

**Letterforms for handwriting and reading: print script
and sanserifs in early twentieth-century England**

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This essay is about letterforms and typography in reading books for young children and how they were influenced by the teaching of handwriting in the early decades of the twentieth century. I examine the contributions made by infant teachers to typography and book design and draw particular attention to the print script movement and the gradual introduction of sanserif typefaces in reading books. I suggest that the use of sanserifs in reading books for young children is one of their first appearances for continuous text. Although the influence of print script on the teaching of handwriting may have had some undesirable effects, I suggest that it indirectly contributed to some innovations in book design.

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Children's reading books have been neglected in the study of book design and typography perhaps because as Beatrice Warde remarked they are the books that nobody sees.¹ But despite their humble status they offer some innovative examples of designing with the perceived needs of young children in mind. In the early years of the twentieth century one such innovation was the deliberate use of sanserif typefaces to conform to a particular pedagogical point of view. This essay looks at the influence of teachers on the use of typefaces and typography that resulted in considered, and eventually widespread, use of sanserif letterforms for continuous text from the 1920s onwards. The rationale behind this development was the idea that the letterforms that children see in their reading books should be the same as, or similar to, those that they are taught to write. The teaching of handwriting, specifically the emergence of what came to be known as print script, the availability of more sanserif typefaces, and the willingness of publishers to try out new ideas provided fertile ground for development. Some of the ideas that drove this had origins in the nineteenth century, in particular, the reaction by some teachers and lettering specialists against the copperplate script that was widely taught in schools, and their attempt to establish what 'simplicity' meant in relation to letterforms.

'Printing', simplicity of form, and sanserifs at the end of the nineteenth century

In their handwriting lessons, children at the end of the nineteenth century were taught either copperplate or, after 1870, the bolder and more upright 'Civil Service' style introduced through the Vere Foster 'Bold writing' series of copybooks.² Both styles were difficult for children to write, copperplate especially so because considerable control of the pen was needed to achieve the difference between thick and thin strokes. Civil Service handwriting, which had rounder letterforms and a more even stroke width, was arguably more legible, but still involved children in mastering loops and evenness of slope.³ Examples, often reversed white out of a black ground to look like chalk writing on slate, were given in some of the reading books in use at the end of the nineteenth century. Letterforms such as these sat

1. Warde, 1950: p. 37.

2. A summary of handwriting teaching at the end of the nineteenth century is provided by Crellin (1982) and Sassoon (1999: chapters 2 and 3).

3. Civil Service handwriting became very widely used and despite the introduction

of models such as Marion Richardson, italic, and print script in the first half of the twentieth century, its far-reaching impact can be seen in the examples of handwriting collected in the 1950s by Piggott (1958).

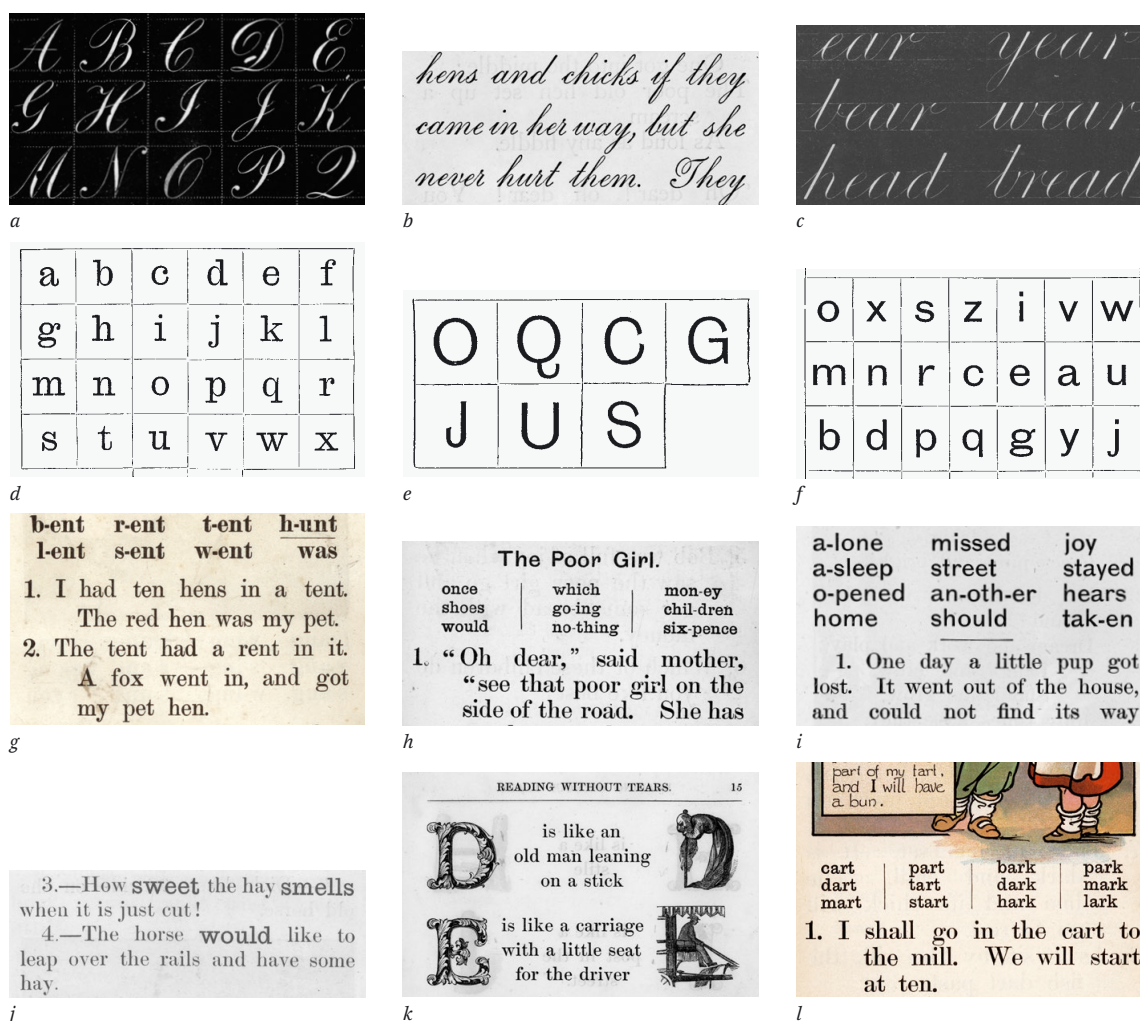


Figure 1. Examples of letterforms from children's reading books of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

- (a) 'Royal school series', *The Queen infant reader*, c. 1880
- (b) 'Hughes's standard story-books', *Stories for standard I*, 1880
- (c) 'Longmans' new readers', *The infant reader, an introductory book to Standard I*, 1891
- (d) 'Macmillan's new literary readers', *The first primer*, 1895
- (e) 'Macmillan's new literary readers', *The first primer*, 1895
- (f) 'Royal school series', *The royal crown primer, no. 1*, c. 1901
- (g) 'Chambers's twentieth century readers', *Second primer*, c. 1901
- (h) 'Collins School Series', *The graphic infant reader, second book*, 1891
- (i) 'Royal school series', *The royal crown infant reader, no. 1*, c. 1901
- (j) 'Longmans' new readers', *The infant reader, an introductory book to Standard I*
- (k) *Reading without tears or, a pleasant mode of learning to read*, many editions, 1860s to end of 19th century.
- (l) 'Macmillan's new literary readers', *The second primer*, 1895

alongside the modern typefaces used predominantly for continuous text, and other typefaces, clarendons, sanserifs and decorative ones were used to demonstrate the alphabet in different ways, and to differentiate headings, word lists and instructions to teachers. Figure 1 gives examples of the different kinds of letterform that young children are likely to have seen in their reading books.

At the end of the nineteenth century, then, young children at school in England would have encountered some letterforms for reading and others for writing or drawing. A contemporary account of classroom practice provided by Gunn in *The infant school* (1906: p. 247) explained that children were expected to make letters in a variety of different media:

The letters which are being studied should be copied by the children in one or more mediums. The big blackboard, the children's drawing-boards or slates, the brush or the pencil, placing sticks or other objects on the desks or tables, cutting letters out of paper with scissors, picking them out from among letter-cards – as many of these and other methods can be used and should be practised. At the same time, the form should be studied and analyzed as form, attention being given to the fact that certain parts are vertical lines, others sloping, others curved, some parts lines, others dots, and so on.

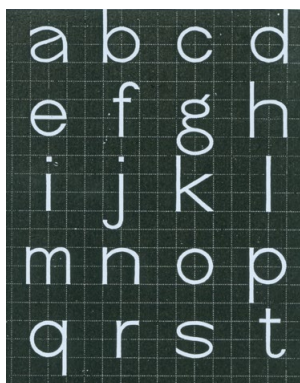


Figure 2. Part of an alphabet for slate drawing from 'The royal crown primer', No. 1, London: Nelson, nd but likely to be early 20th century (reprinted frequently).

Teachers were also expected to be able to write using different kinds of letterform. Gunn drew attention to these differences: he recommended that teachers should learn to 'draw a plain Roman a or g' for use on the blackboard so that children are not confused by these forms when they see them in their reading books'. He noted (1906: p. 263) what was to become an important concern for some teachers:

The chief difficulty in establishing a connection between the teaching of reading and that of writing is simply this, that we use two distinct alphabets in the two processes. If the letter forms were alike in both, we should certainly teach the two step by step together. We should always either write first and then read what had been written, or read first and copy what had been read.

One issue that is apparent when reading contemporaneous accounts is that of terminology: in many documents written at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries there is confusing and sometimes conflicting use of terms such as 'script', 'writing', 'printing' and 'printed'. The term 'printing' was used to describe the drawing of letters first on the blackboard by teachers, and then the copying of these letterforms by children onto slates with chalk, or paper with pencils. This drawn or 'printed' letterform, such as that illustrated in figure 2, was an upright usually monolinear form with no serifs or loops. It seems to have been regarded as an appropriate letter shape to provide a link between reading and writing. Gunn's account (1906: p. 262) suggested that this was common practice:

Attempts are being made in our schools to combine reading and writing at the early stages. We have already recommended the teacher to learn the printed characters for blackboard use for this very reason. Many teachers modify these characters, using a kind of simple italic form written nearly upright, and teach the children to draw the same forms. It is found that children who have had enough practice in drawing either form are able to learn the script character in a few lessons.⁴

A good example of classroom practice that demonstrated how one teacher distinguished between different letterforms was shown in the work of Nellie Dale.⁵ Her method of teaching reading by familiarizing children with the sounds of letters required them to learn letter shapes by drawing or 'printing' them as well as 'sounding' them. In her manual, Dale (1898: p. 23) explained how this was done:

The symbol representing that sound is then shown. A description is gained and compared with other known symbols. The teacher then prints it on the b.b. [blackboard] in its simplest form and the children watch very carefully. They then *draw it in the air*, first with the right hand, then with the left, and lastly with both hands at once. This is then followed by their *printing* it on their b.b. or slates with coloured chalks using the hands alternately and together.

The illustrations of children's work in her manual (figure 3, overleaf) are examples of the printed letterforms the children made, including the double-storey forms of the 'a' and 'g' that they would

4. Gunn used the term 'script' to refer to cursive handwriting. However, in his section on 'modified print script characters' he used the term 'modified printed character' to refer to letters that are not joined, in contrast to 'traditional script characters' that are 'joined to one another and not apart, as in printing'. (Gunn, 1906: p. 246).

5. Dale's method of teaching reading used colour to represent sounds (Dale, 1898). Her reading scheme was issued first as the Walter Crane Readers published by J. M. Dent and then as the Dale Readers published by George Philip & Son. In her acknowledgements Dale mentioned the illustrator and publisher offering 'especial thanks': 'To Mr Dent for his courtesy in carrying out all my wishes with regard to the books' and 'To Mr Walter Crane for the sympathetic

interest he has shown in the Readers and for his charming illustrations which will give so much joy to the children and will help them so greatly to the appreciation of their mother tongue' (Dale, 1898: p. vii). Her scheme was very popular and used in

schools for many years, but her method did not receive universal approval. See, for example, Dumville (1912: p. 408): a strongly-worded paper against the phonic method in general and Dale's scheme in particular.

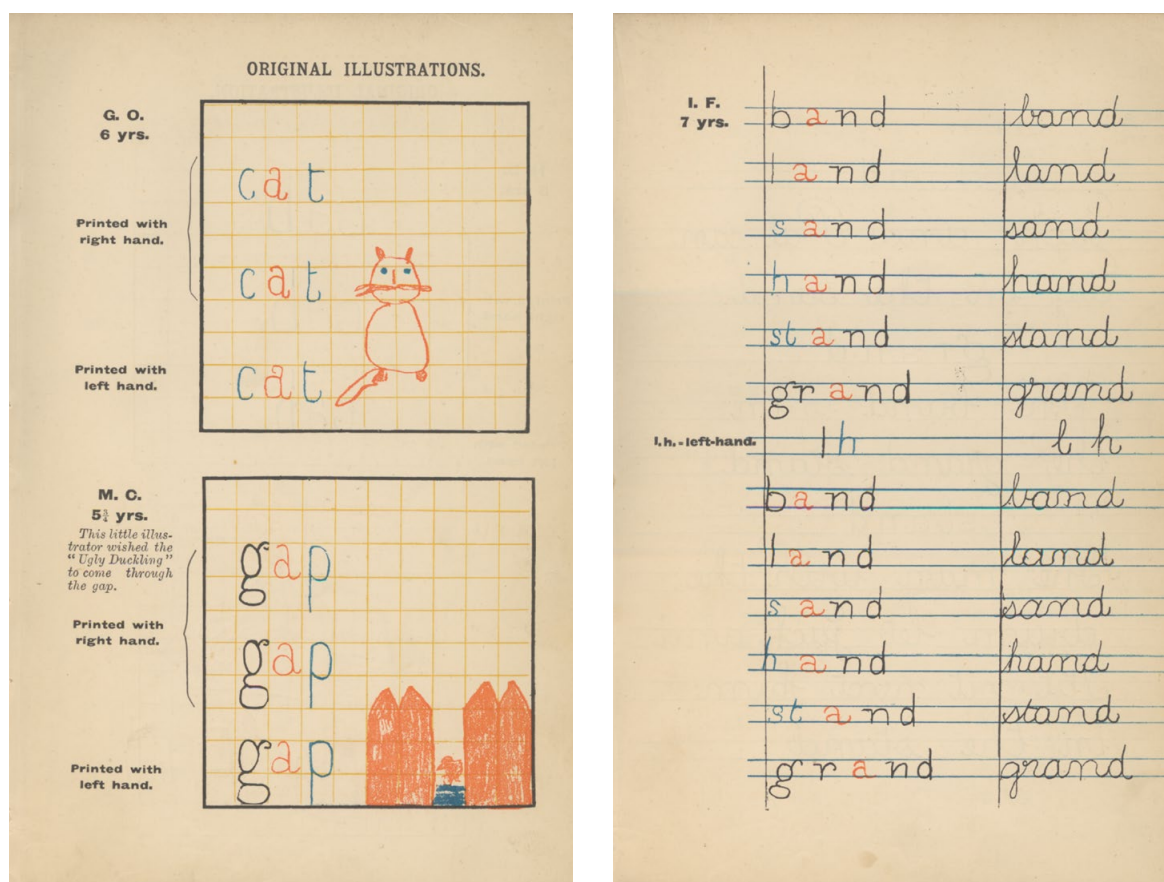


Figure 3. Examples of children's work included in Nellie Dale's manual about her method of teaching reading. The colours are used throughout the reading scheme to represent the sounds of the letters.

