

A Primer on Primers

How Children Were Taught to Read, 1800 to 1950

CAROLINE WARD

Children have been taught to read by every method and by no method—and it would puzzle the wisest to tell exactly how a child does learn to read our anomalous mother tongue.

—William Swinton, *Swinton's Primer*, 1883

Blending my professional interest in beginning readers with the opportunity to spend a month at the Baldwin Collection of Historical Children's Literature at the Smathers Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, I chose to examine the collection's extensive holdings of primers and other books designed to help children learn to read.

I selected 1800 as a starting point as the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries witnessed the beginnings of a changed attitude toward children, their literature, and methods of learning to read. A number of enlightened philosophies would influence how children were taught to read into the next century.

One such influencer was philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) who introduced what was then considered a revolutionary approach to teaching children in his treatise *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). DeVries calls Locke “the spiritual father of children's books. . . . Locke proclaimed that Children should be treated as rational creatures. . . . They should be allowed liberties and freedom suitable to their ages. . . . They must not be hindered from being children.”¹

In the early American colonies, publications from England were primarily what was available to American children, but at the same time the new nation was undergoing a patriotic fervor. One proponent was Noah Webster (1758–1843) who, according to Virginia Haviland, in *Yankee Doodle's Literary Sampler*, produced *The American Spelling Book* (1783) because

“as an educator he was unhappy with children's books which revealed an English rather than an American Culture—and spelling. . . . His work is an example of love of country and pride in a young nation along with a certain antipathy towards England.”²

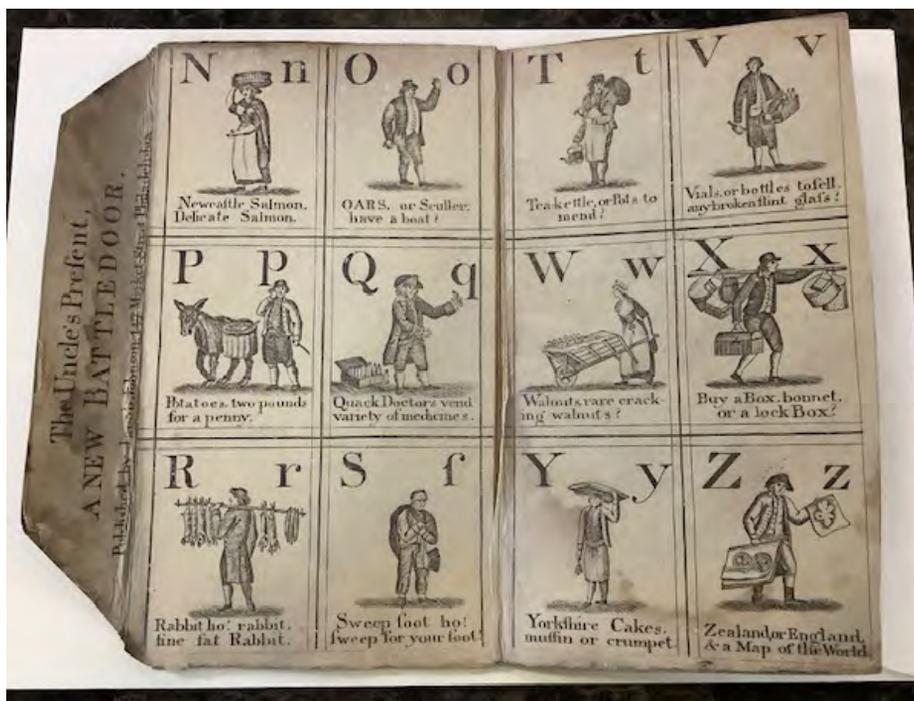
Even with a more enlightened view of how children should be treated and educated, and a new national spirit, a Puritan ethic still dominated instruction. *The New England Primer*, probably published in Boston around 1690, is attributed to Benjamin Harris, a rabid anti-Catholic who moved to Boston from London. According to J. H. Plumb in *Early Children's Books and Their Illustration*, “It went into thousands of American homes where for generations it was, next to the Bible, probably the book most frequently given to children.”³

