

CALLIGRAPHY BEAUTIFUL WRITING  
CALLIGRAPHY BEAUTIFUL WRITING  
CALLIGRAPHY BEAUTIFUL WRITING  
CALLIGRAPHY BEAUTIFUL WRITING  
CALLIGRAPHY BEAUTIFUL WRITING  
CALLIGRAPHY BEAUTIFUL WRITING  
CALLIGRAPHY BEAUTIFUL WRITING  
CALLIGRAPHY BEAUTIFUL WRITING

This book describes the method of presenting the art of writing from the viewpoint of Steiner Education. It covers the syllabus from the preparation for writing to the pen and ink stage. The views of an artist approach to the teaching of handwriting are considered in relation to the developing mind power for the child, as are the benefits of reading their own handwriting before the printed page. Spelling and writing difficulties are discussed and there are many examples of practical work. It fosters the inborn creativeness of the child whereby the development of fluency is fostered.

Miss A. Allen has been working in Steiner Education since 1942 as a class teacher and latterly as a remedial teacher.

ISBN 0 85440 377 5

to teach by ... in Steiner Education

# Teaching Children to Write

Its connection with  
the development of  
spatial consciousness  
in the child

by

Audrey E. McAllen

371:15

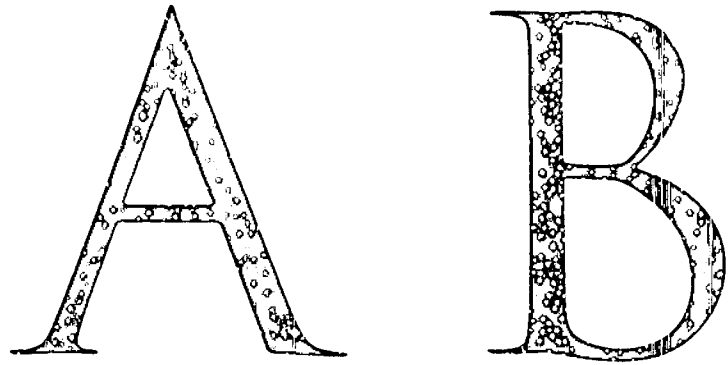
45

Walter Scott Way

37115

45

TEACHING CHILDREN TO WRITE



Teaching  
Children  
to  
Write

—Its connection with the development  
of Spatial consciousness in the Child —



by

Audrey E. McAllen

*Four of the Imperial "Trajan" capitals brush-written by Edward  
M. Catich from his book, "The Origin of the Serif".*

Copyright © 1977 by Audrey E. McAllen  
All Rights Reserved  
ISBN No : 0 85440 317 5

Distributed by Rudolf Steiner Press  
35 Park Road, London, NW1 6XT

Printed by Downfield Press Ltd.,  
Stratford Road, Stroud, Glos. England.

To

Walburga, Shirley, Molly, Joan, Dorothea and Mother

(Southampton 1942–1947)

*Lifelong friends and colleagues*

Other books by the same author

The Extra Lesson —

Exercises in Movement, Painting and Drawing for  
children in difficulties with Writing, Reading and  
Arithmetic.

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	11
To the general reader: The structure of a Rudolf Steiner School (Waldorf School) ... ..	13
Chapter 1. The Growing Child and his relationship to the three dimensions of space.	15
Chapter 2. The Alphabet and Writing as a picture of the development of human con- sciousness ... ..	20
Chapter 3. The Preparation for Writing ...	26
Chapter 4. Teaching the Letters as pictures	39
Chapter 5. Reading your own writing ...	49
Chapter 6. 'Oh, spelling!' ... ..	61
Chapter 7. Writing difficulties: Lack of concentration ... The question of "dominance" The Left hander ... ..	65

(Summary of practical work at the end of each chapter)

Handwriting as an Art

Introductory quotations written with a quill on vellum by Peter Halliday: Craft-member of the Society of Scribes & Illuminators.

CALLIGRAPHY, BEAUTIFUL WRITING,  
IS THE MOST DIRECT FORM OF  
ARTISTIC EXPRESSION. JUST AS EACH  
MOVEMENT OF THE DANCER IS  
ABSOLUTE SO EVERY GESTURE OF  
THE CALLIGRAPHER IS ESSENTIAL.  
IT IS NOT THE MEANING OF THE  
CHARACTER BUT THE WRITING - THE  
MOVEMENT OF EXECUTION  
AND THE ACTION ITSELF -  
THAT IS IMPORTANT.

from the  
Introduction by Tsong Yu-ho  
Eckert, Chinese Calligraphy  
1971

Every sort of pedantry must be kept at bay if the art of education is to have actual life. That depends on making it into a real art, and the teacher making himself into an artist. And we in the Waldorf School (Stuttgart) are able to teach writing in an artistic way with the result that reading can be learnt afterwards as if it were a matter of course. It comes rather later than usual, but it comes as if of itself.

Rudolf Steiner lecturing at Oxford  
1922

## Acknowledgements

I wish to thank :

The Editor of the Rudolf Steiner Nachlassverwaltung, Dornach, for permission to quote from the lectures of Rudolf Steiner and to Mr. Jesse Darrell for the translations of excerpts from lectures not yet published in English.

The Editor : Thames & Hudson for permission to quote and reproduce illustrations from Day's Diringer's book *Writing, a study of its historical development*.

The Publishers : Faber & Faber J. J., U.K. & Watson Guptill Publications, U.S.A., for the quotation from Alfred Fairbank's book *The Story of Handwriting*.

The Publishers : Godine, Noster, Non. — Distributors U.K. Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd., for the excerpt by Tseng Yu-ho Ecketo from the Introduction to *Chinese Calligraphy*, 1971.

The Editor : The Catfish Press, St. Ambrose College, Davenport, Iowa, for permission to quote from Edward M. Catich's work *The Origin of the Serif*.

The President : The Society of Scribes & Illuminators for the excerpt from *Writing and Civilization* by W. R. Lethaby.

Mrs. Margaret Frohlich of the New York Steiner School for allowing me to quote from and to reproduce the Alphabets in her book *Form Drawing*.

Mrs. Walburga Tuch for her examples of Alphabets and transcribing for me the poem from the Gaelic.

Mrs. M. Bignall-Theyer for keeping all the drawings of Heloise and allowing me to choose some as illustrations.

I am indebted to Miss Joyce Russell of Michael Hall School, Sussex, to teacher and parent friends for reading the M/S and their help in its improvement ; to Mrs. Olive Tapp for all the typing which she has done.

## INTRODUCTION

When I enquired at the local library about books on the teaching of handwriting, there was listed only the work of Marion Richardson and three excellent little instruction manuals published by Platignum. The librarian told me that all the emphasis nowadays, and therefore all the books, was on reading.

Surely this is symptomatic of our present situation, reading difficulties have become so prevalent today just because we have put the cart before the horse. The young child is not given sufficient opportunity to write before he is faced with the printed page. This, from an historical development aspect, is quite out of step. Only when we have something to write does the capacity and desire to read arise. The very act of writing prepares "in large" in the body, those subtle movements which have to be accomplished in the matter of split seconds during the reading-reflecting process. The movements required by the reading process are the fruit of the writing faculty. Hence attention to detail and long practice of writing must come first, for reading from one's own writing goes a long way to reducing reading problems, as those teachers who have worked in Rudolf Steiner schools for any length of time, know from their own experience.

This book has been written in order to lessen the pressure on the new class teachers in Steiner Schools, of assimilating in a short time, all the indications which Steiner gave on the teaching of writing. The teacher can then concentrate on reading the educational lecture cycles as a whole, instead of having to go from one to another.

It can be of use to parents who wish to follow their children's work and at the same time learn about some of the fundamental principles of the education which they have chosen for their children. It may also be of interest to other teachers who are deeply concerned about the problems which children are now having with regard to writing and reading.

All the practical examples which are described come from my experience as a class teacher and latterly from the remedial work which I have been doing with children who have writing-reading difficulties.

This short study of Waldorf School Methods, will, I hope, also help teachers to realize the importance in human development of the art of handwriting.

## PREFACE

For the general reader.

The Structure of a Rudolf Steiner School for  
normal children, (Waldorf Education).

The first school was founded by Emil Molt, Director of the Waldorf Cigarette Factory, Stuttgart. He wanted to provide a school for his workers in which the education they would receive there would enable them to live fully in a cultural spiritual life which equipped human beings to meet each other as individuals. He recognized that Rudolf Steiner's teaching, which is called Anthroposophy, contained the genesis of such an impulse, and so asked him to become the educational director of his school. Rudolf Steiner consented with the proviso that he could select his teachers and Emil Molt agreed, adding that he should have the right of dismissal if they failed to maintain the aims and standard of work of the school!

Rudolf Steiner gathered twenty-four of his pupils from varied walks of life and began an intensive training course with them, starting on August 21st until September 6th. The school was opened September 7th, 1919. Before Steiner's death in 1925 it was fully formed with thirteen classes for children from five to eighteen years.

A Steiner school falls into three natural divisions. The Kindergarten takes children from the age of four years to six plus. Here no formal education is given. The emphasis is on creative play; an environment which heals the effects of our modern technology, and brings a right stimulus to the developing sense organs of the child. The teacher is expected to be one who has ideals and is capable of bringing to the children, through story and the seasonal festivals, the moral qualities of goodness, truth and of gratitude which, in the following school period, will be the foundation for finding that this world he lives in, is beautiful. Painting, singing games, learning the first foreign language through speaking and singing and playing all contribute to this.

The Lower School: for children from 6 plus to 14 years. The child now enters the school. He meets his class teacher who will be with him for the next eight years. This teacher will concern himself with all the problems of growth and



learning which the child may have during this time. His educational task is to present his subject matter at the time when it complements the physiological/psychological development of the children. When the subjects of the curriculum are brought in accord with the child's inner development then they have the power of producing faculty. The retention of factual knowledge which can be produced on demand is not the aim; at this age the child should assimilate what he has to learn with feeling, and should be fully engaged in warmth and enthusiasm for what he is given. For this reason the first lesson of the day lasts from 1 to 2 hours and the child is taught by his class teacher. This is the Main Lesson, and subjects, for example, the 3 R's, History, Geography, Science, etc. are taught in block lessons of 3 to 4 weeks. After break the child meets other teachers for languages, singing, games, etc. The afternoon lessons comprise painting, handiwork and craft subjects.

The Upper School, 14-18 years. Here the child meets the specialist teacher. His task is to enthuse the young person for knowledge of his subject so that the desire for truth is engendered as a moral force. From 16 years onwards the pupils are prepared for the usual state examinations; before this there are no internal exams.

The core of Steiner or Waldorf Education, as it is termed in Europe, is to equip the child with the forces to become a fully developed person with the faculties to meet whatever life brings. If all his potential is developed then he will find his right place in the world. He will have the possibility of developing a moral stamina which will enable him to undertake a specific type of work because he sees it is necessary at a certain point, and to be able to change to something else if required, out of his own freedom, not from compulsion. Hence a Steiner Education is one which equips the child to meet the demands of the modern world in freedom.

There are now 150 such schools scattered throughout Europe and the English speaking world.

Off-shoots of this central educational impulse are the Home Schools for maladjusted children and for physically and mentally handicapped children; and the Camphill Communities who provide homes, schools and villages with sheltered work for those of our society who are mentally handicapped.

## CHAPTER 1

### The Growing Child and his relationship to the three dimensions of space

Who has seen a stretch of smooth gleaming sand and not felt the compulsion to run over it and leave footprints on it? The same desire seizes us when we wake on a winter morning and see a velvety expanse of snow covering the ground.

Open space calls up movement in us, this is the element that expresses most intimately our individuality through our will forces. This response to space by movement lies deep in our human make-up, it is a special phenomenon and needs to be recognized as such.

As soon as a child can walk, one of his earliest impulses is to experience his movements in space and to leave his imprint in it. He will find himself a stick to make a mark in the dust; as soon as he can grasp a pencil he will start drawing a circle round and round until the centre is reached -- then out flies the line with a jerk across the paper. He makes another -- into the centre he goes producing what looks like a ball of wool, and out flies his hand again. This is the first pattern he makes. As his delight in what we kindly call "drawings" increases, there emerge from these "circlings", lines, which suddenly become related to each other and then form a square, and we have the beginnings of a house before our eyes! This paper, which he has in front of him, is a version of the ground upon which he walks, but it has boundaries which limit him from seeing the larger expansions of the movements he makes when he overshoots them. Nevertheless, he can place it on the floor and kneel on it, or put it on a chair and stand by it. This paper is a wonderful "moving" piece of ground over which he has control.

