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# The current status of oral reading in professional literature

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SERVICE PAPER

THE CURRENT STATUS OF ORAL READING  
IN PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of requirements for  
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1953

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## CHAPTER I

## THE CASE FOR ORAL READING

The purpose of this review of research in oral reading is to determine the place given to oral reading by authors of textbooks in reading and authors of teachers' manuals accompanying elementary grade reading books. The authors of this paper felt that the study of textbooks used by college students, who are prospective teachers, and by practicing teachers, is important in that the emphasis given by them to oral reading will be greatly influenced by these texts written by authorities in the field of reading. It was felt that a study of teachers' manuals would be important also, since the manuals are a ready source of teaching information. Although teachers do not rely solely on teachers' manuals, it seems likely that they will be influenced by them to some extent. The textbooks analyzed were those published since 1940; the manuals were those of recent publication.

In addition to the textbooks and manuals, articles in the Yearbooks of the National Society for the Study of Education were studied when these articles had to do with oral reading.

The research in oral reading since 1930, done at the School of Education, Boston University, was also studied to discover the degree of excellence of oral reading in the Public Schools, as determined by these studies.

The history of oral reading in the American Public Schools has been one of varying degrees of emphasis. In her study, Hyatt traced the history of oral reading from 1880 to 1941, showing how oral reading moved from a place of first importance to one of secondary importance during that period. In her conclusions, she states:<sup>1</sup>

The idea that oral reading has a place in the school program is now generally accepted although time and attention devoted to it vary greatly at different times and in different schools. The information collected in this study leads to the conclusion that at the present time oral reading is not given as much attention as is justified when its importance in child development is considered.

#### Social Values of Oral Reading

Oral reading is to be thought of not as incidental reading matter, but as a subject which has great value for its own sake. As such it must be skillfully taught chiefly as a worthwhile end in itself.

The human voice is one of the most effective and important instruments in life. Comparatively few people, however, can use this instrument effectively. A good speaking voice, clear enunciation, and pronunciation are certainly assets in all walks of life.

Training in good oral reading should result in the acquisition of pleasing, well-modulated, and easily understood voices. The

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<sup>1</sup>Hyatt, Ada, The Place of Oral Reading in the School Program. Bureau of Publications, Teacher's College, Columbia Univ., New York: 1943, p. 47.

ability to use the voice effectively can not be overestimated. Good voice training is one of the greatest needs of today and as such deserves the attention of educators. Bond and Wagner<sup>2</sup> say:

While it is true that but a small portion of the reading of a person is devoted to oral reading, this reading is usually done in a situation which is highly important to the reader. Studies showing the frequency of the use of oral reading as compared with that of silent reading tend to deny the value of oral-reading instruction since oral reading is used so infrequently in contrast to silent reading...The fact that oral reading is used infrequently does not mean that it merits no attention. If a person reads to a large group but once in his entire life, the time spent in school learning to do oral reading well will not have been wasted.

The quality of most adult oral reading leaves much to be desired. This may be due to poor reading instruction. On this point, Bond and Wagner<sup>3</sup> say:

When we remember that most of the adults of today were taught by oral-sight methods, we wonder why such methods are allowed to persist.

Customarily, as the child's reading ability broadens throughout the elementary and secondary schools, the emphasis on oral reading becomes less and less, in the classroom. In order to maintain the skill once it is acquired and to allow it the attention it deserves because of its significant place in adult life, the school should give it time and consideration at all levels.

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<sup>2</sup>Guy L. Bond and Eva Bond Wagner, Teaching the Child to Read. Boston: The MacMillan Company, 1948, pp. 267-268.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

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Hardly any place else than in oral reading may a teacher feel so confident that she is directing the learning process.

#### Uses of Oral Reading

1. As an Aid in Teaching Beginners:

Oral reading is a valuable aid in teaching beginners to read because it improves the motive or interest, utilizes the familiar elements of speech, is a good test of the knowledge of word forms, and is a test of the child's eye movements (it enables the teacher to know if the child is moving his eyes from left to right and seeing the words in their proper order.) Oral reading also gives training in correct enunciation and pitch of voice.

2. As a Stimulating Influence on the Reader and Listener:

The experience of reading orally in a manner which is satisfactory to the person doing the reading as well as the listener is a source of satisfaction to school children of all ages. It motivates reading in that other members of the class, hearing the teacher praise the reader, wish to read as well.

Durrell says that oral reading "motivates reading, as evidenced by the desire of primary children to read aloud to the group."<sup>4</sup>

Hyatt<sup>5</sup> states:

Children are ear-minded and the meanings of words are clearer when heard than when seen. A feeling for certain types of language forms can probably be developed in no other way. If certain words are to become part of a pupil's speaking vocabulary he needs to hear those words either read or spoken.

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<sup>4</sup>Donald D. Durrell, Improvement of Basic Reading Abilities.  
Yonkers-on-Hudson: World Book Company, 1940, p. 105.

<sup>5</sup>Hyatt, Ada, Op. cit., p. 97.

3. As a Means to Literary Appreciation:

Oral reading is an excellent medium for giving children personal experiences with literature. The reader's enjoyment and appreciation are intensified when he is sharing his reading experience with others. Poetry takes on added charm when it is read orally.

During the primary grades, children should be encouraged to share stories that they have read, and to read aloud their favorite selections. From this foundation should grow the desire to read the best in literature. Furthermore, the best teaching of literature necessitates the reading aloud of much material, such as poems and stories, if the creation of tastes for good literature is to be encouraged and adequately fostered.

Oral reading has many social uses, and it is the business of the school to plan a program of reading that will meet these demands of life.