In *Beauties of the New England Primer* (1824), the publisher acknowledges that “the New England Primer of latter times having become almost useless, if not quite obsolete . . . the Publisher has made a selection . . . hoping it will be acceptable to the children of the present day.”⁴

Yet the influence of this seminal book is such that the contents of *Beauties* still includes the original hymns, prayers, and an



Caroline Ward served as ALSC President in 2000 and chaired the inaugural 2006 Theodor Seuss Geisel Award. In 2020, she spent a month researching this article on a Bechtel Fellowship at the Baldwin Collection of Historical Children's Literature at the Smathers Library, University of Florida, Gainesville.



The Uncle's Present: A New Battledoor (Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson, 1810).

account of the martyrdom of John Rodgers. While secular material sometimes appears in early readers and primers, generally there is a strong moral code and a work ethic apparent; for example, *The Young Child's ABC, or, First Book* contains this cautionary verse: "He who in learning takes pride, In Coach and six may chance to ride, While ev'ry stupid dunce will be, Condem'd to servile drudgery."⁵

Battledores and Chapbooks

For parents looking for inexpensive books, battledores and chapbooks were popular into the early 1800s. *The Uncle's Present: A New Battledoor* (1810) is a fine example of this type of early learning tool. Printed on card stock, it has a simple two-page fold opening with a flap, with alphabet and numbers on the front. The flap entices the reader in with encouragement "Read & Be Wise" and "Come Read and Learn."⁶ It contains no religious teaching and the alphabet is illustrated with "Cries of London," street vendor calls that would have been familiar, at least to English children.

Another type of street literature was the chapbook, often sold by peddlers who traveled the countryside peddling many items including small inexpensive books. Bertha Mahony Miller in *Illustrators of Children's Books, 1744-1945* describes chapbooks as "anecdotes to the heavy puritan influence . . . they were more lighthearted, cheaply made, often crudely illustrated and many contained popular ballads, songs, and stories."⁷

The Boy's Picture Book (1843), a humorous poem that does not take itself too seriously, claims "this penny book, of little things, though small and cheap, instruction brings."⁸ Another chapbook, *New ABC* (1805) ends with a humorous, slightly bawdy rhyme:

"Round about, round about Maggoty pye; my father loves good ale and so do I."⁹ For many of these early publications, the publisher might also be the printer and even the bookseller, and so many also advertise. The chapbook *Apple Pie* (1825) includes the bookseller's advertisement: "This cost one cent, at Jansen's store, where you can buy a number more."¹⁰

The Women as Educators

Primers abound with the names of often unidentified mothers and aunts such as *Aunt Mary's Primer* (1851), implying that the teaching of reading was often the purview of the mother or another female adult. Two real women writers who emphasized the role of the mother in pedagogical instruction and whose influence carried over well into the nineteenth century were Anna Letitia Barbauld and Ellenor Fenn, the latter of whom often went by the pseudonym Mrs. Lovechild. Barbauld's *Lessons*

for Children (1778) urges children "to explore the animal, vegetable, and mineral worlds around them."¹¹ Already a respected author and poet when she wrote these stories, they are filled with familiar childhood scenes and activities and devoid of religious content. According to Zipes in *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature*, Barbauld's new approach helped to change the direction of children's literature, and she is credited with developing the first formalized program of reading instruction for children.¹²

Similarly, Mrs. Lovechild's *The Mother's Assistant, or, Infant School Primer* (1843) contains lively verse such as "Now run away, my little boys, and march and jump and play; You have been studying long enough, so run away and play."¹³ Her most popular reading primer *Cobwebs to Catch Flies* (1783) went through multiple editions in both Britain and America until the 1870s. She also created toys and games that encouraged mothers to teach their children themselves. In *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, editor Andrea Immel writes that through Lovechild's games, we can "recognize her as an early advocate of child-centered teaching strategies. The games emphasize conversation and the child's own world; they encourage the mother to answer the child's questions and to spontaneously teach when the child is interested in learning."¹⁴