Next to appear in his drawings are the boundaries of "above" and "below", a line of blue sky at the top of the paper, and a line of green or brown at the bottom; other scribbles, more meaningful for him than for us, still dance freely on the page. But the time comes when the house has found the site it stands on and an awareness of symmetry enters the drawing; flowers appear on each side of the house; it is flanked left and right by a tree; maybe there are two houses. It is now time for us to stop merely admiring his prowess as an artist and ask

ourselves what he is doing, what is he showing us quite unconsciously in this first visual work of his. The numbers of objects, flowers, trees, lawns and pathways are indeed reproductions of the essential structure of his own body which he feels through its craftsman's tools of hands, fingers, feet and toes! The last stage of this growing awareness of space and his place in it, is his ability to express the movement of "forward" and "backward". Just watch him make a rainbow shine over his house, watch him drawing the curve of its arc!

Rudolf Steiner tells us that he never once found a drawing of the objects of the sense world by a child in which there are not expressed something of the child himself. Those first scribbles are part of his own physiological human mystery, the concentration, the movement, the triumph of completion is the "art" we should be admiring when he places the piece of paper in front of us. In the drawings of his house and garden which come later, he is telling us of the adventure he is having of growing into his body . . . and what hard work it is for some children! What difficulties must they be encountering when the house *wili* : ay lopsided : when the tree is spindly and leafless, and the sky refuses to reach the earth by the proper time? These pictures are a map of the route each child takes from his head to his feet in his first years of life on this earth. That is why, when . . . want to lead over from drawing to writing, we should not abruptly break off this experience he has of himself in relation to the pictures he makes. If we do so we shall hinder his growth and sense of bodily well being. By imposing on him artificial restraints and letter symbols with which he has as yet no connection, we shall corrupt these natural forces of the "will" that still have . . . place in bodily functions like growth, healthy sleep, . . . and all the skills of handling objects, walking with a free rhythmical swinging of the arms, balancing and jumping and skipping joyfully along the road.

If growth into the bodily functions is disturbed and limited then in the end they express themselves destructively, and we have those children who start "messaging up" and scribbling over what they or their friends have done . . . a sure sign that there are already present problems for the educator to heal. We could do well to ponder the connection between the fact of a very young child's interrupted organic development in the way referred to and his frequent aversion later to his school lessons.

How can we come to a clearer understanding of the child's development in relation to the faculties which he needs?

Steiner tells us that the human being is basically threefold in its organic structure — head, breast, limbs — and that the corresponding soul-functions of Thinking : Feeling : Willing :

come to maturity in three distinct stages, each culminating in a particular peak of physiological development : the change of teeth, the arrival of puberty, and, finally adulthood — once called "Coming of Age." These facts, which anyone can observe, and therewith Steiner's specific contribution to educational psychology, have been overlooked by modern educationalists, yet all the physical and psychological implications of this seemingly simple idea have been fully explained in his lectures to teachers.\*

In order to understand the importance for the whole of life in the way we teach writing, we are going to look at the connection between physiology and that part of us whose objective existence very few people recognize today — the soul and spirit — and their connection with the consciousness of space around us, which we take for granted and into which we are born.

Let us first have a look at the human form and consider it in its relation to the surrounding space — to the possibilities, that is, of moving itself in it, of moving the limbs sideways, upwards, downwards, forward and backward.

All normal people have a distinct perception that they are two sided and that each side has different powers and functions. A man knows that he is a right and left sided being, although he gives an approximate impression of symmetry.

Closer inspection shows further differentiations. The right side of the face has a different expression from the left side. Cover one side of a photograph and this is clearly apparent. The activities of left and right differ. The left arm protects and enfolds. The warrior's shield is slung on his left arm. The mother enfolds . . . baby with her left arm. The right arm wields the sword and is . . . for skilled movements. The soul that is not able to take up the archetypal pattern of left and right finds himself at a serious disadvantage in the community.

Our body is also structured so that back and front — spatially considered, forward and backward — are strictly differentiated. The senses and their activities are all directed "forwards" : sight, taste, smell, touch; we even tend to bring our best ear towards the front when listening intently. We depend on our sense of sight to keep our balance.

What we are like behind is hidden from us. Only concentrated inner imaginative attention can give us some idea how we look from behind when we are walking. Try walking backward and discover how this draws one's consciousness of self together.

"Above" and "below" are also bound up with the soul's attitudes and spatial relationship. The man who walks looking upward, or with his head bent is indicative of this. The move-

\*See bibliography.

ments of our head have a free relationship to the four directions of space compared with the body below.

It is of educational importance to realize how this spatial relationship of the body is brought to the child's soul experience. Shortly after birth the first experience of Right and Left is introduced to the newly arrived soul. His first experience of unity with the earth through nourishment comes from the right and then from the left when he takes his first feed from his mother's breast. When feeding from the right breast his *right* arm is free; this moves and waves with the effort and enjoyment of feeding, thus beginning the soul's work on to the *left* side of the brain. When he is changed over to the other breast, the *left* arm is freed, and the *right* side of the brain receives the impressions from the movement of this arm. Realize now, what happens when a child is bottle fed, and the mother is unaware of any need for differentiation, and so uses the arm most convenient and comfortable for her. She supports her baby with her left arm, and holds the bottle in *her* right hand. The baby's left arm would therefore be free to move and wave about so that the right side of the brain would receive more stimulus than the left side. The lack of activity of the right hand diminishes the growth powers working on the left hemisphere of the brain in which lies the Broca centre, an organ connected with our ability to speak.\*

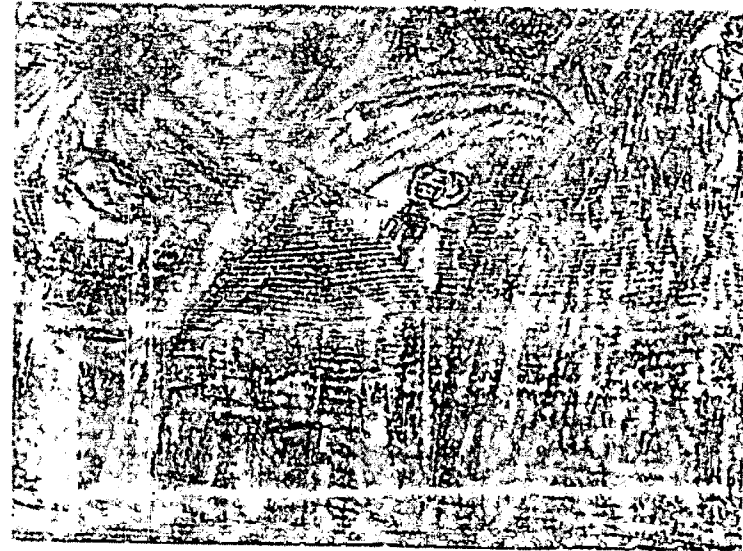
The next fundamental experience for the newly born soul is sleeping. Here the experienced Nanny can make us aware of how the child is helped by correct wrapping up for his time of sleep. She tucks his left arm first under the shawl and wraps it round him so that the right arm is over the left and thus is the one to be freed if he wriggles to release himself. For weeks the baby lies on his back, then comes the discovery that he can turn himself over. Now he experiences his weight from "before". So it proceeds; he first experiences "forward and back" in the horizontal when he crawls and then learns to "reverse!" Finally the great moment arrives when the fully human experience takes place, the child lifts himself into three dimensional space and experiences the sensations of "above", "below", "forward" and "backward" from the vertical position which enables him to turn freely to left and right. In this way there are laid down those faculties by means of which we are later to develop a conscious mastery of space and, as a reflection of it, awareness of our "self".

It is thus that we are occupied in our first eighteen months of life, and this bodily process is repeated in the child's soul experience. It is a deep and fundamental one and the child shows us how it has been taken up within his organism when

\*See R. M. Crosby. *Reading and the Dyslexic Child* - Souvenir Press.

he begins to objectify his movements in the activity of drawing, as we have already described. At first his "house" is merely an object anywhere on the paper, then a little sky appears followed by some indication of earth or grass; when the house is placed *on* this then a distinct development has arrived. The "above-below" relationship of space is established between the ages of four and five. Consciousness of symmetry develops later - a tree on either side of the house, flowers on each side of the path. Finally when we see the arc of the rainbow appear quite suddenly of itself, then we know that the recapitulation of the moment of first standing on his feet and walking has been reached.

In these first 6 - 7 years of life, the child's soul has completed its work on remoulding the body he has inherited from his parents into one that belongs to him. The teeth begin to loosen, the child is ready for school, a new stage of consciousness is about to develop, one in which he will live in a "feeling-pictorial" way of expressing himself. Now he may learn to write, a faculty quite distinct from drawing.



If we take the spiritual scientific view that writing has to do with the development from one form of consciousness to another we can understand this phenomenon. The tribe or nation is recapitulating earlier stages of consciousness before achieving the general intellectual faculty which is the fruit of the long development of western civilization. "Writing has been the main currency of civilization" — "It is the main aspect of culture which clearly distinguishes mankind from the animal world." David Diringer (*The Alphabet*).

This important observation from his research points directly to the fact that man bears within him a creative power which cannot emanate from animal faculties, namely, that Man is a Spiritual Being. His immortal soul and spirit being live in the perceptible vehicle of a physical body endowed with the powers of life and growth. This, men once knew in their deepest nature. The intellectual faculty which during its development closed the door of spiritual perceptions has given man mastery of the earth and extinguished his personal knowledge of his origin, yet at the height of this intellectual development, there were men who, through the very power of their thinking, penetrated to concepts of Man's Spiritual origin and reason for being on the earth. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, (1729--81), writing in the middle of the 18th Century is one of these. He reviews the history of mankind and realizes, if it is not to be a fortuitous series of events, but is there to develop and educate the human being, then each individual needs a lifetime in each of the successive cultural civilizations. Otherwise how can he grow in stature and fulfil his soul and spiritual potential? Later in the 19th Century Rudolf Steiner took this concept further and became the teacher of the Christianised concept of re-incarnation. In clarity of thought he gave the basis for an understanding of the death of Christ on Calvary and the Mystery of the Resurrection. He tells how, since this event the Christ lives and works within the spiritual atmosphere of the earth, our planet itself has become the sphere of His activity. Therefore those human souls who unite themselves with His aims for Mankind will also wish to return ever again to the place where He is working for the Brotherhood of Man and for the spiritualization of the earth.\*

If we test such a concept and apply it to our work in a practical imaginative way, it can broaden our outlook, give us new possibilities of understanding problems and provide new ideas for their solution.

Imagine then a classroom of children; deep in their Soul Spirit-Being will be the residue of attitudes and feelings from their experiences of lives in earlier civilizations and cultures.

---

\*See bibliography.

Some will never have confronted the printed word or ever learnt to write. In others a dim feeling may arise, a memory-association of the awe surrounding such an activity in earlier times. Yet for others a malaise of fear may ensue from some direct experience connected with the first appearance of printing. These can be "overtones" within the process of learning and affect the children's ability to absorb the content of the lesson. None of this will come into consciousness, it will be working within the interplay of feeling-movement-metabolism of the children's will forces. A teacher who is willing to consider such an idea will find his range of observation increasing and that he begins to develop quite another attitude to children's mistakes and clumsiness. In the "awkward" way a child handles his pencil there may be working the memory residue of how a stylus or brush was used. If we recognize such possibilities we are more likely to use a different tone of voice when we come again to show him how to hold his pencil. Our pupil will respond to this new inner attitude of ours from his deepest soul nature; the feeling of being understood creates a health-giving bond between child and teacher, forces of life are stimulated; confidence in the authority of the grown-up is strengthened in the right way. There comes the willingness to learn from such a person.

To be truly an educator we have to find methods which will free our pupils from the past, giving nourishment for the seeds of their earlier experiences to come to fruition in a positive way.\*

---

\*Arthur Guirdham: *The Cathars and Re-incarnation*.

## CHAPTER III

### The Preparation for Writing

*"The less we train the intellect directly and the more we aim to train the whole human being in such a way that the intellect will evolve out of the movement of the limbs, out of dexterity, the better it is."*

*Rudolf Steiner Lecture 5, Basel Teacher's Course 1920.*

We have described how, by the time the young child is able to stand and to take his first steps, the threefold elements of space-perception: left-right, above-below, forward and back, are embedded by movement into the physical body. Spiritual scientific research tells us that the life forces, with which we are endowed, and which have to last us our lifetime, stream down from the head into the body during the first seven years of life. This is the obvious reason for the fact that the pre-school child lives in a quite different consciousness from the adult, a different consciousness even from a ten year old!

