A reading and spelling aid

Minimal Phonic Cues

mpc Teacher's Book

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Introduction

Teachers are constantly looking for ways of helping their pupils, particularly to increase their independence and skill in aiding their own learning and in being able to read alone. A great deal of personal contact with the teacher is required before a child can read instructions and produce written answers. Should this be given by addressing the whole class and directing them all in the same piece of work? Should the children be grouped, with only one section at a time enjoying the teacher's whole attention, or should this contact be as far a possible on an individual basis? Whatever means are used, a great deal more learning takes place when children can work on their own and are motivated to do so.

As a teacher of infants, I constantly exercised all my ingenuity to provide self-checking activities for the 'other group' while teaching something new to some of the children. As a teacher of mixed ability Junior classes and rural classes with a wide age-range, I was most worried by the slower children as it was difficult to keep them well occupied in useful learning while others received my main attention.

In training students to teach infants, I am frequently asked how to 'give children words' for writing without long queues forming or children wasting time. Another

common problem is how to hear each child read frequently while dealing with all the other activities of the classroom. Bright children with good home support frequently work well on their own because they have early success and are encouraged by it. Lack of success puts children off and they lose interest in the task for its own sake.

English spelling is known to be a source of difficulty in learning to read. For a start, there are about forty-four main sounds in the language, but only twenty-six letters in the alphabet. Berkiansky (1969) worked with a group studying phonics. They identified sixty-nine letters representing single sounds and seventy-nine different ways of spelling the six vowels 'a', 'e', 'i', 'o', 'u' and 'y'. More than one in ten common words were exceptions to any rule and 166 rules had to be devised to cover the remaining 5431 words in their sample taken from early reading books. No wonder some teachers have thought that whole-word learning was better than attempting phonics! Yet some ability to attack words not learnt as wholes is absolutely necessary, or we are faced with the even more formidable task of memorising thousands of whole words before we can read very much.

Minimal phonic cues (MPC) solves this initial, basic problem by providing a simple and easily-learnt method of word attack. This book presents a variety of ideas for using MPC, which aims to lighten the task of learning to read by giving early success and independence, two conditions vital to further progress.

NB Throughout this book the teacher is referred to as 'she' and the pupil as 'he'. This purely for convenience. Everything said is of course addressed to teachers of both sexes and refers to both girls and boys.

1 MPC explained, with examples of its use

The irregularity of English spelling

Minimal Phonic Cues aims to provide an accurate means of representing the written word and its pronunciation at the same time. Many attempts have been made to do this, since spelling irregularities cause so much extra trouble to those learning to read English. The names of the letters have never been a great deal of help and nearly all teachers now use phonic sounds. The problem is that although simple sounds help in decoding many words, there are still difficulties with sounds made from two letters, like 'ch' and even more with the combinations like 'igh' and 'tion', and with the variable vowels such as the letter 'a' in *hat, make, call calm, paw, pail* and so on.

George Bernard Shaw tried to persuade us to adopt a new, simplified alphabet. As he said, you might say the imaginary word 'ghoti' spells 'fish'-'gh' as in *tough*, 'o' as in *women*, and 'ti' as in *action*. More recently the initial teaching alphabet (i.t.a) was devised. This includes most of the lower-case English letters, together with a large number of new forms. While apparently giving help to many children and teachers, the great i.t.a. experiment has been criticised for the need to change to a slightly different script later and for not starting with normal English spelling. Various other ideas have been tried, including colour codes and diacritical marks over letters. In all these quite a lot has to be learnt before the system can be fully used, and no system gives a guide which is reliable for every word.
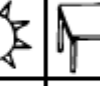
MPC, on the other hand, gives a reliable guide to every single word. It is not dependent on colour, it does not interfere with normal print and it is extremely simple and easy to use. There is no single, prescribed way of applying the scheme. Its use is determined by the methods of the teacher and the needs of the children. This flexibility is one of its greatest advantages, allowing MPC to be effectively used with a wide variety of ages and situations.

How MPC deals with spelling irregularities

MPC starts by analysing all the main English sounds and providing one symbol for each, without using any new letter-shapes (see Figure 1). Although both 'c' and 'x' can be represented by 'k' and 's', and so are not really needed, they are included so that the whole alphabet is shown. Double letters (or digraphs) like 'sh' and 'ng' are linked by a slur e.g. 'sȟ ', 'n͡g'. The 'hard' vowel sounds are shown by a bar over the top e.g. 'ā', 'ē'. The sound ' a͡ir' has been included,

because there is only one 'r' sound. The 'si', as in television, could be shown by 'zy' above it. The 'cue-card' below gives a picture as a guide or mnemonic for each of the forty-five sounds.

Figure 1

Once these basic sounds and symbols can be recognised and the skill of blending into words is acquired, there are only two other small signs to learn. Any English word can be decoded without difficulty. A cross is placed over silent letters, and a subsitution sound over any which cannot be regularised otherwise, e.g. 'cŏmĕ'. Though so simple, this works for *every* word.

The only other question is how to teach capitals. Many of them can be recognised by their similarity to the lower-case letters, and a substitution can be used to deal with the others, as in 'CUE-CARD'.

Dialect and MPC

Dialect may cause some problems, mainly with the pronunciation of 'a' but MPC's flexibility can allow for this.

Teachers in some places, for example, Scotland, may find that some of the vowels are marked in a way which does not correspond to Scottish children's pronunciation. The 'oo' sound, for example in the word 'good', is more like 'ū' in Southern English and 'you' is also pronounced differently. The sounds 'ur', 'or', 'au' and 'o' may also cause some difficulty, probably because the 'r' is sounded so much more strongly in Scottish accents. Where such teachers are adapting MPC to suit their own needs, as advised here, they should use whatever parts of the scheme are helpful and modify those which are not. A slightly different cue-card, omitting a sound like 'er' and perhaps altering 'oo' and 'oo', might thus be appropriate. When words are being marked in books, MPC can be used to make them sound as similar to the normal pronunciation as possible.

The main difference found in other English accents is between 'a' and 'ah' in words like *dance*, *park* and *ask*. Here the teacher should omit 'ah' from the cue-card if it is never used and, of course leave the 'a' uncued in words like *dance*. In the south one would cue 'p$\widehat{\text{ah}}$rk' and 'f$\widehat{\text{ah}}$st' and soon on if this were found to help reading. No change in cues is necessary for other vowel forms, for example, if a Cockney child sounds 'nice' as 'noice' because the child's response to 'ī' will always be read like 'oi', as it would be in normal script. Similarly, in the Midlands the common pronunciation of 'but' is more like the Southern 'boot'. It need not be cued, however, because the response to 'u' will always be 'oo'. The same applies to 'mother' which could be cued either as 'm$\overset{u}{\text{othe}}$r' or 'm$\overset{oo}{\text{othe}}$r' if necessary.

Today accents are usually left alone so long as speech is clear and understandable. The influences of radio and television mean that extremes of accent making a person from say, Devon unintelligible in Yorkshire are rare. However if a child could only communicate with local people he would be at a disadvantage for educational purposes. However musical and interesting such an accent might be, the case for preserving it intact is not strong. Many children learn one accent for school and another for home.

MPC can help to define the sounds to be considered in any informed discussion of accent, though it provides no absolute pronunciation for them as does the

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). This is thus a better system for dealing with details of accent.

Of a number of teachers who tried MPC throughout the British Isles very few reported any snags. The main comments were from Scotland, as outlined above. If there were too many difficulties of accent you might decide that MPC was inappropriate for your pupils. However, the flexibility of the system means that it can easily be adapted to suit individual requirements, or used only in part. MPC is above all, a practical aid, designed to be of the maximum possible use with the minimum amount of detail. Any cue can be used, so long as it enables the child to make a better attempt at recognising the word and pronouncing it in the way which is natural to him (Unless his normal speech is very defective).

Dealing with difficult vowels

One of MPC's most useful features is the way in which it deals with combinations of two vowel symbols which can be sounded in various ways. Usually one of the letters represents the right sound in either its phonic or letter-name form. A cross or a mark and, occasionally, a substitution regularise all cases.

Figure 2

There are also many ways of pronouncing the same letter, e.g. 'a' and 'o' in Figure 3 'o' is used in six different words with different effects. MPC makes it possible to regularise the pronunciation by showing how 'o' is sounded, either alone or combined with another letter.

Figure 3

Five different pronunciations of 'ie' are clearly shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

siĕvĕ friend fliēš fiēld sčiencĕ

Further teaching points

Figure 5 illustrates a variety of words and marks.

Figure 5

Thē childrĕn thöught it strāngĕ
that thĕ liğht bēhind thĕ hill
lŏŏkĕd sō red. Thēy hurriĕd
förwařd tŏ sēĕ whåt it wåš.

Several points can be dealt with using Figure 5.
1. Although this example is fully and logically cued throughout it is unlikely that any reader would need 'the' cued every time. Too many marks look confusing. However, if it *is* thought necessary to use cues on every word they should be faintly marked, so that they can be used if needed but ignored if not.

2. The cross which shows a letter is unsounded has been put over one of the repeated letters in 'hill' and 'hurried'. Some teachers consider that this is unnecessary, as it probably is for word recognition. However, since using single instead of double letters is a common spelling fault, it is worth using the cross to help children remember which words contain double letters. It is also useful sometimes when marking passages for word study.

3. The cross for unsounded letters is also used to deal with the sound 'schwa' in the International Phonetic Alphabet. It cannot be designated using normal letter symbols, on which MPC is based, except possibly by 'uh'. It occurs with several vowel spellings, but is more or less the same sound in *children*, *to*, *the*, *correct*, *majestic* and *succeed*, for example. The sounds 'o', 'a' and 'u' in *correct*, *majestic* and *succeed* do not really need to be cued because they are recognisable when

the word is pronounced slowly and carefully and only change to 'uh' at speed. Because the sounds 'e' in *the* and 'o' in *to* are not like those in pen and *top*, they logically need cues (though these are among the first words to be learnt and should not need making for long, if at all). If consistency is necessary for word study the required effect will be achieved by putting a cross above the letter which is not to be sounded. 'Th','t' and 'children' are how we really pronounce 'the', 'to' and 'children'.

This is a practical help to those children who would otherwise pronounce every bit of a word and end up with something less like its real pronunciation. It has been shown to work well in practice, especially in longer words.

4. There are two regular spellings for the same sound in 'ow' and 'ou', 'aw' and 'au', 'oi' and 'oy'. 'Ah' and 'ar' are alike in some accents and 'er', 'ir' and 'ur' are alike in most (except Scottish). Finer differences, not important for decoding meaning, are ignored in MPC. Because the system aims to simplify the initial stages of reading the cue-card shows only one symbol for each of these sounds. This should be learnt first and used to substitute over the others so that they can be learnt incidentally in the course of reading. 'Er; and 'oi' are definitely more common that 'ir' and 'oy'. I decided to use 'ow' rather than 'ou' and 'au' rather than 'aw' on the cue-card, though since the word *house* is often used at an early stage some teachers might prefer to use 'ou' and 'aw'. This isn't really important. What *is* important is that one or the other should be chosen initially. The teacher can point out the similarity at a very early stage and stop using a substitution.