Unfortunately, not all books written by women were as open-minded. *Mama's Lessons for Her Little Boys and Girls* (1829) has a lofty ideal of "endeavoring to form sentences, and dialogues suited to their comprehension." However, the dialogue between "mamma" and her son is loaded with pious thoughts. And when the boy asks his mother, "why does the sun set in different places depending on the season?" she informs him, "that God makes it so."¹⁵

The Evolution of Nineteenth-Century Primers

Numerous primers published in the 1800s conform to a similar format to include the alphabet, simple phrases, pronunciations, and short stories that get progressively more difficult—often with new vocabulary introduced prior to the story so the reader can practice the words. Prefaces often hint at the educational philosophy being touted. Some even include notes for parents, and many exhibit a surprisingly modern sensitivity. The preface of *The Illustrated Primer; or Child's First Book* (1857) states, “The objects to be aimed at in a primer are simplicity and effectiveness. It is necessary, not only to catch the eye and engage the mind, of the learner, but to win him, by natural and easy steps, toward the mysteries of language.”¹⁶

At the conclusion of this primer, three stories about an elephant, lion, and camel suggest a growing interest in natural history. Generally, the primers of the nineteenth century offered an idealized view of childhood. Almost all the characters are white middle or upper class; poor people are often depicted in lowly work such as tenant farmers. While girls are represented, images of boys predominate. Fathers are almost exclusively engaged in outdoor activities, while mothers are depicted in traditional homemaker roles. Rarely do people of color appear, and when they do, they are usually servants.

The content of *Osgood's American First Reader* (1870) is typical with bucolic stories about farm, home, and play. A didactic lesson about lying does creep in (“Do not lie my son”¹⁷) and another where a girl prays that God will protect her. This moral focus is very much evident in the publications of the American Sunday School Union. According to the rare book department of the Free Library of Philadelphia, “This non-sectarian missionary society founded in 1824 was one of the most prolific publishers of juvenile literature in nineteenth-century America.”¹⁸

One such publication, full of religious and pious sentiments, is *Pictures of John and George* (1832), which features a story where a girl gives pennies to a man with a wooden leg who is unable to work. This portrayal of the disabled is typical of the period; they tended to be pitied or are used as examples of charity.

Phonics versus Whole Language

The debate between the benefits of a phonics approach and a whole-language approach in the teaching of reading is not just a twentieth-century dilemma—conflicting theories competed through the nineteenth century as well. In Gould Brown's *The Child's First Book* (1825), the author notes, “it is quite useless to put a child reading till he can spell and pronounce without aid, the syllables and words he must meet with.”¹⁹

Aunt Mary's Primer (1851) takes an opposite approach by suggesting “spelling lessons may be taught at a more advanced age, but it will be found that a young child will learn to read much more quickly if they be dispensed with in the primer.”²⁰ And to cover all bases, George Stillman Hillard in *The Primer, or, First Reader*

(1864) claims “this primer will be found fitted for those teachers who adopt the word-method, as well as those who prefer the phonic method, and for those who first teach the names of the letters.”²¹

Progressive Thinking

In 1837, German educator Friedrich Froebel introduced the groundbreaking concept of the kindergarten, or Garden of Children. Called the “Father of the Kindergarten,” Froebel labeled his approach to education as “self-activity.” This idea allowed the child to be led by his own interests and to freely explore them. The teacher's role, therefore, was to be a guide rather than lecturer. He insisted that improvement of infant education was a vital preliminary to comprehensive educational and social reform.

By the late nineteenth century, Froebel's theories had been embraced by many in the United States, including John Dewey in his experimental school at the University of Chicago.²² In *Royal Gifts for the Kindergarten* (1897), Frances Post van Norstrand



Norstrand, assisted by Mrs. Alice H. Putnam, *Royal Gifts for the Kindergarten: A Manual for Self-Instruction in Friedrich Froebel's Principles of Education Together with a Collection of Songs, Games, and Poems for the Home, the Kindergarten, and the Primary School* (Chicago: George F. Cram, 1887).

