

CORRECTING READING DIFFICULTIES IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

LANGUAGE is a medium for thinking and for expressing thought," wrote Dr. J. Paul Leonard in the October issue of the *English Journal*. Since thought approach must govern the choice of concepts for particular use in the language arts profession, Dr. Leonard mentioned three that are of special importance:

1. The language arts deal with the acquisition and the effective expression of ideas.

2. Improving the ability to read is a function of the high school.

3. The technique of expression should be taught as the child grows in ideas.

Reading is the correlating center of the three concepts given, as well as the connecting link of the aims of education, which may be expressed as attitudes, appreciations, understandings and abilities.

One of the two classes into which reading is divided is the work or study type, which has as its objective: to acquire information, to form opinions or draw conclusions, to find answers to questions or the solution to problems, to discover new problems, to evaluate materials and to visualize details. The other class of reading is the recreatory or personal interest type, which has as its objective: to share experiences intelligently, to satisfy and stimulate emotions, to find material for reflection, to develop a philosophy of life and to experience esthetic delight.

There are many techniques that are helpful in assisting one to obtain these results. Probably, some of the most important are: finding the central thought, recognizing key words and sentences, outlining, summarizing, reproducing the thought, reviewing, and following directions.

The mechanical difficulties—mispronunciation, improper phrasing, faulty eye movement and failure to note key words—and the comprehension difficulties—word by

word reading, inability to get particular details, lack of vocabulary and inability to think logically—offer problems that require thought and study for a successful solution.

Other problems of great importance concerning English pupils are: the undisciplined, the inattentive, those of limited experience, the non-readers, those who are indifferent to books, the truant, those who have a deep dislike for school or restraint, those who have poor native endowment, the mentally or emotionally unbalanced, those who have poor environment and those whose families and associates use poor English.

There is no one solution for all of these problems, but there are important factors that are necessary in the solution of many of them. Among them are discipline—of mind, work, behavior, attendance and habits—preparation, incentive, an increased vocabulary, and an appeal to pride and ambition.

The technique of expression should be taught as the child grows in ideas. Teachers should make a study of their pupils and make bibliographies of books that are suited to the age and taste of the individual members of their classes. Interest may be stimulated by spending a few minutes of each recitation in introducing a new book. Good print and pretty illustrations have merit. Expression may be improved by dramatization. Stress should be laid on the observance of all punctuations. As words are the tools of thought, no one who has a limited supply can express himself effectively. A pupil's vocabulary, therefore, should grow from day to day. Ease and poise comes with preparation and practice.

The ideals of all English teachers are individual motivations, a thorough concentration of the individual upon his reading problems, and the ability to produce the thoughts in a correct and effective way, to be able to recognize that which is good and to use it for his own advancement, to read in a way that will broaden his mental horizon, and to

discriminate between books that should be read and assimilated and those that should be ignored.

The English classroom must become a browsing room—a place where a child becomes thoroughly familiar with books—references, actual extracts from authors—stories, poems, sketches, essays, biographies, autobiographies, novels, from the extremes of the classics to sport writers. Each has his individual taste, each must find his interest and broaden his limited horizon with actual contacts with others through books. Some need encouragement to browse in expansive fields; some are not so ambitious and can undertake only a fenced and chosen few; some only taste what is laid before them. All progress can be recorded by a file system or notebook with candid criticisms of all discoveries. Most children like this method, especially the delving individually for the secret of an author's greatness, or his failure to hold attention or interest.

There are not many English teachers who feel that they have done all that they should, but if they have given their pupils the ability to find good food for thought and have trained them to express themselves correctly and effectively, they should have no cause for regret.

AURELIA BARTON

A PROBLEM IN DESIGN FOR ELEMENTARY CHILDREN

THE cafeteria in the Main Street School, a dark room in the basement on the north side, was painted orange—not the color of oranges but the color of fresh cheese. Each of the two rooms had several large orange-colored posts in the middle, white walls on three sides, and a sort of wainscoting effect on the fourth with white above orange. The concrete floor was painted to look like tile. What seemed to be needed was a touch of color which would draw the other rather wild colors into a unit.

The Art Committee, composed of five teachers, after discussing various suggestions for decorating, decided that what was needed was a border around the posts and just below the white on the orange wall, preferably a border designed by some child.

The Committee announced that a contest to design a border for the cafeteria would be open to any child who wished to take part. A border by a primary child would be used in the lower grade room and one designed by an upper grade child in the other room. Whether a class competed or not was left to the class and to the room teacher. The designs might be made in art class or in outside time.

It was only when the children began to submit designs that the art teacher learned that many children didn't know the difference between a design and a picture, and a few didn't know what was meant by a border. The art teacher showed samples of designs, particularly borders, clipped from magazines and from wall-paper books, and a number of stenciled borders which were made just for examples. Tree designs were compared with pictures of trees; flower designs with pictures of flowers. The children pointed out designs in print dresses and other objects. They began to collect designs.

By the comparison of designs with pictures the children learned that a design doesn't have to look like a real object but may be adapted from a real object. Square elephants or purple dogs could go into a design but not into a picture. They learned that border designs repeat the motif as many times as necessary to fill a space.

In order to help the second and third-grade children understand this repetition, the teacher let them suggest a motif such as a ball which she put on the blackboard and then repeated enough times to look like a border. The children then made borders of animals, flowers, fruits, and other motifs which appealed to them.

When all entries were in, they were