During the time that the head acts as an organ of growth, its function should not be disturbed if the human being is to maintain health and vitality throughout his life. The "awake" consciousness of the child fills the body and limb system. He explores his environment with his limbs and senses: he absorbs everything, living at this stage of his life in a spontaneous and complete empathy with his surroundings, physical and moral, from the butterfly flitting from flower to flower and the central heating starting up beside him, to the effects of Mother and Father's attitude to life and its problems. This natural state of empathy, which gives him the ability to imitate everything we do and say, is the remnant of the kind of consciousness which he had, not so long ago, in the Spiritual World. Hence he does not discriminate between what is harmful or beneficial, good or bad. It is us, we adults, who drive him out of this paradise of devotion to life with our too soon authoritative attitudes, our "don'ts", "stop it", "mustn't do this", our negations. This does not mean that we allow the child to do as he likes and become a nuisance to himself and us; but it does mean a challenge to our ingenuity, presence of mind, and our will

to overcome an inner inertia and emptiness in ourselves, so that we train the behaviour of the child through this ability he has to copy us. By our conduct we set the pattern for what should be done; similarly, we have to develop in ourselves the knack of diverting his attention from what is harmful or should not be done. Which is the easier -- to take something out of a child's hands which he should not have, with the resulting scream of rage and tears, or to divert his attention first, by removing one's shoe for instance, if nothing else is available, and making it hop along the table? If the child still persists in wanting what has disappeared, one just says 'all gone', and means it. This is then the right moment for asserting authority consistent with the child's consciousness, for in the Spiritual World in which he has been living "things" are "beings", and "thoughts" appear and disappear from consciousness; so that "out of sight, out of mind", is a factor which can be assimilated by the child, for it is one which is reproducing and recapitulating a state of soul that was part of his pre-earthly experience. Developing this presence of mind and fantasy will resuscitate our own life forces and increase our vitality. Such is the challenge and opportunity our family brings us.

When the change of teeth starts, this is the sign that the "inner house building" which we have been able to watch through his drawings, is practically completed; a new form of consciousness is going to arise with a new relationship to his environment and to adults. In short the child is ripe for school, and the life forces, released from a body building activity, may now be used for learning and memory.

When the child of six years old comes into the classroom, he is at an important stage of growing up. He knows it. "I go to school now" he tells us. The kindergarten is left behind. The knowledge we have to bring to him should suit his stage of consciousness, it should not over stimulate the nerve sense system by demands of understanding, concepts -- ideas -- even in a play situation, for this stifles the imaginative faculty, leads to fixed thinking patterns and burdens the memory. It is this which disturbs the organic functions making some children grow thin and pale, others become unconcentrated and disrupted. The children with strong life forces manage to carry the burden of an intellectual method of teaching. Its unhealthy results only appear in the latter part of life when the robbing of the life forces for too early nerve sensory activity results in lack of vitality in the bodily processes. The final outcome is shown in the hardening processes so well known to the medical profession as sclerosis of various kinds.\*

Our teaching method requires us to call on the imaginative

\*See note at end of chapter.

picture-consciousness which is awakening in the child. He is now capable of relating himself more consciously to what affects his soul life and to what he experiences from outside. We have to find a balance in the content of the lessons between what he wants to express, and the objective element in the subject itself. For example, he has to begin to learn that colours have laws and relationships between themselves, and that he cannot just fill his paper with colours he likes if he is to create something beautiful. Naturally, the teacher guides the organic type of "self expression" of the kindergarten stage very gently and slowly over into the realm of colour harmony and relationships.

Writing, which calls strongly on the nerve sense system and a consciousness which is awake and not dreaming, has to be carefully prepared.

Let us therefore look at the structure of the alphabetic symbols themselves. We see that they are based on the straight line and the curve.

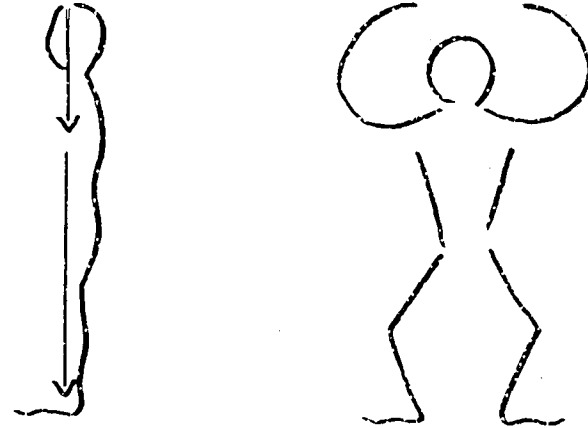
We have described how the body is orientated to space. Let us now observe the pattern of what is straight and curved in the relationship to nature and to man.

We experience the curve as soon as we are out of doors. From the horizon to the zenith before and behind there is the blue curve of the sky. We have this curve reflected in the sun's circle and its passage across the heavens. The moon repeats it, adding her exquisite celestial curve when she is new, to the straight line of its first quarter. The plant sends up its shoots vertically in response to the influence of these heavenly bodies and assumes an endless variety of forms between vertical and curve during its growth.

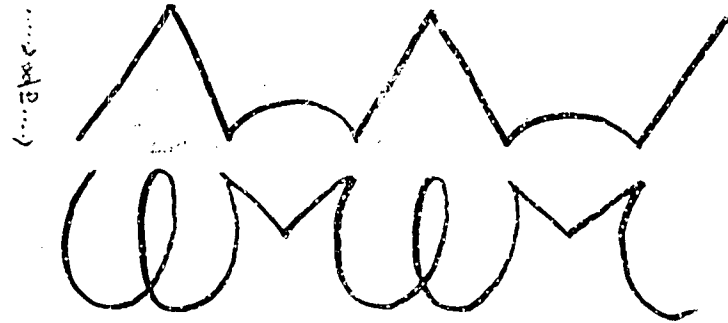
In observing the animal we see here how the straight line and the curve are dominated by the horizontal element. The animal's spine is parallel with the earth, it follows the line of the horizon. The structure of the human being combines all these elements and from their harmony the child experiences the element of freedom in his soul. This freedom should be objectified in his movements and relationship to form. The child has been and still is living unconsciously in all these changes in nature. They are the stimulus via the senses for his growth. We should not at this stage awaken these facts into consciousness; that belongs to the Main Lesson of a much later class. What we have to do is to bring this subconscious knowledge of the world pattern into relationship with his own organism through inner imaginative feeling.

We call on a child to walk a straight line, then to run it. Can he draw this in the air? Can he draw it with his foot? What difference does he feel? Can he draw this line for us on the blackboard? Now on the floor? We must ask where is the straight line in him - his arm, his back: we can take

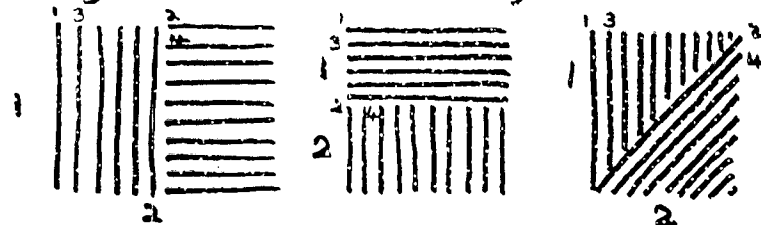
## Straight lines & curves.



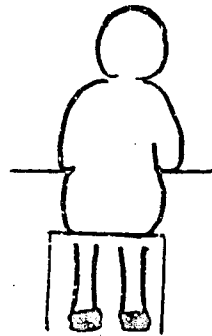
## Running Patterns.



The spatial directions: draw freehand in blocks of lines at least 30cms (12ins) in length. Then in alternating directions...etc.



This



~~NOT this~~



curvy rods and hold them up our back and walk forward and backwards. Shall we try to run? Oh dear, something else wants to happen . . . our back wants to bend! So now we come to the curve. We lie on the floor in curves, we can be in a straight line too. Afterwards we can run these forms. We can curve different parts of us. Someone may discover that our head has a curve in it. Our arms can curve, but our legs can only make "straight line" curves! We are now well on the way to turning ourselves into patterns!

At last the moment arrives when we are ready to draw these forms on the paper in front of us. Our box of brand new fat wax crayons is before us. But what is this . . . ? They themselves are straight and they too have a curve! In their very form is embodied the basic pattern for the use to which they will be put. So now we must hold them properly, and sit in the right pattern too.

Through such an approach we have brought into an objective feeling-relationship to himself what the child has experienced during the first years of life.

We are now at the point when we must consider practical matters: for instance, the height of the table or desk in relation to the seat and the size of the child. This is of vital importance if we are to have good writing. Fortunately modern school furniture designers offer us the means to carry this out. But do we pay enough attention to such factors? The desk height should not push the arm upward so that one shoulder is higher than the other. The chair should be 10 inches lower than the table height. The child should sit so that both feet are firmly on the floor with knees higher than the hips. This angle between knee and hip joint is vital. The child should really be sitting in his hips so that the movement of the hand-arm can come to the base of the spine. This cannot take place if the hip angle is slightly higher than the knee, there is then tension in the thigh muscles; the child's movement system replies to this unequal balance by either turning the feet inward or curling them around the chair legs thus producing a muscular distortion which curbs the whole movement-response to hand-eye co-ordination; the basis is then laid for tight pencil gripping, sitting with the weight on one side of the body or twisting half round at the waist. As a teacher you do not have to look very far before you see such sitting patterns and their effects on the handwriting. This correct sitting position should be presented as a "picture" to the children; for example, a king preparing to sign a royal decree . . . his feet placed on a footstool, his red robe keeping his right arm to the side of his body, the left hand weighted by a heavy flashing ring of jewels so that all see him move the paper. He must hold up his head so that his crown does not fall off! This can be acted

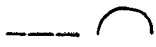



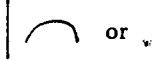
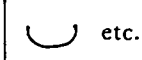
in turn by the children in full royal regalia, and it would be good if they all wore crowns while writing until good habits are established. Such a picture needs to be enhanced by the teacher himself being very conscious when he sits down beside a child to write. It is always good if he treats himself as an "object" and says aloud — "let me see, have I put my feet in the right place, is my arm comfortable . . . etc. Time spent each morning looking to see that each child is properly seated until the right posture has become a habit is time well used.

It is of vital importance to draw parents' attention to this matter. The ordinary chair height is 17 inches which is suitable for those of us who are 5 feet 6 inches and over. Table heights correspond to this. Ideally the child should only draw and write at a table suitable for his own height or, if this is not possible, to have a rubber cushion and stool to bring chair and table height into correct relationship. Parents should see that this is done and insist that the child uses what is provided for him. This care should be applied throughout the class teaching time if we want to develop and keep our good handwriting and prevent muscular tension and fatigue.

It has been interesting to discover that within a year's age range it is only necessary to provide a class with two different heights of tables and chairs. The discrepancy between the varied heights of the children is levelled out by the factor that some children have long bodies and short limbs and others have short bodies and long limbs.

The moment has now come when the teacher is going to place visually before the children the two forms which they have run and walked and explored in their bodies: the straight line and the curve.

How are these to be placed on the blackboard, in relation to the surface as a plane, and to each other?

Like this  or this  or  or  
 or like this  or  etc.

One could reply "does it matter?" Just make it as it comes, naturally. If one follows this line of reasoning then one is simply passing on to the child what is instinctive in oneself, instead of trying to penetrate into the "language" of form and movements, for in his art of education Rudolf Steiner introduced a new subject, that of form-drawing, as a pedagogical means of developing imagination and flexible thinking. The indications which he gave have been beautifully worked out and presented in a book entitled *Form Drawing*.\*

\*Margaret Frohlich and Hans Niederhauser

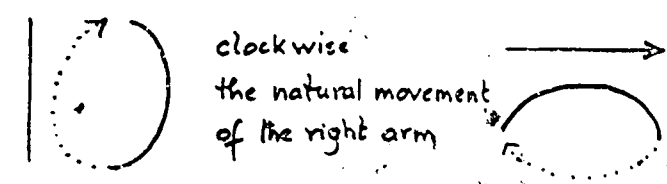
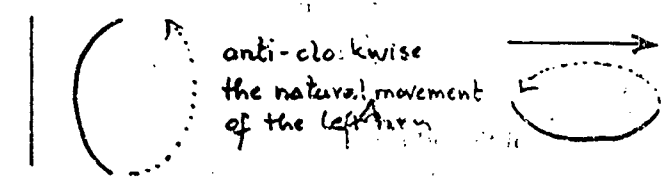
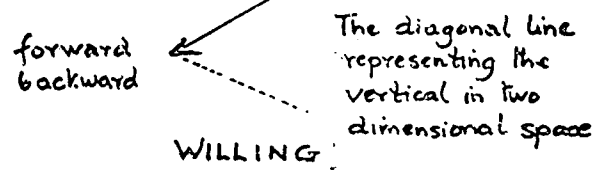
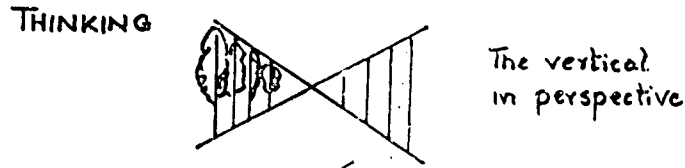
Handwriting is concerned with the straight line and the curve, they are the basic principle in the alphabetic symbol. We are therefore going to consider them in relation to their directions in space and the relation of both of these aspects to the soul forces of Thinking, Feeling and Willing. In learning to write we are reminding the soul of what it has accomplished physiologically in the body during the first seven years of life, and leading it on into future stages of developing consciousness with their consequent inner and outer projections. This will link up with the child's experience in gymnastics, the perspective drawing in Class 6 and the physics work from the Class teaching period into the Upper School, culminating in the Nautical Mathematics of Class 11 and the Main Lesson on Architecture in Class 12.