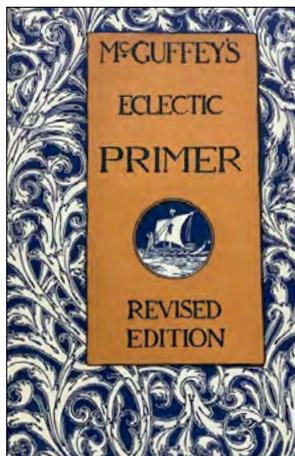
aims to put forward the principles of Froebel's methods. While song and play are an essential feature of Froebel's theory of kindergarten, “The Nursery” section contains the usual alphabet and simple rhymes, but with a freer, more playful tone than many primers (for example, the following rhyme: “Vat hat two easy words, no doubt, but, if the hat falls in the vat, Then who can get it out?”) Though a temperance alphabet in the nursery section seems an odd choice: “A stands for alcohol, a fluid of fire, which often brings death to the seller and buyer.”²³

The Textbook Movement

The series that would have a profound effect on the teaching of reading throughout the nineteenth

century were the enormously successful readers first published by William H. McGuffey in 1836. The preface from a 1901 edition of *The New McGuffey First Reader* reads, “This first reader may be used in the teaching of reading by any of the methods in common use; but it is especially adapted to the phonic method.”²⁴ Writing scrip was taught along with learning to read; in the first reader, “slate work” offers the reader a chance to practice penmanship. The early editions include the basics of grammar and spelling as well as short stories, poems, and prayers; the language has a rote feeling.

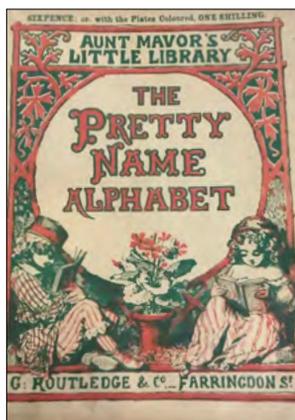
“The enormous popularity and enduring nature of these books can be directly linked to aggressive marketing by the publisher, especially in the South and the West, and the greatly expanding



William Holmes McGuffey, *The New McGuffey First Reader*, Uniform Title: *First Eclectic Reader* (New York: American Book Co., 1901).

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, other entrepreneurial publishers like The American Book Company entered the expanding market for textbooks intended to teach reading. Their *New Education Readers: A Synthetic and Phonic Word Method* (1900) was in the phonics corner of the teaching reading debate. The preface proclaims, "The plan of teaching reading as presented in this book is based on a thorough knowledge of phonics."²⁷ As schools of education developed and the profession of teaching became more formalized, books to teach reading were often written by educators. Additionally, an education expert frequently gave an introduction, perhaps to vet or lend an air of authority to the text. In *Friends to Make* (1928), the lead author worked for the St. Louis Public Schools; the two additional authors are affiliated with New York University.

Illustration in Books for Beginning Readers



Aunt Mavor's Little Library, *The Pretty Name Alphabet* (London: G. Routledge & Co., Farringdon St., n.d.).

Most artists worked anonymously before 1850; for example, an early book, *Primer; or a Child's First Book* (1844), notes that the book is "embellished with numerous and attractive illustrations"²⁹ all without naming the artist.

'Common School Movement' that created a huge market for school books."²⁵ "As times changed, so did the content. More immigrants came to the country and brought with them a wider variety of religions and ethnic groups. By 1879, the McGuffey books were nonsectarian, but the texts still offered examples of family values and morality."²⁶

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, other entrepreneurial publishers like The American Book Company entered the expanding market for textbooks intended to teach reading.

Their *New Education Readers: A Synthetic and Phonic Word Method* (1900) was in the phonics corner of the teaching reading debate. The preface proclaims, "The plan of teaching reading as presented in this book is based on a thorough knowledge of phonics."²⁷ As schools of education developed and the profession of teaching became more formalized, books to teach reading were often written by educators. Additionally, an education expert frequently gave an introduction, perhaps to vet or lend an air of authority to the text. In *Friends to Make* (1928), the lead author worked for the St. Louis Public Schools; the two additional authors are affiliated with New York University.