- (a) (left) Children's drawings of 'printed' letterforms, including double-storey a's and g's. (Dale 1898, plate 5)
- (b) (right) Differences between 'printed' and 'written' forms. (Dale 1898, plate 9)

have been seen in their reading books. Children were encouraged to compare their printed forms with their written ones (figure 3b). Here the forms of a and g, representing 'writing' and 'printing' are different. Dale's reference to 'simplest form' is particularly interesting. In a footnote, giving an example of what she means by printing 'in its simplest form', she referred the reader to *Steps to reading*, the first book in her series which was typeset entirely in a sanserif type (Dale, 1898: 23n). This could well be the first explicit association of sanserif type with the simplicity considered desirable in letterforms for children learning to read. The typeface used in *Steps to reading* is a standard late nineteenth-century grotesque (figure 4, opposite).⁶ By 'simplicity' in relation to type it would seem that Nellie Dale meant letters without serifs with a reasonably consistent stroke width, but not single storey a's and g's.

The simplicity that Nellie Dale sought is not a quality associated with the experimentation in letterforms that occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Artists and designers drew inspiration from the letterforms of the past and widened horizons in their exploration of what letters could be, ranging from the sinuous forms of art nouveau to more angular and stark gothic forms. Edward Strange's *Alphabets* (1895) illustrated this kind of exploration, and shows how

6. 'Grotesque' was the term adopted by English typefounders and printers for a particular category of sanserif letterform prevalent in the second half of

the 19th century. The term first appeared in a Thorowgood type specimen of 1832. (Mosley, 1999: pp. 53–6).

Figure 4. Spreads from two editions of *Steps to reading*, London: George Philip, (nd, but both early 20th century) showing two different grotesques to represent 'printing in its simplest form'. (Dale, 1898: p. 23). Like many children's reading books, *Steps to reading* appeared in many undated editions that, as shown in these two examples, were typeset slightly differently.

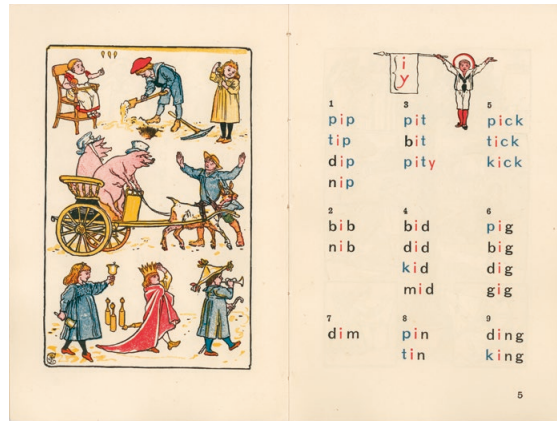
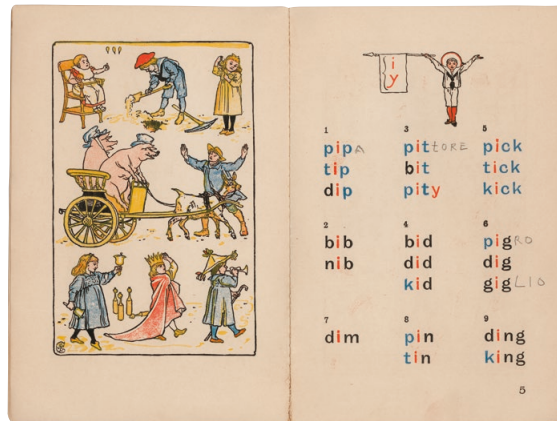


Figure 5 (below). Examples of late 19th century lettering described as having characteristics of simplicity, clarity and legibility.

- (a) (upper) Lettering by Alice B. Woodward. (Strange 1895, figure 159)
 (b) (lower) Alphabet by Selwyn Image. (Strange 1895, figure 160)



'simplicity' became associated with certain characteristics: single-storey a's and g's, and the absence of serifs (figure 5a). He showed a nursery rhyme written out by Alice B. Woodward and described it as 'a good piece of ornamental writing. It has the merit of sufficient simplicity and easy legibility, without loss of the merely decorative quality.' (1895: p. 214) Though 'simplicity' is perhaps not the description we would apply today, the single-storey a's, especially, contributed to its clarity. The alphabet by Selwyn Image (figure 5b) is characterized by clear and separate characters, and it was used as an exemplar in books on lettering and handwriting until well into the 1930s.⁷ Strange describes it:

With the exceptions of the A, which seems quite new, the Q, a capital form, and the not uncommon uncial E, Mr. Image may be said to have adopted ordinary lower-case Roman types, although with many differences of detail. These latter always tend toward simplicity, and the general result is a letter of great power and of the highest importance.⁸

abcdefghijklmnop
 qrstuvwxyz

7. Sewyn Image was Slade Professor, Oxford 1910–16 and Master of the Artworkers' Guild. He was best known for his stained glass designs, but like many of those involved in the Arts and Crafts movement he engaged in several activities. In the 1890s he was particularly involved in the 'book arts' and designed covers, title-pages and bindings. He also designed a Greek type for Macmillans. (See 'Image, Selwyn (1849–1930) *Oxford*

dictionary of national biography, Oxford University Press, 2004, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34093, accessed 29 January 2005). Examples of Image's lettering and handwriting are given in several books and articles on lettering and handwriting including Strange (1895), Day (1902), Bridges (1927) and Finch and Kimmins (1932).

8. Strange, 1895: p. 216.



Figure 6. Hand drawn letterforms by Walter Crane. These letterforms reinforced the 'printed' ones that children were expected to draw. The sans-serif appearance, single-storey a and g, and rather geometric letterforms were unusual in reading books at this time. (Crane and Meiklejohn 1888, p. 32)

This concept of simplicity in reading books for children – handwritten form, single-storey a's and g's, absence of serifs – is seen best in the work of Walter Crane. The lettering in illustrations to *The golden primer* (1888), produced with J. M. D. Meiklejohn, included single storey a's and g's and a rather quirky sans-serif form (figure 6). The use of such letterforms in a children's reading book was, at the time, most unusual. Crane may have been influenced by his colleague Meiklejohn to design letters that children would find easy to draw because of the contemporary classroom practice of encouraging children to draw the shapes of letters as part of learning to read. In the 'Method of teaching reading' printed on the endpapers of *The golden primer*, for example, Meiklejohn suggested: 'If the child has a box of loose letters, let him make the words at the foot of the page with them. If he can print, let him copy them' (1888: [p. i]).

Nellie Dale's choice of a sans-serif to reflect simplicity should, of course, be seen in the context of much greater availability and use of sans-serif types in the latter half of the nineteenth century, particularly for display and advertising. The terms 'block letter', 'skeleton letter' and 'essential form' were used in popular books on sign writing, lettering and handwriting to describe sans-serif letterforms (figure 7, a–e, opposite). The term 'block letter' derived in part from the way in which the letters were drawn. Badenoch's instructions to signwriters 'To Draw Plain Block Letters' (1912: pp. 10–15) explained the construction of a modular base of 'blocks' for the drawing of the letterforms. The use of the word 'block' to describe a particular kind of letter is still given as an instruction to form fillers – 'use block capitals' – but its use at the end of the nineteenth century was symptomatic of a search for simplicity and clarity in letterforms. Steeley (1902a: pp. 1–4) provided illustrations of similarly constructed block letters and numerals including a small-letter alphabet with a very narrow stroke width. However, he used the term 'line letter' to describe a capital letter drawn with an even finer line. In another publication (1902b: plates I and II) he demonstrated a less formally constructed set of letters called 'Line or skeleton letters'. 'Skeleton letter' was widely used to describe letters with thin strokes: such an alphabet appeared in the 1905 edition of Lewis F. Day's *Alphabets old and new* as one of the 'entirely new ones' not shown in the first edition. Handwritten, monoline and skeletal forms were also recommended in schools and colleges for captions, labels in technical drawing and map work.⁹ Edward Johnston's inclusion of a diagram of 'essential forms' in *Writing & illuminating, & lettering* (1906) affirmed this interest in simplified forms and the acceptability of monoline, serif-less, forms. The application of the idea of simplicity to handwriting and the way it was taught had far-reaching results (figure 7f).

Simplification and handwriting

Simplification through a search for the essential forms of letter shapes was one of the concerns that stimulated an interest in handwriting and penmanship around the end of the nineteenth century. Central to this were Robert and Monica Bridges. They belonged to circles that included Selwyn Image, Roger Fry, James Kerr and Edward

9. See, for example, Vere Foster's copy-books. *Plain lettering for map drawing and plans*. London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son Limited, nd. A page from this book is reproduced in Sassoon (1999: p. 51).

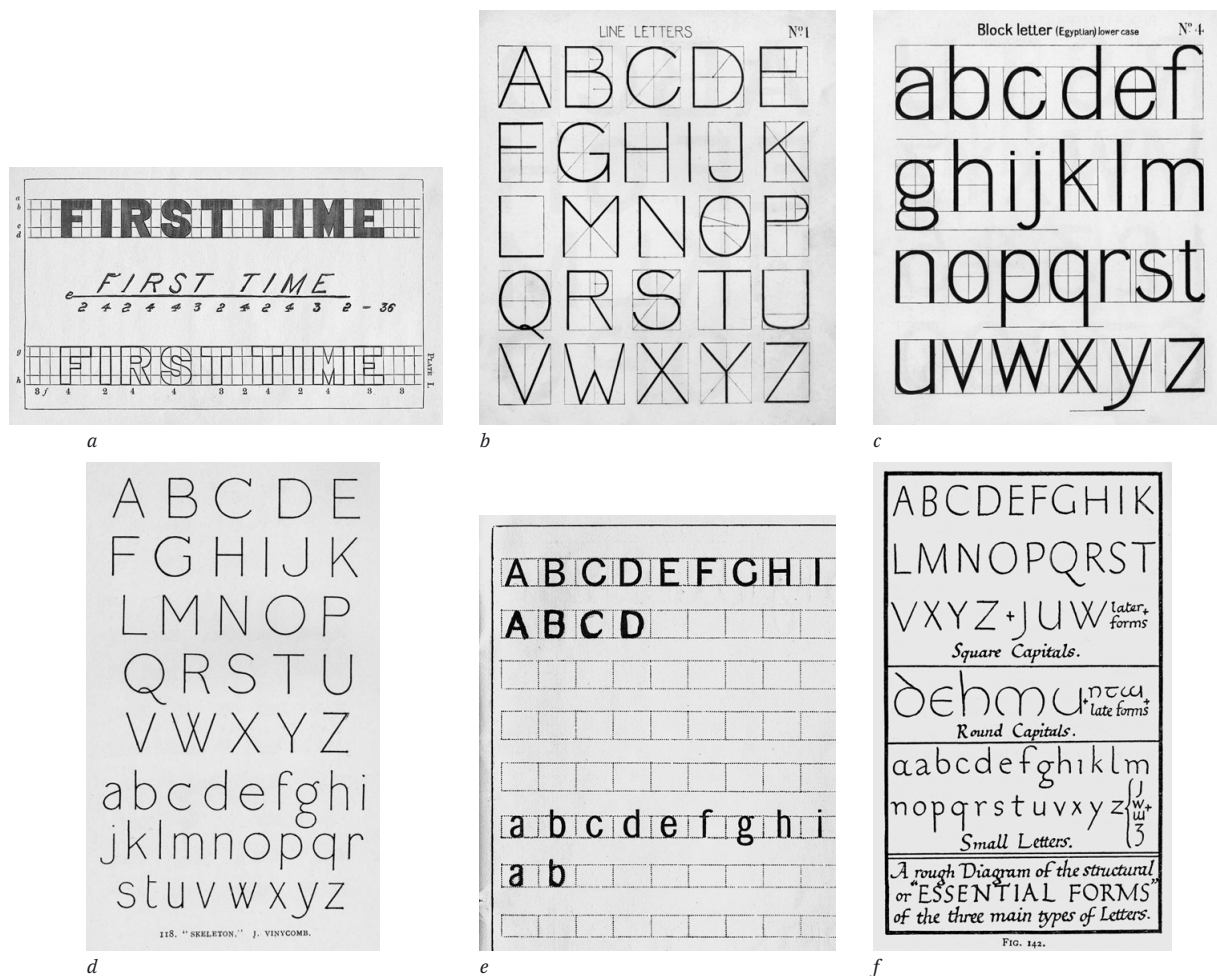


Figure 7. Late 19th and early 20th century examples of signwriter's and letterer's sans-serif alphabets.