## CHAPTER II

## ORAL READING AS AN OUTGROWTH OF ORAL EXPRESSION

## Pre-school Development

Oral language has developed considerably before the child has entered the first grade. He has connected the sounds and meanings of many words. Accordingly it is desirable to use this knowledge as an aid in grasping the thought in beginning reading. Kirk and Monroe<sup>1</sup> say:

Actually it is difficult for children to read without first learning to read orally. Oral language is the tool with which the child comes to school. The aim of the school is to transfer this oral language to reading. Reading consequently, begins through the use of visual-auditory symbols, rather than visual symbols and meanings, the adult reading method.

## Earliest Stages in Reading

The earliest lessons in reading are primarily to enable the child to grasp the meaning of symbols on a printed page, and oral reading is, apparently, the best method for accomplishing this.

Stone<sup>2</sup> says:

In these beginning stages, where the reading material contains a vocabulary familiar to the child as the auditory symbols of well-known meanings, learning to read is primarily the process of establishing connections between the oral symbol, the visual symbol and the meaning.

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Kirk and Marion Monroe, Teaching Reading to Slow Learning Children. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1940, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>Clarence R. Stone, Progress in Primary Reading, St. Louis: Webster Publishing Company, 1950, p. 92.

### Variation of Backgrounds

Many children accustomed to a foreign language in their homes will face the task of learning to recognize not only the written symbols of our language, but the oral symbols as well. In addition to this, wide variation is apparent in the number of word sounds or oral symbols that children have at their command in the earliest grade. One child will show that he possesses a rather large number of meaningful symbols, all readily recallable, while another will seem to have just as many but will experience much greater difficulty in recalling more than a few with readiness, clearness, or accuracy. On the other hand, there will be pupils with a sadly limited stock of oral symbols with an equally pathetic inability to recall. Nevertheless, the school must transfer this oral language, regardless of whether it is adequate or inadequate, to oral reading.

### Matching Symbols and Sounds

Since the first transition from speaking to reading is oral reading, children in the first years should do a great deal of oral reading and this oral reading should continue into the later school program with the emphasis changing from developing good reading skills to broadening these same skills. Kirk and Monroe<sup>3</sup> say:

Oral reading is the logical step in learning to read. The child learns the meaning of the words first through the auditory sense. When he commences to read, then, it is necessary to associate the sight of the word with the sound of the word which he already knows and to make the connection from sight to meaning.

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<sup>3</sup>Samuel Kirk and Marion Monroe, Teaching Reading to Slow Learning Children. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1940, p. 126.

### Writings of Educational Psychologists

Clarence Stone<sup>4</sup> believes that oral reading helps the child in beginning reading because the child is familiar with the spoken word and by speaking the word himself aids his own comprehension.

The writings of educational psychologists indicate a consensus of these specialists feel that oral reading is probably closely related to a full conception and appreciation of the experiences embodied in the printed pages as long as the child's reading vocabulary is still much smaller than his speaking vocabulary or the spoken vocabulary which he comprehends.

While it is generally agreed that initial reading should be largely oral and that the child needs to go through the auditory stage to the auditory visual stage before attempting the strictly visual approach to reading, a functional approach to oral reading is as necessary to the development in the middle grades as it is in the lower grades where it serves mainly as a bridge from oral language to reading.

#### Emphasis on Expression

Expressive oral reading must find a fitting place in upper grade programs. But in order to prove its worth, the emphasis should be on expression; for it is only then that we can realize that the child has come from the stage of learning to read orally - through his initial tool of oral expression - to the place where reading is measured by this same tool which now belongs to the craftsman.

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<sup>4</sup>Clarence R. Stone, Progress in Primary Reading. St. Louis: Webster Publishing Company, 1950, p. 352.

## CHAPTER III

## ORAL READING IN BUILDING READING SKILLS

Oral reading can be thought of in two different ways. First, we can think of oral reading as something to be taught as an end in itself; thus, we teach the mechanics of oral reading because we feel that effective oral reading is a skill worth possessing. Secondly, we can think of oral reading as a method of teaching the reading skills and as a technique of instruction in the content areas. In this chapter, we shall consider oral reading as a method of teaching reading skills, and consider the mechanics of oral reading in Chapter IV.

## Primary Reading

Authorities in the field of reading seem to agree that most of the reading in the primary grades should be oral reading.

McCullough, Strang, and Traxler<sup>1</sup> say:

A beginning reading program that ignores oral reading is depriving the child of one of the avenues through which he may learn words -- the auditory.

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<sup>1</sup>McCullough, Strand, Traxler, Problems in the Improvement of Reading. New York: McGraw Hill Company, 1946, p. 107.

Dolch<sup>2</sup> says:

The need for exact word-recognition is one of the important reasons which causes beginning reading to be oral reading for the most part.

The reason for oral reading being of such importance at the primary level is that the beginning reader has had little or no experience with visual learning in the sense in which reading is visual learning, i.e., association of a printed symbol with a sound and a meaning. At the primary level, most of the child's learning has been auditory learning. At this level, the child is just beginning to acquire the skills of reading, and in order to be certain that the skills of reading are being properly learned, we have the child read orally. More important perhaps, is the fact that the child's familiarity with auditory learning makes oral reading more meaningful to him since he sees and hears the word at the same time and is able to associate meaning with the sound and sight.

Dolch<sup>3</sup> says:

To the child, thinking and talking and reading are closely related. We know when all the children are thinking they all want to talk. We also know that we develop expression by stimulating talking.

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<sup>2</sup>Edward W. Dolch, Teaching Primary Reading, Gerard Press, 1950, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup>Op. cit. p. 120

Therefore, to insure thinking and to stimulate expression, we have children read aloud. But reading aloud is also essential to make sure the child correctly matches sound and sight.

Durrell<sup>4</sup> says:

The oral reading method has the very great value of permitting a close check on the development of accurate word-recognition, and, in addition, it takes advantage of the close relationship to speech in which the child has had several years of experience.