In lectures entitled 'Man: Hieroglyph of the Universe' Rudolf Steiner requires us to overcome the abstraction of considering the directions of space as purely interchangeable radiating lines. He describes them to us as planes of activity which relate our own soul forces to those working in the Universe. He makes us vividly aware of the dynamic difference between the perpendicular and the vertical planes, with the horizontal plane as the mediator. The perpendicular plane divides space into left and right, it is the plane of symmetry, the line of thinking. The vertical plane is that which divides man in front and behind, it is the line of Will. Will, in the human being, is connected with the movements of passing before and behind. Steiner characterizes this by pointing out that our food moves from in front to behind. It is involved in the Will activity of our metabolism, also that the experience of the vertical comes about through our being able to keep ourselves integrated in the velocity-movement of the earth. So when we fall over, we have temporarily lost the power of keeping pace with the gyration of the earth!

To bring these planes from three dimensional space into the two dimensions of drawing we need to clarify the difference between the perpendicular plane and the vertical plane — in the dictionary and therefore no doubt in our minds — vertical and perpendicular are given as synonymous terms. We must also remember we are speaking of "planes" of activity not just lines. The perpendicular plane is connected with the right angle. We stand perpendicular to the surface of the earth. Therefore the straight line which we draw from above to below on our paper is the symmetry line which divides it into left and right, is the line of the perpendicular "thinking" plane. The vertical plane is the one that divides in man what is in front and behind, this in two dimensional space is represented by the lines between which verticality runs, namely the lines of perspective which connect eye level with a specific point on the horizon. Therefore when we draw a



# Soul faculties & the directions of Space



Left-right clockwise European writing direction



Right-left anti-clockwise Pre-Christian & oriental writing direction

diagonal line from right to left we are drawing the line of the vertical plane, the line which represents "will" activity. Physiologically we can move our eyes up and down (perpendicularly) we can move them left and right (horizontally) but to move them forward and back we have to use our will and carry our whole body forward and backward. These, expressed on the two dimensional space of our paper, are the diagonal lines which connect our eye level with the horizon.

The straight line which divides our paper into "above-below" is the line of the "feeling" plane. The "curve" is the sum total of all three, it is the boundary between man and the universe of the stars, its qualitative language is that of clock and anti-clockwise movement. The natural movement of our right arm is clockwise, it moves from left to right: a consecutive clockwise spiral swings along from left to right which is the modern European direction of writing. The left side mirrors this in reverse, moving from right to left. See diagram. In other lectures Steiner discusses the capacities of soul which are built up by the different directions of writing used by the various races.\*

We have now several choices. Do we wish to emphasize the qualitative element of feeling by drawing our straight line on the horizontal plane and reiterate it by the clockwise above-below movement of the curve lying horizontally? Or do we wish to emphasize the perpendicular element of thinking with its left-right symmetry and joining our curved line also into relation to this, distinguishing between the clockwise or anti-clockwise direction? This is for the teacher to ponder and decide in relationship to the particular disposition of the children before him. Is there a preponderance of any one temperament in the class, for example? Is it a dreamy or an awake group of children?

Johann Kepler (1571-1630) retained all his life the religious devotion to the universe which is the special gift of the young child. In him this acted as a 'heightened' consciousness and from this he was able to give us the three laws of planetary motion. He writes in his work *Harmonicis Mundi* "In the beginning God on an indisputable decision chose the straight and the curved with which to imprint upon the World the divinity of the Creator."

Steiner emphasizes the importance of the impression on the child of his first school lesson where we make him aware of these two fundamental forms - hence the necessity of our conscious preparation. Margaret Fohlich sums this up in her book *Form Drawing* as "the teacher's constant awareness of three guiding questions, and his endeavour to live up to what

\*Berlin: 27.10.1909.

they imply : What am I to do? How am I to do it? Why am I to do it? This inner attitude will enable him to help the children entrusted to him." This is the standard for the preparation of our lessons because good honest teaching must be based on this "inner attitude".

We have left our imaginary classroom some pages back, with its pupils waiting quietly (we hope) for us to give them something to do.

We place our choice of a straight line and a curved one on the blackboard and ask them to make these one after the other in the air; we must emphasize that they are to watch their finger as it draws the form, never letting it out of sight. We notice which children make large free movements with the whole arm and those who do not stretch their arm or only make restricted movements from the wrist; these are the children whom we must call to the blackboard to trace the drawings we have made there with their finger. The teacher must develop the skill of interesting the able children in this, as the cultivation of the interest in each other is an important part of social moral training. When we are satisfied that the children have experienced a release from their cramped movements, the forms can be rubbed off and replaced by those children whom we have seen to have good free movement. They too must draw them really large, using the whole arm, not just the wrist. The next step is to tell the children to cover or close one eye and make the forms with their hand and one eye. This will show us the prevailing eye and hand "dominance" in the children which will be discussed in a later chapter. Now repeat this with both eyes closed and one hand, now look the form through with closed eyes only. This procedure should be repeated with every new form and pattern which they are to draw in their books so that good hand-eye co-ordination and attentive looking will become habitual. A further development is to tell the children to draw the form on their neighbour's back, he must then repeat it in the air in front of him and draw it also.

With this method we can introduce all manner of cursive patterns based on the straight line and curve and loop during the first school year.

All drawing of patterns should be done very slowly on large sheets of paper. It is also good to practise drawing straight lines in the different spatial directions, the strokes should be at least 12ins or 30cms in length, this will develop a sense of spacing and the grouping of words when the children write.

With an introductory main lesson of 2 - 3 weeks of such activity, we should be ready to introduce the alphabetical letters to the children.

"For a child begins with movements, expressions of will, not with looking at things. That comes later.

Hence it is necessary to begin, not with reading, but with writing — but a writing which comes naturally from man's whole being."

*From the Teachers' Course at Oxford, 1922.*

## Summary of Practical Applications

Teachers should check :

The height of the desk and the chair.

Children's posture when drawing the running forms and when writing.

That both feet are placed firmly on the floor with the right foot slightly in front of the left.

The desk and table height should allow the arm to be supported to about 2 inches from the elbow. *This is vital* as lack of support causes muscle tension in the hand and arm.

The paper or exercise book should be placed parallel to the front of the desk and a little to the right. This position for the right-handed person is that of the professional calligrapher, for the artist has always an innate feeling for the correct relationship of his materials and tools to that of his body. *The function of the left hand* is to pull the paper upward to the top ledge of the desk, drawing it as necessary toward the left, so that the right hand is not forced into an oblique angle to the upper arm. The writing hand should not be allowed to slide downward to the edge of the desk and so lose its support for the arm.

Crouching over the desk or for the head to be held on one side is *NOT ALLOWED*: shallow breathing, poor circulation, indigestion and fatigue can be the consequences. Eyes : Teachers should advise parents to have their children's eyes tested as early as three years to make sure that their child is perceiving clearly. The first five years are critical in the establishment of normal vision. I am informed by an ophthalmologist that by the time a child enters school, "lazy eye" (amblyopia) can be dense, and useful vision irretrievable. Eye strain must be avoided. Teachers must see that the eyes are held the distance from the paper as is the length from the elbow to the knuckle of the first finger. (For an adult 12--14 inches [37--38cms]). One eye should not be held nearer to the paper than the other.

Crayons should not be less than 4½ inches (10½cms) long when new. As soon as they no longer rest against the side of the hand between the thumb and first fingers, an extension

should be made and attached ; or the crayons discarded for writing purposes :

*Before drawing the forms the children should :*

Run and walk them. Find them in their bodies. Draw them in the air, eyes following the movement of the finger, the first time a free choice of hand and eye and foot should be given so that the teacher can observe the children's handedness and eye and foot preference. This done the forms should be drawn in the following sequence :

Right hand and both eyes open

Right hand and right eye only

Right hand with both eyes closed

Follow the form through from memory, eyes closed, but actively looking along the form.

A variation : The children draw a form on the back of the child who is in front of them, he repeats it by drawing it in the air ; on his paper ; on the blackboard.

Drawing of forms on the floor with the right foot, the crayon held between the big and first toes.

Left-handed children should use left eyes : left feet. For their writing posture etc. *see Chapter 7.*

For Form work in the Class Teaching Period see : *Form Drawing* by Margaret Frohlich and Hans Nierderhauser.

*Note : Page 27*

"It may seem strange that writing should come before reading, but what ultimately matters is to start, not from materialistic conceptions of life and so form a preconceived idea of what the child ought to know when it is eight years old, but to know what are the *consequences* of this early knowledge. Too early reading directs the thoughts along abstract lines. It leads the child away from actual life. Ultimately it produces arterial sclerosis. It is always so that the influences of education on the Spirit and Soul of the child extend into the region of the physical in later life. And if our school methods today were more wholesome, there would be fewer bald heads in the future!"

*Rudolf Steiner, The Swiss Teachers' Course, Dornach, 1923.*

## CHAPTER IV

### Teaching the Letters as pictures

*"The qualities of childhood pass over into later life through a metamorphosis determined by quite definite laws."*

*Lecture 5*

*"There is always an urge in the soul to pass from a unity to its parts."*

*Rudolf Steiner, Lecture 10*

*Basel Teachers' Course, 1920*

These two educational concepts lie at the heart of Steiner's pedagogy and he emphasises again and again that they require an artistic feeling and approach to his subject on the part of the teacher. Education is an Art and the teacher must become an artist in the presentation of his subject and the handling of his pupils. This idea is reiterated in lecture after lecture by Steiner. If we teachers really accept this as reality, then our pupils will be able to develop, or at any rate, will have better chances to develop an intellectual capacity with a healthy constitution, a sixth sense on how to act in our rapidly changing social conditions and the courage and confidence to deal with those problems with which life will present them.

Writing and reading are two highly complex activities which we require of our children at a fantastically early age. "Now it is a thoroughly unnatural thing to require a child in its sixth or seventh year to copy without more ado the signs which, in this advanced stage of civilization, we now use for writing" Rudolf Steiner says to teachers at Oxford in 1922 (Lecture 5).

How then are we to meet the demands of our present educational requirements without taking from our children the forces they need for their organic development, for natural and healthy digestive systems, their breathing, the functioning of their hearts, the co-ordination of their limbs, the proper physical growth of the brain itself?

This question stands behind all Steiner's Art of Teaching. He points out that the demand for precocious intellectual activity means that the child's physical organs and his whole nervous system become a likely prey for all sorts of malfunctioning and his soul grows apathetic to its environment, often strongly antipathetic to his lessons and even to his whole education.

are given in a picture form, but with this *difference* — the picture must clearly say the *name* of the vowel, in contrast to the pictures for the consonants which have as their basis the *sound* of the initial letter and in spelling never say their name as the vowels do. Hence Angel, not apple, Eagle not elephant, Princess Idonia, [when she is little she likes to wear her crown every day], Opal not orange, Unicorn, [the form of U appears between his horn and ears], not umbrella. These are the name-symbol sounds which the child has already heard and been given when he has asked "what does that letter say?" Remember it is the *name* of the vowel which is used in *spelling*! "How do you spell Father, Mummy?" asks the child. "F" "A" (as in fate) "I" "I" "E" (as in feet) "R" comes the reply, his Mother saying each letter by its name. This is what he is confronted with at home — very few parents will split the word up into its sound syllables. "And how do you spell Rita's name" (to him it sounds "Reetah") "R I (!) T A" is the answer. The child needs the security of knowing what to write.

In the first year at school the reading is an imitating activity given through the authority of the teacher. He says "FATHER is father" — this is accepted by the child and memorized. Through writing and meeting the word again and again it is learnt. We can speak of the vowels as the singing sounds which make words come alive. The consonants are the shaping sounds which envelope them like a cloak. The children can sing the vowels, then place a consonant in front of them. They love to sing BAH, BA, BE, BI, BO, BU. This can be written down and the adventurous ones will quickly carry this activity further. It is important for teachers in English speaking Rudolf Steiner schools to realize that the 'sound-gesture' of the vowels shown and practised in the eurythmy lessons\* has, for children in the First Class simply nothing to do with the written characters.

All that the children have learnt should be summed up in a sentence which has a moral overtone.

"The world is good." This is the experience in which the child lives in the first seven years of life. Something of this element should be called into consciousness when he writes his first sentence as "writing". The earlier sentences from which words and letters were "analysed" were given by authority and copied through his ability to draw. Now the letters are to be written with a "feeling-knowing" consciousness; the content of the sentence and choice of words should arise between the teacher and the children. The sentence may first be written with all the letters drawn in their picture form and afterwards repeated with them written as letters, or this second way may be left

until the next main lesson; it will depend entirely on the ability of the children and the teacher's sensitivity as to the whole artistic form which the main lesson has taken.