- (a) 'Plain block letters'
(Badenoch 1912, plate I)
- (b) 'Line letters'
(Steeley 1902a, plate 1)
- (c) 'Block letter' (Egyptian) lower-case'
(Steeley 1902a, plate 4)
- (d) 'Skeleton' letters by J. Vinycomb
(Day 1906 edn, figure 118)
- (e) 'Block letter, or Egyptian', Vere Foster's copy books. *Lettering plain and ornamental*, London: Blackie, nd (first published in the 1860s and reprinted until the 1970s)
- (f) 'Essential forms'
(Johnston 1906, figure 142)

Johnston, all of whom shared an interest in historic models and who sought inspiration from these to develop alternative approaches to handwriting and calligraphy.¹⁰ Edward Johnston was strongly influenced by his friendship with the Bridges, and writing in 1926 he acknowledged that he was 'put on the track of the Half-uncial', and made aware of Maunde Thompson's *Greek and Latin palaeography* by them.¹¹ This group contributed to a climate of interest in handwriting in different ways, though it was Monica Bridges who, at this time, was most engaged with handwriting in the classroom. She wrote: 'I was always interested in handwriting, & after making acquaintance with the Italianized Gothic of the sixteenth century, I consciously altered my hand towards some likeness with its forms & general character. This script happening to please, I was often asked to make alphabets & copies, & begged by professional teachers to have such a book as this printed, that they might use it in their schools.'¹² Her book,

10. Roger Fry was Monica Bridges's cousin and had a particular interest in historical handwritten forms (see Fry and Lowe, 1926). James Kerr was Medical Officer to the School Board for London and in this role contributed to several accounts of hygienic practices in schools, in particular in relation to eyesight, when he commented on typography. See, for

example, the chapter on 'Eyesight' in Newsholme and Pakes (1904). He was also the Chairman of the Child-Study Association Special Committee on handwriting (see below p. 90ff).

11. Childs and Howes (1986: pp. 86–7; 81).

12. Bridges, 1898: [p. iii].

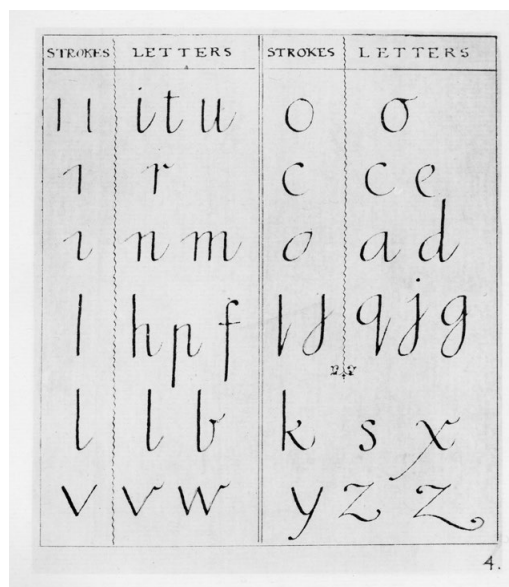


Figure 8. Monica Bridges's 'simplified forms' for young beginners. (Bridges 1898, p. 4)

A new handwriting for teachers (1898), contained a number of facsimiles showing examples of alphabets she recommended for children, and the italic handwriting of Edward VI and Michelangelo. The final part of her introduction provided 'Instructions [for] how children should use the copies': 'for young beginners I give simplified forms and the order in which it is convenient to write them.' Children, she believed, should begin with the small letters and she urged that the 'simple strokes of the which the letters are composed should be the first learned.'¹³ These letterform components are shown in figure 8.

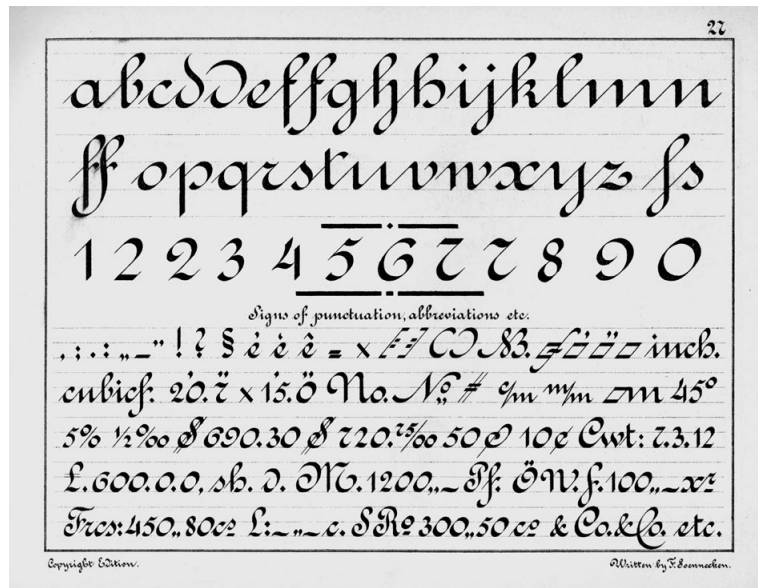
Bridges's and Johnston's shared opinions about handwriting helped to consolidate the view, delivered most effectively by Johnston in his work at the London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts, the Royal College of Art and other art colleges, that studying letterforms used in ancient manuscripts, using a broad-nibbed pen, and raising students' awareness of 'essential' forms, was one way to improve handwriting. In 1906, Johnston was asked by the London County Council (LCC) to report on pens and copy books in current use. In his report he voiced the concerns held by himself, the Bridges, and others that legibility, beauty and character were lacking in the copperplate models in current use.¹⁴ Not surprisingly one of the books that he recommended was *A new handwriting for teachers*: 'There are at least two modern copybooks, or rather, writing books, which give good models – or fairly good. Mrs Bridges' "A New Writing" & "Round Writing" by F. Soennecken. They are, however, hardly adapted for ordinary school use.'¹⁵ The models Johnston mentions are exemplars of different kinds. Unlike Monica Bridges's model, Friedrich Soennecken's was based on the use of a straight-edged broad pen (he manufactured and sold pens to be used in the execution of his model). The model, which follows the French *ronde* tradition, resulted in a very round script with high contrast in stroke width (figure 9, opposite). Like Bridges, he was concerned with how to teach the script and began by drawing attention to component parts of letterforms and to letterform 'groups':

13. Bridges, 1898: p. xi.

14. This report is reproduced in full in Childs and Howes (1986: pp. 221–3).

15. Childs and Howes, 1986: p. 222.

Figure 9. Friedrich Soennecken's round writing recommended by Edward Johnston, along with Monica Bridges's handwriting, as 'good models – or fairly good'. (Soennecken nd, p. 27)



In Round Writing the letters are developed in accordance with a standard rule, from plain rudimental strokes that are between themselves in a certain harmony of dimensions. Grouped according to the affinity of their forms, they are ... derived in systematic succession from a prototype. The latter, as the figurative expression of the Method, shall always show the scholar the origin, simplicity, and symmetry of every letter.¹⁶

The use of gridded paper in his copybooks encouraged a widely-set script, necessary because of the thickness of the stroke relative to the x-height of the letters.

Neither Bridges's nor Soennecken's models appear to have been widely used in English schools though Bridges's copybook was adopted by the Parents National Educational Union (PNEU), a home-schooling society.¹⁷ This society seems to have had a keen interest in contemporary developments in handwriting: in 1911, for example, Johnston was invited to talk about 'The teaching of handwriting as penmanship' at its annual conference held that year in Reading.¹⁸ The PNEU journal, *Parents' Review*, for that year contained a detailed report of this conference, including transcriptions of all the lectures – except Johnston's. There was, however, the following brief account (PNEU, 1911: p. 752):

Mr Johnston then gave his lecture, illustrating his theme by most skilful lettering on the blackboard. Mr Johnston described in detail the three main qualities of good writing, viz., readableness, beauty and character. The essentials of readableness in writing were simplicity (having no unnecessary strokes), distinctiveness (letters having individuality), and proportion (writing not exaggerated or dwarfed). The essentials of beauty of writing were comprised of beauty of form, beauty of uniformity and beauty of arrangement. Under the last heading, character, the lecturer instanced the value of freedom (real, not affected, boldness), and personality (the nearly unconscious development of personality).

16. Soennecken, nd: p. vii. Soennecken was passionate about modularization and systematization of handwritten forms (which does not seem to be in line with the Johnston tradition). Soennecken's *schriftsystem* where he breaks down a sans-serif, monolinear form into geometric and component parts, shows this in the extreme (Soennecken 1913: p. 48).

17. Wise (1924: p. xiii).

18. The archives of the PNEU are held at the Armitage Library in Ambleside among the Charlotte Mason papers. There is, however, no material relating to Monica Bridges or her copybook. I am grateful to Dr John Thorley, who catalogued the

Armitage archives, for drawing my attention to the note about the Reading meeting of the PNEU. The 1911 date conflicts with that of 2 January 1912 given in Childs and Howes's list of Johnston's surviving

lectures (1986: p. 235), suggesting that the latter may have been post-dated. Dr Thorley notes (email 9 November 2004) that the PNEU conference at Reading was held in July 1911.

The print script approach to handwriting

Johnston's lecture at the Reading PNEU meeting was the basis of his more widely quoted 1913 lecture to the LCC Conference of Teachers. In 1913 he said that: 'Penmanship, or the art of writing, for our immediate purpose, may be defined as writing done with a broad nib, and based on a good model – itself written with a broad nib' and goes on to suggest that beginners might 'trace in their own experience the passage of the Roman Capital into the skeleton of the roman small letter that took place between the first and the fifth centuries'.¹⁹ As a result of this lecture Johnston has been associated with the introduction of the use of print script handwriting models for use in schools. However, it was not the concept of print script that Johnston introduced, but rather the idea that a simplified, skeletal form written with a pencil or stylus was the best way to introduce children to a future cursive form written with a broad-nibbed pen. Indeed, it seems that Johnston's emphasis on simplicity helped to reinforce the nineteenth-century classroom practice of 'drawing the printed letter'. Although many of the books that promoted print script handwriting (in a number of forms) acknowledged Johnston's reliance on the broad-nibbed pen as an essential element of his approach, many did not. Alfred Fairbank helped to set the record straight:

Print-script (sometimes called 'ball and stick') is a simplified version of the Roman letter. It was introduced into schools following a lecture by the late Edward Johnston to L.C.C. teachers in 1913 when, in making suggestions as to an ideal course of teaching handwriting, he showed amongst his alphabets one which was later adapted for school use. Johnston regarded print-script as rather formless skeletons of Roman lower-case letters and did not wish it to be thought that he was directly responsible for the form of print-script characters.²⁰

Johnston's involvement with the LCC and his consequent and inevitable contact with teachers contributed to a growing interest in handwriting, including two meetings about handwriting set up by the Child-Study Association. The papers presented at these meetings were published first by the Child-Study Association in 1916 and then by Longman in 1918, and provided contemporary accounts written by teachers and others involved in education. The meetings were chaired by James Kerr who, as well as his interests in the typography of school-books, was becoming a strong supporter of print script handwriting, and of the value for children in learning the same alphabet for reading and writing: 'For the learner simplicity is the great desideratum, for the scholar legibility and speed, to which all other considerations are quite secondary. For these reasons the spatial forms of written and printed words, the characteristic shapes and relations of the letters and spaces, should approximate as much as possible'.²¹

Several papers at the Child-Study Association meetings were given by practising teachers. One, by S. A. Golds, was strongly influenced by Johnston; another, by Kate Grainger, appears to have been less so, but it seems that from around 1914 Golds and Grainger were working together on a 'print script' model and that their work was being promoted throughout LCC schools by school inspectors.²² Their detailed accounts, which were published in the Child-Study Association meeting proceedings, show the extent to which some teachers were

19. Childs and Howes, 1986: p. 225.

20. Fairbank, 1954: pp. 22–3. His remarks about print script are new to the 1954 edition. See also Johnston's note to Fairbank on this issue, quoted in Childs and Howes 1986: p. 39. In the 1948 edition Fairbank says that print script is a simplification of the 'lower-case Roman letter of our printed books', 1948: p. 90, and that 'Print-script is suited to the infant learning to read and later for beginning composition, when chalk, crayon, and pencil are the writing implements, but when the child begins to use a pen he should be brought to the first stage of the running hand.' (1948: p. 13) Fairbank, however, was no fan of print script: 'Print-script is held by teachers of infants, who are doubtless appreciative of its simple character, to be of assistance in teaching both reading and writing, since one alphabet serves the two purposes. It has two shortcomings: there is nothing about it that gives a hint of development into a running hand and it has circular instead of elliptical movements.' (1954: p. 23)

21. Kerr, 1918: p. 1.

22. A significant figure in the print script movement was C. W. Kimmins, Chief Inspector of the Education Department of the London County Council, 1904–23. He wrote (with Robert Finch) *The teaching of English and handwriting* in 1932. This is a good summary of the development of the print script movement, drawing attention to experimental work and some of the personalities involved. It presents a 'ball and stick' version of print script which is illustrated in the chart on p. 93.

involved in the development of print script and its use in schools. They both begin with their experiences of teaching children to write copperplate script and the difficulties they observed. The advantages they give of the new method are thus derived from their experience as teachers, and their accounts are illustrated with examples of children's writing, powerful evidence of its effectiveness. Golds's paper (1918) began with an account of 'experimental lessons' in handwriting given to girls in the infants' class at St Luke's School in London in early November 1914. She explained that 'this kind of writing [print script] seems to come almost natural [*sic*] to the little children. It was the loops and joins of the other style which bothered the little ones and spoilt their letters, even when they had learnt to write them properly.' Golds went on to describe the print script forms as: 'extremely simple, being only straight and slanting lines and simple curves, and being also very few in number. After learning these it is quite easy for the little ones to make letters. When the letters are mastered, the children begin to write words by simply standing the letters side by side. Thus the children can write at a much earlier age, and the writing becomes a great aid to their reading' (1918: p. 7).