Substitutions may not be necessary for bright children who can soon learn several possibilities, but those who are slow or young will probably need them. MPC gives such pupils the smallest possible initial learning load so that the rest of the phonic work is encountered in the course of reading and can be learnt incidentally as far as possible. The *MPC Spelling Workbook* is designed to reinforce and consolidate these rules. Once they are known, the aid can be discarded. There is not a set scheme for dispensing with certain things at each stage because needs will vary from child to child and class to class. Completely individual discarding of cues would be difficult within a class, but children will neglect them when they no longer need them and so provide their own grading to some extent.

2 Ideas for adapting and using MPC

How can you, the teacher, use MPC? There is no set scheme for its use because so many teachers have found its flexibility to be one of MPC's great advantages. However, this book is accompanied by the *MPC Word List*, which contains over 6000 cued words, the *MPC Reading Workbook* and the *MPC Spelling Workbook* (see Appendix 2). As their titles suggest, these are designed for individual use by the pupils to aid and reinforce their learning. These two workbooks and simple dictionary provide a phonic scheme which can be used to extend and accompany other work in reading. The skills learnt from using these books will aid both the sight learning of common words and the attack and spelling of new ones.

An aid to spelling and pronunciation

In contrast to the limited choice of reading material found in set reading schemes, *any* passages can be marked with MPC. The boundless range thus offered means that learners can absorb the relationships between spelling and pronunciation, using MPC to aid in the decoding of new words, while reading really interesting material. No formal phonic instruction is necessary once the forty-five sounds and the skill of blending have been learnt. Spelling-pronunciation relationships can then be learnt as are grammatical forms, mainly through unconscious absorption. For example if 'brīght', 'sīght', 'līght', 'nīght' are continually encountered when reading, the deduction that 'igh' is pronounced 'ī' seems inevitable. At the same time the pupil is taking an interest in what he is reading, other context cues are present and, because there is no hold-up over difficult words, fluency is being developed. Moreover, MPC continually highlights the relationships between sound and spelling.

An aid to finding out new words

What does the pupil usually do when stuck on a word? He can ask, "What's that word?" and be told. Sometimes, instead of saying the word, the teacher might encourage a guess from the context: "What could it be? What is she doing?" or, "Well, what is that in the picture?" The pupil might be told to read on and then might also say, "Try and build it up. Say the sounds." Unless the reading book is carefully graded for phonic difficulty, insistence on a thorough attempt at building may easily result in 't-h-o-r-o-u-g-h'. This is not much help unless many rules and blends are already known, because the single letter-sounds are not always a good guide.

The wise teacher will probably suggest a guess from context, checked by the main consonant sounds, as a useful compromise. For instance, if a pupil reads 'He wanted a bike' when the text is 'He roda a bike', the 'r' and 'd' in 'rode' could be pointed out and another guess suggested. However, this approach requires good language experience in the pupil and good teaching ability in the teacher, as well as time and individual attention. A pupil soon loses interest if he has to keep stopping, and in many cases will not be able to read at all unless the teacher is hearing him.

The situation will be very different if the pupil knows the sounds and cues of MPC. He will not use the cues for words he knows, but coming to 'rōdě' will be able to say it straight away, without asking anybody, or losing the meaning of the sentence by stopping. It is just as effective as if the teacher was beside him saying, "You don't sound the 'e' but it makes the 'o' sound 'ō'", and is certainly quicker. I have heard children using MPC get the word almost immediately without even having to say the sounds aloud.

Experiments show that MPC not only aids fluency and independence, but also, because it leaves the word-shape unaltered (unlike i.t.a.), constantly presents the sound-symbol relationship to the child.

Methods of presenting MPC without printed materials

Of course, good teachers have all sorts of ways to prevent children getting stuck or discouraged. Some see that all or most of the new words to be met are learnt beforehand through flashcards, games and drill in which interest is provided by the competition or puzzle element. These may be individual or group activities (see Appendix 1). Cues can be used in preliminary work of this kind if books cannot be marked. One way of doing this is to write the same word on both sides of a flashcard and add cues to one side. The cued words can be shown first and their structure pointed out, e.g. 'should' is made up from 'sh', not 's-h', and 'ould', pronounced 'ood'. This is easily seen when cued. The structure could be made more obvious by asking the pupils to find smaller words within the word, e.g. in 'become'. They may already know 'be' and 'come', but if not, the marks will help them to remember how they sound, e.g. 'cŏmě'. In marking a word like 'become' it might be more accurate to put 'běcŏmě', but it is best to use the letters which are already there as far as possible if this gives a sufficient guide, e.g. 'bēcŏmě'.

It must be stressed once again that there is no absolutely right or wrong way of marking any word. The teacher must use MPC as it is most helpful to her pupils, discarding and adapting as necessary. Separating words or syllables with strokes also helps to make the structure more obvious, but would probably prove rather distracting if done on books.

Having gone through a few cued words in this way, the children will enjoy trying to remember them when shown the uncued side of each flashcard. I have found from experience that this really amuses and interests them. Moreover, because they have built up and can reconstruct the words for themselves, the children will remember them far better than if they had simply been told them by the teacher.

Another variation on this idea is to give children the words of a new book written on small cards, again cued on one side and not on the other. I found this most effective with a group of backward seven-year-olds. They put their words in a tin and, after going through them once at school, took them home. The MPC marks are so simple parents learn them very quickly and can then help their children with them. If the sounds are already thoroughly learnt the children can work out what the new words are. They then really enjoy the puzzle of trying to read the uncued words and only looking at the other side if they are stuck. Some children using MPC in this way were overheard saying:" No, don't turn it over yet. I think I can get it." I think I know what it is but I'm not telling yet. I'll turn it over first and see if I'm right (Turns it.) Yes, I'm right. It's --------." One child, whom I met in the street during the holidays, said, " I don't half like them words. I do 'em every night."

Of course, the way one teaches and the relationship one builds up with pupils will affect the result, but there does seem to be something about using MPC which appeals as a kind of game. The child is motivated not just by wanting to win a competitive game, but also by an individual challenge which stimulates thought. Moreover, MPC is not separate from reading.

Having studied individual words in this way, the child is delighted to find that the next book in the reading scheme can be read fluently. This achievement provides further encouragement.

Work with infants

One experiment was carried out with a middle and top Infants group over the nine months from the autumn half-term till July. Bookmarks, made from thin strips of a card on which new words were written with cues, were duplicated to provide a thorough and systematic progress through a whole reading scheme. Most published readers give lists of new words encountered. The words in these lists were arranged to fit the size of a bookmark, so the first one covered pages 1-10, the second pages 11-24, etc., according to the number of words needed. Large print was used for the letters, so that they could be cued easily and be seen clearly by the children. A set of wall pockets was made to hold the bookmarks in sets, there being three or four bookmarks for each book. When a child finished a bookmark, it was put back in the right pocket and the child could sign his name on a list attached, which acted as a simple and effective means of recording progress. When he had a new book mark the teacher went through it with him, seeing that he could work out the words. There was no difficulty if the sounds were thoroughly known; the child could look up the cued version of a new word on his bookmark instead of having to ask the teacher. However, because normal reading methods were being used alongside MPC, some children were reading books before they had learnt the sounds properly, and so needed help. This is also a good way of using cues without marking books.

From this experiment, I feel that most children under six are better using whole-word learning and making sure of the sounds in various ways so that they can analyse later. Some are still at the intuitive stage and not ready for exact analysis, but are in various stages of pre-reading. They may use MPC in an unanalytical way. For example, when confusing 'this is' with 'here is', as so many do, they may say to themselves "'here' has a cross at the end. I'll remember it by that. "This does no harm, whereas forcing the child to use the cues properly is more likely to confuse than help. Children are bothered by 'funny marks they can't understand', so professional judgement is needed as to when to start.

My own experience leads me to think that, while the child can start learning individual sounds very young, analysing and synthesising are linked with the ability to perceive the relationships between a whole and its parts. This ability can be assessed using Piaget's tests with something like wooden beads of two colours. See what answers a child gives when asked, "Are all the red beads made of wood? Are all the wooden beads red?" Or do the experiment with two equal-sized pens. Put them one above the other and say, "Are they the same length?" Then move one part to the side and say, "Are they still the same?" Children who can only take one side into account, or one factor at a time, are going to be more confused than helped by phonic analysis. Yet knowing letter-sounds, and so with what sounds a word begins or ends, will help their reading by giving them extra clues to the words.

The teacher should thus concentrate on plenty of spoken language, some whole-word and sentence reading, paying attention to pre-reading skills and to learning of sounds and letters representing them. When the sounds are known and understood MPC can be used for rapid progress and independence.

Work with older slow-learners

For the majority of poor readers of seven or over, sight-learning of whole words is not the answer. They must acquire some skills of word-attack. They are often discouraged and difficult to interest or to persuade to concentrate, and will, of course, have all sorts of problems and reasons for backwardness, which may need investigation. This aspect will not be examined here, as it is thoroughly dealt with in so many other books. It should be stressed that if any teacher is so inexperienced as to think that one method or idea is going to wipe out all problems she will be disappointed, and I would be the last to suggest that MPC or any other idea will do this. However, they may help in some cases and the teacher should therefore be aware of all possible approaches. Of course, much training and skill is still necessary to know what to do and when and how to do it.

MPC's advantage for slow or backward Junior or Secondary children is mainly that phonic experience can develop through reading in context, with only the forty-five sounds-symbols to be memorised. Memory, which is so often faulty in these children, can be supplemented by reasoning when MPC is used. The infallibility of the scheme is a great relief to such pupils, and boost their confidence immensely. Years ago, when I was trying to help slow Juniors, I had to keep apologising to them for the irregularities of our spelling. I tried to teach them to think, and then they would say, for example, " You told us the 'e' at the end makes a vowel 'say its name'. Why doesn't it in 'gone' and 'have'?! All I could say was, " I'm sorry, but it doesn't always work." Some children can remember a certain number of exceptions to rules, but after a certain pint they just give up. An E.S.N school reported to me that the whole atmosphere there had changed since they started using i.t.a. May boys who had given up trying and become disruptive found that they now had a chance to succeed, and changed their attitude completely. For children such as these to have to learn changed spellings later is an unnecessary burden when MPC can have the same regularising benefits without altering normal spelling. A teacher who had just explained MPC marks to a boy who already knew most of the phonic sounds reports that, after trying it, he came running out to her shouting, "It works" another teacher remembers a boy in a similar circumstances saying to her, "Why ever didn't you tell me about this before?".

In *The Improvement of Reading* (McGraw Hill, 1967) Strang quotes a youth at a clinic, who said, "There's one thing I don't like, when you're reading out loud and you come to a word and you can't pronounce it and the teacher tells me what it is." The older and, possibly, the more intelligent the slow reader is, the more he resents his inferiority and lack of independence. Once he has learnt the MPC sounds and symbols and can use them, he can read marked material without reference to the teacher, because he can find out words for himself. This boosts confidence and also means he can work without constant attention and help, which usually results in a lot more being done and experience gained.

Slow readers who have poor sight memory but are not too weak on reasoning or sound discrimination are most likely to be helped by MPC. Once they have learnt the system they can read marked workcards, which will sometimes enable them to do the same work as better readers. It may also be helpful to mark difficult words as they are encountered, either in the book or on a piece of fairly stiff plastic which can be held over the page and marked in felt-tipped pen. This is a good idea if you want to use MPC in books but cannot mark them.