There remains only the decision as to the style of writing the Capital letters, in Roman or Cursive Hand. It is of course natural for the teacher to choose the style which he himself uses. Steiner himself intimated that the Roman capitals should come first before the Gothic style of the German calligraphy. The cursive emphasizes the rhythmic element which is beginning to appear in this new stage of childhood, but which will not be fully developed until the ninth year. As the present day child is subjected to so many sensory pressures which interfere with his spatial relationship to his body, and as this element is disturbed or already lacking in children who have been found to have reading difficulties, it would seem more helpful for the teacher to choose the Roman capitals. In them they will become subjected to the discipline of the upright stroke which helps to make them conscious of left and right. The horizontals of E, F, H, L, T, Z cause them to notice 'above' and 'below' and the diagonal strokes required for Z, Y, X, W V give them 'forward and backward' practice. Thereby the children keep repeating the process by which they are enabled to settle comfortably into their bodies, making it the instrument to reflect the threefold powers of Thinking, Feeling and Willing which work on to them spiritually through three dimensional space.

This constitutes the first Main Lesson in writing. All our efforts in this first school year should be directed to seeing that the children really become at home in this subject and that their work is as perfect as possible: every page of writing should be a "picture" in itself. Along with this goes the discipline of correct posture, an essential to good work, proper muscular control, healthy breathing and undamaged eyesight. These are the essentials, not "getting on" and attaining "reading ages". It will take the teacher all his time and strength to see that his class are sitting and working with good bodily co-ordination.

All main subjects in a Rudolf Steiner School are taught in block lessons of 3 — 4 weeks every morning for the first 1½-1¾ hours of the day. The work described forms the "intellectual" content of the Main Lesson which will also include the fairy story and stories of everyday happenings made by the teacher; class recitation, individual work for particular children or groups which is of a pedagogical nature: piping and form drawing. The activities of the Main Lesson should call upon the thinking, feeling, willing elements at work in the soul. The teacher's sensitivity to the children's needs and his artistic feeling for content of the lesson, should engender a sense of well being in them, so that body and soul grow together in harmony.

\*The new Art of Movement to Speech and Music inaugurated by Rudolf Steiner.

## SUMMARY

Basic Teaching principle : From the Whole to the Part.  
Lectures : Practical Advice to Teachers, Stuttgart, 1919.

The need to satisfy in childhood the "analytical" tendency working in the Subconscious.  
"Analysis" of sentences into words, words into letters.

Lecture 10. Basel Course 1920.  
The pictures of the letters should be done firstly with the paint brush in a "painting-drawing" style, *see* Lecture 3: Human Values in Education. Arnhem.  
Lecture 8 : Spiritual Values in Education, Ilkley.

The First School lesson -- an example given by Rudolf Steiner to the first teachers of the Waldorf School  
Lecture 4: Practical Advice to Teachers  
Writing-Reading-Spelling: Lecture 5: Practical Advice to Teachers

### Practical Work

Running the forms of the consonants.  
Writing them in the air using the sequences given in Chapter 3.  
Singing the vowels.  
Singing and saying them with a consonant in front of them.  
Singing or saying the Alphabet, both forward and backward.  
Accompanying this with movement, walking and clapping : clapping above and below alternate legs while walking or sitting.  
Writing their names, letters and words with the right foot (left foot for left-handed children).  
Writing the first sentence.  
Concentrate attention on sitting position : correct holding of the crayon : eyes : where are the short-sighted children sitting?  
No turning of head sideways so that one eye is overstrained.  
Train the left hand to do its work : holding the paper ; moving it up the desk ; drawing the paper to the left as the hand moves too far away from the right side of the body.  
Careful "drawing" of the capital letters. (Spacing comes later).  
Some children will retain the connection with the original pictures of the letters, even as late as Class 5 (10 years) — embellishing a tree with leaves and apples, giving the king a crown and sceptre ; they should not be disturbed in this, made conscious of it, or stopped. Children who finish writing quickly should have some handwork which they can do — finger knitting, plaiting, coloured "darning" or string games are suitable. Later they can be shown how to prepare a coloured page for their writing. This prevents the colouring

*Stroke sequences and directions for writing the Roman majuscules.*

Basic form | C

Letters enclosing space  
O Q D B

Letters with partially enclosed space.  
A R P

Curved line open letters.  
U G J S

Three dimensional line open letters.  
L E F  
H K M N T  
V W X Y Z

N.B. These two numerals are often incorrectly written. 2 5

*The basic movement of the minuscules.*

*n* has an up and over movement — clockwise

*u* has an up and under movement — anticlockwise

*The few exceptions embody both these movements.*

over of letters and words which they have written, a habit children quickly acquire when waiting for more work. Teachers should look at their own handwriting and notice the way they draw the capital letters. Are the sequences correct . . . some may be correct for the cursive and italic hands : are they correct for the Roman hand?

"First, we — that is, everybody — should recognize his own handwriting as an art — an amazing art really — to be improved rather than degraded. This partly for its own sake, and also because it is only from a general interest in, and recognition of, art that any improvement in the forms of the things we produce from pots to cities, can spring up. Common interest in the improvement of ordinary writing would be an immense disciplinary force : we might reform the world if we began with our own handwriting, but we certainly shall not unless we begin somewhere". W. R. Lethaby from *Writing and Civilisation* the foreword to the catalogue of the First Exhibition of the Society of Scribes and Illuminators.

## CHAPTER V

### Reading your own handwriting

*"In reading only the head is occupied and anything which only occupies a part of the organism and leaves the remaining parts impassive should be taught as late as possible. The most important thing is first to bring the whole being into movement, and later on the single parts".*

*Rudolf Steiner, the Torquay Course for Teachers, 1924.*

This precept we have tried to follow out in the classroom work of the children in their first school year. After the presentation of the letters in the first term, the children will write out the whole or selected parts of the Fairy Tales they have heard. This will be done in capital letters in large writing books without lines. They should read firstly from what is written on the blackboard and then from their own books.

There is no need for the teacher to use a vocabulary "suitable" to the children's age and understanding. We want them to experience language — their mother tongue — in its beauty, variety and rhythm. Long words of many letters will keep their attention occupied and is far better for them than struggling to read the printed page. Descriptive words, beautiful sounding words, these will give them the wide range of vocabulary which they will need in the later classes. Eight to nine years is the age when children love to "taste" sounds ; witness the joy that swear words give them to the mortification of many a mother! So let them exercise this desire in acquiring from their writing a wide variety of exciting-sounding looking words . . . their very shape and context will "explain" their meaning. We have, of course, to be awake to the changing meaning of words. Not so long ago a description of "the princess descended the stairs, her train sweeping behind her", was met with gasps of astonishment and howls of "impossible" ; the story teller was visualizing her clad in "gold and purple velvet" -- the hearers were seeing the blue and white of British Railways! Also the teacher has to learn how to build up a widening vocabulary for children who are "word starved" at home.\* Limiting the vocabulary

\*R. Honeyford, M.Ed., "Class Talk", *British Journal of Disorders of Communication*. Vol 7, No. 2., 1972.

is not an answer to this. Steiner education has the inestimable value of Eurythmy to offer as a help in awakening a sense for language, a subject which can be taught in any school, state or independent. But the deciding factor is the TELLING — not reading — of stories by parents and teachers. The effort that the adult makes to portray the content of words by the imaginative situation in which they are used, this is the stimulus which widens the child's interest in sounds and words and therewith the intelligence to comprehend their meaning.

Reading together, as a class, passages from the blackboard which we have already written, helps to establish good intonation and a rhythmic flow of breath. The teacher should read a complete sentence expressively and clearly and the children should repeat it afterwards; each time the teacher will point at the writing. When the children can speak the passage as a whole, then comes the turn of the individual reader, each child pointing as he reads; the choosing of the individual words, underlining them, finding similar words — those beginning with the same letter — finding out how many times a particular letter occurs in a passage etc. Finally some of the children may read it alone from their book. (Learning to read is not a time-and-motion study). The following day, after the new piece of writing has been treated in the same way, the previous passage can be walked and read by certain children. This can be done in various ways either to suit the temperament of the child for example, or to help with speech-limb co-ordination; teachers will find endless indication in Steiner's lectures on how to help children who are "asleep" in the head, or too nervously awake in their sense system or weak in their breathing and circulatory system. A teacher should also be observing which children remember easily and those who cannot recall what they have learnt. Such hindrances can be helped by the methods we use in dealing with the subject matter. The child who has a "sleepy" head will also probably have poor speech-movement co-ordination and so he should say a word on every step he takes as he reads aloud. Those who cannot recall what they learn should stand and read a sentence, then take three or five steps before reading the next sentence. Others who retain everything in their heads so that they become "gabbling" readers without a feeling for the structure of a sentence or its meaning, need to read and run at the same time. The teacher should support the reading, whispering the word or whole sentence so that there is no hesitation over the unknown word. At the end of the week the children can be asked to write down their favourite words, some can come to the blackboard and do so for the others to read. The teacher will find endless combinations of this kind of activity and individualizing to meet the special problems which the children have. By the

third term, if not sooner, the children will have gained a mastery over the size in which they draw their letters, the spacing of the words and awareness of how many words will fit across the page. This being so it is now time to introduce the margin and lines into their writing books. The teacher should have already written his passages on lines on the blackboard so that it presents a spatially attractive "picture". The children should now become conscious of this and the teacher can draw lines in their books as a guide. There is no need for these to be rigid, a gentle curve allows more letters. The teacher must explain that the letters should walk carefully along the line and must not fall off it at the end, but go at once to a new one. They soon begin to recognize that a new line is needed when a long word comes near the end of a line.

The curriculum of the first school year in Steiner's schools is a recapitulatory summing up of the child's soul-spiritual development during the period to the change of teeth. The following period of seven years (7--14) is centred physiologically on the growth and development of the breathing and circulatory system, that rhythmic centre of us which sustains our life and never tires! It is the physical expression of the Feeling life of the Soul, and while this is developing a new stage of consciousness appears in the child . . . he begins to live in the feeling of the drama of events at home and school and of his own changing soul life. Sympathy and antipathy as healthy forces of the soul now come to the fore and the subject matter of our lessons must see that they are fully used, for their fruit will be the faculty of balanced judgment after puberty has been gone through. This rhythmic element and pronounced living in sympathy and antipathy will become apparent from the second school year. ("Oh Mummy I *must* have Rosemary to tea today; no, not Jane too, I *can't* bear her! — these are the signs of the time.) Just as the straight line gave the structure for the child's spatial experience and is basic to the Roman capitals, so the curve is basic to the minuscules. In the major numbers of these the rhythmic swing of clockwise and anti-clockwise is present (n u) This movement sums up all the spatial elements and brings them into a dynamic rhythm. This of itself educates and cultivates the new stage of body-soul development which takes place especially between 7 — 9 years when the heart and breathing rhythm adjusts to that of the adult tempo. On this adjustment taking place properly depends a healthy life of body and soul.

In the classroom the question which concerns us now is — "Do we teach the small letters in print script and join them afterwards or start straight away with a running hand-writing?"

There are many views on this based mainly on the priority given to reading and allowing this to decide the time of

introduction and type of writing. In 1916 Edward Johnston\* was asked by the then Board of Education for his advice on a foundational handwriting style, even so print script won the day, and it has been left to Johnston's pupil, Alfred Fairbank to find a solution for the transition from print script to a running hand. He says, "although useful for teaching infants print script has a serious lack as a handwriting style, for it does not develop naturally into a running hand. Accordingly, some other style is generally taught when the child uses a pen. Print script is plainly uneconomical since it has to be abandoned and a poor foundation for the acquisition of a fundamental skill"† This is fully substantiated today by the experience of the teachers who are concerned with the problem of dyslexia, and of the many technical errors in writing; for example, writing "s" and "e" from below upwards probably stems from this awkward change from print to a running hand.

The requirement in Steiner pedagogy is that we take hold of the faculty of imitation which lingers on for a time after the change of teeth and lead it over into the feeling for the authority of the teacher by showing children how writing develops out of a beautiful copying of the world around them. We are therefore, during the first year at school, while the children are mastering the capital letters, also preparing that next stage, so beloved to the child, of "joined up" writing.

The preparation for this is the drawing of manifold patterns and the development of form drawing which Margaret Fröhlich has worked out for us from Steiner's indications. If this is a regular feature of the main lesson as well as a main lesson in its own right it is a natural step to the introduction of the small writing letters and the short sound of the consonants and vowels at the commencement of the second school year.

Again the teacher is faced with a variety of choices of handwriting styles. Upright — slanting — looped or straight strokes. Here his pedagogical-artistic feelings should be the deciding factor. During the first school year he will have come to know his pupils intimately through his observation and work with Steiner's many educational lectures. He will ask himself if his class is mainly one where the children's will forces are strongly active but, as a whole, lacking in a rhythmic element; or is it a group of children who live strongly in their nerve sense system taking up every impression and quickly discarding them. Are they a dreamy unawakened group of children? These are the considerations which should decide the style of writing which the teacher will choose.