Golds appears to have been aware of one of the criticisms leveled against print script because she ended by referring to some 'speed tests' in which she found that her children wrote just as quickly in the 'old' as the 'new' style.²³

Like Golds, Kate Grainger was concerned about the difficulties children had in learning copperplate. She referred to the 'muscular effort which the looped letters always presented to the younger children' (1918: p. 4):

I ... wondered whether it might not be possible to develop a handwriting from a very much simpler alphabet than the ordinary script letters; from an alphabet which consisted only of the essential parts of the letters, and which would therefore be much more readily and easily written by the younger children, whose control over the finer muscles of the hand is not sufficiently developed to enable them to make the looped letters successfully and well.

She then explained how she developed her approach to handwriting:

The first thing to be determined upon was the alphabet to be taught. This was done by consulting a book and taking the essential parts only of each printed letter. A few letters presented difficulties, e.g. the letters a and g and there are divergences from the usual printed letters in the alphabet which I finally selected.

It is clear from this that Grainger used printing type as a model for her print script forms. The 'difficulties' she referred to were the two-storey forms of a and g. Several print script advocates made the same point: for example, *Manuscript writing and lettering ... by an educational expert* (Hogg, 1921) included a diagram showing how

23. Several authors mentioned the speed with which print script forms could be written because one criticism was that separate letters took longer to write than cursive script. Kimmins presented papers at the April and June 1916 meetings of the Child-Study Association, both of

these describing tests he had supervised investigating speed of writing when using print script forms. (Kimmins, 1918a and 1918b). In the first he summarized work on the speed of handwriting carried out in the USA, and explained his plans to replicate (with some revisions) this work

in London. He used the same test as the researchers in the USA with 'Mary had a little lamb' as the test text. His second paper gave the results of his speed of writing tests which demonstrated that print script could be written faster than what he called 'ordinary handwriting'.

Figure 10. Illustration from *Manuscript writing and lettering... by an educational expert* to show how 'the same essential forms underlie both writing and printing'. The author believed that the 'Skeleton Roman Alphabet contains the fundamental forms of both written and printed letters'. (Hogg 1921: p. 34)

Figure 11. Examples of print script alphabets devised by teachers and used in London schools illustrated in Golds 1918, pp. 8–9.

- (a) The scheme of writing at St Luke's School
- (b) The scheme of writing at St George the Martyr's School
- (c) The scheme of writing at Cromer Street School

'the same essential forms underlie both writing and printing' (figure 10). It is not surprising, then, that Grainger concluded (1918: p. 6) that the effectiveness of print script was: 'That in the lower classes the similarity between the type of the reading book and the letters written by the children is undoubtedly a great help, within the reading and in the writing'. She gave as further advantages that younger children found print script much easier to write than copperplate because of the absence of 'looped letters and joinings' and that it was easier for teachers to correct because the letters were clear, and appropriate for arithmetic and maps because of their clarity.

Golds and Grainger promoted print script as an approach to handwriting rather than a particular letterform shape. There were many different print script alphabets used in schools. Some of these are illustrated in figure 11. These alphabets entirely lacked any aesthetic qualities: they all contained some particularly ugly letterforms, confirming that Johnston could not have been involved in the formulation of a specific print script model. Nevertheless, interest in print script was growing and a number of publications were produced for different purposes and audiences. Print script alphabets were used in handwriting schemes and were discussed in publications about them, in books with a broad perspective on the teaching of handwriting, and in more general works on lettering and design. Despite a common print script approach there was considerable variation in the letterforms used, ranging from very geometric forms to those with more cursive qualities; some letter shapes were idiosyncratic and mannered, as shown in the synopsis of different forms of selected small letters and capitals illustrated in figure 12 (opposite).

The terms 'script writing', 'print script' (print-script), 'print-writing', 'manuscript writing' and 'modern script' were all used in the second and third decades of the twentieth century to describe a style of handwriting in which the letterforms were 'simplified', 'essential' or 'skeleton' in their form, and upright, separate and monoline. This range of terms reflects the various different contributions to the development of the approach: 'print' refers to the association with type in reading books, first to the technique used by teachers at the end of the nineteenth century of asking children to draw the letters

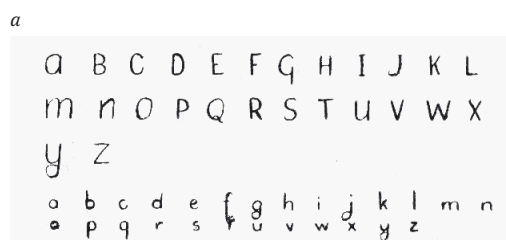


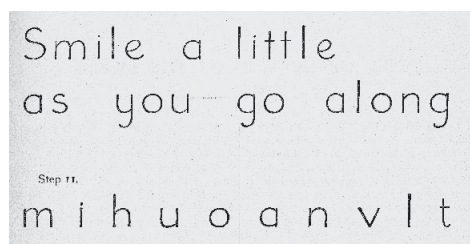


Figure 12. Synopsis of different letter shapes from print script alphabets.

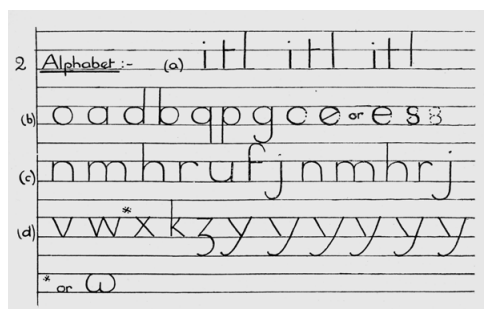
- (1) Golds [1919]
- (2) Thomas [1919]
- (3) Raw 1923
- (4) Wise 1924
- (5) Finch & Kimmins 1932
- (6) Robertson & Field 1926

used in their reading books, and second, through a concern to link letters for writing with letters for reading. ‘Manuscript writing’ seems to have been used in accounts that make direct reference to Johnston, either, as Golds did, to acknowledge his view that an understanding of fundamental letter shapes is a pre-requisite to writing quickly, or by stressing the importance of the broad-nibbed pen as the tool that should be used to emulate the ninth- and tenth-century manuscripts that Johnston so admired and believed should form the basis of a legible and beautiful handwriting. ‘Script writing’ and ‘script’ seem to have been used less, and as a short term for ‘manuscript writing’.

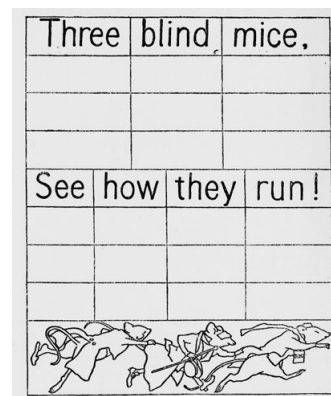
Some of the letterforms shown in figure 13 (overleaf) are from handwriting models that would have been used in schools in the 1920s and 1930s. Golds’s *Manuscript writing* (1919), which evolved from the paper she presented at the Child-Study Association meetings, comprised a graded scheme of handwriting which began by breaking letters down into groups according to their formal elements, first the capitals, and then the small letters. She provided a series of steps to be followed in each of the classes in the infants’ and senior schools. The book concluded with examples of children’s writing. Golds was evidently writing with the needs of practicing teachers in mind, as she acknowledged (1919: p. 30): ‘I trust that this book will supply the want that has been felt and prove a practical help to many of my fellow-teachers.’ Her missionary zeal is apparent in three short sections: ‘The advantages of the system’, ‘Some objections to this



a



b



c

Figure 13. Print script alphabets used in London schools in the 1920s.

- (a) Golds's distinctive print script model with a cursive e and short-tailed g. (Golds [1919], p. 11)
- (b) 'Ball and stick' was the term sometimes used to describe print script models based on the straight line and the circle. (Hardwick, [1920], pp. 15–17)
- (c) 'Print-writing' from 'Nelson's print-writing for school', a bound-in, 12-page supplement that appeared in some of the later editions of Thomas, [1919]. This illustration is from page 10 of that supplement and shows words for children to copy and outline drawings for colouring in.

style of writing answered' and 'Opinions expressed by head masters and mistresses who have adopted the system'.²⁴ Through judicious use of quotations from children, teachers and 'commercial people' she demonstrated that her approach to handwriting was easy to learn, legible, quick to write and capable of being developed into an individual hand. Her model was used for *Blackie's manuscript copy-books*.²⁵ Another teacher-produced handwriting scheme was *Simple script writing* by Gladys Hardwick and published by Evans Brothers around 1920.²⁶ This is an archetypal 'ball and stick' interpretation of print script, as Hardwick ([1920]: p. 15) describes: 'the whole scheme is based on the straight line and the circle, therefore a thorough practice of these, as shown, is best preparation for a script in which roundness and uprightness are the main characteristics.' The resulting model is unattractive, both in examples for copying, and in samples of children's writing. Hardwick, however, was concerned to some extent with planning and decoration, presumably arising from her classroom experience. For example, she gave precise instructions for the depth and use of 'guiding lines' for the early stages and devoted a whole section to 'pattern making' in the form of decorative borders and initial letters.²⁷ The book concluded with a short section on 'The relation of script to ordinary writing' where she highlighted two points in favour of print script: the use of one instead of two alphabets for reading and writing, and its simplicity, allowing greater speed and ease of learning. Thomas's *Handwriting reform* ([1919]: p. x) was a 'plea for the introduction into our schools of that method of handwriting which is called Print or Manuscript writing'. He described his scheme rather grandly:

It is a complete departure from the older systems of handwriting. It discards the script letters elaborated by the copperplate engraver, and substitutes the simple and artistic Roman characters in which all our books are printed. It abandons the joinings of letters during the early stages of instruction, and concentrates the child's attention on the form of the separate characters. It abolishes loops and flourishes of every kind, unnatural slopes and distracting guidelines, and restores writing to a simplicity and freedom which have long been absent. Thus PRINT-WRITING is not a mere change in the form of letters. It is a scientific system of penmanship differing from the ordinary script in many features. (Thomas [1919]: p. 3 of appended section)

24. Golds, [1919]: pp. 12–14.

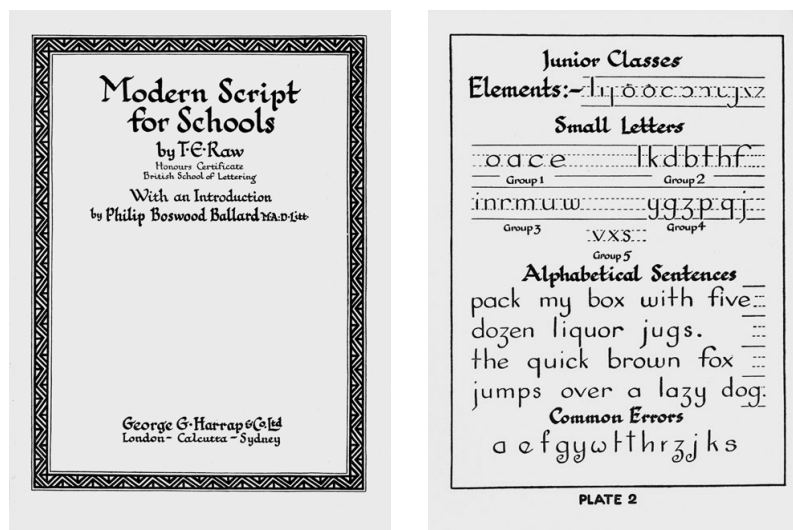
25. See Sassoon, 1999: p. 68.

26. This is a 78-page book that ends in mid sentence with a list of suggestions for continuing with the print script approach in the senior school. The production error is evident in the two copies of this book that I have seen.

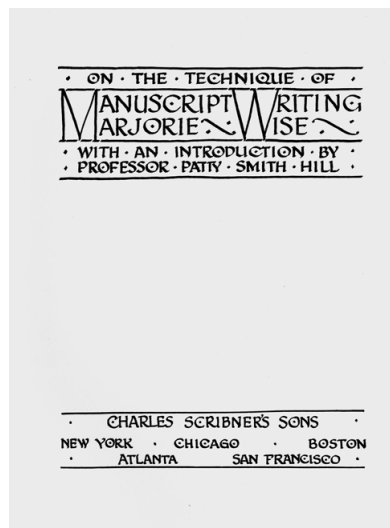
27. Hardwick refers to Johnston's *Writing & illuminating, & lettering and Manuscript writing ... by an educational expert*, published by John Hogg, which suggests that she was aware of the broader context of print script.