The earliest primers examined at the Baldwin Collection were almost exclusively illustrated with woodcuts, the cheapest method of the day. When color appears, it was probably added by hand, often carrying an extra charge. The cover of *The Pretty Name Alphabet* (n.d.), proclaims, "sixpence, or with the plates coloured, one shilling."²⁸

An interesting example of a hand illustrated book is Bolles' *The Illustrated ABC: With Original Engravings* (1854). It has an amateur appearance with color crudely spread across the image, not necessarily within the lines.

As the nineteenth century progressed, engravings became more refined, but there is still little color, and even into the mid-nineteenth century artists are not individually mentioned. Book illustration transformed over the latter half of the nineteenth century as developing technology made the mass production of colored prints more efficient and affordable. It ushered in what is considered the golden age of children's book illustration centered around picture books illustrated by Walter Crane, Randolph Caldecott, and Kate Greenaway.



Steps to Reading by Nellie Dale (George Philip & Son Limited, 1895).

Some illustrations from this movement found their way into beginning readers. *Warne's Alphabet and Word Book: With Coloured Pictures* (1876), with its bright and colorful pictures, must have been a welcome change from the typical early reader, yet in the copy viewed, the illustrator is still not given credit, and the content focuses on children's good behavior. One refreshing example of a reader illustrated by Walter Crane is *Steps to Reading* by Nellie Dale (1895). It was part of a series, *The Dale Method of Teaching Reading*, that offered seven readers with accompanying teacher's handbooks. Instead of the dreary morality that marks many of the primers of the time, Crane's colorful, whimsical pictures depict lively children participating in imaginative play as they learn the alphabet and simple first letters.

The Twentieth Century

McGuffey's phonics-based primers dominated American primary education from the middle of the nineteenth until the early twentieth century. But some educators and social scientists began to believe that McGuffey's moralizing texts were too complex for young readers, and they argued for a simpler approach, one that used a carefully limited vocabulary and story lines that were more relevant to the lives of contemporary children.³⁰

Out of this movement emerged the best known and possibly the most controversial series published in the early twentieth century. *Dick and Jane: Basic Pre-Primer* (1936), the first in the series, was created by educator Williams S. Gray and former teacher and reading consultant Zerna Sharp, who believed in the "whole word" (or look-see) method whereby students recognized whole words and connected them to the stories suggested by the pictures. They featured short, simple sentences accompanied by idealized images of a white middle-class American family. "Its popularity in the grade schools through the 1930s and 1940s rivaled that of *The New England Primer* and the McGuffey readers in their times."³¹

Educational publishers continued to dominate the material designed to help children learn to read. Even as late as 1936, the *Children's Catalog* contains only two books designated as stand-alone (not part of a series) readers. A few titles break out of the textbook mold, such as McNair's *Seaside and Wayside No. 1* (1901). The preface states, "These are not offered as natural science textbooks but rather as a contribution to the idea that facts of permanent value may be made known."³² *Who Knows: A Little Primer* (1937) was one of the few readers examined with recognizable illustrators, Berta and Elmer Hader. While part of a textbook series, The Child Development Readers, the text of *Who Knows* is limited but more interesting as it is mostly a guessing game that offers some incentive to keep reading.

While American children were doggedly learning to read with Dick and Jane, certain educators were examining ways in which children acquired language and literacy. One of these was Lucy Sprague Mitchell, founder and chair of New York's Bank Street School. According to Leonard Marcus in *Golden Legacy*, Sprague had "worked tirelessly toward a systematic understanding of the stages of language development during the first seven years of life."³³ In her *Here and Now Story Book* (1921), Mitchell states in the preface, "Stories must begin with the familiar and the immediate. . . . But also stories must lead children out from the familiar and immediate, for that is the method of both education and art."³⁴

She put her theories to practice when she collaborated with Margaret Wise Brown to create a series of readers for D.C. Heath. In *Farm and City* (1944), while the illustrations depict traditional family images, there is repetition and more natural sounding sentences in the text.