---

\*See note at end of Chapter.

†The Story of Handwriting.

A looped writing style works on the child's rhythmic-breathing-circulatory system. The upright style with its straight strokes, where the pencil repeats the initial stroke in a backward direction awakens the will and curbs the excessive penetration of sense impressions into the child's nerve-sense system.

The methods described in Chapter 3 for making the child dexterous, and seeing that the writing activity is taken over into the whole body, should be continued in the cursive pattern work and the first joined writing; the reading by the class and the individual is continued.

When the cursive writing stage is reached the question arises at what point should pencils be introduced. It has been the custom to use coloured wax and then colour pencil crayons in the English Steiner Schools until pen and ink is used. This has had its drawbacks, time wastage and disturbance through the constant breaking of the crayon points — delightful, of course, to our pupils who collect these in match boxes and spill them all over the floor . . . (and not one is allowed to be lost either!) Crayons need extra pressure too, which causes the bad habits of tense hand and arm muscles. Neither do they glide over the surface of the paper. All this has to be weighed against the colourful effect of the finished writing and the interest to the children of changing the colours as they go from sentence to sentence.

But what one observes nowadays is the lack of rhythm in children's movements and the tension and clumsiness in their handling of wax and pencil crayons. Our present situation therefore, appears to need a medium which allows for a good rhythmic quality in writing, where an experience of weight and lightness is possible. Here the ordinary graphite pencil comes back into its own, for now modern technology has produced a plastic bonding process which makes 3B and 4B pencils that do not smudge or break so easily. These glide over the paper and the children can have the pleasurable experience of thick and thin strokes which, with coloured crayons is difficult for young children to achieve. The use of these can be continued for decorative capital letters and titles but the main writing should be done in the media which gives the opportunity for rhythmic flow and beauty of line, not to mention the ease for the correction of badly shaped letters or copying errors.

When cursive writing is established by the 2nd term of Class 2, the time arrives for the children to read from print. Although they will have been using books at home no doubt from the age of 2 — 3 years and even be reading already, nevertheless, the introduction by the teacher to a printed book, in the way it is presented, can have a lasting educational impression. Books and the printed page, up to this moment,



## Old Celtic Prayer

Oh Michael the victorious,  
I make my circuit under thy shield.  
Oh Michael, of the white steed  
And of the bright, brilliant blade!  
Conqueror of the dragon,  
Be thou at my back,  
Thou ranger of the heavens!  
Thou warrior of the King of all!  
Oh Michael the victorious  
My pride and my guide!  
Oh Michael the victorious  
The glory of mine eye.

have been one of the many assorted impressions of things in one's environment, like the kettle, knives and forks and meal times, part of every day existence. Now it is to be brought to the child in its true context and purpose.

We have already seen that writing was itself connected with religious life — the scribe in pre-Christian times — the monk afterwards — wrote down the Word of God. The desire for literacy in the last century really stemmed from the wish to read the Bible, for innumerable people the Bible was their first reading book. It is an important pedagogical principle that a sense for a future activity or aspect of learning is prepared with children. It is good for them to be told "when you are such and such an age — or when you come to Class 7, then you will learn about such and such a person or subject. The children will hear stories from the Old Testament in Class 3 and so in context with this, it is good formally to introduce the printed word from a book which stands behind all Western cultural life, the Bible. This important moment should be prepared for by the teacher at a Parents' Class-meeting, so that parents too, can take part in feeling the importance and dignity of the moment when the printed word is placed consciously before the children. We can prepare the opening verses of Genesis with the children, or verses from the story of the Nativity. They can be learnt by heart and written first and then the teacher can bring to the classroom one of the larger Bibles with their clear print and one by one the children can take part in their first reading lesson, each child in turn coming to stand beside the teacher, together they point at the words and the child speaks them consciously and clearly.

"When we come to reading, our efforts must simply be in the direction of making the child aware, this time in his head, what has already been elaborated by the bodily forces as a whole. Reading is then grasped mentally, because it is recognized by the child as an activity in which he has already been employed." (from the Ilkley Course for Teachers, 1923. Lecture 8).

It is in the Third Class that the printed form of the small letters can be introduced, for example, in the writing of poems. This is only a specialized form of writing and is not the style we use for every day communication. It is easier and more logical for the child to recognize the letters in single formation from the experience of joined writing than to have to link separate letters together. The idea that if the children learn to print first it will familiarize them with the printed letters in books is not a sound pedagogical concept. Of course the majority of children can manage this but it is a contradiction of those spiritual forces at work in his being which develop into faculty.

The final stage is the introduction of ink in the Fourth Class. This is the year when the cuttlefish, which produces its self-defensive "ink", is introduced in the Main Lesson on Natural History. Thus the curriculum itself indicates the time when the children should change to this medium. Here again we can apply the historical development approach . . . the latest productions of our civilization are not the best thing for children whose organism is not yet developed and complete. The hard ball of the biro which is neither pencil nor pen destroys all the work we are doing to write rhythmically and beautifully and keep these qualities when later we have to write at speed.

Pens made by themselves from bamboo produce excellent writing. Interest and care for their writing comes about through the experience of using something that they themselves have produced and which works! Teachers with classes of 30 - 40 may quail at the thought but it is possible with careful preparation. It is one of the ways of teaching the respect for the materials of which things are made, which is so sadly lacking now. Garden bamboo cane stakes, normal penshaft thickness are useable, cut into the usual penholder-nib shape; the pith carefully thinned away on the nib, its width having been cut first. A "reservoir" to provide a flow of ink can be inserted at the back of the nib and wedged into the holder. A flexible narrow strip of copper, or a strip cut from the sealing band of a sardine tin is suitable. If dipping into the ink gives trouble, the "reservoirs" can be filled by using a paint brush as an ink filler. Teachers may like to use coloured paints before they introduce ink. Quill pens can also be made. They are considered by calligraphers as unsurpassed by any other tool for writing. But "free range" geese will have to be found, as quills are not what they were; modern farming trends have undermined their structure . . . seagulls are unaffected, if you can find feathers which are thick enough! Quills must be toughened by standing for a time in a solution of alum before cutting.

It is the use of self-made pens which enable the children to resist the urge to fall into very small writing that comes after the Ninth year when they, for the first time, experience themselves as individuals standing apart from the world. Before this "9th year crisis" they have lived with the unconscious assumption that they were a part of the great world in which they lived.\* Now they feel a withdrawal from this "oneness" and often overnight a child's handwriting can change from a large rhythmic style to a microscopic tightness. Confidence in the world process can be regained and sustained through a right development of the art of writing.

\*See note at end of chapter for fuller description.

Examples of alphabets.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M  
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

third grade

A B C . . .  
fourth grade

A B C . . .  
fifth grade

from "Form Drawing"

A B C D E F G H I  
J K L M N O P Q R  
S T U V W X Y Z

Alphabet in shaded drawing - see Chapter VII

A B C D E F G H I  
J K L M N O P Q R  
S T U V W X Y Z

Here is an example of decorated capital letters suitable for older children.

## SUMMARY

### Class One : (children aged 6+ – 7+ years)

This is the year in which Writing is taught in one or two Main Lessons each term.

#### The First Term :

Preparation for Writing (Chapter 3)

Introduction of the Capital Letters

Copying the first words and sentences. Exercise books should be as large as is compatible for children to manage on the area of the desk or table without their slipping about ; certainly not less than 30 x 21 cms. Letters should be approximately 4 cms (1½ inches) in height.

Emphasis on the *drawing* of the Capitals.

Large clear letters : see that every child draws each stroke of the letter in its correct sequence.

See that Posture, pencil holding, distance of eyes from the paper, are correct.

Preparation for "running handwriting" through the drawing of cursive patterns and form drawing. The cursive patterns should not be allowed to straggle across the paper. Lines are needed approximately 5 cms (2 inches) apart. The children should first make the patterns between the lines quite freely. As skill increases the width of the lines should be reduced to 2¼ cms (8/10 inch) for the preparation of introducing the running hand in Class 2.

#### The Second Term :

Writing practice and reading what has been written. Writing sentences of their own making.

Pattern work continues.

#### The Third Term :

Continue writing stories and making sentences describing what they have seen and done.

Introduce single lines for the writing, emphasis on good spacing : margin : see the work is well set out on the page.

Continue form drawing.

Introduce the graphite pencil for the drawing of cursive patterns.

N.B. Pencil Companies using a bonding process which lessens the smudging of 3B and 4B pencil have the word "bonded" printed on the pencil shaft.

### Class Two : (children 7+ – 8+ years)

The work of this year is teaching a running hand and Reading.

#### The First Term – Using pencils 3B or 4B

Introduce the small letters of the Alphabet (minuscules) in round hand if Roman Capitals have been used. In Cursive hand if Cursive Capitals have been chosen. Use single

lines so that the children are clear where the letter sits in relation to its ascending and descending strokes. It is important that the lines are far enough apart so that "ascenders" and "descenders" are not tangled up. A proper contrast between letter and word-spacing should be seen. Spend time on these details and teach the careful use of the rubber. How many children see rubbers being used by adults? Teaching is necessary. We can do this best by sitting beside him and talking to the rubber . . . commenting on it . . . "mm, you are a soft one ; this one is hard, we shall have to use you very lightly or you'll leave a smudge behind . . ." Speak about the paper, its surface, the whiteness . . . "I wonder where the tree grew that you came from? . . . yellowish paper . . . that must be paper which has already done a lot of work! It's made from thrown away paper." Present materials to children as a picture of your reactions, your judgments and experience, *not* information of how they are made, that comes later and really will be interesting to them if you have prepared it in this way first.

Is the way the pencil is held correct and is the left hand doing its work?

#### Check posture

When introducing the minuscules help the children to discover, from the stroke directions and the invisible movements between them, how the capital letters have shrunk to their new shapes. Find these in sentences and practise them in groups of three in alphabetical sequences, e.g., abc, cde, efg . . . zab . . . [k or f, never g]. This is a "ss" occasionally used in formal writing.] Repeat such practice sequences, speaking the movement directions aloud, until each child can do them with his eyes shut.

Reading from their writing – learning the short sounds of the vowels : the letter-sound combinations.

#### The Second Term :

Continue copying writing and the making of their own compositions. Introduce the first printed books. When this is done we should lay the foundation for a recognition of the beauty of printed letters. We cannot do better than have in our classroom examples of the "Ideal" letters, those that have influenced all Western writing – The Trajan Capitals remaining on the columns of His Triumphal Arch (Emperor 98 – 117). Edward M. Catich has produced each of these on separate cards printed in a terracotta that exactly matches the colouring of the Roman tiles of this period. The children can thus see letters as an artistic creation in themselves\*

\*See "Reed, Pen and Brush Alphabets for Writing and Lettering"

The Third Term :

Writing and reading practice continues together with form drawings.

Writing styles and their effect.

Exercises for "sleepy" children, nervously awake children, poor speech movement co-ordination.

Class Three : Printing introduced.

The writing of business letters provides for the teaching of spacing and layout. Each letter should be presented as a "picture" in itself.

Practise it in Classes 4 and 5, ready for neat labelling on maps and in science books.

Class Four : Writing in ink.

Consult books on handwriting for correct angle of pen to paper, type of nib for chosen style of writing, etc. (See *bibliography*)

NOTE on the Ninth Year Crisis. Rudolf Steiner, Basel Course 1920. Lecture 8.

"In the ninth year the child experiences what is really a complete transformation in his soul, indicating a significant change in his bodily-physical experience. From then on, the child begins to experience himself as separate from his surroundings. He learns to distinguish between the world and self. When we are able to observe rightly, we must say that before this revolution in human consciousness, world and self flow more or less together. From the ninth year (this is, of course, meant approximately) man distinguishes between himself and the world. This must be thoroughly taken into account in the teaching material and educational life, that we bring to the child from the ninth year on. It will be well, up to this time, not to confuse the child with description or characterization of things that are separated from man or can be regarded separately from man. You see, if we tell the child fables or fairy tales, we speak about animals or perhaps plants in the same way as we speak of people. Animals and plants are personified and quite rightly, because the child does not yet distinguish between self and the world, because everywhere in the world the child sees something that he experiences in himself."

## CHAPTER VI

### On Spelling!

*"Spelling lessons must run parallel with developing the children's feeling of respect and esteem for what their predecessors have established."*

*Rudolf Steiner, Practical Advice to Teachers, Lecture 5.*

We need only to spell when we are writing. It is a capacity which must not in any way obtrude into consciousness; it must be entirely the servant of thought. The faculty of inner visualization must be working at a subconscious level and work upon the capacity of self-movement which we have been using in our teaching method.

It has already been described how movement, speaking and thinking are developed out of each other: all three of these processes are involved in spelling.