Thomas devoted only one short chapter to the letterforms themselves. The rest of the book was given to posture, holding the pen, materials, the use of guidelines, plus a brief account of the origin of writing. In his chapter on 'Manuscript or print writing' he acknowledged the work of Golds and Grainger and included work from children in their schools in an appendix. He also showed an illustration of what he called 'the usual form of the small letters' captioned 'Specimens of the letters in Nelson's print-writing series', and the editions of the book that I have seen include advertisements for the same. Thomas claimed ([1919]: p. 55) that manuscript or print writing is not new: 'It is only a variant of our small print letters, the Roman type, except the a and g'. T. E. Raw's *Modern script for schools* (1923), *Manuscript writing and lettering ... by an educational expert* (1921) and Marjorie Wise's *Manuscript writing* (1924) took a broader historical view of the teaching of handwriting. These authors promoted print script as part of a scheme leading towards a rounded cursive hand in the Johnston tradition. Raw (1923) for example, dealt with the transition from skeletal forms to a fairly cursive form written with a broad-nibbed pen and in so doing offered a sound interpretation of Johnston. He presented a scheme designed to correspond with the junior, intermediate and senior classes in elementary schools. Junior and elementary classes were encouraged to produce separate letters, with the circle as the modular form, and he wrote (1923: p. 23): 'The teacher must insist on the roundness of the circle; better too wide than too narrow. In order to emphasize the roundness, circles may be likened to oranges or moons'. An example of the letterforms to be used in the early stages of learning to write is shown in figure 14a. Raw's print script model, like that shown in *Manuscript writing and lettering* (1918) was drawn with a broad-nibbed pen which not only distinguished it from monoline models from this period, but also emphasized, as Johnston advocated, that print script was merely an early stage in the development of a cursive hand. The title pages of these books are themselves examples of the handwriting to which they aspire (figures 14a, and 14b overleaf). Wise (1924) went a

Figure 14a. For some authors print script was seen as pre-requisite to writing with a broad-nibbed pen. The title pages of the books of Raw (right) and Wise (overleaf) show the kind of handwriting that they sought to inspire. Raw's print script model is written with a broad-nibbed pen. (Raw 1923, title page and plate 2)



14b. Wise saw 'essential forms' as the starting point for a style of handwriting that would eventually be written with a broad-nibbed pen in the Johnston tradition. This is a very geometric rendition of print script. The lines appear to have been drawn with a ruler and compass. (Wise 1924, title page and p. 4)



28. In her history, Wise identifies Edward Johnston, Monica Bridges, S. A. Golds and Graily Hewitt as key players in the development of print script in England. Hewitt was a pupil of Johnston and a keen promoter of the broad-nibbed pen as the correct tool for handwriting. In *The Oxford copy-books* [1916] he demonstrated a round-hand drawn with a broad pen which was similar in style (but more assured) to those in the books by Raw, Wise and others at this time. Hewitt was not at all in favour of print script as drawn with a pencil: 'The modern print imitation is rendered as with a slate-pencil or a match end; and all the virtue of the pen-method negated by an unconvincing misapplication.' (1930: p. 54) Lehman (1976) gives an account of Wise's work which is based on Wise's 1924 book but Lehman notes that Wise, in the early 1930s rejected her print script work in favour of Alfred Fairbank's italic models (Lehman, 1976: p. 50).

stage further: the entire book (other than some of the examples) was written by hand with a broad-nibbed pen. Her account was comprehensive and gave a history and development of what she referred to as a 'movement' as well as descriptions of method, and criticisms, followed by a copybook 'beginning work with pencil in order to master the essential forms and then proceeding to penwork' (Wise, 1924: p. 1).²⁸ Her book concluded with a bibliography which included contemporary sources as well as sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writing masters, and some examples of young children's writing. The appearance of print script alphabets in more general books on lettering and design helped to confirm its broad acceptance (figure 15, opposite). In *A book of lettering* (Robertson and Field, 1926: p. 5) an example of 'print writing' is described as 'a simplified form of lettering based on the Roman ... It is a suitable type for children to use', and in *Ticket and showcard design* (Pearson, 1924) there is an example of 'the Script style now taught in some schools in place of, or in addition to, handwriting'. Other books also included 'skeleton letters' or 'simplified forms' without particular reference to children: the examples from Higgins (1932) show a number of variant forms. *Lettering for schools* (Judson, [1928]: p. 7) illustrates letters drawn with a ball-pointed nib: 'Block letters made with a ball-pointed pen are excellent for a beginning, as the forms are plain and familiar to all'.

One reason for a more than passing acceptance of print script was endorsement by education authorities. In 1923 the Board of Education published a pamphlet *Print-script* written by school inspectors in response to 'recent discussions in the Press and elsewhere upon the introduction of Print-Script into Elementary Schools'. They noted in the preface that 'The general trend of opinion appears to be that, while younger children gain considerably by the habitual use of script, the older children learn from it to write more legibly if not more pleasingly.' (Board of Education, 1923: p. ii) The 26-page pamphlet comprised an introduction plus four accounts that included synopses of case studies carried out in schools in Leeds and Leicester, as well as an appendix listing further reading. The case studies were concerned with speed of writing, legibility and acceptance of the



a



b



c

Figure 15. Print script alphabets were included in general books on lettering.

- (a) 'Print writing' alphabet described as 'a suitable type for children to use'. (Robertson and Field 1926, p. 5)
- (b) Alphabet described as the 'Script style now taught in some schools in place of, or in addition to, writing.' (Pearson 1924, pp. 11–12)
- (c) The 'Skeleton Small Letters' showing a number of variant forms. (Higgins 1932, p. 14)

style as children progressed through the educational system. Further endorsement of print script was demonstrated through the *Handbook of suggestions for the consideration of teachers and others concerned in the work of public elementary schools*. The 1927 edition's chapter on 'Handwriting' (pp. 311–26) summarised the print script approach, but with considerable emphasis on the use of the broad-nibbed pen as a development from what was referred to as 'unjoined skeleton print script'.²⁹ The Hadow report of 1931, *The primary school*, further confirmed the extent of support for print script:

The simplification of the dual task of teaching the elements of reading and writing to infants, which arises from the adoption of a single alphabet, is so well recognized that unjoined print script is now almost universal in the infant school. The lettering adopted is so similar to that of ordinary print that only in the formation of the two letters a and g is there any material difference, and some publishers have eliminated even this difference by printing reading books for infants in the print script alphabet.³⁰

But the report did not recommend that print script should be used in schools, opting instead for legibility and clarity as the most important criteria for 'good writing' with the result that primary schools in England adopted a number of different handwriting models, not all of which were in the print script tradition. Marion Richardson's model, for example, shown first in the *Dudley writing cards* published in 1928, and then in the 'Writing and writing patterns' series introduced in 1935, was designed to be both legible and clear. It was not a print script form, for even in the early stages of the scheme children were encouraged to develop a cursive approach, for example, by drawing patterns based on the movements of making letter shapes, and by the use of exit strokes on some of the letters. Fairbank's *Handwriting manual* was first published in 1932, and this, along with *The Dryad writing cards*, introduced italic handwriting into schools. Both these models, as well as various print script ones, were taught in schools until well into the 1970s (Sassoon, 1999).

29. One of the most interesting points raised by the author of this chapter is in a footnote where he discusses the notion of fitness for purpose: 'Whatever style of handwriting may be adopted for the later stages of school-work, there are many practical purposes for which teachers will find it useful to retain the *unjoined* skeleton print-script e.g., scientific records, mathematical calculations, geographical diagrams and maps, and various purposes in the industrial arts and crafts.' The author then suggested a simplified form of numerals for such purposes 'without

"tops" or "tails"' (ascenders and descenders). The numbers 1 to 9 are illustrated in the footnote, and presented as lining figures (rather than non-lining) suggesting that this is what was meant by the reference to tops and tails.

30. There were five parts to the Hadow report, published between 1923 and 1931. The most relevant here are *The primary school* (1931) which set out to influence

the style of education to be offered in 'primary' schools that replaced 'elementary' schools on the recommendation of the Hadow Committee in 1926, and the 1928 review *Books in public elementary schools* which provided an historical perspective as well as a wide-ranging account of the use of books in schools. All the Hadow reports, plus commentaries, can be downloaded from www.dg.dial.pipex.com.

The debate among teachers and others about print script that was one of the reasons why publishers in the 1920s began to seriously consider the typography of their reading books for young children. Some looked for ways to support teachers, like Golds and Grainger, who were keen to relate letters for writing to letters for reading. One of the points repeatedly made in favour of print script was that it meant that children learnt the same letterforms used for writing as for reading. In the Board of Education's leaflet about print script 'there appears to have been a practically unanimous opinion amongst teachers who have tried this script in their schools that it possesses many advantages especially in the early stages of reading *and* writing' (1923: pp. 21–2). One obstacle that had to be overcome was how to adapt handwritten print script forms for use in reading books.

Typefaces in reading books in the 1920s and 1930s

In the 1920s and 1930s most reading books were set in seriffed type. Many publishers had taken note of the 1913 *Report on the influence of schoolbooks upon eyesight* published by the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS).³¹ This not only provides an early example of design decisions being taken with a particular user group in mind as a result of scientific investigation, but also of the need of publishers to be competitive in a growing market. The content of the report was much influenced by the work of Edmund Huey whose book *The psychology and pedagogy of reading* (1908) related research on vision and legibility to educational practice.³² Its relevance to the visual appearance of schoolbooks was seen in the chapter 'Hygienic requirements in the printing of books and papers'. Interpretations of these findings by the BAAS Committee (which included experts in typography and printing as well as members of the medical profession) resulted in recommendations that were explicit, and easy for those involved in book production to act upon.³³ The Report claimed that a 'modern face', where the letters are more legible, may be suitable for younger readers; but for more fluent readers an 'old face' style may be better because 'the letters of the "old face" flow more naturally into words because the height of the ascenders tends to be shorter'. They gave examples of recommended typefaces including Old Style, Modern, Old Style Antique, Caslon Old Face, and guidance on type size, line spacing and length of line in relation to children's age in a 'Standard typographic table', and also illustrated as 'Specimens of type' (figure 16, opposite). This guidance appears to have been

31. The 1913 report was the culmination of a number of meetings of various sub-committees of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS). Recommendations about typography, though slight, were made as early as 1903: 'School books are considered to be appropriate and well printed when the paper is thick enough to prevent the ink showing through; the colour of the paper slightly toned white, not glazed; the ink a good black; the size of the type pica leaded; and the length of the line about four inches.' (Report of the 73rd meeting at Southport, September 1903 published by John

Murray, 1904: p. 461.) Recommendations continued in the BAAS reports: in 1911 (p. 633) G. F. Daniell added a little more detail about typography, introducing children's age as determinant of type size: 'Types recommended are "double-pica" for very young children; "pica-leaded" for children of age six to eleven, and "small pica leaded" for the older children.' In 1912 the Committee provided a more detailed report, plus illustrations of recommended typefaces and type sizes. This report also acknowledged input from the printing trade (Report of the 82nd meeting of the BAAS, Dundee, September

1912 *Reports on the state of science* 1912, pp. 295–318). The 1913 Report, from the 83rd meeting, in Birmingham, is a revision 'involving substantial alterations' of the 1912 report.

32. Summaries of eye movement and other psychological reading research are given in Venezky, 1984: pp. 3–38.

33. The 'printing experts', included J. H. Mason, R. J. Davies, F. J. Hall, H. Fitzhenry and F. Killick. The type specimens they consulted are also listed: those from Caslon & Co, Haddon, Miller and Richard, Shanks & Sons, R. H. Stevens & Co.

minimum in the typographical table.
Printed from type known as Thirty
Point Old Face.

than the minimum given in the
typographical table. Printed from
24 Point Old Style.

Figure 16 (above). Examples of specimens of type suitable for children under seven from the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) 1913 report. The 'Old Face' is Caslon Old Face (top); the 'Old Style' is Stephenson Blake Old Style No. 5. Actual size.

Figure 17 (right). The publishers of both of these books stated explicitly that they were following the BAAS guidelines. Actual size.

- (a) (upper) 'Chambers's phonic readers for infant schools' (*First infant reader*, London: W. & R. Chambers, p. 61). The typeface fits the category 'Old Style Antique' in the guidelines.
(b) (lower) 'Gibson's simplified print writing primer' (*Stage 3*, Glasgow: Robert Gibson & Sons, p. 7). The typeface is a standard grotesque of the period, but with modified a, g, and t.

But if Jack did not hear
the maid, the dog seemed
to do so. When tea-

2. The cart wheels and the
hors-es' feet bring mud so
fast that his brush is kept

welcomed by educational publishers and supported by teachers.³⁴ The BAAS report was widely publicized both in printing and educational journals (Mason, 1913; *School World*, Dumville, 1912). Its recommendations were followed by publishers, and in some cases used in their publicity for a particular series, though as can be seen from the examples in figure 17, publishers' interpretation of the guidelines varied considerably.³⁵ The strongest recommendation was: 'the size of the type-face is the most important factor in the influence of books

34. This was not the first time that recommendations were made for type size in children's books. Several early 20th-century books on school hygiene included reference to size of type in their sections on reading. (See, e.g., Newsholme and Pakes, 1904: p. 95; Shaw, 1906: pp. 175–9; Gunn, 1906: p. 255). However, it seems likely that these references did not have the impact on publishers that the 1913 BAAS report did.

35. 'The type and arrangement of *The Sunshine Readers* conform in every

respect to the recommendations of the Committee of the British Association on the Influence of Schoolbooks upon eyesight.' The Glasgow publishers, Robert Gibson & Sons, followed some of the recommendations: their books were set in a sanserif typeface, which was not one of the recommended ones, but the following sentence appeared on the back cover: 'This book conforms in arrangement with the recommendations made by the British Association for the Advancement of Science.'

Figure 18. In many children's books in the 1920s, the size of the type was increased without corresponding increases in space between the lines, and large type sizes with justified setting meant that the pages appeared overcrowded, with very uneven spacing between words. Actual size.

- (a) (upper) E. A. Gregory, 'New steps for tiny folk', *Two little runaways*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. [2–3]. The typeface is Caslon Old Face, recommended in the guidelines.
 (b) (lower) 'Ring-o-roses series', 6: *Six wee crabs*, London: Cassell, pp. 4–5. The typeface fits the category 'Old Style' in the guidelines.

Figure 19. 'The new beacon readers' combined Century Schoolbook with generous space between the lines. Actual size. (J. H. Fassett, 'The new beacon readers', *Book one*, London: Ginn and Co., 1922, pp. 20–1)

“ No,” said Tray. “ I cannot come. I have no pail, and I cannot come with you to play and dig on

I. Mama Crab saw Jim and Joe put the six crabs in the net. She was so sad, but she said, “I will

She is too ill.

You may fan her if you like.

I wish I had a little fan.

upon vision' (1913: pp. 13–14), and as a result, many reading books produced between 1915 and 1925 typically had very large type with rather less interlinear space than most designers today would consider appropriate (figure 18).

