

Patriotic Alternative Framework For Literacy

Very few of us remember how we learnt to read and that's because it's a simple straight forward process that we master and then move on.

Reading is the fourth strand of language after **listening, understanding** and **speaking**. Literacy levels are declining though in our country, and one in five children leave primary school with a reading difficulty. Only 35 percent of primary school children in England report they actually 'like reading.'

Poor teaching, too much reliance on technology, multicultural classrooms and **culturally inappropriate** books are some of the reasons for this and **PA Reading** sets out to address this problem.

Structure in children's early readers have given way to **attention to content** and it seems the priority is entirely on books showing **diversity** and **inclusivity** of both **gender**, and **race**.

Welcome To Patriotic Alternative Early Reading

Introduction

PA Reading is a structured reading scheme which means it is graded in terms of word and sentence difficulty.

William Murray (creator of the 'Keywords to Literacy' scheme) makes the point that only **twelve words** make up **a quarter** of the words we use each day and a **hundred** make up **half** of all words used each day. It therefore makes sense when developing a new reading scheme to teach the most commonly used words in the English language first.

The following are an initial hundred words needed to become 'a reader.' They are 'sight words' and 'high frequency' words that have to be **memorised** as most cannot be 'sounded out.'

a an all and are as at but buy be bought came can children come could day do does don't down for from get go got had has have he help her here him his house I if I'm in into is it it's just like little look looked made make me Mr Mrs my no not now new of off old on one our out play put said saw says see she so some that the their them then there they this time to too up very want was we went were what when who which will with you your



PA Reading introduces the following words in addition:

Sight words: **Sophie Lucy Grandad can't jump skip busy take dress cross shoes soon caterpillar leaves chrysalis butterfly green pink blue black purple yellow need she look house push gym tidy**

Consonant vowel consonant (CVC) words. Three letter words that can be 'sounded out.'

Max Mum Dad Sam run sit top got wet mud box red fit fix

In total 67 words are used in the first six books; enough to enable children to start their journey in becoming 'readers.'