Teachers who *can* mark books may be unable to do so through lack of time. This problem can be solved by adding cues to any word which children need help when hearing them read. If this is done continually, books will soon have cues marked where necessary without any extra time having been spent doing it.

Writing

One of the advantages cited by advocates of i.t.a. is that it enables young children to write freely, as they spell entirely by sound. There is not doubt that such free writing is inhibited by the irregular spelling of traditional orthography. One of the greatest problems when teaching writing in t.o. is thus helping children with words. Usually they have to be written by the teacher in individual wordbooks, and it is difficult to avoid a queue waiting for this to be done. It is some help not to have too many children writing at once, but if others are doing maths, need conversation or help with making something, there is still a question of priorities. Teachers try to make children be as independent as possible by encouraging them to try their own version, to look up words on lists or in simple dictionaries, or by writing up words likely to be needed beforehand. Another good idea is to give each child a plain sheet of paper and a paperclip to attach it to his

wordbook, and only to help with a word when he has made an attempt on the paper. If the word is right it is quicker just to say so, or there may be only one letter to alter.

A child could also write using MPC sounds on the loose sheet in his wordbook to be altered if necessary by the teacher, or ticked if correct, e.g. 'having✓ rit right✓'. If a child can remember and spell words like 'tea' and 'came' it is not necessary for him to put a cross over the unsounded letters when writing (though this is a help when reading). I do not think it would be wise to encourage children to write using MPC sounds alone when they did not know the correct spelling. Fluency would certainly be increased, but this would result in 'It was my birthday yesterday and eight friends came to tea' being written 'it woz mī bérthdā yestérdā and āt frendz cām t tē', which I would not advocate. If a child had no means of finding the right spelling, MPC would enable him to record the sound accurately, but spelling should be as normally correct as possible from the start, even if it is a bit harder for children to achieve.

In writing, MPC can be used to aid in looking up the correct spelling. Learning the alphabet order is important at this stage, but a child may still look up, for example, 'quiet' under 'c' or 'a', or not be sure if it is the word he wants because of irregular spelling. The MPC Word List which accompanies this book contains over 600 of the words most commonly used in early spelling together with cues. They are indexed under initial sound as well as initial letter, so that, for example 'phone' is found under both 'p' and 'f'. Spelling and MPC is discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

Language-experience approaches

Many teachers prefer not to use a set reading scheme for beginners, but to let them make up their own reading material in some way; *Breakthrough to Literacy* (Longman) materials may be used, or children's pictures with captions and simple sentences written at their dictation and made into books. Wall-story techniques, as explained by Goddard in *Reading in the Modern Infants School* (ULP, 1958), use a similar idea for group teaching. MPC can be used with any of these approaches.

My own experience here has been mainly with adult illiterates, for whom I found it impossible to provide printed material at a level which did not insult their intelligence, yet which was simple enough to read. They therefore dictated

sentences about their jobs, their cars, their families or anything else they liked, which I wrote down on strips of card. They copied these into their books or had them typed on a jumbo typewriter when available. Then they cut up the cards into words, which they used for matching and making other sentences. Some record of words known was needed. One good way to do this was to tick them off in a 500-word book or on a Ladybird *Key Words* list, adding them if they were not on the list. Then, when the pupils were judged ready, cues were added to the books or words to show the sound-symbol relationship.

In some cases, cues were quickly understood and could then be widely used. In others, much work of an intuitive nature without analysis was needed. The older the pupils, the more diverse their problems and needs. Some, whose reasoning is very poor, need much preliminary work before word attack is possible. Yet I taught one man who was quite intelligent, with a reading age of about seven and no idea of the sounds. He raced ahead using MPC, which he understood at once.

Conclusion

The range of ideas suggested here will have given some idea of the great scope and flexibility of MPC. To try it, there is no need to invest in any new or expensive materials. It can be used in full or in part as needed. It could be used for only some children in a class, without disruption. If a child started it and then changed to a school or class where it was not used, the child might miss it, but would not be at a disadvantage. It makes spelling better, not worse. There is no need for a sudden changeover from using it, just a gradual disuse. By the time a reading age of a about eight is attained MPC should not be needed, except for some spelling practice and analysis of spelling rules (see Chapter 4). It allows phonic practice using reading matter which is not graded for phonic simplicity and which can therefore be in completely natural language. However, it should be remembered that children can cope much better with two-syllable words than with words of three syllables or more. Vocabulary should be largely within the child's spoken vocabulary; words may be pronounced but not understood when they are easy to read.

MPC is most readily used to aid reading independence when there is some mental maturity and ability to analyse. It would thus be ideal for reasonably intelligent adults who speak, but cannot read English, as in some of the developing countries. For such pupils cued books would be very useful, enabling independent reading to take place quickly. Chapter 5 deals more fully with the use of MPC in various situations and with different age-groups.

It must be emphasised that MPC cannot be used effectively until the sounds have been properly learnt. After that, rapid progress is possible. Preliminary attention to learning the sounds and cues is therefore vital, and is dealt with in the next chapter.

3 Teaching the sounds and the skills of bending and using cues

It should now be apparent that a thorough learning of individual sounds and symbols and the ability to blend are essential before MPC can be properly and effectively used. It would be interesting to see whether simply drilling the sounds, teaching how to blend and use cues and then starting on cued reading material would work. After only a short period of drilling there would be complete freedom to read anything. However, this would be very unsophisticated and is not advised.

Teaching the basic phonic sounds

In Infant classes the normal or current programme of early reading should not be interfered with, but learning sounds and their symbols should take place at the same time, perhaps as a separate activity. Children should be shown how to form letters properly, not just left to copy sentences written by the teacher. This is a good time to teach the concepts represented by the symbols which they are learning to write' to show that a *number* of words begin with 'b' and not just one on a chart, that although the second at the beginning of a word is a good guide to it, the sound may also occur in the middle or at the end of a word. Traditionally, children of three and four have had alphabet books which taught them to say one letter at a time while looking at a picture connected with it. If they learnt the phonic sounds in this way it would certainly do no harm. But other considerations must be remembered: interest, meaning, concentration, left-right sequence, language development, and the need to improve visual and aural discrimination and memory. Exercises may help any skill, but it is far better if the skill can be combined with other activities or learnt, at least in part, incidentally. It is like comparing the old method of learning music by practising scales first with modern methods. The scales may be a good thing later, but could put the child off music altogether if done without meaning.

One way of teaching sounds with the maximum amount of meaning is to write labels for the classroom which contain all the MPC sounds, making matching sentences, matching words and also matching sounds of the same size. There is thus meaning in every part. For example, I made labels on which the following sentences were written with cues:

Read quietly in this corner.
Four can play in the sand.
Three can play in the house.
Have you put your toys away?
This is our shop.
Pencils go in this box.
Choose something from this shelf.
This is where the cage is kept.
Aprons are kept here.
Here is the junk box.

In line with the theory that the two main aspects of literacy are fact and fiction, a wall-story was the next idea which I treated in this way. The children had heard and enjoyed *The Gingerbread Boy* so a wall-story was made (rather a long one, as some children were seven). A picture accompanied each sentence.

1. The farmer's wife was cooking.
2. She made a gingerbread boy.
3. He jumped out of the oven.
4. The blacksmith shouted, we will soon catch you.
5. Run, run, as fast as you can.
6. You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man.
7. But he could not get over the river.
8. Quick, jump on my back, said the fox.
9. But he never got there. Why? The fox caught him.

This was a popular piece of equipment. The children enjoyed reading it, some more or less learning it by heart and then learning to pick out the words. Once children also got the idea of finding sounds, they became very interested in trying to match them and would often do it on their own. With MPC every sound can be matched accurately, and there is no confusion between 'a', 'ā', 'ah', 'au', etc. Children can see for themselves if there is a discrepancy between sound and spelling. Given suitable stimulus and encouragement, much can be learnt from these matching activities, each sound being in context both in a word and in a meaningful sentence.

Because they take some time to make, it is tempting to leave one wall story up for too long. It is advisable to change the story every week or so, since once the freshness has gone it can easily be ignored and lose its value. We replaced *The Gingerbread Boy* with *Jack and the Beanstalk*, treated in the same way, with matching sentences, then words, then sounds. The sentences were:

Jack sold the poor cow.
2) He got some magic beans.
3) They grew into a great beanstalk.
4) Jack climbed up to the giant's house.
5) Fee, fi, fo, fum, yelled the giant.
6) Quick! Hide! Said the giant's wife.
7) Where is my goose? Fetch her.
8) She laid a very large egg.
9) Oi, mother. Bring me my axe.
10) Down fell the giant with a crash.

This also contains all the forty-five MPC sounds. When working out sentences of this kind a few sounds are difficult to fit in, usually 'x', 'j' 'oi' and 'qu', which are not so commonly used. A little alteration may be necessary to include these. Here we change 'Hi, mother', to 'Oi, mother' because 'oi' did not appear anywhere else. It is better, though, to teach the less-used sounds in some other way than by contriving unnatural sounding phrases.

Even with quite a lot of matching practice most children still need daily repetition for symbols to be thoroughly known. It is rather like learning multiplication tables. All kinds of activities ensure the concepts are understood, but there is still the need to repeat and memorise later. Once the concepts of what sounds are, and what they do, are known, the cue-card should be gone though daily, with picture mnemonics, until the pictures can be discarded. Any other means liked by the teacher, such as card games, *Breakthrough* phonic folders (Longman) or Stott apparatus (Holmes-McDougall) can easily be adapted for MPC.

The same wall-story technique could be used without MPC, but would have to use matching letters, even if their sounds did not correspond, or be confined to those that did correspond, perhaps just consonants. This does not have the same value as MPC in pointing out the relationship between sound and spelling in, for instance, the word 'four', where the vowel sound is irregular.

The way in which MPC includes the digraphs 'ch', 'sh', etc. in the early learning is also an important advantage. They are not more difficult to learn if taught as one sound, and not knowing them is a source of trouble. In one school which I was comparing with my experimental class I found only single sounds had been learnt, and was told they 'hadn't come to the others yet'. The linking of digraphs with a slur aids their assimilation as one sound, but it is important that younger

children should realise that the slur is not part of the symbol. It should therefore be drawn more faintly or in a different colour. Though colour makes cues more attractive to the younger ones. It takes longer to do and is not really necessary. There is no reason, however why a teacher should not use different colours if she wants to do so in marking apparatus or books for those starting to learn to read with MPC.

Adaptations for older slow-learners

These examples of the matching labels and wall-stories were made for older slow-learners and adults, and also include all the sounds.

1) A crow sat on a high branch.
2) She had just found some cheese.
3) The fox looked up at her there.
4) Why are you so quiet? He said.
5) I am sure you can sing very well.
6) So the crow made a big noise.
7) The cheese fell out of her mouth.
8) The fox soon ate it and ran away.

The next one was made up for an adult class using a small, rather bare room.

1) The window is made of glass.
2) Our tables are wooden ones.
3) The walls are plastered now.
4) These are light metal chairs.
5) This is a square shape.
6) These tables have been joined together.
7) You can keep things in here.
8) We sit where we choose.
9) Cards go in this box.