In regard to teaching reading to mentally retarded children, Kirk and Monroe<sup>5</sup> say:

Silent reading should not be introduced too soon to mentally retarded children. Oral reading should be prolonged since it aids learning and gives the teacher a guide to the methods of reading the child is using.

Thus, in beginning reading, oral reading is more of a continuum of experience for the child than is silent reading. This plus the fact that the oral reading provides a means whereby the teacher can check on the pupil's progress, makes oral reading a valuable method of instruction in primary reading.

#### Teaching the Fundamentals of Reading

In the beginning reading situation, the child is

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<sup>4</sup>Donald D. Durrell, "Development of Comprehension and Interpretation." National Society for the Study of Education 48th Yearbook, Part II, 1949, p. 195

<sup>5</sup>Samual Kirk and Marion Monroe, Teaching Reading to the Slow Learning Child. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1940, p. 143

concerned primarily with learning new words, recognizing familiar words, mastering pronunciation, and learning meanings of words. By having the child read orally, the teacher is in a position to determine whether or not the child recognizes and understands the words. In her master's study, Pearson<sup>6</sup> discovered that 44% of the pupils whom she tested made errors due to lack of ability in word-analysis, 40% of the pupils made errors in word substitution such as "dog" for "boy", and 37% made errors because of a low sight vocabulary.

In the Gould<sup>7</sup> study of oral-reading errors in Grades II and III, 47.9% of the pupils in the second grade and 42.3% of the pupils in the third grade made errors due to deficiency in word analysis. These errors and deficiencies become apparent in the oral reading of the child. In this regard, Bond and Bond<sup>8</sup> say

The (oral reading) method has the advantage of making errors easily detected. The teacher knows instantly the trouble the child is having and immediately correction is possible. Thus there may be

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<sup>6</sup>Alice R. Pearson, "A Diagnostic Study of Oral Reading Difficulties in Second Grade", Unpublished Master's Theses, Boston University, School of Education, 1942, pp. 18-23.

<sup>7</sup>D. E. Gould "A Survey of oral-reading errors and Suitability of Materials in Grades II and III." Unpublished Master's Theses, Boston University, School of Education, 1942, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup>Bond and Bond, Teaching the Child to Read. New York: MacMillan Company, 1948, p. 102

constant diagnosis and appraisal of progress.

Silent reading to the exclusion of oral reading will not make these difficulties as easily discernible to the teacher. Dolch<sup>9</sup> says:

Only oral reading makes sure that each symbol is matched with its proper sounds. This matching is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end. But without it the end, ability to read, will not be attained.

Stone<sup>10</sup> agrees with this opinion when he says that oral reading "gives objective evidence of the child's attainment in word-recognition and eye-movement habits."

#### Phrase Reading

As the child progresses through the grades and improves in reading ability, he learns to read by phrases.

The Gould study showed that 62.5% of the second graders and 44.2% of the third graders tested, made errors due to inadequate phrasing. The Burns<sup>12</sup> study of reading difficulties in the fourth grade, showed that 33% of the

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<sup>9</sup>Dolch, Op. cit. p. 123.

<sup>10</sup>Clarence R. Stone, Progress in Primary Reading. St. Louis: Webster Publishing Company, 1950, p. 368.

<sup>11</sup>Gould, C. E., Op. cit. pp. 12-13.

<sup>12</sup>Barbara Burns, "A Diagnostic Study of Reading Difficulties in the Fourth Grade." Unpublished Master's Theses, Boston University, School of Education, 1938, p. 43.

Group tested also made errors due to inadequate phrasing. McKee<sup>13</sup> says that oral reading can be used as a check on the pupil's sense of relationship between words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. An understanding of these relationships is basic to effective oral or silent reading, and oral reading will immediately show whether the child is doing phrase reading or word-by-word reading. Faulty phrase or sentence reading may be due to any one of several causes. It is up to the teacher to find out what the exact nature of the difficulty is by giving the faulty reader an individual oral test, and then providing for corrective work.

#### Pupil's Understanding of Punctuation

Faulty phrase or sentence reading may indicate that the child does not understand the function of punctuation marks; an understanding which the effective reader, oral or silent, must have. He should know that punctuation marks are used by a writer to make his meaning clear, and, in the case of oral reading, punctuation marks are the reader's guide to reading so as to convey the author's intended meaning to the listeners. In silent reading, the teacher can not possibly be aware of this lack of understanding of punctuation on the part of the pupil, but this deficiency becomes apparent

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<sup>13</sup>Paul McKee, The Teaching of Reading in the Elementary School, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948, p. 607

as soon as the child begins to read properly.

#### Checking Pronunciation

Oral reading is the only way to formally check the pupil's pronunciation of words. It is possible to check pronunciation through conversation and oral reports, but these reporting activities do not take place too often, and conversation is incidental in its occurrence. Some oral reading can be done each day in one of the areas of the curriculum, if not by all of the students, at least by some of them.

Broom<sup>14</sup> says:

The application of phonics in oral reading is particularly important in developing good pronunciation.

Once it has been established that a pronunciation difficulty does exist, corrective measures can be taken.

#### Oral Reading as an Aid to Better Silent Reading

Oral reading calls for the use of all of the skills required in silent reading plus those peculiar to oral reading

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<sup>14</sup>M. E. Broom and others, Effective Reading Instruction. New York: McGraw Hill Company, 1942, p. 189

alone. As was pointed out earlier, oral reading affords the teacher an opportunity to check on the pupil's understanding of punctuation, word recognition and word analysis skills, and on understanding of meaning. With this information, the teacher can provide for individual instruction, and assign reading which is within the pupil's range of ability, thus being assured that the pupil's silent reading will be quite effective. Stone<sup>15</sup> says:

Specialists in the psychology of reading are agreed that oral reading is a very valuable means in the mastery of the mechanics of reading basic to enjoyable efficient silent reading.