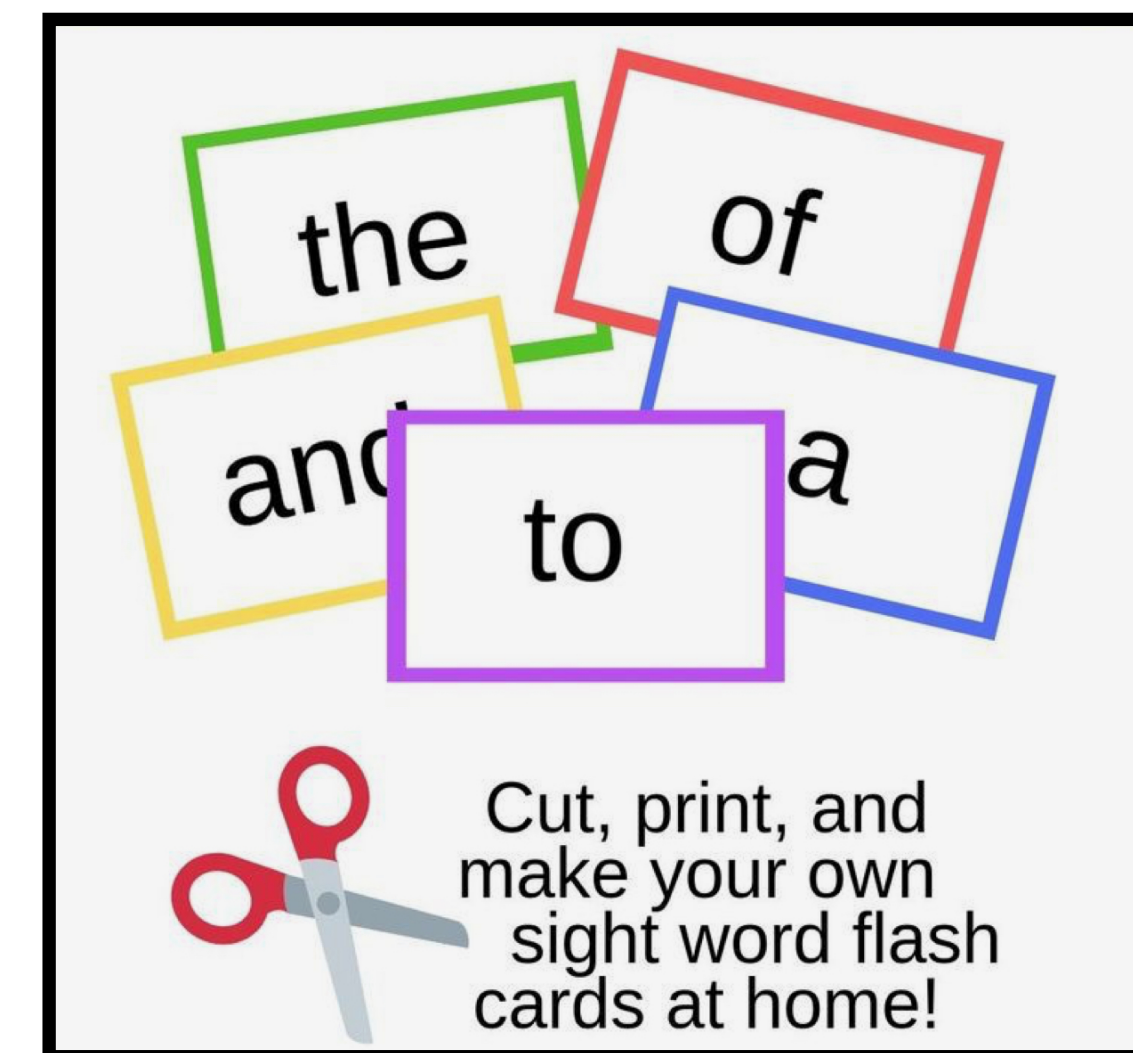
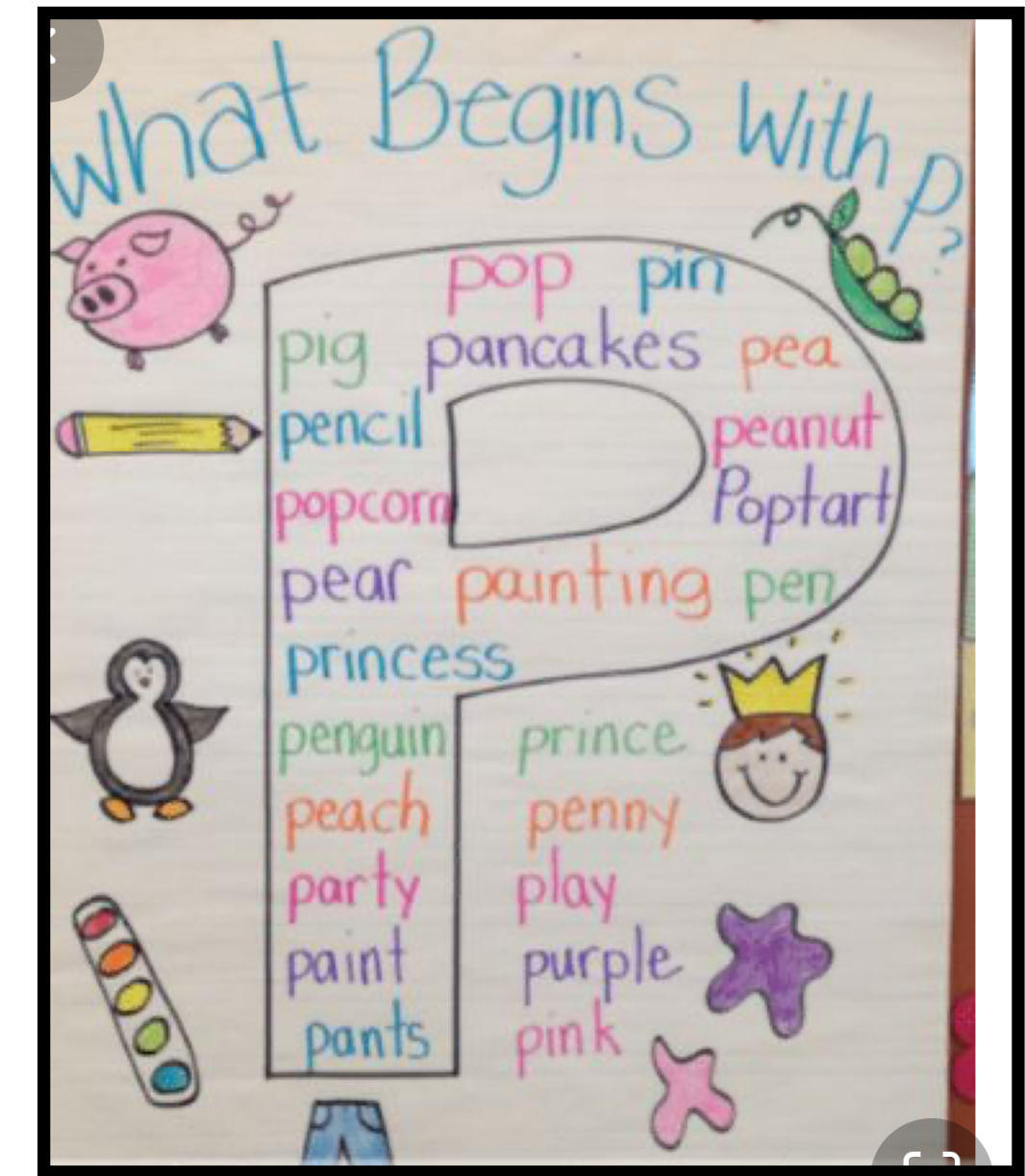
What is Phonics?

Letter sounds and the skill of 'sounding out' or 'breaking down' words. So that **s i t** becomes **sit** and so on.