The labels could be arranged in place at the start of a session. they may sound dull, but their down-to-earth, everyday nature appealed to these slow-learners as something that made sense. The labels could be fixed with Blu-tack and removed to be put away again. This is one way of coping when using a room once or twice a week, which is also used by other classes.

Comic strip stories can be adapted in the same way to provide the interest of fiction. A sixteen-year-old slow reader, who showed very little interest in the books available, frequently brought in comics, whose lurid picture stories he followed avidly. I realised that what he needed was action. With his help I produced the sentences below, made out on cards for the *Language Master* (Bell & Howell) so that he could put them through and hear them in order. Then I got him to match words and sounds, written on separate cards, and put them in place on the sentence cards, using paperclips. When he could do this, and had done other preliminary work, I gave him a tape of the cue-card to which he could listen as he pointed to each sound.

This particular boy had previously managed to learn most of the alphabet sounds, and capital (but not small) letters. If he had been taught MPC from the start I have no doubt that he could have read, using cues, in spite of his very limited memory.

1) This man went shooting tigers.
2) The tigers were very fierce.
3) They had gone far into the jungle.
4) The tigers were not frightened.
5) A tiger can kill a man.
6) Here is a big one coming now.
7) I'll fix him, says the man.
8) He points his gun carefully.
9) Whizz! He has missed the tiger.
10) The tiger is chasing him now.
11) The man is climbing a tree.
12) But tigers know how to climb trees.
13) He has nearly got his paw to the man.
14) The man uses his gun quickly.
15) This time the tiger falls down dead.

It is not easy to get excitement and a sense of urgency into such simple writing, but it is worth the effort if it arouses interest. MPC gives the great advantage of allowing phonics to be studied using this kind of material, instead of 'The dog sat on the log' variety. To maintain interest, of course, a series of stories would be needed, so that not too much time is spent on one story and its analysis.

The following strip story is suitable for any age. This also includes all the MPC sounds.

1) Meet the Smith family.
2) Mrs Smith is cooking the dinner.
3) Mr Smith is washing the car.
4) Jimmy is going to school.
5) Mary is playing in the garden.
6) Baby is crying in the pram.
7) The dog is asleep in his box.
8) Mrs Smith says, Dinner is ready now.
9) Mr Smith says, Quick! What have you got for us?
10) Jimmy says, I though we were having chops.
11) Mary says, I thought it was a joint of beef!
12) The baby is having some milk.
13) The dog has got a bone.

Workcards were used to aid analysis of this story, for example:

Find these silent letters **e n m h y a k o gh**
(They can be found in *were, dinner, Jimmy, school, playing, ready, quick* and *thought*, as examples.)
Find these different sounds for letter **a**: o a͡ha͡ir (was, car, Mary); **o** sounding u (some); **o** sounding oo (cooking)
The marks make these easy to see and provide an interesting puzzle element for children ready to do some analysis.
Appendix 1 contains further simple games designed to give practice in memorising the sounds and early sight vocabulary, so reinforcing learning.

Starting MPC with children who know most of the phonic sounds

These children should already know the short vowels and single consonants, which are exactly the same in MPC and t.o.:
a e i o u as in *cat, get, tin, pot, cup*
b c d f g h j k l m n p r s t v w x y z are all exactly the same.
Consonant blends of digraphs may or may not be known, but should be checked: **qu, ng, t͡h**(as in *they*), **t͡h**(as in *think*), **sh**, **wh** and **ch**. The vowel blends are **ah, er, ow**, o͞o(as in boot), o͝o(as in *foot*, except in Scotland) and a͡ir. The bar is understood to show the letter-name, ā, ē, ī, ō and ū. If MPC is used it is not necessary to know any other alternative sounds or blends, like 'oy' or 'aw', 'igh' or 'ai'. These will follow later, but could be learnt by using substitutions over them at first. Thus, if you decided to use MPC with slower Juniors and found they already knew the usual simple phonic sounds, reference to the cue-card would probably be all that was needed before they could begin decoding any marked word for themselves. The cross indicating silent letters and the substitution are quickly understood.

Limitations to MPC's use are found in some cases where a child's sight memory for words is so good that analysis seems unnecessary and rules seem to be deduced automatically. There is then no need to interfere with a natural reading ability. The use of MPC for some spelling analysis might be useful in such cases, and would probably be enjoyed and quickly understood to improve insight into language. The other limitation is when children have such poor reasoning power that analysis only makes things seem more impossible and does not sustain their interest. MPC works extremely well with fairly mature children who can reason but who do not memorise easily. Teaching skills such as selection of the right time and place, how long to stay on one thing and what will keep up interest as well as reinforce what must be learnt, must be exercised with MPC as with any other teaching aid.

There are many useful aids for teaching phonics, such as those in *Phonics* and the *Teaching of Reading* by J.M. Hughes (Evans Brothers, 1972), and there is no need to repeat here what is readily available elsewhere. However, the more complex forms, such as 'ea', 'final e', '-tion', can be left till later, and reading using MPC can be done without them. These rules and exceptions could then be deduced in the course of reading in the same way. It is hoped, as rules of grammar are absorbed in the course of learning to speak. It is probable that better learning will take place if rules are pointed out and reinforced, but this can be done once reading is already fluent using MPC (see Chapter 4).

Learning to blend sounds

The other consideration is blending, which is a problem in MPC just as it is in any other phonic work. It is quite common to meet children who know the sounds and yet cannot put them together. Many writers stress that to add a vowel to consonants, which is difficult to avoid when trying to be heard across a classroom, creates unnecessary difficulty. 'Ber-a-ter' does not sound 'bat' and this should be remembered. One group with this fault was helped by the verses shown below. These were put up on the wall in large print and we read them through until they were known.

My d-a-d dad
Is s-a-d sad
For the pain in his tooth is so b-a-d bad.

Some m-e-n men
Kept a h-e-n hen
And when it had chicks
They had t-e-n ten.

Young S-i-d Sid
Made a b-i-d bid
But he lost all his cash
So he h-i-d hid.

Jimmy g-o-t got
Much too h-o-t hot
So he covered his head
With a p-o-t pot.

In the s-u-n sun
With a g-u-n gun
Bill shot at a target
For f-u-n fun.

Children should, of course, learn style and appreciation of literature once they been taught to read. This kind of idea is used as a step on the way and more or less in desperation when confronted with children who are hard to teach and difficult to interest.

Learning sounds in context

One cannot always know enough about the experiences of such children to judge what has lead to this kind of problem, or whether better methods would prevent it. However, it is likely that learning sounds within words rather than in isolation, as suggested earlier, would help. The method outlined here has proved very effective in achieving this.

The principle is to provide a simple, illustrated sentence within the child's interest and experience, which is read first. Two letters are picked out below it. The teacher sounds these and points out where they occur in the sentence. In order to emphasise meaning the child is then asked a relevant question, which

necessitates making some prediction or association. Below this are a number of random repetitions of the two symbols, from which the child has to pick out the letters and discriminate between them, with help if necessary. For example:

Figure 6
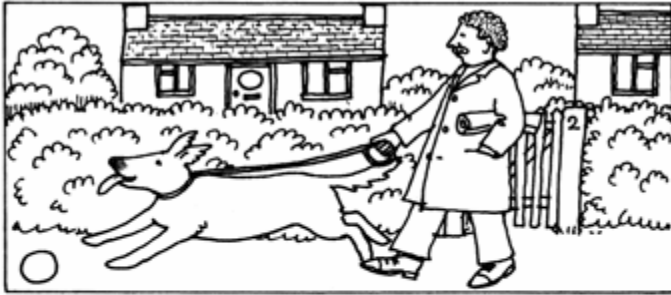
This man is taking his dog out.
    m   d
Where do you think they might be going?
m m m d d m d d m d d d m m d m d m d d d m m d

In this case the teacher might use the following approach: " Do you know what those two letters say? What words are they under? Read the sentence until you come to the first one. What word is it? What does it begin with? That's the sound 'm'. What word is that letter under? (dog) What sound does that start with? ('d') Now point to the 'd' sounds underneath. Point to a 'm', now a 'd'."

Generally, the teacher should read the first sentence, or help the child to do so, if he can, and then point out the sounds. After this preliminary work the child can be left alone to complete some follow-up activity, e.g. Colour these pictures and write the letters under the pictures they belong to.

Figure 7
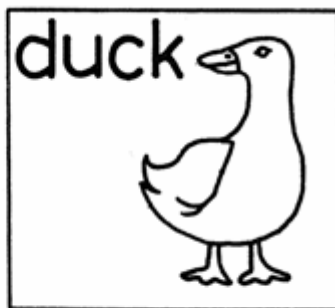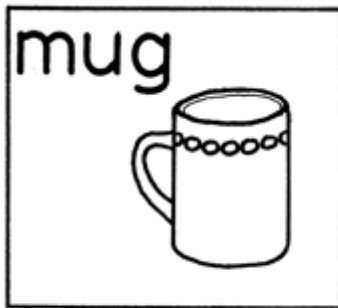
The *MPC Reading Workbook* is based on this idea and provides practice in forming letters as well as in recognising them. Follow-up activities designed to reinforce learning are also suggested. Different sentences could of course be used according to the age and ability of the children, while older slow-learners could use them for individual work, with a tape.

Blending can also be taught by pointing to sounds on a large cue-card and moving about to make words, first of two letters, then of three, e.g. *at, in, up; cat, win, pup*. Children may then try this individually or in pairs and see how many words they can make, if possible in sentences.

Other simple ideas to give variety and aid memory are jingles like this which could be put on the wall and illustrated. These contain all the MPC vowel sounds.

Doors slam	**a**	Donkeys bray	ā
Hens peck	**e**	Pigs squeak	ē
Bells ring	**i**	Babies cry	ī
Corks pop	**o**	Cocks crow	ō
Knives cut	**u**	Cats mew	ū
Dogs bark	a͡h	Trousers tear	a͡ir
Cows moo	o͞o	Cooks cook	o͡o
Wolves howl	o͡w	Pots boil	o͡i
People talk	a͡u	Machines work	e͞r

Relating MPC to an existing reading scheme

The use of cues can be revised using flashcards based on your existing reading scheme. Write the same word on both sides of a card, cueing one side only. Help children to learn the words using cues, then to try to remember them without

cues. The cards can be held up for work with a group, or given to pairs or individual children. Knowing the first hundred most common words is a great help in making a start, since these form a large proportion of all reading matter. It is vital to go through them with the children and show them how the cues are cued before they can be left to do it themselves. Words with more than two syllables should not be used, since these require a skill in breaking down words which should be taught later.

Once this decoding ability has been acquired it is possible for it to outstrip understanding. This makes it even more essential that attention should be given to general language, knowledge and experience of all kinds as well as to reading. The teacher should encourage the use of dictionaries in which word meanings are simply explained, and see that, even if children can read for themselves, they are questioned about what they have read or allowed to discuss it, and not just left to get on alone. Even when children become expert at word attack, their reading matter needs to be graded for content difficultly and vocabulary. It must be emphasised that no one stops learning to read. Even the most expert can improve their speed, vocabulary, ability to skim, to find main points, to summarise and evaluate, and so on. If children do make good progress in the early skills, it is vital to build upon and continue this work, so that the initial progress is not lost later.