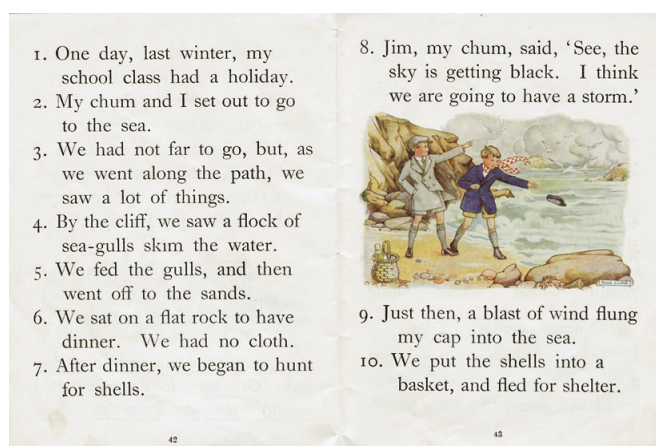
The BAAS report, specifically its recommended attributes for typefaces for use in school books, influenced the design of what was to become a well-known and widely-used reading book typeface. Century Schoolbook was designed for Ginn & Co. by Morris Fuller Benton in response to a commission by Ginn & Co. to the American Type Founders Company (ATF). Benton:

consulted the 'Report on the Influence of School Books upon Eyesight' written for the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and other academic studies on the subject. All of these tests and experiments indicated that children required larger and more distinct typefaces than did adults. Consequently, Benton increased the space between the letters, the x-height of each letter, and the weight of each stroke, and balanced the color of the type by opening up the counters. (Shaw, 1989: p. 49)

Century Schoolbook was issued in 1919 and used by Ginn in the USA for the 'Beacon reading' scheme. This scheme was introduced to England by Robert D. Morss who was appointed in 1919 to rejuvenate the London office of the company.³⁶ 'The new beacon readers', published from 1922, were typeset in Century Schoolbook with generous interlinear space; they had considerable appeal and were widely used in English schools until the 1960s (figure 19). Morss worked closely with Beatrice Warde who began publicising Monotype typefaces and typesetting equipment in the late 1920s. Newly-cut historic typefaces

36. Lawler (1938: p. 114 and pp. 187–90).

Figure 20. Monotype Imprint 101 was used in all four books in 'The radiant way', and may have been used as a result of the publicity issued by Monotype about their 'large size composition' machines and the promotion by Warde and Morss of the suitability of some of their typefaces for use in school books. (J. Brown and E. Sinton, 'The radiant way', *Second step*, London: W. & R. Chambers, 1933, pp. 42–3)



such as Baskerville, Plantin and Imprint combined with the increased availability of large size composition equipment on Monotype machines meant that typesetting 16-, 18- and 24-point type no longer had to be done by hand. Warde and Morss wrote several articles that helped to promote the importance of good typography in children's reading books (Morss, 1935; Warde, 1935; Warde, 1950), and used the opportunity to publicise Monotype typefaces and the advantages of large size composition machines.³⁷ There was therefore support for and availability of a relatively large number of seriffed typefaces for use in school books. W. & R. Chambers, for example, who published 'The radiant way' in 1933, took advantage of this availability and used 18- and 24-point Monotype Imprint 101 in the four books of the series (figure 20).

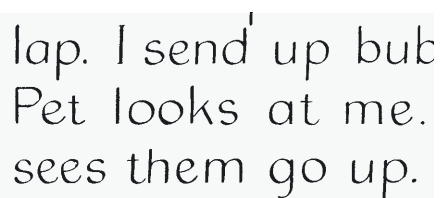
Representing print script in reading books

Seriffed typefaces continued, then, to be very much the norm in reading books in the 1920s and 1930s, endorsed by the BAAS reports and made possible by Monotype typefaces available for machine setting in large sizes. It is in this context that we can assess the efforts of some teachers to acquire reading books that linked reading and writing. The classroom practice of drawing the printed letter, reinforced by the print script movement's emphasis on simplicity, meant that teachers gained confidence and authority in their choice of letterforms suitable for children. It is not surprising that some reading books were produced using handwritten letterforms, under the influence and close direction of teachers. 'Blackie's manuscript writing' series used the handwriting model developed by S. A. Golds in her 1919 book *Manuscript writing*, and in her series of copybooks. Blackie produced two related series: 'Blackie's coloured manuscript writing infant readers' and 'Blackie's manuscript-writing infant story readers'. Individual titles in both of these series were published throughout the 1920s.³⁸ These books were carefully produced and in many ways embodied the Johnston 'print script' approach. The title

37. Warde (1935: p. 16) noted: 'The Large Size Composition equipment on "Monotype" machines makes it unnecessary to resort to the use of worn type and hand-setting for a child's book in sizes large enough for unaccustomed eyes.'

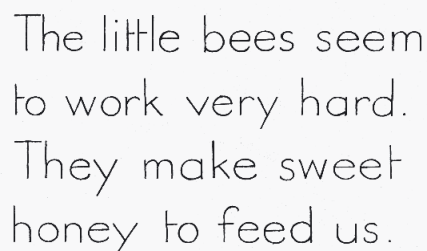
The growth of publicity printing has greatly increased the amount of large size composition done, and at the request of printers here and abroad a large majority of the classic "Monotype" faces now possess 16- or 18- and 24-point composition matrices.'

38. The use of the word 'coloured' in the first of these titles refers to the printing of every other picture in the book in full colour.



lap. I send' up but
Pet looks at me.
sees them go up.

Figure 21. The text in the 'manuscript writing' series published by Blackie was written in S. A. Golds's print script model. (L. M. Sidnell and A. M. Gibbon, 'Blackie's coloured manuscript-writing infant readers', *Little ones' own picture reader*, London and Glasgow: Blackie, 1924, pp. 26–7)



The little bees seem
to work very hard.
They make sweet
honey to feed us.

Figure 22. 'The Burnley readers' was a series produced using a print script model used in the classroom. (*First reader*, London: Nelson, 1937, pp. 22–3)

pages of each book were written with a broad-nibbed pen in a joined, rounded letterform. The inside pages of each book, though still written in pen, followed Golds's print script model including the rounded small-letter e and the short tail of the small-letter g (figure 21).

Blackie's commitment was further demonstrated in the care taken in the choice and production of images.

Print script also infiltrated reading books through even more direct teacher involvement; some began to produce their own books, a practice referred to in an account of the introduction of print script into schools in Leicester: 'It is noteworthy that one very good Infants' Mistress had, for several years, used only one alphabet, namely, the one commonly used heretofore [i.e. print script] for handwriting, and in order to make this possible had, with the help of her staff, manufactured in school all the reading material required. This was done solely in order that children should not have to learn two alphabets in the early stages'.³⁹ One such teacher-produced series is likely to have been 'The Burnley readers' which used a hand drawn, large, ugly and spindly letterform (figure 22).⁴⁰ This series included a 'first' and a 'second' reader, and a *Teacher's handbook* (Burnley, 1937: [p. ii]) that made it clear that the choice of letterform was intentional: 'The text of the Readers is printed in Script and can be used for first Exercises in Writing.' Handwritten letterforms were also used in 'The "Seandar" individual reading books' first published in 1929 by Cartwright and Rattray, a stationers in Hyde, Cheshire; and then in the 1930s by the educational publishers E. J. Arnold of Leeds. A distinctive characteristic of these books was the reversing of the letterforms to white out of black to simulate the blackboards on which teachers wrote for children to copy (figure 23, opposite). Though widespread in nineteenth-century reading books, this practice was unusual in the 1930s, and shortlived, though acquisition of the 'Seandar' series by E. J. Arnold suggested that this publisher at least thought it may have had potential.⁴¹ Arnold also published 'The "Welbent" reading scheme' devised by Augusta Monteith which used a handwritten, rounded print script form with relatively long ascenders and descenders on a series of word and picture cards (rather than a book). The period in which handwritten forms were used in reading books was relatively short-lived, perhaps due to unconventionality, but also because of the growing availability of sanserif typefaces that met the print script aims of simplicity and clarity, and the teachers' desire to link letters for writing with letters for reading.

The use of sanserif type to link writing and reading was mentioned by at least two print script authors. In the following quotation the words 'sans serif' were printed in an emboldened grotesque: 'Learning to read could undoubtedly be further facilitated by having all the early reading-books printed in "sans serif" type, so that precisely the same forms would be used in both reading and writing'.⁴² This view (and the typographic styling, although with a single storey

39. Board of Education, 1923: p. 20.

40. Though the copy of this that I have seen was published by Nelson in 1937, it could well be that it had humbler origins in the classroom.

41. Kerr (1926: p. 554) is less than

enthusiastic about the approach: 'White print on black appears smaller and clearer but probably would soon dirty, and at present has practical difficulties in the way of production.'

42. Hogg, 1918: pp. 34–5.

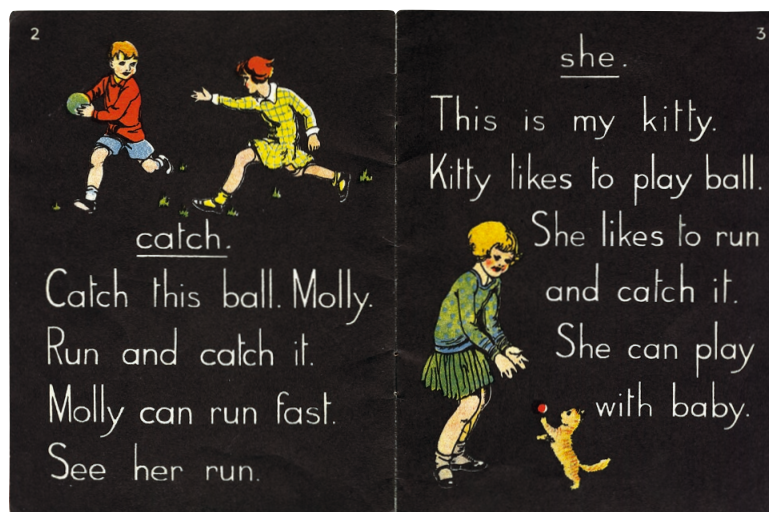
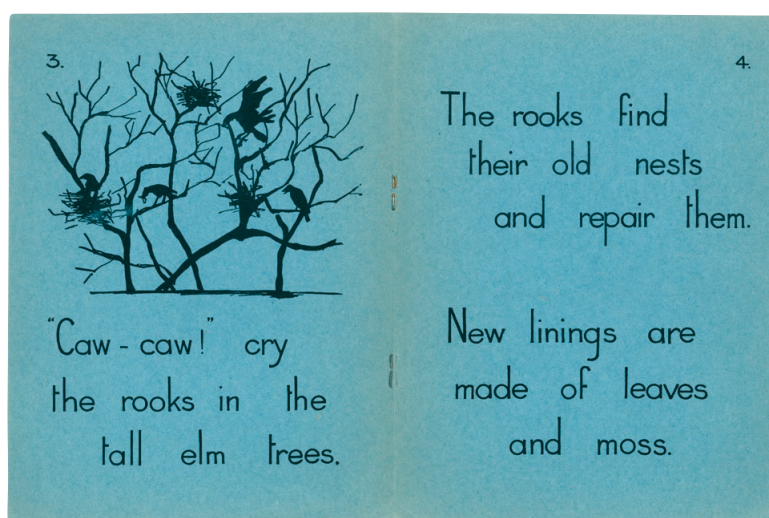


Figure 23. An example of hand-produced print script letterforms. The similarity of some of the characters and evenness of spacing suggests that a stencil may have been used, though there is variation in some character shapes. The same letterforms were used in the related 'The "Seandar" reading and writing booklets'.

- (a) (upper) 'The "Seandar" individual reading books', *My first reading book*. Leeds: E. J. Arnold & Son Ltd, [1920s], pp. 2–3.
 (b) (lower) I. Lang, 'The "Seandar" reading and writing booklets', Set B2, *Birds*, Hyde: Cartwright & Rattray [1920s], pp. 3–4.



a) was repeated five years later by Raw (1923: p. 24) who asserted that: 'The use of "Sans Serif" print reading books is a decided help in junior classes, since similar forms in reading and writing lessons are brought before the pupil's eye and help mutually in impressing the letter-forms'. At this time, however, few books were set in sans-serif type so Raw was writing with very little evidence. The author of a paper in the Board of Education pamphlet (1923: p. 9) referred to a series of reading books that 'is partly printed in "block type" in order to reduce to a minimum the difference between the printed types and the letters formed by the teacher on the blackboard and by the children on their papers.' This series is likely to have been 'The Dale readers' (specifically the first part *Steps to reading*), which though first published in 1899 was still being used in schools in the 1920s. One of the earliest reading schemes to be produced entirely in sans-serif type was the 'print-writing' series produced by the Glasgow publishers Robert Gibson & Sons in the 1920s.⁴³ This scheme included primers: *The play-way book A* and *The play-way book B*, a series of phonic reading books and a related series of supplementary books, 'Print-writing fairy tales'. These books were typeset in a grotesque sans-serif with some specially drawn characters, notably the single-storey a and g and small-letter t (figures 24–5, overleaf).

43. Most of the Gibson print-writing books are undated so it is difficult to be precise about publication. The British Library gives 1922 as the date for the primers and 1921 as the date for the fairy tales. The dates given in the two copies of the fairy tales in my own collection are 1929 and 1934.

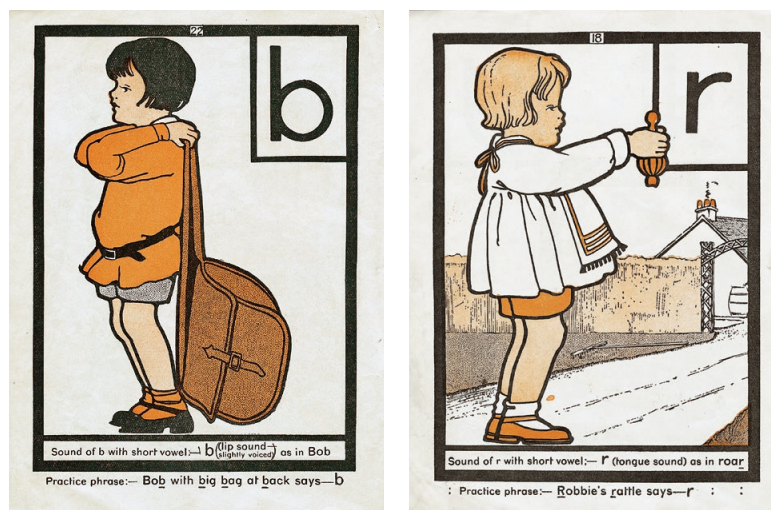


Figure 24. Gibson's 'print-writing' series was set in a grotesque sanserif with some quirky characters (such as the t and the g).