In Britain there is an emphasis on teaching children **phonics** (or letter sounds). Children learn to recognise letter sounds, sound out, and then say the whole word. This is a very important skill and success in reading **can** be achieved through this method alone. However, it can be dull and off-putting for some children which is why PA Reading advocate using **real books that tell real stories**. Phonics is the method favoured by the government and probably puts more children off reading than ever motivates them!

It is important to teach phonics simultaneously, however, and PA Reading recommends following the '**Letters and Sounds**' programme; adapted from the **national curriculum of England and Wales** strategy for literacy. Remember: learning to read by **memorising sight words and high frequency words using real books is like taking the lift**. It's a quick way to get started.

Phonics provide the stairs for when the lift breaks down!



What Makes A Good Graded Reading Scheme?

- Good sized, clear **font**
- Bold, colourful, clear **pictures** drawn with plenty of humour.
- Lots and lots and lots of **repetition!**
- A gradual build-up and introduction of new **vocabulary**.
- Stories that are **culturally relevant**. It's lovely to hear stories from 'around the world' but children enjoy pictures of settings they recognise. Homes, local communities, festivals such as Christmas, traditional summer holidays, stories about well known historical figures and so on.
- **Characters** children can identify with.
They want to see pictures of children who look just like them and who live in houses just like theirs etc. In exactly the same way that adults want to identify with their own kind in literature, drama, magazines, television shows, advertising, and soaps!
- Interesting, exciting, humorous **stories**. This is not easy in the early stages when limited by the number of words the writer can use. This is where a good illustrator becomes extremely important. Books become more interesting when the writer is able to use more words.
- Stories that provide opportunities for children to apply their knowledge of **phonics**.
- Text that provides opportunities for children to use **picture clues** and **contextual clues**.
- **Short books** that can easily be finished in one go so children feel a sense of achievement.

What's Different And New About PA Reading?

- It utilises the principle of learning and practising sight and high frequency words first before children are given books.
- It is culturally relevant to children indigenous to the British Isles.
- It depicts boys and girls in traditional roles.

PA Reading includes: *

- A guide for parents on how to use the material
- Vocabulary (flash cards) to label the characters and to be used for displays in the home (or wherever children are learning).
- Ideas for games to assist in the teaching of the high frequency words.
- Comprehension material
- Books in sets of ten and in order of difficulty: So far there are ten. Six are fiction; four are non-fiction. Both types of 'reading' are important from a young age.

* To be completed later!

Notes On How To Use The Material

PA Readers like a number of other well known reading scheme stories are centred around a family. There are Mum and Dad and three children: Sophie, the eldest; Max, a boy and Lucy the youngest girl. They live in a typical British home and lead a typically British lifestyle.

The first step when introducing the books is to familiarise children with the characters. Character names should be displayed everywhere and children should be able to match names to pictures of the characters. Their names should be as familiar to children as their own.

Secondly, children should be introduced to all the high frequency words **before** they are given the first five books. When they are familiar with the vocabulary they will be able to read the books fluently. This is an essential step and checks should be made to ensure children really know the words.

Spend time **learning the words** for the first books. It doesn't matter how long it takes. Make word learning fun for children. Use the games supplied with the reading scheme; write the words out for the children. Use flash cards. (It helps if children are given three or four words at a time to learn rather than showering them with all the words at once). Try giving them three words to learn first. If they know them all the following day, give them three more. If they only know two of the three words, give two new words. If they only know one, give one new word. If they don't know any, don't give any new words! BUT ... Keep practising. All children learn at different rates and it will happen. A quick check of word recognition can be made using the word ladder at the beginning of each book.

It is important to note that the creators of **PA Reading** use speech bubbles to support the text. Further words are used inside a speech bubble which represents more **natural language**. Parents need to make children aware of what a character is saying and encourage them to 'have a go' at reading a speech bubble. There should, however, be no pressure for children to learn the few extra words inside a speech bubble as meaning from existing text is perfectly clear.

Learning to read, like learning to do anything is dependent on clear instruction but more importantly it's about practice. How ever daunting a task, it is important that parents provide daily reading sessions. Managing the day, so that children have frequent regular exposure to reading is an important part of home education.

Obviously children need to learn to read as many sight or high frequency words as possible but it makes no sense to learn words that they are **not** going to use. They only need to learn the words used in the first six stories **in the order in which they will be read.**

PA Reading does not support forcing children to read if they are not ready. Neither does it believe in waiting till they show an interest. We simply believe in a structured approach with culturally appropriate content. If children are given books to read without first being introduced to the vocabulary they will stumble through with little or no enjoyment. If they know the words, then receiving the book becomes the 'icing on the cake.' They will read the book quickly and with confidence and eagerly ask for the next one!

Once children have read the first ten books they start learning the vocabulary for the next ten and so on. The quantity of words in the story will increase, the print size will decrease and the words will not need to be repeated so frequently. The stories will be more interesting and the books will be longer.

After that, the **need for structure and grading is unnecessary** for most children. They should now be able to choose their own books. A list of recommended 'real books' for early readers is provided.

Happy Reading!