4 How to withdraw the use of cues at the right time and aid spelling

Minimal phonic cues are intended only as a temporary aid to learning. It is therefore necessary to consider how long they should be used and in what way they should be discarded. Because there is no changeover to another script, the way in which the cues are discarded depends largely on the way in which they have been used.

An MPC reading programme

This example is based on work which was tried in an Infant class of about thirty-five children with a range of five to seven years. Though set out in the form of a progression, individual children were at different points on the programme. Books were not marked but new words were on cued lists.

Pre-reading work to develop language, visual and aural discrimination, interest in stories, understanding the use of labels to convey meaning, etc.
2. Using means such as wall-stories, captions on the children's own pictures, class news books, the breakthrough stand and materials (Long-man), to aid word matching and sentence matching and to give the idea that print conveys meaning.
3. Writing begun, letter formation and learning of sounds.
4. Any other reading pursued intuitively by whole-word learning until at least consonant sounds are known, when they should be used as guide in conjunction with context clues. Phonic work as suggested in Chapter 3.
5. After the sound concepts are well established, repetition and some drilling on sound symbols for about five minutes daily until, with the cue-card as an aid to memory, MPC can be used for decoding new words. Children given individual cue-cards to learn and use. Large wall cue-card provided.
6. MPC then used in one or more of the ways suggested in Chapter 2.
7. If new words are marked on books, children can ignore any marks they don't need. Once a vocabulary of about 150 words is known, (usually by about the fourth book of a reading scheme), work could begin on extracting the rules of spelling and pronunciation using some system of word analysis. MPC dictionaries could still be used, but group teaching using MPC Spelling Workbook will now speed the process of internalising the sound-symbol relationships before children go on to a Junior class.
In age-grouped classes the programme should be begun and proceed as far as

possible, with records kept on children's progress so that it can be continued without interruption according to individual needs. An ideal form for such records is shown in Figure 8, using squared paper. The stages may be groups of sounds learnt, books read or any graded set of skills. It is then easy to group children for practice by lookng down the record to see which are at the same stage.

Figure 8

Name	Stage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Jane Burton		✗	✓	＼				

Key

1   Pre-reading
2   Wall story
3   Letter Formation
4   Simple sounds
5   Digraphs
6   Blending
7   Using Cues

＼   doing this

✓   finished this

✗   tested   and passed

To achieve the maximum benefit this programme should be agreed and co-ordinated throughout an Infant department. If some teachers wish to use MPC, while others do not, it should be used only incidentally to aid understanding and not be relied on too heavily. Partial use in this way is not confusing because no departure has been made from normal spelling. No harm will be done if MPC is incompletely mastered by the time of transfer to another school, provided that analysis was not over-emphasised at a stage when it was only confusing rather than helpful to a child who could have made some progress by whole word learning and use of context. Slow-learning children are greatly helped in later 'remedial' work (though this is a misnomer for children properly taught) if they really know the sounds and digraphs thoroughly, whether cues are to be used or not. If cues are used in later teaching of slow-learners, a basic knowledge of the sounds as shown on the cue-card will enable quick progress to be made once the child has attained the mental maturity necessary for satisfactory analysis and synthesis. Independent learning using cues will then also be helped.

Leaving cues behind

The transfer consists of 'internalising' the cues; knowing that an 'e' at the end of a word is not sounded, that 'gh' is similar, but may modify the preceding vowel, that '-tion' is sounded 'shon', etc.; the things which good readers do unconsciously without cues. Cues aid this normal process and, having made it more conscious, also help spelling.

The MPC spelling Workbook defines the main spelling rules, using cues, and suggests children's activities for each rule. In this way, learning is reinforced. The book's contents are briefly listed below. Of course, these are all rules which have to be learnt whether MPC is used or not. The progression is designed to ensure that children who have used MPC in the early stages are finally able to discard it while getting as much value as possible from it. Each page of the MPC Spelling Workbook could serve as the source material for a group lesson or discussion.

Lesson 1
Unsounded letters: indicated by putting a cross above the letter. Children find words with final **e** and copy them.
Double letters: explain how only one is sounded.

Lesson 2
e at the end of a word sometimes makes the preceding vowel 'hard'.

Lesson 3
The two main ways of spelling $\overline{ow}$.
$\widehat{oi}$ and $\overline{oy}$, which sound the same and are regular.

Lesson 4
$\widehat{aw}$ and $\widehat{au}$, including the $\widehat{au}$ sound in *all, talk, for, more, door,* etc. Adding the marks will help to reinforce the sound-symbol correspondence or discrepancy.

Lesson 5
c sounded either as **k** or as **s**. Help pupils, by looking at the words they have found, to deduce that rule that **e** and **i** following **c** make it produce the soft sound **s**.

Lesson 6
g and **j** sounds.

Lesson 7
gh usually unsounded, but modifying other symbols. (It is better not to deal with **gh** as the sound **f** here, but leave it to go with **ph** as an alternative, later on.)

Lesson 8
ch when the **h** is unsounded.

Lesson 9
The **er** sound.

Lesson 10
Silent consonants: **k, g, w**. There is no harm in doing some written-learning to try to help children remember the spellings, but using the words in various meaningful ways should also play a part.

Lesson 11
s sometimes sounding like **z**.

Lesson 12
The vowel sounds; **a, e, i, o, u; a, e, i, o, u** and **ah, er, oi, oo, oo, aw, ou**. Point out that these sounds vary much more than consonants in the ways they are spelt, partly because speech has changed over the years and in different places.

Lessons 14,15
Ways of spelling the 'hard' vowels, e.g. **ai, ay, a-e; ee, e-e, ea, ie, ei; i-e, y, igh, ei; ow, oa, o-e; ue, eu, u-e; oo** spelt in various ways. The teacher must, of course, use professional judgement as to how much of this children can do at a time, and when. If giving too many alternatives only seems to confuse it may be better left until later.

Lessons 16, 18
mo sounding **mu**, **ph** as **f, f** as **v** or changing to **v,** and **gh** as **f**. Although these sounds could be quite difficult and confusing without MPC, the marks make them clear and more interesting.

Lessons 25, 26
Breaking words into syllables. As well as being able to sound out *c-a-t*, etc., the reader must be able to sound *c-a-f* or *d-a-l*, because these are syllables within words. Attention to syllable-reading is often neglected and is a cause of some difficulties. Obviously, this work is done as needed, and not otherwise.

Lessons 27,28
The various sounds and spellings of *–tion, -sion* and *–cian*. These are mainly longer words and children need to be advanced in their reading to cope with them.

Lessons 29, 30
Alphabetical order, needed for looking up words and for listing things, is sometimes neglected. See that children can recite the letters of the alphabet in order at some point, and also give practice in thinking whether one letter comes before another, to help in looking forward or back. Plenty of practice is needed in various ways before children can use a dictionary quickly and, of course, small wordbooks, followed by 500-word, 1000-word or 2000-word dictionaries may help

children to reach the stage of using a bigger one. The *MPC Word List* will be found very useful here. Exercises on finding a word its second or third letter are also needed, e.g. *because, before, behind.*

Lesson 31
Check that all small letters and capital letters are known. For bright and average children this should be so by the time they transfer from Infant to Junior classes. Once children can read and write with reasonable fluency it is better for them to use the letter-names for spellings. For the less-able this should be postponed until they can read without needing to build up sounds aloud, or they will get confused. Eventually, both will be known. If MPC has been used systematically, capital letters which differ from lower-case will have been marked with substitutions.

5 Using MPC with different ages and stages

Nursery-reception, 4-5 years

Whatever the methods or media used, the training and experience which the pupil brings to the task will be a major factor in success. For example, in athletics a new style or technique is likely to make a marginal improvement possible, but the athlete's enthusiasm and fitness, and the trainer's skill are also very important. The most important aspect of early teaching is concerned with the 'fitness of the athlete'. The skills of using spoken language freely and well, being able to see and hear differences and similarities, and getting interested in wanting to read are the most important things to attend to initially. There is no need to repeat the information and help available in a number of other books and courses, but it is important to attend to this aspect as well as to choose materials which suit your purposes.

Today, great stress is laid on the importance of early language skills in preparation for reading, as well as on all-round development. Of course they are important, and as much as possible should be done to teach them. However, it is possible that children whose language background is poor are at an increased disadvantage if they are expected to rely almost entirely on context cues in reading. One way to tackle this problem is to increase the learner's language skill, but another approach is to make better use of other clues to words, so that reasoning may come into play more fully. Activities to train visual skills will possibly help children with poor visual discrimination and memory, but they are likely to make more progress using other skills as well, such as hearing and even touch and movement. All the senses should be given stimulus and practice in the pre-school child, for a multi-sensory approach gives a far better chance of success.

Sound discrimination activities are vitally important if an aid like MPC is going to be used, though they would also benefit children using other learning methods. Picture-sorting, a common visual activity, is more useful if children are helped to sort by the first letter sound, even before they know the symbol. 'I-spy' games, grouping things in scrapbooks according to first letter sound or even vowel sound, calling out groups of children whose names begin with the same sound, using music, rhythm and rhyme, all help to train the ear. Children with mild speech defects may be helped by such activities and should, of course, also receive whatever special help is available. Any child who can speak must be able to hear sound in order to reproduce it' he doesn't ask for meat when he wants a

sweet, though he may say 'sleet' or something near it. What has first been done unconsciously and intuitively needs to become more conscious in preparation for using written symbols for these sounds. Children are often unaware of separate words and may think of phrases like 'got-to-go' or 'in-a-minute' as one unit. To read and write they must break up the flow of speech. Activities with labels and wall-stories, suggested in Chapter 2, are valuable ways of showing children word relationships, even before they may be expected to remember the details. Younger children in the 5- to 7-year-old range can learn from watching older ones matching words and letters, and start doing it themselves when they are ready.

Infant classes, 5-7 years

Although MPC is a system which concentrates on individual sounds, fifty to a hundred words should be learnt as wholes before analysis by sounds is introduced. During this period children should be learning to write and recognise individual sounds, but only in readiness for later word-building. This age-range should start with sight-recognition of words and phrases. Word-attack skills should be introduced when they already have a basic sight vocabulary, since using individual sounds form the first might lead to the habit of stopping to build up each word more than should be necessary. An approach using the children's own language should employ the same principle.

Since phonic work of one kind or another will inevitably be undertaken later, whether formally or informally, the sound-symbol bonds must be thoroughly learnt. What better time to learn these than while the letter-forms are being taught? The MPC Reading Workbook is designed to do this, and provides individual practice to consolidate learning. Informal ways of reaching the concepts of what sounds do in words and sentences, what they are and how they can be used, are as vital, at first, as learning number concepts before the use of their written forms. Young children enjoy repetition, which is the natural way a baby learns to practise vocal sounds. The same practice can be given, for a few minutes each day, using a means such as the cue-card. It will be well repaid later in an increased facility and freedom to decode new words. Some teachers think there is no place at all for repeating something until it is thoroughly memorised. If all teaching were of this kind they would have a case, but it is a mistake to ignore repetition altogether. Once the MPC sounds are fairly well known children should have some means of using them to help when they come to a new word in their reading, for instance in one of the ways suggested in Chapter 2. The cues will

also be used for looking up words in small, marked dictionaries or the MPC Word List *to help* with writing.