On the other hand, spelling itself has had its own evolution, and only become static comparatively recently. With the loss of interest in the Greek and Latin languages words have suffered from a loss of their own ancestry: their sound or spelling are no longer evocative of their past. Thus the teacher stands in the class room with little inner connection himself with words as history — only as a utility for communication, and this emptiness therefore, works upon the children producing lack of interest. This in its turn affects the children's Will and its power on the recall of memory. Conventional teaching of spelling does not really reach to the root of the situation. Some children manage to learn by rote, but like other capacities, as for instance, Maths or Music, either one can spell or can't. There are some children who are good at spelling naturally, and those who are unable to retain the visual picture of the word however many times they write it. It may be learnt, but under stress — that is speed of requirement — the old faulty picture returns. These faults seem only to be overcome when, as fully conscious adults, they take the matter in hand, though even then there will remain words whose spelling always arrests the flow of thought.

If we have given the children time really to enter into the methods described, and found ever fresh ways of enabling them to practise what we have taught, then many of their spelling troubles can be overcome.

Steiner suggests that teachers need to approach spelling with a "light hand" showing the children that the grown-ups spell words like this, and therefore they should also do so, as they too have to grow into the customs of the adult world of which one day they will be a part.

It will not be long before the naturally able spellers and those to whom spelling is to be a problem will emerge, these are often the children who have entered the class after the basic preliminary work has been done, and the suggestions which follow apply to children who are ten years of age and over.

The aim must be to work for inner visualization and, through interest, arrest the attention. For example, a short graphic sentence containing two words, which need "fixing" in the mind, used in a new way can be written on the blackboard. Then the "analysing" procedure can be used. The second day the children can stand with their backs to the board and different ones asked to say the sentence; follow this by asking for the spelling of the fourth word on the first line; the last but one word of the sentence etc. The third day the children can be asked to write the sentence from memory, or insert words which have been rubbed off. Naturally a new sentence can be added on each succeeding day in classes of older children.

In this way we implement the three day rhythm in our teaching to which Steiner has drawn our attention. This rhythm takes into account the threefold structure of the soul with its developing capacities and the importance of the intervals of sleep. We have to give the opportunity for the full assimilation of our subject matter into the soul-bodily organization before calling on the child to reproduce it with his intellect.

Spelling corrections are a problem both to teacher and pupils, especially if their work is well written and comes back defaced with red marks and — whisper it only — sometimes teacher's "scribble"!

It has a beneficial, consoling effect on children of all ages, if the teacher sits down beside a pupil, consciously places himself in the correct posture for writing and slowly and beautifully writes out three or four of the misspelt words for him to copy — once! We cannot do this every day for each child, but we can see to it that in every main lesson we have written once in each child's book in his presence; watching the care with which the teacher treats words, awakens interest and conscience towards them.

We need to distinguish between different types of "spellers" — "original spellers" for example, are those who, in the heat of composition feel the "picture-meaning" sense of the sounds as they write, in connection with their rhythm and the content of their thought. To make these children learn spelling is the best way to turn them into bad spellers, for having learnt words

out of their context, when they are required in composing thoughts, they never know which is right — what they "imagine" or the correction. For them, and truly for all poor spellers, it is far better to comment at the end of their compositions that they have spelt "accommodation" and "necessary" correctly, than to return it to them scored with red lines.

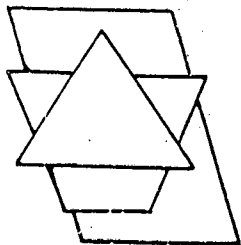
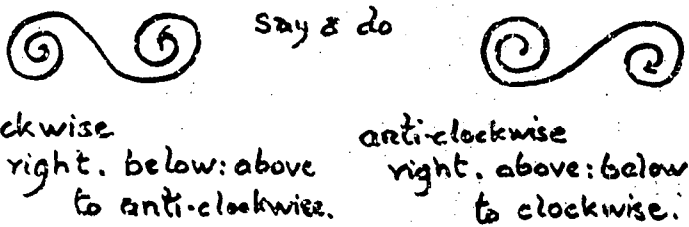
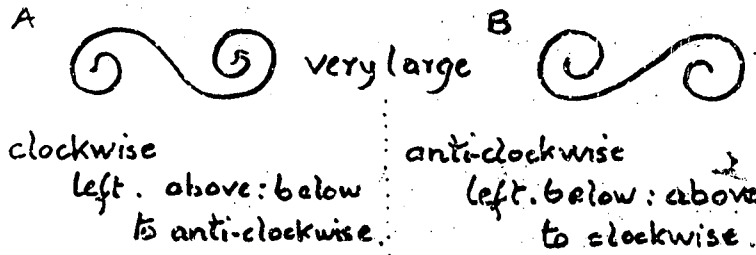
It is the "bizarre speller" who is our problem. He puts any old letters together and needs special teaching on a one to one basis. Until this can be arranged we must concentrate on his writing, making him copy out most beautifully a line from a poem which the class is learning, a verse, or a sentence with alliterated sounds. This is the best way to help him and also the "original speller" — these are the "non-memorising types." Then there is the other type of speller: those who only learn by heart words which have a feeling content with themselves, their interest and activities . . . given lists of these words they can learn them and recall them at will.

There is a large body of work contributed by teachers to help the poor speller. The learning of specially selected groups of words is the main consideration here; there is certainly a short time between 8 — 9 years when children love "collecting" and this moment can be used for such work. But when this is over, time spent on learning by rote can be a sterile procedure and it would be better used in work of a remedial nature which arouses the whole of the child's abilities, rather than his head memory only.

Painting can be used, for instance, to help poor spellers and readers, not in extra painting lessons, but in the usual weekly one. Painting is not to be regarded as a "subject" but as part of everyday life; that is why Steiner made the class teachers responsible for this instead of it being taught by an art teacher. Social training in the class also consists of the children recognizing that each one has some special need and they must accept it that Tom is different from Will, and that Mary has to have something which Sally doesn't.

If we have noticed that there is a child who cannot take hold of his thoughts — is vague and sleepy, then we make him paint two or three geometrical forms, one super-imposed upon the other. He then has to learn to see which parts the forms have in common and which will protrude (*see illustration*). This helps him to differentiate in his "inner" looking. Another exercise is to paint a background colour leaving a geometrical form as a space in the centre, which then can be painted in with the complimentary colour. Here we call on the child's ability to hold a picture in his mind and not let it become washed away by the too strong processes at work in his body. After working at this exercise, words may be substituted for the forms.†

Exercises for older children with reversal problems  
p.d.g.b.n.u. etc.



freehand  
see  
text



Learning difficulties can be foreseen by accurate observation especially if we have had the children in the first three classes, i.e., before 9 years. Steiner gives specific ways of painting for children who hold on to their thoughts and so become "overloaded" with them; and for those children whose thoughts disappear into the depths of the body. In the first instance contrasting colours should be painted in large areas next to each other. This has an effect similar to the relief we have when gazing out over a landscape: in the opposite situation, colours which blend into one another should be used and painted with a drawing style in narrow, ribbon-like forms, looped together. Here the child's consciousness is not allowed to go on dreaming in his bodily processes; in this exercise he must remember to lift his brush to go over or under the loops. He has to wake up, just as he must in a road of heavy traffic. Steiner follows this by illustrating how the same pedagogical need can be extended into the gym lesson by seeing that the second type of child alternates the gymnastic exercises with reciting and singing while the other children remain silent in between the exercises.\*

Thus the subject matter of lessons can be used to heal and produce latent faculties if the teachers have really observed the children in their care, and understand how, by using the conjunction of body and soul working together, the intellect will be produced as a fruit in due season.

SUMMARY

Steiner Lecture 5. Practical Advice to Teachers.

Using the "three day rhythm". The supplementary Course to the Waldorf Teachers, 1921. Lecture 3.

Correcting Spelling

Types of Spellers

Observe which children cannot let go of their thoughts.

Observe which children lose their thoughts.

Corrective painting exercises. Two for children from 6 years onwards. Two for those over eleven.†

Exercise for reversal problems. All the spatial dimensions are contained in the regular spiral (arithmetical). Their corresponding soul faculties are brought into activity when drawing this form.

Schonell's "The Essential Spelling List."

Dale R. Jordan. *Dyslexia in the Classroom*, Publishers: Charles E. Merrill, Ohio.

\*Oxford Course Lecture 8.

## CHAPTER VII

### Writing Difficulties

*"Our rightful place as educators is to be removers of hindrances . . . Each child in every age brings something new into the world from divine regions, and it is our task as educators to remove bodily and psychical obstacles out of his way ; to remove hindrances so that his spirit may enter in full freedom into life."*

*Rudolf Steiner, Oxford Course for Teachers, 19.8.22.*

As early as the first main lesson of school, it will be apparent to the Class Teacher which children are experiencing hindrances, both in mastering their bodies and to the harmonious influx of their will forces.

Many factors play into this. A very common one is that in the years before the change of teeth, the inherited body has been too hardened and difficult to transform into a vehicle for the expression of the child's own will ; the habit patterns of the family are so firmly embedded in the constitution that the work of soul-spirit on the body is hampered. The polarity is when the bodily constitution is delicate and mobile, while the environment is harsh and over stimulates the nerve-sense system, so that the work of the soul-spirit of the child is disturbed and the life forces depleted. Both these conditions will produce many warning signs which show that the child is unable to absorb the content of the lessons and change them into the necessary faculty. We will consider some of these signs, with suggestions for helping them to be overcome.

Lack of concentration is a common complaint made by both teachers and parents. Two of the usual causes of this are, firstly, too many sense impressions crowding in on the children as soon as they wake up. What is the first thing that they see on waking? The wall paper! Is it strongly patterned and coloured with cartoon figures or complicated forms? This can be an irritant to a delicate nerve sense organisation . . . and even to a strong one! A plain wall in a warm colour — pinks and orange tones — is more health giving to the senses ; it can be enhanced by curtains of a deeper shade. Is the radio on when they awake? Is it audible over the whole house? Is the eight o'clock news

on at breakfast time while Father is reading the newspaper and children and Mother talking about the arrangements for the day? If so, is it any wonder that teachers complain that children just don't *hear* what is said to them?

In these conditions the vitality and delicacy of perception of the sight sense and hearing sense are already over-stimulated by the time children arrive at school and if they come by fast driven cars with the radio on too, how can young children settle down to quiet concentrated work with the residue of all these impressions working from the body on to the soul? Children arriving by school bus are not in a much better condition. They have usually "worked" each other up into a state of excitement. Even the effects of the healthy walk to school are depleted when there is constant heavy traffic on the road. All this the teacher has to take into account. Therefore to spend ten minutes on a simple painting or shaded colour exercise before the morning verse would go a long way in helping the children to settle down to work.

Another more subtle and deeper condition for lack of concentration is when the child has had the experience of having his play constantly interrupted. Over-anxious or dominating parents are the culprits here. There are mothers who want the child to play as they did when children, they do not recognize that their child has a "fantasy" working in the Will which wants to develop a different kind of play interest. Or the child may be slow at starting his play and just as he has become immersed in it Mother comes along with something else she wants him to do, or to change his place of play. This background accounts for many a fidgety child. The teacher can distinguish these causes through careful observation and visiting the home. As a remedy for this he will see that the child has an opportunity to "play himself out" either in the classroom or even by arranging a time when the child (if he is in the First Class) could join in with the kindergarten. These children are often so frustrated that they are glad to be with younger children who in their turn become their healers.

Incessant talking, and inability to remember, are two other obstacles to good work which have to be tackled. These come more from the soul-spirit of the child than from the environment. Observation will show that the breathing of these children is very shallow ; they can be helped through working with the body and in this way making the child more active in his soul nature. Steiner has emphasized the unique condition that the children are in between the change of teeth and puberty, namely, that what is done with the body works upon the soul, and if we make the child active in his soul-feeling life, this works back on to his bodily constitution. We need to remember that this law, discovered by Spiritual Scientific research, works

At this age, the condition of the body is the soul's "objective outer world" and these deeply embedded senses tell him about it. If the child is not allowed to develop at his own pace, if he does not have enough practice at sucking but is too early spoon fed for example, and "helped" to walk too soon, then the integration, the response of his Will to these senses are weakened. Not only is this a disaster to the sense organ itself but it goes far deeper, for Steiner points out that there is an important metamorphosis of these senses into those "senses" which we use to communicate with our fellow man, namely "the sense of movement" is inter-connected with our capacity for recognizing the sound of speech; the "sense of vitality" (life) for the recognition of thought; and the "sense of balance" into the capacity of hearing.

When our pupils do not hear the difference between the sounds of speech, cannot recognize "cup" from "cap" when they cannot grasp the explanations, when their speaking is slovenly, the sounds not properly articulated, then the senses of balance, vitality (life), and movement have been weakened. With this knowledge we can see how all that Steiner has given in his pedagogical methods have a healing and reviving effect on these all important bodily senses that inform us of the creative powers of that Universal Life of which we are a part.