Adams<sup>16</sup> says:

Because oral reading is a symptom of the child's ability in silent reading, the teacher should not have the children do much independent silent reading until she knows they can easily read orally materials of appropriate difficulty. If the children hesitate or fail in reading orally, they cannot read silently with any more facility.

In silent reading, pupils will often skip over difficult words or phrases and go on. In oral reading, the difficulties made apparent to the teacher can be analyzed and corrected.

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<sup>15</sup>Clarence R. Stone, Op. cit. p. 368

<sup>16</sup>Adams, L. Gray, D. Reeve, Teaching Children to Read. New York: Ronald Press, 1945, p. 212.

Kirk and Monroe<sup>17</sup> say:

Therefore, it may be concluded that comprehension of the thought from the printed page through the visual sense comes only after prolonged practice and through a short-circuiting process of first oral reading, then inaudible reading, less vocal movement, less lip-movement, and finally little or no vocal movement.

The more associations which a child can make with a word, the more certain we can be that he will retain the meaning of the word and will recognize it each time he sees it. Oral reading offers the very important association of sound with words, and this association may be carried over into silent reading. When, in doing silent reading, a child comes across a difficult word, he may read the word aloud. He may read a whole sentence or more if the meaning is not clear. Hearing the word or sentence may clarify its meaning in the child's mind.

#### Reading in Literature

One objective of any reading program should be to awaken an interest in, and a desire for, reading. By allowing the pupils to read aloud stories in literature courses, the strictly entertaining aspect of reading is made evident. This is especially true of poetry. Poetry, by its very nature, calls for oral reading. The poem which may seem dull to the child when read

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<sup>17</sup>Kirk, Samuel and Monroe, Marion, Op. cit. p. 124

silently, may take on a completely new meaning when read orally, and may be the means of awakening an interest in poetry on the part of the pupils. Here, the teacher's task is to instruct the pupils in effective oral reading, so as to bring out the full effect of the poem through the sound of the words and through expressive presentation.

In addition to stressing the entertaining aspect of reading, oral reading can be used as a check on the pupils' comprehension of plots, characters, and events in literature. This can be done by having the pupils read lines which express ideas, describe characters or events. The following lines from a teachers' manual by Russell and Snedaker<sup>18</sup>, illustrate this usage.

Read the lines that show the difference in the way Lonnie and his grandfather felt about meeting folks on the river.

Oral reading in literature is also an excellent way of checking on the reading ability and progress of the pupils. Russell and Snedaker<sup>19</sup> say:

The oral re-reading activities are a good index to the teacher of the ease or difficulty of the material for the group and the balance or unbalance of the reading program. If she finds that a whole group have become slow and labored in reading orally, or uncertain in their search

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<sup>18</sup>Russell, Mary Snedaker, Manual for Teaching Wings to Adventure. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1950, p. 236

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, p. 50

for details in the text, she can suspect that they have been going too fast and that they need easier material of a supplementary nature to reinforce acquired sight vocabulary and to build fluency. She may sense the need for certain types of word analysis through the errors which the children make even in this prepared material.

Witty, Lindahl, and Koch<sup>20</sup> say:

Children's interpretation of the text as revealed in oral reading provides opportunities for the teacher to judge the reader's comprehension.

#### Oral Reading in Other Areas

Just as oral reading is of great value in checking comprehension in literature, it is useful in other areas of the elementary school curriculum. Horn and Curtis<sup>21</sup> list the following types of oral reading situations found in schools.

- a. reading a story or poem for entertainment of classmates.
- b. reading a selection as part of a report.
- c. reading to prove a point.
- d. reading for information.
- e. reading announcements, committee reports, original papers.
- f. reading aloud softly to oneself to enhance appreciation of a literary selection.
- g. choral reading.

<sup>20</sup>Witty, Lindahl, Koch, Manual for the Brave and the Free. Boston: D. C. Heath Company, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup>Horn and Curtis, "Improvement of Oral Reading." National Society for the Study of Education. 48th Yearbook, 1949, p. 256.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

### Developing Poise and Effective Expression

In addition to the use of oral reading as a method of instruction in reading and in the content areas, effective teaching or oral reading will do much to develop poise and a sense of confidence when reading or speaking to a group. Horn and Curtis<sup>22</sup> suggest that since children are relatively uninhibited, proper audience reading situations should be allowed them, thus getting them accustomed to the audience situation before they are overcome with shyness and embarrassment as so often happens.

Thus, oral reading is a valuable means of instruction in all phases of the elementary school curriculum. Silent reading will predominate as the child advances from the primary grades because silent reading is the faster method of reading, but as Stone<sup>23</sup> points out, fluency in oral reading usually carries over to silent reading. Witty, Lindahl, and Koch<sup>24</sup> sum it up nicely when they say:

The growing importance of oral speech and communication makes it necessary for children to be able to interpret written materials correctly

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<sup>22</sup>Horn and Curtis, Op. cit., p. 225.

<sup>23</sup>Clarence R. Stone, Op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>24</sup>Witty, Lindahl, Koch., Op. cit., p. 25.

and effectively in oral reading. The reading program should provide as often as possible opportunities for reproducing every-day situations that require the skill.....This kind of reading activity entails the need for the reader to acquire poise and self-confidence, to develop certain habits of speech and enunciation, to interpret beauty and meaning through the written text.

TYPES OF ORAL READING SUGGESTING IN SIX TEACHERS MANUALS ACCOMPANYING  
BASAL READERS.

The following tables are the result of an analysis of six manuals which accompany reading books of various grade levels. The manuals were analyzed page by page; the purpose being to note references to, or suggestions for, oral reading. Each reference to oral reading was counted once under a particular category. Oral reading for some purposes is mentioned only once in some manuals, while others are mentioned over and over again.