Once an average seven-year-old level of reading has been reached it may be time to use cues for spelling rules and word study, rather than for reading, as explained in Chapter 4. All the other skills of reading – understanding the main point of a story, using the context – and, of course, writing all the attention, since enlarged experience in environmental work, stories read aloud, art expression, music and so on, all help the child to gain a balance of experience and enlarged vocabulary, as well as being valuable and interesting in their own right. It is vital that decoding ability should not be allowed to outstrip vocabulary and experience. Meanings of new words become very important, leading to the use of dictionaries. The child may, through learning to read quickly, begin all the sooner to 'read to learn'. However, he should not attempt reading matter beyond his understanding even if he can decipher the words. There is a wide choice of fiction and information for this age level, and it is a good time to consolidate and enjoy the fruits of learning to read, while concentrating on mastering writing and spelling to some level of accuracy.

For any children with such problems that they have not been able to reach an average standard, a thorough recognition of phonic sounds and their symbols will be invaluable in any remedial work. It is frightening to find such children, after two or three years in school, having learnt only a few words by sight recognition and very few sounds. Surely they could learn forty-five sound-symbol bonds if enough time were given to it. They could then make rapid reading progress using MPC. Numerous experiments have shown that learning the sounds and their symbols is the only real barrier to progress. Once this has been done, the rest is easy.

In teaching the two MPC symbols, the cross and the substitution, it is important to present them not as yet another thing to learn, but while explaining the structure of a word. For instance, if a child comes to the word 'beautiful' the teacher would say something like this, putting in marks at the same time: "We don't sound the 'e' or the 'a' (putting the cross over them) and the 'u' (adding the bar) sounds its name. Now can you put this part together? There are only two sounds 'bū'. Can you get it? Try the rest of the word. (Substitute 'o͡o' above the second 'u'.) Now start the sentence again." The child will then probably be able to read the word. If not, another approach would be to get him to leave out the word and find what is being described, then go back to 'beautiful' and use a mixture of context nad phonic cues to find out what it is.

Children quickly understand how MPC can help, and find its logic attractive. It is

very hard on them, after being encouraged to use reason in thinking things out and solving problems, to be presented with some thing as illogical as the English spelling system. The fact that MPC gives a guide that can be trusted in *every* case is really appreciated and a great morale-booster.

It is vital that word-building in this way should be encouraged only once it really is helpful, so that it does not become a burden, hindering the understanding of what is written. In the early stages practice with sounds can be done in an enjoyable activity or game (see Appendix 1), separate from other reading, until the required maturity is reached.

Junior children, 7-11 years

For many children there is a change of school at 7-plus. Ideally, close contact between schools would prevent any problems connected with the change from arising. If MPC was used in an Infant department the children concerned should be allowed to continue with it and stop using it when they are ready, at least with their reading. The best results are achieved when a child has learnt the spelling rules using MPC, so that it can be used for an understanding of word structure and spelling, giving time for this to be internalised and the prop discarded. Children who are moved from a school using MPC to a Junior school which does not use it are at no disadvantage. Any learning of sounds is equally valid in MPC and t.o., the children will not be used to writing in a different script, and they will not have to change their print in reading.

On the other hand, if a Junior teacher who likes MPC has children from an Infant school which did not use it, there will be no difficultly in introducing it where needed. The children should already know most of the phonic sounds, which are the basis of MPC, and some revision of these with the introduction of the two marks, the cross and the substitution, will allow its use. MPC shows sound-spelling relationships clearly and so might at least be used when explaining something involving this from the blackboard, or compiling lists of different ways of spelling the same sound. Unfortunately, MPC is of no help in deciding whether to use 'their' or 'there', '-tion' or '-sion', '-ight' or '-ite' in writing, although it is a great help in rading such sounds with the right pronunciation. A very interesting and imaginative form of word study can, however, be undertaken using the *MPC Spelling Workbook* as explained in Chapter 4. The extent to which this would be advisable depends on the children and their skills.

An analogy can be made between learning the skills of literacy and finding your way in a new town. If you have a good aural memory, instructions of the 'first left, second right' variety can be used. This is hopeless for those who can't remember what is said, but they may manage if the same instructions are written down. Others, with good pictorial memory and understanding, may do better looking at a street map. Some may use cues, like a pub on the corner or an uphill slope or a shop. Even better, some may learn by being accompanied a few times. However the process began, after a time one just knows the way, forgetting how this knowledge was acquired. Similarly it is in the early stages of teaching reading that method is important. After a time the skill comes naturally. In most cases different ways of teaching achieve very similar results in the end. The main difference will be found in the less-able learners, more of whom are likely to fall by the wayside if the method doesn't suit them or if they have been discouraged.

An experiment comparing scores in pre-reading activities with progress after nine months at school showed that children could make reasonable progress if they were strong in some areas, such as language structure, visual discrimination or sound discrimination, even if they were weak in one of the other areas. Those who were far behind were weak in almost all areas. It is unlikely that MPC can do much for these children. They need to improve their powers of learning by practising the kind of activities they should have done before starting school. However, because MPC can use interesting material which is not graded in too restrictive language, whole-word learning, use of context, sounds and reasoning in almost equal quantities, the chances of success are increased.

One warning should be given about MPC. It is usually hard to interest children in conventional word analysis of the kind used in Tansley's Sound Sense. On the other hand, a teacher who recently used MPC for word analysis says the children find it so enjoyable that they are inclined to do too much! This is perhaps the only drawback to the scheme.

Junior children with reading difficulties

The various terms 'remedial', 'slow-learning' and 'backward' really only describe some of the different kinds of difficulties. Since this book does not purport to deal with all the related problems of diagnosis and treatment it will pass over many points which are vital to teachers, hoping that, if they feel their knowledge is deficient here, they will attend a course or read some of the many books on the subject.

Some Juniors with below-average attainments are only just seven on transfer and have not had as long in the Infant school as others. This is sometimes overlooked in assessing them. A few of these will also have had considerable

periods of absence or have moved school several times. They need to receive extra attention in following the usual programme so that any gaps in their skills and knowledge may be filled, e.g. by teaching phonic sounds. Some may be slightly brain-damaged and deficient in ability in one or more areas, often particularly in hand-eye co-ordination or perception. For these, I would recommend training the weak points and using the strong ones. Some have major or minor physical defects which are not always diagnosed. For instance, if a child has one weak eye he may be able to see and yet soon get tired of making the effort. Catarrh often causes temporary deafness or partial loss of hearing. Examples of cultural deprivation may range from the child who is well cared-for physically and emotionally, but whose language is limited and interest in books small, to one from a shocking home, who is maladjusted, insecure, antisocial, lacking in proper sleep, and so on. In a few cases children have been poorly taught, often because a system was adhered to which didn't suit the particular child, or because there was not enough systems. These children may have widely differing needs, different capacities and potential, different strengths and weaknesses. No one idea will work for all of them. The teacher must decide whether MPC is worth trying, either with a group or an individual, and attention must be paid to many aspects other than the methods used to teach reading.

For one reason or another these children will have a small sight vocabulary and lack skill in decoding new words. A good deal of remedial work is therefore concerned with developing decoding skills, learning sounds and blends, and trying to use them to attack new words. It is necessary to find books which practise these skills, as well as books which are of Junior interest, but of Infant reading standard. Although there are now many of these on the market, they are inclined either to concentrate on interest, like the *Griffin and Pirate series* (E. J. Arnold), or on phonics, like the *Royal Road Readers* (Chatto & Windus). The *Oxford Colour Readers* (O.U.P.) concentrate on picture cues while the *Dr Seuss* books (Collins) combine comic-strip type humour for phonics with humorous picture cues. Variety is important, so that the reading material suits the child's own needs and interests. This can be ensued if the children make their own books by dictating them or drawing the pictures for them.

Of course, MPC can be added to any book, kit, reading-card or homemade written matter. Any of the ideas described previously to avoid marking the books could be used, and any method of learning sounds. For children who take a long time to memorise anything, learning and using the forty-five MPC sounds is much simpler either than trying to remember many 'sight' words or using standard phonics, learning a large number of blends and groupings before the system 'works'. Moreover, the teacher has a much wider choice of materials with which to try to arouse interest.

If the class normally uses work-cards, harder words on them can quickly be marked with MPC so that the poorer readers can decode them without feeling inferior. The slow child is often ashamed of his poor ability and does not ask for help when needed. MPC enables him to progress alone, giving him an independence highly valued by most children. They also like having their own small cue-cards as memory-aids. If slow children in a normal class can help themselves, more time will be spent in reading, and their attitudes towards learning will be improved.

Secondary children needing help

These children usually understand and remember sounds and cues very quickly. MPC can then be used on material suitable for their needs and interests. This might include reading matter from newspapers or magazines, forms, labels, signs and all the 'real-life' written material they so badly need to read. It should be remembered that small print is difficult to cue. One way round this problem is to print enlargements and simplified texts to go with magazine pictures or sports news, mark them with MPC and paste them in. It is less damaging to the self-respect of a backward child of secondary age to be seen with an adult paper, even if he is reading something pasted into it instead of the printed text, than to have an obviously babyish book to read. If short, simple sentences and words mainly of one or two syllables are used, material is less likely to be too difficult, and it can still be varied and mature in content. Cued books are especially useful here, enabling more varied reading to take place.

In some secondary schools all pupils are given the same topic worksheets or assignments, the remedial teachers preparing simplified versions for those who need them. If the slower children know MPC the cues can be added to the worksheets instead of rewriting the whole assignment. A secondary teacher who tried MPC with her less-able children reported that they learnt it 'almost at once' and that it worked 'like magic'.

When children are being taught by a variety of teachers in a number of different curriculum areas it has to be recognised that reading progress in each subject is the responsibility of all teachers. It cannot be confined to one or two special teachers. Even English language teachers have to teach the appreciation of

literature and improved style in written work with the majority, and so find it hard to help a few with basic skills at the same time. As with Juniors, MPC allows more working without help once marks have been added to the words likely to cause trouble. Books printed with cues would probably be most useful with older children, because they would benefit from longer passages and a greater variety of vocabulary which it would be time-consuming to mark by hand. Some bright children might be able to add cues accurately, thus aiding their own spelling and analysis of word structure. These books could be used for slower ones. Since larger print than usual may be needed for cues to be clear, marked bookmarks or a marked dictionary of harder words at the back of a book might be more practical. A tape of the cue-card which could be borrowed and run through by a child who was well-motivated to learn would make progress possible and require very little extra teacher time. A teacher who tried MPC with some severely retarded readers of 12-13 told me that it took only few minutes to explain the system. If a child was stuck with a word, pencilling cues over it enabled him to read it immediately. A cued dictionary, such as the MPC Word List, would have enabled him to look a word up and then read it. The small amount of initial instruction needed to teach MPC and so enable backward secondary children to learn for themselves is a clear advantage.

Adult illiterates

Although this title is commonly used, my own experience of two years evening-class teaching of basic literacy has shown me what a variety of needs it can cover. I originally took on the work intending to experiment with the use of MPC with these students. Although I used some aspect of it with most of them, either for reading or spelling, it was a spectacular success with only a small proportion. I had to abandon any idea of carrying out a set programme of learning sounds and cues together and then using them with all pupils, because it was obviously not in their best interests.