- (a) (upper) 'Gibson's print-writing primers', *The play-way book A*, Glasgow: Robert Gibson & Sons, 1920s, p. 18 and p. 22. In the first primer each letter is introduced with a distinctive illustration that hides the shape of the letter.
- (b) (right) 'Gibson's print-writing primers', *The play-way book B*, Glasgow: Robert Gibson & Sons, 1920s, pp. 18–19. In the second primer sentences are introduced, though initial capital letters are only used for the pronoun I, and for proper nouns.

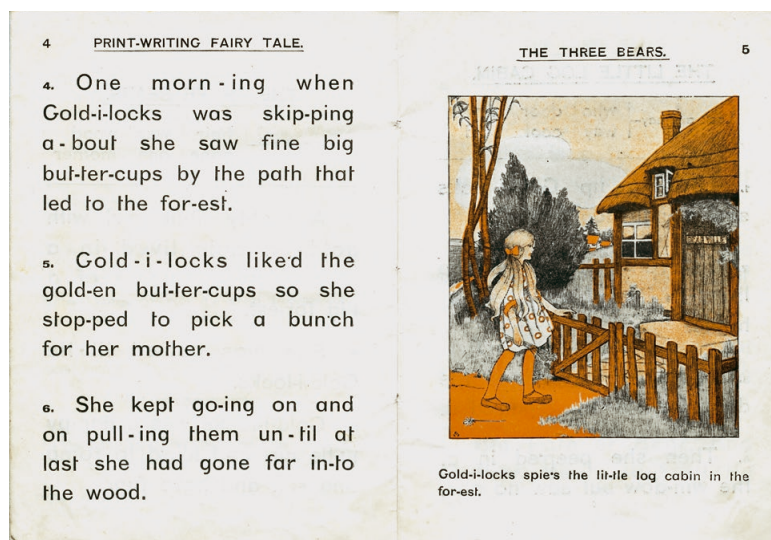
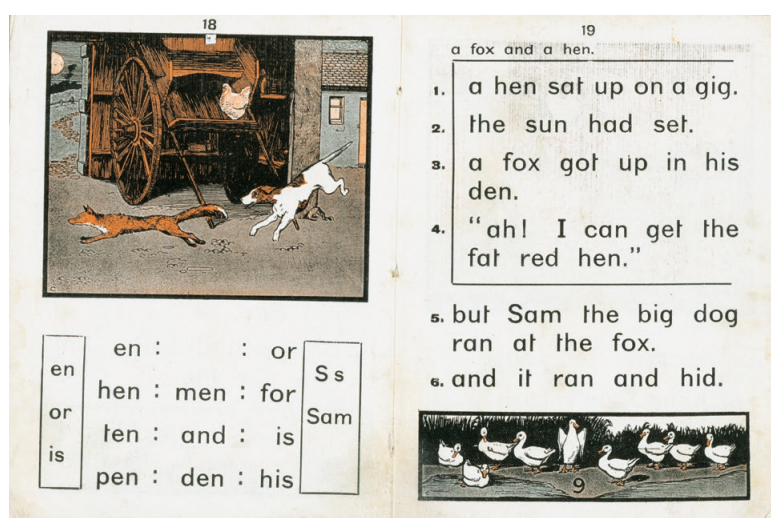


Figure 25. Double-page spread from 'Gibson's "Nexus" series print writing fairy tales', *The three bears*, Glasgow: Robert Gibson & Sons Ltd, pp. 4–5. The fairy tales were 'printed in the plainest print-writing type'.



Figure 26. Walter Crane's drawn letters in *The golden primer* included a single-storey a and g as well as a quirky e and q. Crane and Meiklejohn, 1888, p.[32]

There was occasional use of single-storey a's and g's in reading books in the latter part of the nineteenth century, though this was rarely driven by pedagogy. Crane's hand drawn letterforms in *The golden primer* (1888) were exceptional and deliberate and seem to have been designed specifically for educational purposes (figure 26). Infant characters were not part of the standard character set in typefaces that would have been typically used for reading books in the late nineteenth century, or in the early twentieth century. Then, as now, special characters were specially designed. One publisher that addressed this issue was the Grant Educational Company whose 'The songs the letters sing' series was published in the 1920s and used in schools until the 1950s. The publisher claimed that 'The type being in a bold script will be found helpful for writing as well as reading' ([Meeres], 1920s: inside front cover). Of the books in the series *A preparatory primer*, *Book IA* and *Book IIA* were typeset in a distinctive typeface that bore some resemblance to Richmond Old Style which appeared in a 1925 specimen issued by the Blackfriars type foundry, but the a and g and also the small letter t appear to have been specially drawn, indicated by a distinct lack of fit between these and the other characters (figure 27). This is an example of a publisher attempting to link reading and writing, not through typeface, but

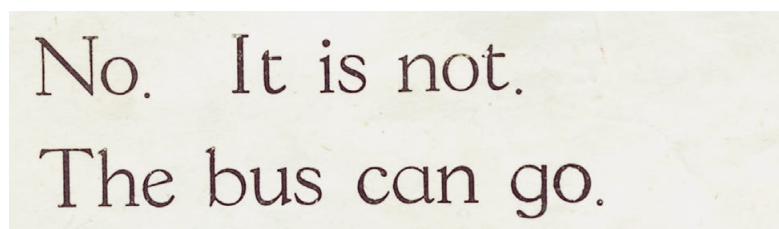
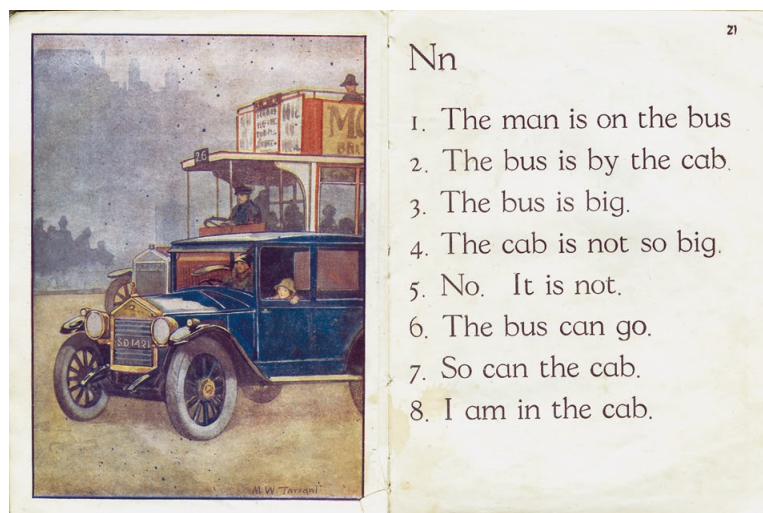


Figure 27. Type with infant characters was used in some of the books in 'The songs the letters sing' series.

- (a) (upper) S.N.D.[Rose Meeres], *The songs the letters sing, A preparatory primer*, Glasgow: Grant Educational Company, 1920s, pp. 20-1.
 (b) (lower) Example of the type at actual size.

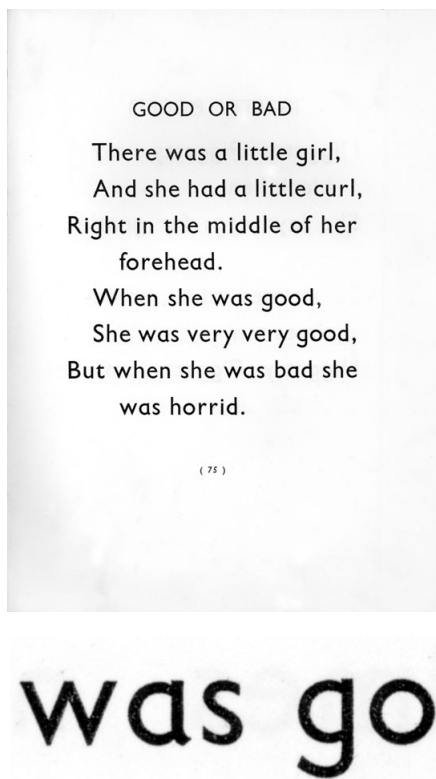


Figure 28. Gill Sans with infant characters specially drawn for this book of poetry for children. A. M. Monteith, *First poetry book*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1934, p. 75. This is a reprint of the first edition, published as *The pink book of verse*, 1931.

through the character shapes.⁴⁴ This use of infant characters, especially with a seriffed typeface, was unusual and ahead of its time, but in the 1920s and 1930s infant characters also began to be available for use with some sanserif typefaces.

The use of sanserif typefaces for continuous text in children's reading books from around 1930 was tentative: of forty-nine reading series and books listed in the 1935 LCC list of approved books likely to be used by beginners and infants, only two series used sanserif type. These were the 'Child's picture readers' and 'The John and Mary readers' (London County Council, 1935). One of the reasons for this relatively slow growth was the lack of typefaces other than the grotesques (which tended to be used for supplementary information and headings). The availability of Gill Sans in 1928 and Granby in 1930 offered two further options.

Beatrice Warde argued in the *Monotype Recorder* (1935: pp. 14–16), that Gill Sans was a typeface 'of major importance' because 'very little children see essentials to the exclusion of the accidentals ... there is some reason to get down to essentials with their printed letterforms' and suggested that serifs were not necessary in the early stages of learning to read because speed of reading (which she believed was enhanced by serifs leading the eye along a line of type) was not a primary concern. She drew attention to *The pink book of verse for very little children* by Augusta Monteith, published by Sheed & Ward in 1931 and set in Gill Sans in sizes that reduced from 24- to 14-point through the book (figure 28).⁴⁵ While not a reading book, it marked an important development because it was set entirely in Gill Sans with specially drawn infant a's and g's. Monteith, a teacher and author of 'The "Welbent" reading scheme' that used handwritten print script forms, explained (1931: p. vi) why she chose this typeface: 'The type used throughout is the Sans-Serif of Mr. Eric Gill, who has designed cursive forms of a and g specially for this book. In this type, as in the common "script" forms, the letters are reduced to their essential elements; but there will be found a perfection of form which makes it the best possible model for children learning to write'. Monteith linked what she called 'script' (meaning print script) and Gill Sans through the reduction of the letters to 'essential elements', and extended the print script/sanserif association by acknowledging a particular typeface as a 'best possible model'.⁴⁶ Monteith's was the most clearly articulated and evident support from a teacher both for sanserif type and for infant a's and g's. Gill Sans, with and without infant characters, was used by a number of publishers in the 1930s and 1940s. E. J. Arnold, for example, used it for some of the books in the 'Individual reading books' series (figure 29, opposite). Another popular typeface at this time was Stephenson Blake's Granby, notably used by Schofield and Sims for 'The John and Mary readers' published around 1932. This series initially comprised four books and a teacher's book.

44. This typeface was also used in 'Simple reading steps', a later Grant series of over 30 books published from the 1930s to the 1950s.

45. *The pink book of verse* was 're-issued in a cheaper edition' in November 1934 as *First poetry book*, also published by Sheed & Ward.

46. Monteith may have been supported in her quest for a suitable typeface for her books by the publishers of *A pink book of verse*, Sheed & Ward. Maisie Ward was a friend of Eric Gill, so would have been aware of his work. (Sheed & Ward also published the first edition of Gill's *Essay on typography*, 1931.)

Figure 29. E. J. Arnold used Gill Sans with infant characters in 'Individual Reading Books', *My third reading book*, Leeds: E. J. Arnold, nd, pp. 8–9.

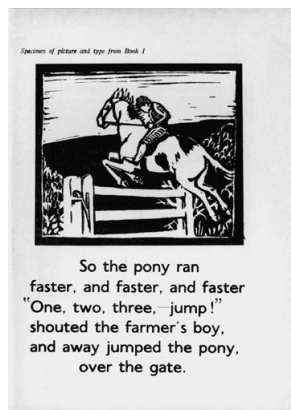
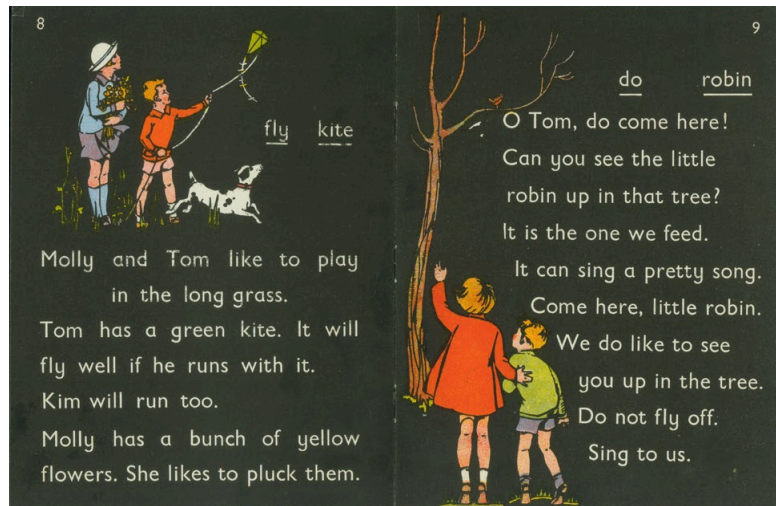


Figure 30. 'The John and Mary readers' were set in Stephenson Blake's Granby, and which had characteristics of Gill and Futura. Page showing 'Specimen of picture and type from Book 1' from Ashley [1932], back of cover.

It was typeset in a range of sizes and was illustrated by black and white linocuts by E. L. Turner. The result was striking and unlike any other contemporary scheme (figure 30). Schofield and Sims also published 'The Mac and Tosh readers' later in the 1930s. This series showed some similarities with 'The John and Mary readers': the *Introductory book* and *Book 1* were typeset in Granby, and the illustrations (by Rita Townsend) had a graphic quality using flat colours, usually red or green, and black. The later books in this series used Gill Sans with an infant 'a' and 'g' (figure 31).