This count was made because the authors of this paper were interested in finding out what is actually suggested in the way of oral reading in the manuals. Our question was, "If a teacher were to teach only by the manuals, how much oral reading would be done in her classroom?" The following tables show that in some instances there would be much oral reading while in others there would be little, depending upon the reader and manual being used.

TEACHERS' MANUAL FOR LET'S TRAVEL ON<sup>25</sup>

## NUMBER OF TIMES SUGGESTED

Phrase reading.....	1
Audience reading.....	30
Reading for information.....	7
Reading to answer questions.....	44
Reading for pronunciation.....	1
Reading poetry.....	16
Dramatizations.....	2
Reading for directions.....	6
Choral reading.....	8
Reading to clarify a point.....	6

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<sup>25</sup>Arthur Gates, Manual for Let's Travel on. Fifth Grade Reader. New York: MacMillan Company, 1948.

TEACHER'S MANUAL FOR MAKING VISITS<sup>26</sup>

## NUMBER OF TIMES SUGGESTED

Reading poetry.....	12
Reading for information.....	62
Audience reading.....	6
Reading to answer questions.....	17
Phrase reading.....	2
Reading descriptive passages.....	3
Dramatization.....	4
Reading to find special words.....	7

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<sup>26</sup> Julia M. Harris, Teacher's Manual for Making Visits.  
 Third Grade Reader. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company,  
 1939.

MANUAL FOR IF I WERE GOING<sup>27</sup>

NUMBER OF TIMES MENTIONED

Reading to locate information.....	55
Expressing the mood of the story.....	18
Audience reading.....	24
Reading to stress use of punctuation marks.....	22
Reading to recognize main story divisions.....	26
Reading to express judgements.....	1
Reading descriptive words.....	1
Reading for classification (organization of events in sequence).....	2
Reading to express the feeling of characters.....	2
Reading to verify conclusions.....	12
Dramatizations.....	1

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<sup>27</sup>Mabel O'Donnell and Margaret L. White, Guidebook for the new If I Were Going. Third Grade Reader. White Plains: Row Peterson Company, 1950.

MANUAL FOR WE ARE NEIGHBORS<sup>28</sup>

NUMBER OF TIMES MENTIONED

Reading to find main ideas.....	3
Reading to interpret moods of the story.....	2
Reading for specific information.....	3
Reading to improve expression.....	4
Reading to answer questions.....	10
Reading for enjoyment.....	9
Sight reading practice.....	2
Phrase reading.....	1
For improvement of reading.....	2

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<sup>28</sup>David Russell, and Ousley Odille, Manual for Teaching We Are Neighbors. Second Grade Reader. Boston: D. C. Heath Company, 1948.

MANUAL FOR TEACHING WINGS TO ADVENTURE<sup>29</sup>

NUMBER OF TIMES MENTIONED

Reading to express feeling of the story.....	3
Reading to answer questions.....	6
Reading poetry.....	4
Reading for improvement of reading skills.....	1
Reading italicized words to study the reason for using italics.....	2
Reading to prove a point.....	5
Reading flashbacks to study their use.....	1
Phrase reading.....	2
Reading to get ideas of the story.....	2
Audience reading.....	11
Reading to study writing techniques.....	2

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<sup>29</sup>David Russell and Mary Snedaker, Manual for Teaching Wings to Adventure. Sixth Grade Reader. Boston: Ginn and Company, 1950.

MANUAL FOR LUCK AND PLUCK<sup>30</sup>

NUMBER OF TIMES MENTIONED

To check comprehension..... 1

Reading for enjoyment..... 6

Reading exciting parts of the story..... 1

Reading poetry..... 2

Reading dramatic parts of a story..... 2

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<sup>30</sup>Witty, Koch, Lindahl, Cadwallader, Teachers' Guide for Luck and Pluck. Fourth Grade Reader. Boston: D. C. Heath Company, 1948.

## SUMMARY OF TABLES

The following summary of the preceding tables shows the total number of times each oral reading activity was mentioned in the six manuals analyzed.

Reading for information	127
Reading to answer questions	77
Audience Reading	71
Reading poetry	34
Reading to recognize main story divisions	29
Reading to express mood of the story	23
Reading to clarify a point	23
Reading to stress use of punctuation marks	22
Reading for enjoyment	15
Dramatization	9
Choral reading	8
Reading to find special words	7
Reading for directions	6
Phrase reading	6
Reading to improve expression	4
Reading descriptive passages	3
Improvement of reading	3
Sight reading practice	2
Reading to study use of italics	2
Reading to express feelings of characters	2
Reading for classification (sequence of events)	2
Reading to get main ideas of the story	2
Reading to study writing techniques	2
As a check on comprehension	1
Reading exciting parts of a story	1
Reading for pronunciation	1
Reading to express judgements	1
Reading descriptive words	1
Reading flashbacks to study their use	1
Total oral reading references	485

The following table shows those oral reading activities which are suggested in more than one of the manuals analyzed. In no case was any particular type of activity mentioned in all six of the manuals. The greatest number of manuals in which any one oral reading activity is mentioned is four. The remaining oral reading activities not listed in this table, but listed in the summary table, were mentioned in one manual only.

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Type of Oral Reading Activity	Number of Manuals in which suggested
Reading for Information	4
Reading to answer questions	4
Audience reading	4
Reading poetry	4
Reading to recognize main story divisions	2
Reading to express mood of the story	2
Reading to clarify a point	3
Dramatization	4
Phrase reading	4
Reading for improvement of reading	2

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## CHAPTER IV

## THE MECHANICS OF ORAL READING

When we speak of the mechanics of oral reading, we refer to certain skills which are peculiar to oral reading, and particularly those skills which have no place in silent reading. Effective oral reading calls for more skill than silent reading because it utilizes all of the skills of silent reading plus a few more which are peculiar to it alone.