Of weaker ones, with a reading age of 6-7 years, the majority knew the alphabet letter-names and seemed to think learning phonic sounds was babyish in some way. As they were so insecure and likely to stop coming at the slightest setback I could not tell them that the letter-names were practically useless and they should learn something else. I therefore tried another tactic of getting them to deduce sound from the letter-names, which some seemed able to do, and continued telling them whole words and trying to increase sight vocabulary. MPC, introduced as a spelling activity, was not viewed as so childish. One very successful idea was to tape a radio programme likely to interest most of them, such as a report on food prices or a sports commentary, play it to them and at the same time write up words that occurred in it on a board. We then used it for

discussion to help them talk and think about it. Next I would see if they could read the words I had put up. Usually one or two knew each word, so I used cues to point out the sounds and how letters formed the phonic sound of the word, with some of them unsounded with digraphs, etc. this worked very well and those who could not read the words at first soon learnt to do so after a few tries.

In this case, a number of students were West Indians, who had been taught at school by learning letter-names first. This would be less likely to occur with those who had attended British schools. However, I found that some of these pupils had not 'missed out' on education in the popular sense, but were brain-damaged or handicapped in various ways. Some had been to E.S.N schools where they had been well taught to have achieved what they had done so far, and also given the desire to learn more. These usually know most of the phonic sounds and only needed some revision of digraphs to begin using MPC providing they had the necessary reasoning power. On the other hand, a small proportion were intelligent people who had long spells in hospital as children, where either no teaching was given or they were too ill to take it. Several had taught themselves to read but were worried about their spelling. Some had never learnt the alphabet order so that they could use a dictionary, and really only needed that in order to help themselves. MPC may thus certainly be useful with adults, but must be applied with discretion according to need.

The best approach with very poor adult readers is to aim at the recognition of the hundred most common sight-words, while at the same time working on word-attack skills with the *MPC Spelling Workbook*. A reading scheme using MPC might well be useful in some cases, using adult material. It would have the great advantages of providing phonic practice on normal adult vocabulary, and giving practice in seeing the relationship of sound and spelling in the course of reading interesting material in context. Once sounds are learnt, any marked books can be used.

I tried making reading cards on which a piece from a newspaper was pasted and printed out in large type below, with cues added. Pupils could take a card home and practise on the cued script, then try reading the cutting on its own. Another idea, explained in Chapter 3, was to help a pupil to make his own book about his job or family, or about cars or some other interest. Word matching and word analysis using cues was practised on each bit as it was written. Wall labels and comic strip pictures with captions were also used with the virtual non-readers in the way advocated with Infants, but made more relevant to their interests. Whereas schoolchildren are a captive audience, it is important to keep adults coming happily, and other considerations must sometimes be sacrificed to this one. They thought a great deal of these books they had made themselves, in some cases never having expressed themselves in writing before. One man who started a little story about his childhood kept reading a few lines over and over to

himself with a sort of creative pride which was quite touching. A woman who had not been able to write to her son abroad wept over the first letter she managed to get down on paper with a good deal of help. Another pupil, who had learnt to read in English in school in Pakistan, could read even irregular words like 'neighbour' without difficulty, yet hardly understood any word meanings. If anyone ever 'barked at print' he did. Speaking and extending his English vocabulary were his first needs. He learnt very quickly, using children's picture dictionaries at first, and was soon persuaded not to be satisfied with reading unless he understood it.

Since this is not a book on teaching adults these matters are only touched on to show how important it is to be sensitive to the needs of one's pupils. Although I think a knowledge of MPC may well add to the tutor's range of skills and resources, it must only be used where useful and not be expected to meet all needs. The older the pupil, the wider the variety becomes. When teaching adults on a one-to-one basis, simply pencilling MPC over words on which people get stuck is very useful. It helps the pupil to see the sound-spelling correspondence and is a reminder if he reads it again to himself.

Overseas students learning to read English

This category also covers a wide range of needs. At present I can only suggest in what ways MPC might prove useful.

It is likely that it would be a very good method for intelligent English speakers who have never before learnt to read or write the language. They would learn the sounds and cues very quickly and then, if given cued reading books, could teach themselves a great deal and learn with very little help. This would be a great advantage where resources were limited and very formal teaching methods necessary. A short spell of direct formal teaching would quickly be followed by independent reading. Another great advantage is that the basic sounds could be taught with an English accent and then applied to words. The *MPC Spelling Workbook* would be very useful in doing this. The main problem would probably be that although such pupils speak English it is really their second language and that therefore their reading technique might soon outstrip their vocabulary. However, if less time were needed for learning the mechanics of reading more time could be given to extending experience and vocabulary in various ways.

English has an advantage over some languages in having such things as invariable adjectives and relatively simple declensions. However, word meanings such as 'go on, go off, go away, go to, go after, go with' give trouble because they are so varied. Irregular spelling is another source of difficulty. The use of MPC in such cases would be very much a matter for the teacher's discretion. It would be quite permissible, for instance, to point out the number of unsounded letters by using the cross over them when giving explanations, or to use the bar and slur in the same way to show pronunciation where needed, without using the full system. One or two teachers who tried MPC stated that some of it seemed unnecessary with their pupils but they had used some aspect of it where they found it useful. This is fine and must be emphasised as one of the advantages of the system. It can and should be used and adapted in any way required. The teacher is the best judge of what her pupils need, and has no need to feel guilty if using MPC in a different way from one that has been advocated, provided it works. For instance, one person who tried it said that the cue-card had several things on it which the children didn't understand, e.g. they didn't know what an acorn was. The obvious thing to do would be to alter this picture to 'ape' or 'ace' or anything the pupils did know. Similarly, objects have different names in different places, e.g. a van may be called a truck; there may be no thistles or roses or owls. So you alter it to something else. There is nothing sacrosanct about the pictures which are used to aid sound recognition, though the sounds themselves should remain largely the same, as they have been carefully considered. Deviation from them might be necessary if, for instance, teaching in a Scottish accent, where 'bot' and 'foot' have the same vowel sound. There may be no need then to use the two forms on the cue-card. Some may feel that the sound 'ear' should be included on the cue-card, and should therefore add it.

Students of language structure

It is becoming increasingly common to include the study of language structure in various courses on language and communication. The International Phonetic Alphabet is a rather complicated designation of the English sound system. Some symbols, being unlike English forms, need some practice in learning and can easily be misinterpreted when used for just one or two lectures. MPC provides a simple and reliable alternative which is readily understood by the non-specialist.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this book has been to explain a new but very simple idea in such a way that anyone interested will have no difficulty in understanding and using it. Judging by the large number of teachers who have been able to experiment with MPC after reading only two or three pages of information and ideas, it has shown itself to be readily understood. It is to be hoped that the extra information and suggestions included here will make it easier for those who are less enterprising or experienced, and also benefit the pioneers by sharing the many ideas which have been found successful in one way or another.

One of the members of the Bullock Committee, whose Report has been published since most of the experimental work was done on MPC, encourage me to make this work available to teachers as worthwhile aid. The following relevant recommendations are made in the Bullock Report.

'56. There is no one method, medium, approach, device or philosophy that holds the key to the process of learning to read.'

I should like to emphasise that I agree wholeheartedly with this statement. MPC is an aid, not a panacea.

'60. The accurate perception of individual letters and groups of letters is an important factor in learning to read. Young children should be helped to learn the characteristics of letters through a variety of games and activities, not through formal exercises.'

From the Report's 333 recommendations I have selected those which give most support to an aid like MPC. I agree with all the rest and would work on language, encourage pre-reading skills, use 'cloze' or practise the use of context cues, teach for a variety of comprehension skills and so on. It is in the area of learning the sound-symbol relationships that MPC is most likely to help. The release from drills and from detailed phonic work detached from the normal reading context should allow more meaningful reading and reduce frustration and

discouragement. Moreover, it enables pupils to do more for themselves, which could make all the difference between wasting time waiting for attention and getting on with the job of learning. Class organisation is simplified not only because the children can work alone more easily but also because they can start.

It is often claimed that reading improvement resulting from intensive help out of the classroom is not maintained on return. MPC allows slower children to cope with work in the classroom and carry on more normally, once they know the sounds, thus preventing any such loss.

There is a fairly wide consensus of opinion today that teachers who have expected their pupils to 'pick things up' just because the opportunity is there have been over-optimistic. There could easily be a corresponding swing towards more formal methods of teaching which, in fact, the majority have never abandoned. MPC strikes a good balance here. Although there is a very clear sound-symbol structure for which some direct teaching is needed, MPC very quickly leads to more freedom, both in learning independently with the motivation of success and interest and in using almost any reading materials within the range of oral understanding. Freedom from the restrictions of constant repetition for 'look-say' word learning as well as from the grading of phonic readers, starting with regular three-letter words, allows for much more natural and easy writing.

Finally, perhaps the most vital consideration is the need for co-operation between home and school. The child with someone who can hear him read at home and who can understand and share in the aims of the school will have a great advantage over the child who is entirely dependent on what is learnt on the school premises. Although everyday written language is not marked with cues, it is not in a different script. The technique required to teach the MPC marks need not be sophisticated. Any parent with a copy of the cue-card could do some good by going through it to help the child learn the sounds. The majority of parents who have spent a short time studying MPC could easily use cues to regularise a word in a newspaper or book in order to help a child read it. Beyond the classroom, it is also ideal for amateur volunteers helping in adult literacy campaigns.

No other aid that I know of is so easy to learn and use. There is so little to add to what is normally known and understood, yet it can make a spectacular difference to the ease of reading and teaching to read. If MPC can help even a few unhappy strugglers, something will have been achieved.

Appendix 1

Simple games to reinforce learning sounds and early sight vocabulary

Children vary widely in the amount of repetition they need for anything to be permanently memorised. Some need a great deal, however meaningful and interesting the presentation or context. Such children are particularly helped by games with a purpose, which provide motivation for learning and involve repetition without boredom. If they are also self-checking, they can be played while the teacher is occupied elsewhere, thus stimulating independent learning.
1. *Flashcards*: group (Figure 9)

Aids the memory-bond between picture-cue and sound.

Make cards about 10 x 6 cm. On one side write a sound from the cue-card in large print; on the other draw the corresponding picture. The children are shown the picture and try to say its sound. The first to do so takes the card and shows both sides to the group.

At the end the child with most cards goes on to another activity, while the rest repeat the game.

These cards can also be used for games 2, 3 and 4, and for matching to sounds in words and sentences on the wall or to a large cue-card.

Figure 9

2. *Guess the sound*: pairs
Aids the recognition of symbol without picture.

Both children must be able to say a sound with its picture. One child shows the picture (or sound) side of a card to the other, who has to say its sound (or

picture), and takes the card if right. The children can take it in turns to select a card, change after a wrong guess, or after each set.

3. *Sound pairs*: group
Matching recognition and the use of more than one sound-picture combination are all involved.

Add a second set of cards with different pictures. (a) Both sets are spread out, picture-side upwards. The children take it in turns to pick a pair, checking by looking at the other side.
(b) One set is picture-side downwards. A pair consists of a sound matched to a picture. The winner is the child with most pairs.