Even with the above examples, by the 1940s there was still a paucity of enticing beginning readers that could spark children's

With newly created children's departments in public libraries starting at the turn of the century, the establishment of specialized children's departments in publishing houses and perhaps, most important, a growing concern about national literacy, the world of books for beginning readers was about to experience a radical transformation.

excitement to read. With a few exceptions, the process of learning to read appeared to be firmly entrenched in the classroom, but all that was about to change. With newly created children's departments in public libraries starting at the turn of the century, the establishment of specialized children's departments in publishing houses and perhaps, most important, a growing concern about national literacy, the world of books for beginning readers was about to experience a radical transformation.

In 1957, just a few years after the scope of this research, onto the pages of beginning readers marched a certain Cat soon to be followed by a Little Bear. Together these two characters and their corresponding publishing houses—Random House and HarperCollins—would begin to dramatically change the options for beginning reader books. &

References

1. Leonard De Vries, *A Treasury of Illustrated Books; Early Nineteenth-Century Classics from the Osborne Collection* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1989): 13
2. Virginia Haviland and Margaret Coughlan, *Yankee Doodle's Literary Sampler of Prose, Poetry & Pictures; Being an Anthology of Diverse Works Published for the Edification and/or Entertainment of Young Readers in America Before 1900* (New York, Crowell, 1974): 234.
3. J. H. Plumb, "The First Flourishing of Children's Books," in *Early Children's Books and Their Illustration* by Gerald Gottlieb and Charles Ryskamp (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, Oxford University Press, 1975).
4. *Beauties of the New England Primer* (New York; Baltimore: Samuel Wood & Sons; Samuel S. Wood & Co., 1824).
5. *The Young Child's ABC, or, First Book* (Hallowell, ME: N. Cheever, printer, published by Ezekiel Goodale, 1809).
6. *The Uncle's Present: A New Battledoor* (Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson, 1810).
7. Bertha Mahony Miller, compiler, with Louise Payson Latimer and Beulah Folmsbee, *Illustrators of Children's Books, 1744–1945* (Boston: The Horn Book, 1946): 14.
8. *The Boy's Picture Book* (Concord, NH: R. Merrill, 1843).
9. *New ABC: Being a Complete Alphabet in Verse, to Entice Young Children to Learn Their Letters: To Which Is Added a Number of Tom Thumb's Songs* (Worcester, MA: J. Thomas, sold wholesale and retail at his book store, 1805).
10. *Apple Pie* (New York: sold by J. B. Jansen, 1825).
11. Anna Letitia [Mrs.] Barbauld, *Mrs. Barbauld's Lessons for Children* (New York: C.S. Francis & Co., 1838–1858).
12. Jack Zipes et al., "Primers and Readers," in *The Norton Anthology of Children's Literature* (New York: Norton, 2005): 80.
13. Mrs. Lovechild, *The Mother's Assistant, or, Infant School Primer* (Concord, NH: R. Merrill, 1843).
14. Andrea Immel and M. O. Gremby, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 12.