McKee<sup>1</sup> says:

....Thus, effective oral reading of a given selection requires all and more than the reading ability needed for reading that selection silently. Because this "more" is largely a matter of using familiar inflections of the voice to convey the writer's intended meaning, using a pleasant voice, pronouncing words correctly, and speaking rhythmically, reading orally is for the reader who reads silently with sufficient skill, a speech problem rather than a reading problem.

## Pronunciation and Enunciation

Correct pronunciation and clear enunciation are very important factors in oral reading. Faulty pronunciation may be due to a speech defect and therefore, a case for a speech clinic, or it may be due to faulty word-recognition and word-analysis, in which case the teacher will have to

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<sup>1</sup>Paul McKee, Op. cit. p. 117.

provide individual or small group instruction in whatever phase of reading the child is having trouble. Poor enunciation may be due to similar causes, and again, individual or group instruction will be necessary. Durrell<sup>2</sup> says:

Practice in enunciation can be made specific by using words the child commonly enunciates inadequately. If the drill is designed to correct his specific errors, a child will usually pay close attention and practice on his own initiative.

The manner in which a child pronounces and enunciates words in oral reading may be a good indication of how a pupil will pronounce and enunciate words in conversation. The alert teacher will profit by the pupils' oral reading by noting these deficiencies and making provision for individualized instruction for those pupils needing it. Russell<sup>2</sup> says:

In the area of techniques of oral reading, many teachers help certain of their reading groups by providing opportunities for work in the following:

1. Pronunciation
2. Use of punctuation marks and capital letters.
3. Phrasing
4. Varying the voice to indicate changes of meaning.

#### Expressiveness

Most of the selections chosen for oral reading in schools and out of schools, are selections which call for expressive

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<sup>2</sup>Donald D. Durrell, Improvement of Basic Reading Abilities.  
Yonkers on Hudson: World Book Company, 1940, p. 140.

<sup>3</sup>D. H. Russell, Children Learn to Read. Boston: Ginn & Co., 1949, p. 92.

reading. The generalization might well be made that all oral reading requires a certain amount of expressiveness on the part of the reader. Expressive reading does not usually come naturally to young people; they must be made to realize that the nature of the selection being read, whether it is a poem, dialogue in a story, or a report in a content area, will determine the type of expression to be put into the reading. The expressive quality of the oral reading will determine the interpretation which the listeners are able to get from the reading. Poor expression may be due to inadequate knowledge of the function of punctuation, faulty word-recognition, short eye-voice span, or too difficult material. In this regard, Broom<sup>4</sup> says:

Materials should be provided for oral reading that are on the level of the pupil's reading ability regardless of the grade classification of the material.

Russell<sup>5</sup> says:

Although oral reading is used less frequently, it still involves certain new factors; like silent reading it includes recognition, association, and thinking, but it also requires expressing the thought in such a way that the listener will think with the reader. There are accordingly a number of factors in oral reading which may or may not be aids to good listening. These additional factors may be classified roughly as (1) voice factors and (2) techniques of oral reading.

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<sup>4</sup>M. E. Broom, Op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>5</sup>David H. Russell, Op. cit., p. 90.

### Eye-Voice Span

The eye-voice span is very important to effective oral reading. If the reader's eye-voice span is short, chances are that the reading will not be smooth, but will be broken up by many pauses. In order to read smoothly, the eyes must always be ahead of the voice. If the eye and voice are together, word by word reading will result. Also, in order for the reader to know what inflection of the voice to use and what kind of expression to use, his eyes must be ahead of his voice. In short, he must read and interpret before he vocalizes; he must do phrase reading; recognizing words, quickly analyzing unfamiliar words, perhaps working out their pronunciation, all within a very short period of time. The length of this period depends upon the eye-voice span. Anderson and Dearborn<sup>6</sup> say:

Anyone who has observed a skillful oral reader in action will appreciate the value of a wide eye-voice span. Some oral readers use the eye-voice span so effectively that it is hard to tell, unless the manuscript is in view, whether they are reading or talking.

The eye-voice span may be improved by giving drill lessons with the tachistoscope or with flash cards.

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<sup>6</sup>Irving H. Anderson, Walter F. Dearborn, Psychology of Teaching Reading. New York: Ronald Press, 1952, p. 123.

## VOICE PITCH AND LEVEL

The oral reader must try to keep his voice at a natural pitch. A high-pitched voice in oral reading is often due to nervousness on the part of the pupil, either because reading to the class makes him nervous, or as Durrell<sup>7</sup> says, the material may be too difficult. In his study, Burke found that difficult reading causes a high-pitched voice in oral reading, but goes on to say that a high-pitched voice is not necessarily due to difficulty of reading material.<sup>8</sup> If the tenseness is caused by too-difficult material, giving the pupil material suitable to his level of ability will remove the tenseness. If the tenseness is caused by an audience fear, Durrell<sup>9</sup> suggests the following activities to get the pupil to overcome his fear:

- a. An imaginary radio broadcast at which the person reads behind a screen.
- b. A puppet or marionette show in which the audience watches the action of the puppets while the pupil reads the lines accompanying the action.
- c. Reading material to accompany shadow plays.
- d. Reading from a lantern slide with the room darkened.
- e. Reading into a microphone placed in a separate room.
- f. Reading into a sound recording device and then listening to the record of one's own voice.

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<sup>7</sup>Donald D. Durrell, Op. Cit., p. 135

<sup>8</sup>Harold L. Burke, A Study on the Pitch of Oral Reading of Fourth Grade Children. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Boston University, School of Education, 1939, p. 66.

