of dyslexics.

Today's primary reading programs consist of heavily illustrated books in bright colors with a few words in small print at the bottom of the page. The emphasis is on using the pictures to interpret the words. There is no systematic teaching of the alphabetic principle. To the sight reader, alphabet letters have no intrinsic meaning. They are just a bunch of squiggles arranged in no meaningful sequence in a word. The picture projects meaning.

It was Dr. Samuel Orton, a neurophysiologist, who was the first to discover that the sight method caused reading problems. In the 1920s he had examined many children in Iowa with reading problems and had concluded that their difficulties were being caused by the look-say, sight method of teaching reading. He was so concerned that he wrote an article for the *Journal of Educational Psychology* with the blunt title, "The Sight Reading Method of Teaching Reading as a Source of Reading Disability." It was published in the February 1929 issue. He wrote:

I wish to emphasize at the beginning that the strictures which I have to offer here do not apply to the use of the sight method of teaching reading as a whole but only to its effects on a restricted group of children for whom, as I think we can show, this technique is not only not adapted but often proves an actual obstacle to reading progress, and moreover I believe that this group is one of considerable size and because here faulty teaching methods may not only prevent the acquisition of academic education by children of average capacity but may also give rise to far reaching damage to their emotional life.

The *Journal of Educational Psychology* was being edited by the very progressive utopians who were creating the reading programs that were causing the problems. So why did they publish Orton's article? It confirmed what they were planning to do: dumb-down the nation. Their response to Orton was that he did not fully understand what education was all about.

So we've known since 1929 that the sight method causes dyslexia, reading disability, or functional illiteracy. But this information was kept from the public until 1955, when Dr. Rudolph Flesch wrote his



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sensational exposé, [Why Johnny Can't Read](#). But that didn't stop the professors of education from continuing their socialist mission. That they were impairing the brains of millions of children didn't seem to bother them. They fought tooth and nail against Flesch and his followers, and they won.

Today's teachers of reading have never heard of Flesch or Orton. And Teachers College at Columbia, the source of the pestilence, is still producing reading programs that favor the right brain over the left brain, the image over the word. They will continue to destroy literacy in America until enough informed parents and other citizens rise up to stop them.

Dr. Samuel L. Blumenfeld, an author and educator, has written many books on education including the popular [Alpha-Phonics: A Primer For Beginning Readers](#).





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