4. *Sound Bingo*: group
This game encourages effort and quick response in recognising sounds.

Divide large cards into sections the same size as the flashcards. In each section draw a sound corresponding to one of the flashcards. The caller holds up a picture. The first child to recognise it as matching a sound on their large card takes it to cover that sound. The first to cover his or her large card wins. The large cards may be the same or slightly different for each child.

5. *Test your friend*: pairs (Figure 10)
This is a useful and interesting method of self-checking, and involves learning and correcting responses.

Cut notches in three sides of a piece of card about 12 cm square. The number of notches depends on the number of sounds which need testing. Draw a sound beside each notch and a corresponding picture on the reverse of the card. The card is held upright between the children. The one who can see the pictures say, for example, 'Point to the owl'. The other then has to place his finger or pencil in the notch by the o͡w sound. If correct, he takes a counter. Five cards, each with nine sounds, will cover all the MPC symbols and could follow the same progression as the MPC Workbooks.

Figure 10
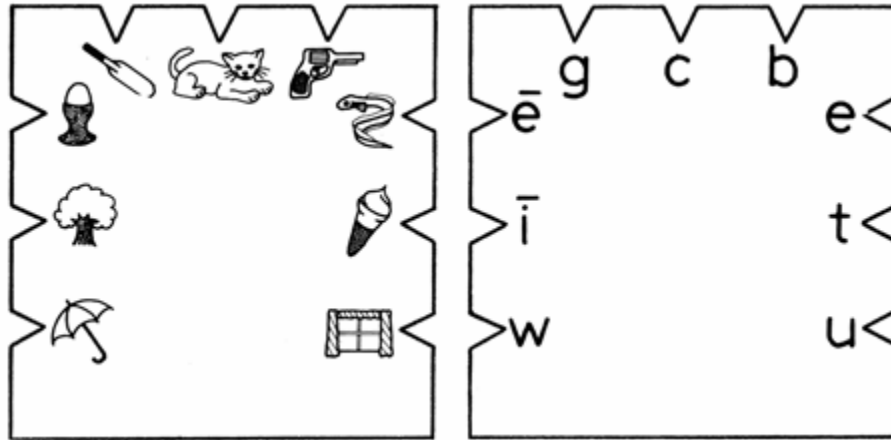
6. *Spelling the sounds*: pairs (Figure 11)
With the help of MPC cues, the varying spellings of vowel sounds are introduced and learnt. Children should have reached lesson 14 of the MPC Spelling Workbook.

Make six cards each about 12 x 9 cm. Write one vowel sound clearly on each card: $\bar{a}, \bar{e}, \bar{i}, \bar{o}, \bar{u}$ and $\overline{oo}$. On the back of each card write a list of words containing the different ways in which the sound on the front can be spelt, e.g. $\bar{a}$—*may, cake, plaice, weigh*; $\overline{oo}$—*who, through, shoe, blue*. Make a duplicate set. (a) One child lays his cards down with the sounds showing. The other picks a word from his cards and asks the first to find it by picking up the right card from his own set. If he is right first time he gets a counter. When he has five counters they change places.
(b) The first child asks the other to spell, for example, weigh. After choosing the right card by the sound the other then reads out the word and so gets a counter.

Figure 11
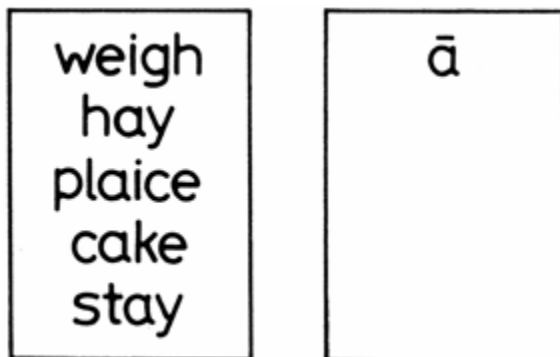
7. *Word recognition board game*: group
This aids learning the early sight vocabulary, using cued words from the MPC Word List. A teacher must be present to ensure words are correctly read.

On a piece of card about 40 x 50 cm draw a road on which are marked about 50 moves between Start and Home. Number six small containers (such as margarine tubs) 1 to 6. In turn, the children throw a die and take a word from the tub of that number. When they have read the word correctly they move that number of spaces. The first to reach Home is the winner. To add interest the board can be made into a football game, race track, treasure hunt, etc. Hazards can be added, e.g. Think squares: a tub labelled Think contains cars saying 'Think of three words beginning with p', 'Think of four words ending with t', etc. These are read by the teacher.

Appendix 2

The *MPC Workbooks, Word List* **and Checklists**

The *MPC Teacher's Book* is accompanied by two workbooks and a simple dictionary, all for use by the pupil. Although mainly intended as part of a series making full use of MPC as an aid to reading, they could easily be used with more traditional methods. Only the normal alphabetical forms are used and all the letters are included.

The *MPC Reading Workbook* teaches the main phonic sounds and how to form the letters from which they are made. It does not go through them in alphabetical order, but starts with the consonants which are most useful both as an aid to recognising words and in teaching the correct movements. There is one representation of each of the main sounds, e.g. **ow** but not **ou**. The sounds **ch**, **sh**, **ng**, etc. are included since these are regular in use. Children should become familiar with them at an early stage, and think of them as sounds in their own right. All the letters are used.

Each page forms a complete unit, taking a its starting point and focus a simple, lively illustration. Some direction and help are needed from the teacher, firstly in reading the sentence and then in discussing it with the pupils to encourage language and ensure that print is always associated with meaning and interest. The *sound* of the letters is then pointed out and its association with the symbol emphasised. The letter-names should not be taught at this stage. The teacher should supervise the pupil's writing movements before leaving him to work alone, since this will avoid much trouble later. At the bottom of each page are suggestions for further, more open-ended activities designed to reinforce learning.

The *MPC Spelling Workbook* teaches the main rules and exceptions of English spelling, clearly shown with the help of MPC. Each rule is presented with examples and practical reinforcement in the form of activities, so that the pupil learns to spell through experience. A vocabulary of about 150 words is necessary before beginning this workbook.

The *MPC Word List* is a simple dictionary containing over 600 of the words most commonly used in early reading with cues. Space is provided for the pupil to add new words. Once pupils know the sounds and cues, they will be able to read and learn the words and so recognise them in their books. It is hoped that this will help to deal with the two great problems encountered by those teaching reading to beginners: hearing pupils and giving them words for writing. By allowing the pupils greater independence, the *MPC Word List* will save the teacher time while laying the foundations for a thorough linguistic understanding of phonemegrapheme correspondence.

MPC Checklists, found on the last page of each book.

The *MPC Reading workbook* checklist lists the sounds covered in the book and provides space to record the pupil's progress: *knows sound* with *picture cue*; *know sound without picture cue*. There is also space for fuller notes on each sound.

The *MPC Spelling Workbook* checklist list the rules or skills covered in the book, indexed by lesson number. It can thus also be used as a list of contents. Since the workbook deals with the understanding of English spelling in principle, rather than with learning actual examples of words, the checklist is designed to record that each page has been worked through and understood. The pupil may have to do a page more than once, so it is suggested that three marks be used to show his progress: mark ╲ doing this page, tick ✔ page completed with understanding, ✘ success in later revision test. Understanding of the *MPC Spelling Workbook* can also be tested using the quiz on page 55. This can be done as a game by the pupils or used as a method of testing by the teacher.

The *MPC Word List* checklist is intended as a record of progress in using sounds and cues. There are six columns: *First Sounds, Second Sounds, Blends, Simple Words, Using Cues, Syllables and Endings*. At the head of each column is a star which should be coloured in when the work in that column is complete. The teacher could have a master copy of the checklist column is complete. The teacher could have a master copy of the checklist with the same headings but with the pupil' names some the side. The stars could then be entered against the names, so helping to group the pupils.

Spelling Workbook Quiz

Lesson

1	What do you know about **e** at the end of a word?	1	It's not sounded. It may alter the vowel.
2	What would it change these to? **a e i o u**	2	**a e i o u**
3	Write or point to two ways to spell **ow** and **oi**.	3	**ow ou; oi oy**
4	Write or point to two ways to spell **au**. Spell **for** and **door**.	4	**au aw**
5	What other sound can c stand for? How do these sound? **ca co cu ce ci**	5	**s** as in **circle ca co cu se si**
6	What other sound can **g** stand for?	6	**j**
7	What do you know about gh? What does **gh** sound like in enough?	7	It's not sounded. It may alter the vowel before. **f**
8	What other sound can **ch** stand for?	8	**c** as in **school**
9	Read or spell: **word fur first heard her.** What sound is in each word?	9	**er**
10	What do you know about these? **kn gn wr** Read or spell **knee gnome write.**	10	First letter isn't sounded
11	What other sound can **s** stand for? Which s sounds like **z** in **sees**?	11	**z** the last
12	What are vowels? Name some of them.	12	Sounds made by altering the shape of your mouth. **a e i o u a e i o u oo oo ow au er ah oi air**
13	Read: **Wh-n-sy—r b-rthd-y?** What can you do about vowels that change their sounds?	13	**When is your birthday?** Guess from the rest of the word. Refer to cards
14	Read or write words from the cards. Read: **day make lady tail weight**. Read: **feel near ceiling piece he.**	14	(All have **a** sound) (All have **e** sound)
15	Read: **throw coat hope though goes.**	15	(All have **o** sound)

16	Does everyone speak with the same accent? Which change most, vowels or other sounds?	16	No. Vowels, like **a, a** and **ah**
17	Read: **Monday month one once**. What sound does **o** make here? What would you do if **o** didn't make sense?	17	**u** Try **u**.
18	What sound does **ph** make? What sound does **f** make in **of**? Read: **laugh cough tough enough**. What makes the sound f here?	18	**f** **v** **gh**
19	Read: **walk walked walks walking**. Which are the 'bits'? Write from memory: **pick picks picked picking**	19	**ed s ing**
20	Find a small word inside: **Demisting unfitted**.	20	**mist fit**
21	What do you do to **come** before adding **ing**? Add **ing** to **have bake make live**.	21	Take off the **e.** **having baking making living**
22	What do you do to sit before adding ing? Add **ed** to **beg bat pin**.	22	Add another **t.** **begged baking making living**
23	Read these: **pick hick, might dight, sing ming, house bouse.** Are they all words?	23	No, but they could be syllables in words.
24	n what way are these words alike? **shoe moon through who**	24	All have the sound **oo**.
25	What do you notice about these? **C**annot **jamjar clockface doorknob** Can you read them?	25	Each is made of two words put together
26	Read the first syllable of these: **disconnect petticoat maternal hipster.**	26	**dis pet mat hip**
27	How do you sound **tion**? Think of a word with it in.	27	**shon** **action station fiction position**

28	Try to read these: **tension mission passion.**	28	**sion**
29	Say the alphabet, using the letternames Is **a** before or after **o**? Is **p** before or after **x**? Is **j** before or after **b**?	29	**a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z** before, before, after
30	Which of these comes first in a dictionary? **dog dad dig** Write the alphabet in small and capital letters.	30	**dad a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z**