Sanserif type with infant characters met the needs of teachers who wanted to use reading books set in a type that related to the forms of handwritten print script. This is an excellent example of the use of a modern letter to fulfil a particular, pedagogical, function. There was, however, another view voiced by Beatrice Warde (1935: p. 15), that infant characters were not appropriate for *reading* because that is a different activity to writing: 'they [children] are also [as well as learning to write], and primarily, learning to read, and it seems a pity to familiarize them with a and g of a form they will not meet in normal roman, and in the case of a, in a form which is more coincident



Figure 31. 'The Mac and Tosh' series was typeset in Granby; and in Gill Sans with infant characters.

(a) (left) E. Ashley, *Mac and Tosh with Jim and Jenny*, Huddersfield: Schofield & Sims, c. 1938, pp. 6–7, typeset in Granby.

(b) (right) E. Ashley, *Mac and Tosh go to school*, Huddersfield: Schofield & Sims, c. 1938, pp. 20–1, typeset in Gill Sans.

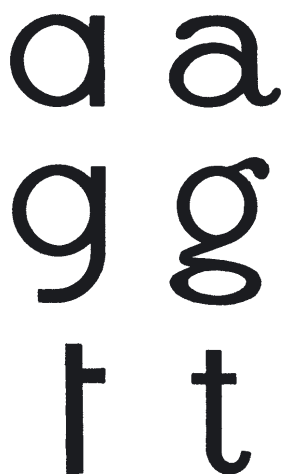
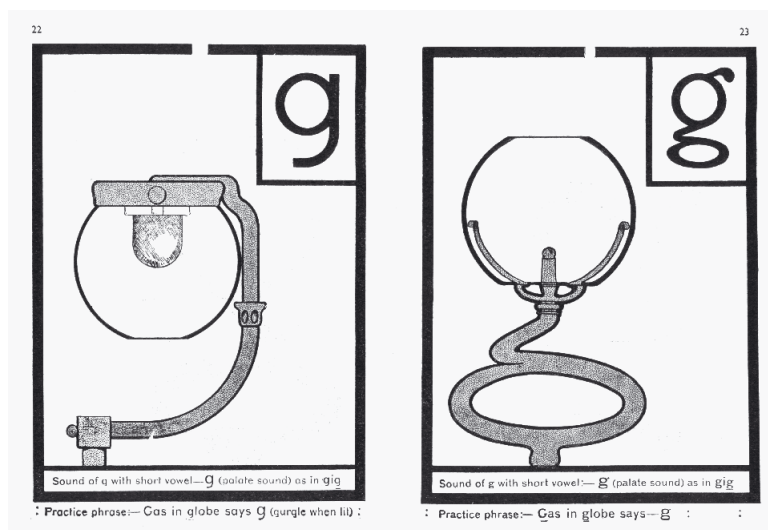


Figure 32. Alternative characters from *The beginner's playway book A*, Glasgow: Robert Gibson & Sons. This edition, it is claimed, superseded the *Play-way book A* illustrated in figure 24a: 'it contains both forms of the letters a, g, and t (a, g and t)'. Book A is then followed by *Play-way book B* 'for those who prefer the Print Writing forms' or *Beginner's book B* 'for those who prefer the ordinary printed forms'.



with o and e than with the unmistakable lower-case'. She returned later (1950: p. 38) to this issue, perhaps able to make her point more strongly because of the preponderance of reading books set in sans-serif typefaces with alternative a's and g's. Warde raised two important issues relevant to designing for children's reading: consideration of whether familiarity with double-storey a's and g's is relevant preparation for adult reading, and the need to help beginner readers by making sure that there is sufficient distinction between characters. Warde's view was contrary to that held and promoted by many of the teachers and educationists involved in the print script movement, and conflicted with their tenet that letterforms for writing and letterforms for reading should be the same. Some publishers responded to these opposing views by including both infant and non-infant characters in the same book. Robert Gibson, for example, introduced both single- and double-storey a and g and two forms of the small-letter t in *The beginner's playway book A* (figure 32). Others produced two editions, one with seriffed and one with sans-serif typefaces, the latter, as in the 'Janet and John' series in the 1950s, sometimes referred to as the 'print script' edition. Most publishers chose to follow the view of many teachers that sans-serif typefaces were better at helping young children learn to read, and in the 1940s and 1950s most publishers began to introduce reading schemes in sans-serif typefaces. There were some notable exceptions such as the well-known 'Janet and John' series first published in England in 1949, and typeset in Century Schoolbook.⁴⁷

Child-centred book design

In the field of educational book design, some reading books produced in the 1920s and 1930s offered new designs to meet the needs, as perceived by their teachers, of young children learning to read. The ideas of 'simplified forms' and 'fitness for purpose' encouraged the use of increasingly available sans-serif typefaces in reading books, though it was not until the 1960s that their use was typical. Other examples of child-centred design, also influenced by teachers, can be seen in the way these sans-serif typefaces were used. Publishers that used sans-serif

47. This series, like the earlier 'Beacon' reading scheme, was introduced from the USA where it originated as the 'Alice and Jerry' reading scheme.

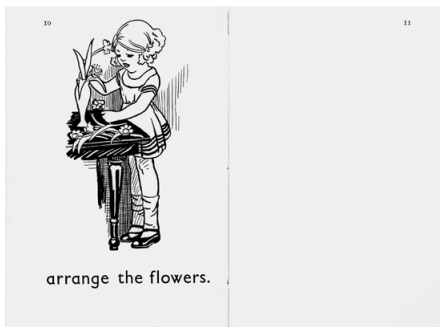


Figure 33. 'The child's picture readers' series was designed by Augusta Monteith who wanted to encourage children's engagement with the books by leaving the right-hand page of each spread blank so that they could be encouraged to write sentences of their own. (Monteith 1933, pp. 10–11)

typesetters seemed, also, to have been prepared to listen to teachers' views about book design, and to break away from book printers' conventions, such as justified setting and pages crammed with text and pictures.⁴⁸ Many sans-serif reading books of the 1930s showed fewer words on a page or spread, resulting in a more open and spacious effect. The increase in small-format supplementary books, suitable for small hands (such as those that formed part of 'The Mac and Tosh' series), may also be evidence of a growing awareness of the needs of the classroom. But the most significant development, in terms of book design, was the growth of the use of the double-page spread to organize the graphic components of a reading lesson.

The organization of reading books into 'lessons' with identical components (such as a picture, the text that accompanies it, sometimes with an exercise or the listing of relevant words) became widespread with the introduction of the Revised Codes at the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ But text and pictures were often organised with no regard to the 'segments' imposed by the physical structure of a book: pages and double-page spreads. In many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reading books new lessons began either on rectos or versos, and may or may not have coincided with pages or double-page spreads. The 'Child's picture readers' (1933) was one series that exploited the double-page spread to relate to a particular child-centred method of teaching reading. In the books in this series a picture and one or two lines of text appeared on each left-hand page and the right-hand page was blank (figure 33). The author, Augusta Monteith, explained:

These little books have been compiled in order to give the children a supply of pictures dealing with their own everyday experiences. It is hoped that in some schools, at any rate, they may be the personal property of the child. He could be encouraged to talk about the pictures, to give names to the children depicted in them, to write sentences of his own opposite the pictures, and to colour them in if he likes. In short, the child should build up his own special reader.⁵⁰

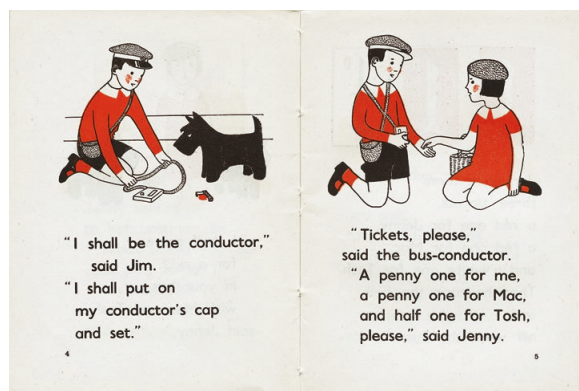
'The Burnley readers' were also designed to encourage children's engagement with the book and these too used the double-page spread as a means of relating text and pictures. 'The Mac and Tosh' and 'The John and Mary' readers used the page, rather than the spread, as a means of relating text to pictures, and the approach they took of putting the picture above the text that related to it became a typical way of organizing reading books for young children (figure 34, overleaf). 'The John and Mary readers' give a further example of the

48. There is some evidence to suggest that such views were held by a broad constituency, thus ensuring a receptive audience. James Kerr in *The fundamentals of school health* (1926) made the following observations: 'Line illustrations are preferable to half-tone work both from visual and educational considerations. Black and white is the only kind necessary for ordinary school purposes. ... Only one picture to a page saves confusion. The printing of numerous small pictures in the margins is inadvisable.' (pp. 556–7)

49. See the example quoted in Board of Education (1928: p. 11) 'In reading books 40 lessons and not less than 80 pages of small octavo text should be required in Standards I and II, and not less than 60 lessons and 120 pages in higher standards. ... Two pages may be considered minimum for an effective reading lesson; and engravings, lists of words and names, and supplementary questions or exercises are not to be taken into account in computing contents of books, except to a small extent in the First Standard.'

50. Monteith, 1933: p. 20.

Figure 34. In 'The Mac and Tosh readers' the page was consistently used to segment the information into child-sized chunks. (E. Ashley, *Mac and Tosh play games*, Huddersfield: Schofield & Sims, c. 1938, pp. 4-5)



consideration of typography: the series is described as the 'sentence method of teaching to read' and the books have been designed so that the phrases 'can be seen at a glance': 'Then in the actual printing of the primers, apart from the big print, good spacing, good margins, simple attractive illustrations, etc., there should be thought about the phrasing. Roughly, the lines should be arranged in phrases that can be seen at a glance, so that the child's eye will be trained from the first to move rhythmically.'⁵¹ In each of the books the lines have been broken in accordance with this principle. These examples show how some publishers responded to teachers' ideas about how books could be designed to help children's reading, and many of these ideas have continued to the present day.

The legacy of print script

In the UK in the first three decades of the twentieth century the print script movement drew together teachers, experts in handwriting and lettering, publishers and printers. The outcome of their debate can be seen in the typography of children's reading books throughout the twentieth century. Teachers, drawing on their classroom experiences of teaching reading and writing, contributed to some significant developments in book design, not only in the letterforms used, but in the relationship between text and pictures, and the consideration of material attributes of reading books that might affect children's engagement with them, and their motivation to read. This development was influenced by concern for the needs of beginning readers, and it can reasonably be argued that this is a kind of user-centred designing. Teachers were supported in their aims by publishers who also had the opportunity to respond to scientific findings about typography through the recommendations of the BAAS reports. Many of the most actively engaged teachers appear to have had excellent working relationships with publishers and printers: for example, Nellie Dale worked closely with J. M. Dent; Golds had a long-standing association with Blackie; and Augusta Monteith worked with E. J. Arnold. The names of Johnston and Gill are also associated either directly or indirectly with the work of these teachers. Golds's approach to handwriting was clearly influenced by Johnston, and Monteith seems to have been involved with Gill in some way in the drawing of infant characters for *The pink book of verse*. Johnston's influence was more far-reaching: many teachers were not only aware of his work and

51. Ashley, [1932]: p. 15.

opinions, but also of his evocation of the ‘spirit of the age’. His design of lettering for the London Underground helped to create public awareness of a modern, clean-cut, no-nonsense letterform which has been described as ‘belonging unmistakably to the times in which we lived’.⁵² The inclusion of Johnston’s alphabet in a book on lettering for schools (Judson, 1920) suggests the influence it may have had on teacher’s thinking. In reading books, if one heeds the rationale promoted by followers of the print script movement, the sanserif form was the one that most closely represented the simplified, skeletal, monoline form that was thought to link letters for writing with letters for reading. As early as 1899 Nellie Dale’s *Steps to reading* represented one of the first deliberate attempts to use the ‘modern letter’ for reading – an excellent example of form following pedagogic function, and of a letterform chosen with the needs of a particular group of readers in mind.

What has been the legacy of this burst of activity in the 1920s and 1930s? The impact of print script has meant that generations of children learnt to write using an approach to letterform construction that was not conducive to either beauty or currency in handwriting: there is no doubting its deleterious effect. It resulted in teachers taking some authority over the kinds of letterforms that should be used for beginners in handwriting and subsequently in reading. The growing use of sanserif typefaces and infant characters in the 1960s and 1970s has resulted in reading books that have undistinguished typography often characterized by characters that are similar in shape (an extreme example would be the similarity of the a, o, and g in the typeface Avant Garde Gothic). It remains the case that many teachers think that simplicity of letterform is what is most helpful to children learning to read.

That teachers’ views often do not coincide with those held by lettering experts and typographers was evident in a sub-group on the teaching of handwriting at a meeting of the Association Typographique Internationale in Reading in 1976. It was further demonstrated in a survey of teachers’ views about typography, undertaken in the 1980s by Bridie Raban.⁵³ But what do children think? They have rarely been asked, a point noted by Rosemary Sassoon (1993) who provided examples of children’s views about typefaces. My own recent work in primary schools suggested that children have strong opinions about typefaces and about infant characters, and could express those opinions clearly. They did not seem to be as confused by double-storey a’s and g’s as many teachers suppose, and did not seem to mind whether books were set in seriffed or sanserif typefaces.⁵⁴

It remains the case, however, that at the beginning of the twentieth century the strong ideas of some teachers had a considerable and lasting impact on book design. They persuaded publishers to produce books that reflected these ideas which, the teachers believed, would smooth the path of children learning to read.

52. Quoted from Christian Barman, ‘Public lettering’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 18 March 1955 in Justin Howes’s essay that accompanies the catalogue for the ITC version of Johnston’s design for the London Underground (Howes and Farey, 1999: [p. 8]). Howes’s essay describes the development of the London Underground type design including the involvement of Gill, Meynell, and Pick in its development.

53. Gray, 1976: pp. 6–11; Raban, 1984: pp. 123–9.

54. Walker and Reynolds, 2002/03: pp. 106–22; Walker, 2005.

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