<sup>9</sup>Donald D. Durrell, Op. cit., p. 139.

Providing the pupil with as many opportunities as possible to read orally to the group will gradually do away, (if not completely, at least to a great extent) the pupil's nervousness in the audience-reading situation.

The level of the reader's voice must be such that all can hear what he is saying. Practice and experience in reading to a group is the best way of improving voice level.

#### Reading to an Audience

There are certain general principles to be followed in audience reading in the classroom which bear noting. Although audience reading is not one of the mechanics of oral reading, it seems appropriate to place it in this chapter because it has certain mechanics of its own.

If the pupils are reading for the enjoyment of the class, the readers should prepare the material to be read beforehand, so as to be familiar with it and be able to read it effectively and expressively. The enjoyment in listening to someone read is taken away if the reader stumbles over words or is so unfamiliar with what he is reading, that he puts no expression or puts wrong expression into the reading. Another important point, upon which all reading textbook writers seem to agree, is that when a pupil is reading to the class, he should be the only one with a copy of what is being read. Preferably, the material should be new to the class, but if the reader is reading from a textbook or

from a basal reader, the rest of the class should sit with books closed, and merely listen to the reader. When the whole class follows along in the book, the reader loses all incentive to read effectively, and the class becomes one big critic body, merely listening and looking for reading errors; or the pupils go ahead reading on their own, and pay no attention to the person reading aloud. McKee<sup>10</sup> says that there should be "an atmosphere of recreation and enjoyment" with no quizzing and checking by the teacher.

Many writers suggest having the class set up standards of good oral reading to be followed by pupils when reading to the class, and having the oral reading evaluated by the class according to the standards set up. By having faults pointed out each time a pupil reads, he should become more and more effective as an oral reader each time he gets up before the class. Rating scales set up by the pupils should consider such things as voice pitch and level, posture, expression, smoothness of the reading, pronunciation and enunciation, and mannerisms.

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<sup>10</sup>Paul McKee, The Teaching of Reading in the Elementary School. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948, p. 136.

## CHAPTER V

## IMPORTANCE OF GOOD CHOICES IN ORAL READING

An important aspect of oral reading is the enjoyment it can foster in the reader and the listener. Through carefully selected materials the elementary teacher may succeed in making learning to read orally a pleasant experience. When the pupil enjoys reading and listening to reading, he is going to want to further his own reading experiences. As in any life situation, one pleasurable experience creates the desire for more of the same. When the enthusiasm for reading has been established, the teacher's work will be greatly facilitated. A pleasant, interesting selection is read to another for the same purpose that an enjoyable incident is related.

Accurate interpretation, emotion, emotional appeal, and the rhythmic forms of expression may be best conveyed by pupils who have been well guided in reading orally.

Another important aspect of oral reading is its worth socially. Significant personal and social values are products of an effective, well-thought-out oral reading program. (The reader's self-confidence and the audience's respect for the spoken thought can be built up among the pupils best through a common appreciation of the material presented.) This is possible

only when good choices have been made. Then the audience as well as the reader will benefit.

As the reader realizes that his classmates are interested in the material which he is sharing with them and interpreting for them, he will want to read aloud to them more frequently.

#### Oral Reading and the Child's Daily Life

Oral Reading should be closely connected with the daily life of the child, especially in the early years. The child, through reading, acts as the conductor of the author's thoughts to the minds of the listeners. In order to do this well, he must understand the thought and appreciate the subject matter. Practice with various types of material and different methods of presentation will show the child the value of oral expression.

#### The Teacher's Function in Oral Reading Program

The choices of oral reading material made by teachers in the elementary grades will influence the individual's choices as he matures.

Consequently, the teacher should take into consideration the following steps:

1. Providing incentives creating audience situations.

- 2. Helping pupil's find material suited to their audience.
- 3. Helping pupils prepare themselves to read effectively.
- 4. Exercising influence, if need be, on the reaction of the audience.<sup>1</sup>

It is most inadvisable to embarrass a child in any way when he is doing oral reading.

The teacher should not make an error in reading an occasion for correcting the pupil's articulation difficulties. She should not insist upon basing interpretation upon punctuation. She should be careful about attempting to speed a pupil's oral reading. (To force a pupil beyond his speed in a social situation may result in confusion.) The teacher should be careful not to let the pupil remain "stalled" upon a word which he can not recognize, even though this may be a familiar word. When the child is reading orally the situation should be an oral one.<sup>2</sup>

#### Audience Reading

Preparing the child to read orally for an audience is a long succession of steps: motivation, drill work in word skills, enunciation, and interpretation. All these steps are necessary so that the individual is ready to meet the oral reading situation under whatever circumstances it may arise.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Julia M. Harris, Teacher's Manual for Making Monthly Visits. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p. 42.

One of the early steps in developing oral reading is the creating of genuine audience situations. Such a situation includes:

1. Persons who are willing to listen.
2. A reader with good material.

One of the aims of any oral reading program is to condition the pupil who proposes to read to an audience to be able to select good material for reading and be prepared to read it effectively.

Two requirements in helping the pupil to prepare for oral reading are, one: thorough familiarization with the ideas to be expressed; and, two: mastery of pronunciation and meaning of all the words.

The real test of a pupil's oral reading ability is the degree to which he succeeds in interesting his audience.

Horn and Curtis<sup>4</sup> point out that although oral reading in real-life situations has a much lesser place than silent reading, when oral reading is done, it is important enough to warrant systematic and good teaching.

There are several types of oral reading situations usually mentioned:

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<sup>4</sup>Ernest Horn and James F. Curtis, "Improvement of Oral Reading", National Society for the Study of Education 48th Yearbook, 1949.

1. Reading aloud in family or among friends.
2. To inform or prove a point.
3. Reading a report, announcement, original paper, etc.
4. Reading to oneself to enhance appreciation.
5. Choral reading.
6. Reading to children.