15. *Mama's Lessons for Her Little Boys and Girls: In Two Parts with Engravings* (London: John Harris, 1829).
16. *The Illustrated Primer; or Child's First Book Designed for the Earliest Instruction in Schools and Families*, embellished with numerous engravings (New York: George F. Cooledge & Brother, Booksellers and Publishers, 1857).
17. Lucius Osgood, *Osgood's American First Reader: For Schools and Families*, illustrated by New York Bureau of Illustration (Pittsburgh: A.H. English & Co., 1870).
18. "American Sunday School Union," The Free Library of Philadelphia, accessed February 1, 2020 <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/programs/rarebooks/theme/children>.
19. Goold Brown, *The Child's First Book: Being a New Primer for the Use of Families and Schools* (New York: printed and sold by Mahlon Day, 1825).
20. *Aunt Mary's Primer: Adorned with a Hundred and Twenty Pretty Pictures* (Providence, RI: Mather & Burr, 1851).
21. George Stillman Hillard, *The Primer, or, First Reader* (New York: Taintor Bros., 1864).
22. "Friedrich Froebel," *Britannica Encyclopedia*, accessed March 1, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Friedrich-Froebel>.
23. Frances Post van Norstrand, assisted by Mrs. Alice H. Putnam, *Royal Gifts for the Kindergarten: A Manual for Self-Instruction in Friedrich Froebel's Principles of Education Together with a Collection of Songs, Games, and Poems for the Home, the Kindergarten, and the Primary School* (Chicago: George F. Cram, 1887).
24. William Holmes McGuffey, *The New McGuffey First Reader, Uniform Title: First Eclectic Reader* (New York: American Book Co., 1901).
25. Elliott J. Gorn, ed., *The McGuffey Readers: Selections from the 1879 Edition* (New York: Bedford St./St. Martin's, 1998), 7.
26. Alice McGuffey Ruggles, *The Story of the McGuffeys* (New York: American Book Co., 1950), 92.
27. Abraham Jay Demarest, *New Education Readers: A Synthetic and Phonic Word Method* (New York: American Book Company, 1900).
28. *Aunt Mavor's Little Library, The Pretty Name Alphabet* (London: G. Routledge & Co., Farrington St., n.d.).
29. *Primer; or a Child's First Book* (New York: George F. Cooledge & Brother, 1844).
30. "Reading with and without Dick and Jane. The Politics of Literacy in 20th Century America," A Rare Book School exhibition by Elizabeth Tandy Shermer (The Rotunda, University of Virginia, June 9–November 1, 2003), <https://rarebookschool.org/allprograms/exhibitions/dick-and-jane/>.
31. Kate Kelly, *Dick and Jane: Story of These Early Readers*, accessed February 1, 2020, <https://americacomesalive.com/dick-and-jane-story-of-these-early-readers/>.
32. Julia McNair Wright, *Seaside and Wayside No. 1 Nature Readers* (Boston: D.C. Heath & Camp, Co., 1901).
33. Leonard S. Marcus, *Golden Legacy: The Story of Golden Books* (New York: Golden Books, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, 2007): 70.
34. Lucy Sprague Mitchell, *Here and Now Story Book, Two to Seven Year Olds*, illustrated by Hendrik Willem van Loon (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1921).

Bibliography

- Locke, John (1632–1704). 1752. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. London: Printed for S. Birt et al.
- Webster, Noah (1758–1843). 1925. *The American Spelling Book: Containing the Rudiments of the English Language for the Use of Schools in the United States*. Philadelphia: Kimber & Sharpness.
- The New England Primer, Improved, or an Easy and Pleasant Guide to the Art of Reading Adorned with Cuts; also The Assembly of Divines' Catechism*. 1816. Norwich, CT: Printed by Russell Hubbard.
- Aunt Mary's Primer: Adorned with a Hundred and Twenty Pretty Pictures*. 1851. Providence, RI: Mather & Burr.
- Lovechild, Mrs. (1743–1813). 1822. *Cobwebs to Catch Flies, or, Dialogues in Short Sentences: Adapted to Children from the Age of Eight Years*. London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy. Pictures of John and George revised by the Committee of Publication (Philadelphia American Sunday School Union, 1832).
- Gecks, Mathilde, Charles E. Skinner, and John W. Withers. 1928. *Friends to Make, A First Reader*. Richmond, VA: Johnson Pub. Co.
- Bolles, John R. (John Rogers) (1810–1895). 1853. *The Illustrated ABC: With Original Engravings*. Troy, NY: Merriam, Moore & Co.
- Warne's Alphabet and Word Book: with Coloured Pictures*. 1876. London: Frederick Warne & Co.
- Dale, Nellie. 1895. *Steps to Reading with Pictures by Walter Crane*. London: George Philip & Son, Limited.
- Elson, William H. (William Harris) (1856–1935). 1936. *Dick and Jane: Basic Pre-Primer*. [by] Elson-Gray. Chicago: Scott, Foresman.
- Hahn, Julia Letheld (1891–1942). 1936. *Who Knows: A Little Primer*. Illustrated by Berta and Elmer Hader. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Mitchell, Lucy Sprague, and Margaret Wise Brown. 1944. *Farm and City*. Our Growing World series, illustrated by Anne Fleur, educational consultant Blanche Kent Verbeck, University of Ohio. Boston: D.C. Heath.
- Children's Catalog*. 1931. 4th edition, rev., first Supplement. New York: H.W. Wilson.