These situations will only be successfully met when a good foundation in the mechanics of oral reading, plus a careful selection of material for oral reading, are made by the teachers from the first grade on through the elementary schools.

Pupils should not, however, be forced to read before an audience without preparation. One of the causes of artificial and ineffective oral reading among school children is the embarrassment and tension caused by the older type of instruction which required pupils to read materials for which they were poorly prepared. Such remedial work in pronunciation, inflection, and the other elements of speech may be dealt with by the teacher in private. Because one of the most important factors in any oral reading situation is the reaction of the audience, harm could be done by stimulating any awkward feeling in the reader, thus destroying the original purpose of creating an audience situation.

Not until the pupil is fairly confident before an audience should the first oral reading be undertaken. The less artificial the audience situation, the more effective it will be. A common interest in a topic provides many incentives.

### Sight Reading

In making a selection of material to be read, emphasis should be placed upon phrase and sentence exercises based on the chosen story. This is done in order that the pupils will encounter no new words, no awkward phrasing, and no meaningless sentences. From this background should come reasonably smooth reading without previous preparation.<sup>5</sup>

The first sight reading should be done with materials which, although the pupil has never seen them before, contain little or no new vocabulary. When sight materials are introduced in which there is new vocabulary, it is advisable to have the pupils glance briefly over the selection before he reads it orally. If he feels that he can read it satisfactorily, he may do so. If he wants assistance, he should obtain it before attempting to read aloud.<sup>6</sup>

### Dramatization

Using Dramatic activities has proved to be an excellent means for stimulating an oral reading program. Dramatizing material which has been prepared from a story read by the class develops both language skills and dramatic abilities, while at the same time serves as a means for developing adequate oral reading. When the selection is made for the

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<sup>5</sup>Donald D. Durrell, Improvement of Basic Reading Abilities. Yonkers-on-Hudson: World Book Company, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup>Arthur Gates, Improvement of Reading. New York: MacMillan Company, 1947, p. 40.

dramatization, the teacher must again be careful to take into consideration the interests, needs, abilities, and understanding of the group.

Bond and Wagner<sup>7</sup> say:

The use of dramatic activities has proved to be an effective incentive for reading. For example, a radio dramatization of material that has been prepared from a story that has been read develops linguistic and dramatic abilities and is at the same time an effective means of developing both silent and oral reading abilities.

#### Reporting

In making a report to the class a child should be able to read well orally whether he is reading his own or someone else's work. To do this he must realize the importance of his reading and understand that he is acting as interpreter of a significant passage.

Pupils frequent reporting would be a means of encouraging more search for materials bearing on any general theme which the class may be considering at the time.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE INTERPRETIVE VALUE OF ORAL READING

When used in various ways, oral reading becomes perhaps the best method of stressing interpretation; showing the pupils the importance of interpretation in reading, the wide variety of possible interpretation of a given passage, and the importance of finding the one correct interpretation intended by the author. In addition to being a means of demonstrating interpretations, the actual interpretation put into the reading of a selection helps the listener to better understand and enjoy the selection. Bond and Wagner<sup>1</sup> say of interpretive oral reading:

A good reader must be skilled in interpretive oral reading. He must be able to read in a manner so that he imparts information, shares a story, interprets character expressions. He must do his oral reading in a manner that enables his listeners to appreciate with him his interpretation of the author's meaning.

Interpretive oral reading may be done by a group or by individuals. The common method of group reading is choral reading and the individual interpretive reading is done by individuals in a group presenting a play or a person reading a poem.

## Choral Reading

Choral reading does have a definite place in the elementary school curriculum. It is one reading activity in which all of the pupils may participate on an equal footing. There will be wide

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1. Guy L. Bond, and Eva Bond Wagner, Teaching the Child to Read. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1950, p. 39.

variety of ability in individual oral reading, but in choral reading, all voices blend into one, and the slow reader and the reader who is lacking in some of the skills of reading can join the chorus and enjoy reading, knowing that he is not the center of attraction and that any slight errors he might make will not be noticed. Choral reading is also a method of aiding the slow reader. When reading in unison, the slow reader will fall into the rhythm set by the class, and by doing this, will see how punctuation affects the reading and how certain parts are read differently. In short, the slow reader will learn something of expressive and interpretive reading by taking part in choral reading. Russell and Snedaker<sup>2</sup> say:

The choral reading of poems gives pleasure in a group activity and affords valuable experience in the animated, rhythmic expression of ideas. As one group of children listens to another group read a poem, appreciation of how meaning and mood are expressed becomes more vivid. The importance of emphasis and of pause, the purposes of pronunciation, are made clear to pupils through this type of activity. Also, it shows how clearly articulated speech helps in communicating ideas.....Through choral reading the pupils are often given a better appreciation of what good poetry really is.

#### Dramatics

The medium which best stresses interpretation, and depends upon interpretation for its effect, is drama. Dramatic reading is suited to the elementary school curriculum. There are many plays written for the elementary school level and stories

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<sup>2</sup>Russell Snedaker, Op. cit., pp. 54-55.

with dialogue in children's readers may be dramatized. It isn't necessary that an actual play be performed with costumes and scenery. The pupils can be allowed a short time to read the material and then the play or dramatization can be read in front of the class. In this manner, plays can be put on quite frequently. All of the pupils should be given a chance to participate in these dramatic activities. Practice in dramatic reading will improve the pupil's ability and develop poise and diminish self-consciousness when speaking to a group.

Dramatization also has the effect of impressing upon the child the fact that written language is the same as spoken language except for form. By having the children read parts of plays, they will realize how difficult it is to do a part well, and may increase their appreciation of the talents of professional actors and actresses, and may awaken an interest in dramatics in the pupils.

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