Hence Steiner's emphasis that teachers must work at their own speech so that it becomes objective and not embedded in habit patterns and tones . . . he gave specific speech exercises in the first training course for the Waldorf School teachers; he expected them to practise eurythmy and painting too, these are a powerful means of reviving the intimate connections between hearing -- movement -- speech. Painting is the reviver of the "sense of vitality" as also is the making of riddles which is given in the curriculum of the first three classes of the lower school; these give the impetus towards the metamorphosis of this sense into the concept or thought sense.

Symmetry drawings and dexterity exercises all work towards establishing the child's relationship to the sense of balance, preparing him to hear the melodic harmony and rhythms of music and speech and movement.

These are the great healers for the stresses and lacks in early childhood and their long term effects should never be underrated, for what we have done for the children does not end when they leave school, our pedagogy will continue to work in the subconscious regions of the soul and the fruits will appear long after the means have faded from memory.

Bad writing postures can be corrected by giving the pupil a suitable "picture" -- see Chapter 3. If it is an older child, we can help him by letting him stand and write, for a short time each day, at the blackboard. If the bad habits are too firmly

engrained, then we should try using a drawing board at an angle of 45° to support his book. The eye is thus directed at 90° on the paper and at this correct "calligraphic" position the sense of movement is brought into play through the activity of the eye, and so correction is gradually brought about. Ideally all writing should be done on a raised surface, but this in school conditions would be a counsel of perfection.

We should help children, who entering the class later, sit with the left arm surrounding their writing, or hold their head in the left hand, by giving them a ball to hold. The hand should be cupped with its back resting on the desk. Ideally the ball should be made of copper -- a metal which warms itself from the heat of the body and stimulates the circulation -- but one firmly stuffed with sheep's wool could substitute. If neither is possible, then an orange can serve the purpose.

We should make sure that the left hand is really left handed and not ambidextrous. Many children are presumed to be left handed by their parents because of the fact that babies are ambidextrous is not known. It has been overlooked that it is necessary for parents to give a definite lead and training in handedness. His dominance should be checked by the school doctor and suitable exercises made with the eurythmist or with the remedial teacher so that a full left-sided dominance is achieved.

He should sit with his paper a little to the left of his body, and to avoid smudging his writing as he moves, it should be tilted so that the top left hand corner is higher than the right. He should keep his arm close to his body and write using his fingers to make the movements rather than the hand and wrist. He can practise this skill by holding a marble between his thumb and first two fingers as he would his pen, and making the letter forms with this. The function of the right hand is to move the page up towards the top of the desk as the writing proceeds.

To prevent the deterioration of handwriting through the hurried taking of notes and dictation, time should be given once in each main lesson throughout the school to the enjoyment of writing beautifully; it would give the teacher an opportunity to make the children conscious of the necessity for the correct management of pen, paper and their sitting position. The discipline of making the correct movement-sequences of the letters with a broad nibbed pen has a quietening effect, similar to that of Geometry, on the turbulent forces of puberty. In writing thus, the children experience a musical element which complements the spatial speech of Geometry. Needless to say some good examples by the teacher would be a great stimulus to this, just as his own paintings, which he makes for his classroom at the seasonal festivals or for birthdays are a help to the children's paintings.



From the age of ten all children need to make the capital letters in shaded drawing — see page 57. This is the great corrective to stiff wrists and tightly held pencils and overcomes the automatic movements that so easily become a habit as children begin to develop speed in writing.

In education no teacher can say "all my own work", everything that is done for the child contributes something. If we use methods which belong to the essential development of man as a spiritual being then we place in him a seed, instead of a stone, and in due course this will receive "water" from some other teacher, perhaps a long time after. Then the seed will germinate and in a few weeks the pupil will master through the power of his own will what has been hampering him.

We have to have the confidence that faculties develop if they are rightly prepared. If we do this conscientiously then we are giving our pupils bread from the loaf that always renews itself, and water from the bottle that is never empty . . .

*"Pedagogy is love for man resulting from knowledge of man, and this is the bringing of the living spirit right down into the bodily constitution, the bodily functions." Rudolf Steiner. Education and Modern Spiritual Life. Lectures given at Ilkley, 1923.*

Two reasons for lack of concentration.

Co-ordination.

Dominance and laterality defined.

Correct writing positions for the left hander.

Kinesthetic Sense — Senses of Movement : Life : Balance and their metamorphosis into the "higher" senses of Speech : Thought : Hearing.

Painting and riddle making.

For restless classes on arrival at school :

Before the morning verse, ten minutes general remedial exercises. With the younger children walking and clapping rhythms to music or recitation ; hopping, skipping and movement concentration exercises. The older children should practise their tables in movement : form drawing, shaded drawing and colour exercises in painting. (these on sugar paper). Symmetry exercises for all age groups.

Correcting bad habits of posture and writing. One colleague has had excellent results with Upper School children who have had behaviour and learning problems when they have been persuaded to change their style of handwriting.\*

Important : All teachers should inform themselves on entry, whether the child has crawled properly as a baby or shuffled along on his bottom. There is enough evidence from medical and psychological sources that this is a warning sign and its consequence is often reading difficulties : that is, there has been a retardation in the metamorphosis of the lower into the higher senses. Remedial exercises in the classroom should begin at once from the first class, and if the pupils with this background come later into the school because they are "slow in reading", they are not likely to progress without special help from teacher and doctor, so watch these children carefully.

Signs of trouble in older children's writing are : reversing the letter sequences in words, 'on' for 'no', 'was' for 'saw', writing letters upside down, w for m, n for u, changing the order of letters, omissions and adding letters, crossing out and writing illegibly to hide the fact that they cannot spell and the bizarre writing already mentioned. Individual help is a *must* for these pupils.

Class 6 — Introduce a manuscript book for the formal writing of poems and quotations. The Roman and Medieval History Main Lessons give us the opportunity to do this.

\*See *Overcoming Nervousness*, Rudolf Steiner at Munich, 11.1.1912

## Biographical Notes

Catich, Edward M.

of St. Ambrose College, Davenport, Iowa. Calligrapher  
Topographer : Lecturer. Editor of the Catfish Press, Iowa.

Diringer David

M.A. (Cantab), D. Litt. (Florence) was educated in Florence to which University he subsequently returned, first as Lecturer, then as Professor. Among his many appointments have been Lecturer in Semitic Epigraphy Cambridge, Secretary of the Permanent Committee for Etruscan Studies. Dr. Diringer is the founder and director of the Habet Museum at Cambridge and Tel Aviv.

Fairbank, Alfred, C. E.,

con. apy. with his profession as a se  
executive of the Admiralty. President  
Society of Scribes & Illuminators from 1906  
member of the Society of Designer Craftsmen  
receiving the Leverhulme research rewards. President  
of the Society of Italic Handwriting. Designer and responsible  
for the Books of Remembrance of the R.A.F. Church  
of St. Clement Danes.

Johnston, Edward

(1872-1944) gave the major impetus for the revival of formal calligraphy and his teaching created an International School of Scribes. His book, *Writing, Illuminating, Lettering* (1906) has never been superseded. He reconstructed medieval techniques of pen cutting and vellum preparation. His 'foundational hand' has been the starting point of the modern development in calligraphy. He trained most of the founder members of the Society of Scribes & Illuminators. He held that in all work Truth must be sought and the main approach to this is through Religion, Science and Art. He said that the thought which inspired his work had been, "to make living letters with a formal pen."

Lethaby, W. R.

(1857-1931) was an Architect and Scholar. From 1879 he worked with Norman Shaw for twelve years. In 1896 he was appointed first principal of the L.C.C. Central School of Art; in 1900 he became Professor of Design at the R.C.A.; and in 1906 he became Surveyor to the Fabric of Westminster Abbey, a post he held for 21 years.

Steiner, Rudolf

(1861-1925) Teacher, philosopher and writer, lecturer. Founder of the Anthroposophical Society which embodies his teachings from spiritual scientific research and their application to practical life. His work embraces education, medical research, curative education, agriculture and economics; and the arts, with his own original contribution of Eurythmy. The Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, the second of two buildings which he designed is the headquarters of the General Anthroposophical Society, of which there are national societies in nearly every European country and the North and South Americas and India

Note: On the Imperial Trajan Capitals  
This is the ideal development of the structure of all our Western letters

Describing their construction, Edward M. Catich warns us that, "We live in an age of specialization . . . and tend to project into our view of the past our own limitations. Thus there arises the danger, when writing about ancient letter making, of concluding that Roman calligraphers, were, like us, one-sided specialists. But in antiquity the calligrapher's art was practised as a compact, unified whole." (from *The Origin of the Serif*.)

He goes on to demonstrate how these beautiful letters were derived directly from drawing.

## Bibliography

All relevant literature is published or distributed by Rudolf Steiner Press, London, except where otherwise stated.

*As an introduction to Rudolf Steiner's concepts:*

- Practical Training in Thinking. 1 Lecture, 1.1.1909.  
The Education of the Child in the Light of Anthroposophy. Essay, 1909.  
The Four Temperaments. Lecture 1908/9.  
Cosmology, Religion and Philosophy. 10 Lectures. September, 1922.  
Christianity as Mystical Fact.  
From Jesus to Christ. 12 Lectures. October, 1911.  
*The Education of the Child. 10 Lectures of Rudolf Steiner referred to in this book:*  
The Basel Course for Teachers. Die Erneuerung der pädagogisch-didaktischen Kunst durch Geisteswissenschaft. April 1920.  
The Oxford Course for Teachers. (Die geistig-seelischen Grundkräfte der Erziehungskunst) August 1922  
The Supplementary Course to the Waldorf teachers, 1921. (Menschenkenntnis und Unterrichtsgestaltung).  
Swiss Teachers Course. (Die pädagogische Praxis vom Gesichtspunkte geisteswissenschaftlicher Menschenkenntnis. Die Erziehung des Kindes und junger Menschen)  
Acht Vorträge und eine Ansprache. Dornach 15-22 1923  
\*Noch nicht in der Gesamtausgabe. Kartonierte Ausgabe von 1956.  
Rudolf Steiner Verlag, Dornach, Switzerland.  
Practical Advice for Teachers, Stuttgart 1919.  
Ilkley Course for Teachers 1923. Education and Modern Spiritual Life.  
Torquay Course for Teachers 1924. The Kingdom of Childhood.  
Arnhem Course for Teachers 1924. Human Values in Education.

## Reference Books

- Aeppli, W. *The Care and Development of the Human Senses.*  
Barfield, O. *Speakers' Meaning.*  
Barfield, O. *History in English Words.* Faber & Faber.  
Boos-Hamburger-Hilde. *Aus Gesprächen mit Rudolf Steiner über Malerei.* R. G. Zbinden & Co., Verlag, Basel, 1954.  
Catic, E. M. *The Origin of the Serif; Reed, Pen & Brush Alphabets for Writing & Lettering;* Catfish Press, Davenport, Iowa.  
Clark, Margaret M. *Teaching Left handed Children.* University of London Press.  
K. Critchlow. *Order in Space.* Thames and Hudson.  
Diringer, D. *Writing: a study of its historical development.* Thames and Hudson. *The Alphabet: a key to the History of Mankind* (Hutchinson (International)).  
Fairbank, A. *The Story of Handwriting. A Handwriting Manual.* with Charlotte Stone and Winifred Hooper. Beacon Writing books. Ginn & Co.  
Girdham, A. *The Cathart & Reincarnation. We are One Another.*  
Gray, Nicolette. *Lettering as drawing.* Oxford U. Press, 1971.  
Johnston, E. *Writing, Illuminating & Lettering.* Pitman.  
König, K. *The First Three Years of the Child.*  
Lessing, G. E. *The Education of the Human Race.*  
Naveh, J. *Origin of the Alphabet.* Cassel.  
Niederhäuser, H. & Fröhlich, Margaret. *Form Drawing.*  
Steiner, R. *Man: Hieroglyph of the Universe.* Dornach, April 9-May 16, 1920.

## Books on Steiner Education

- Baravalle, H. von. *Geometric Drawing and the Waldorf School Plan.* International Waldorf School Movement. *Rudolf Steiner as Educator.*  
Carlgen, F. & Klingborg. *Education towards Freedom.* The Lanthorn Press, Sussex.  
Edmunds, L. F. *Rudolf Steiner Education. The Waldorf Impulse.*  
Frommer, Eve. *The Voyage through Childhood into the Adult World.* Pergamon Press, Oxford.  
Harwood, A. C. *The Way of a Child. The Recovery of Man in Childhood.* Hodder & Stoughton.  
Heydebrand, Carolyn von. *Childhood, a study of the Growing Soul.*  
Howard, A. *What about a Steiner School?*

Linden, W. zur. *A Child is Born.*  
Stockmeyer, E. A. Karl. *Rudolf Steiner's Curriculum for  
Waldorf Schools.* 2 vols.  
Wilkinson, R. *Common Sense Schooling.* Henry Goulden Books.

*Waldorf Readers*

*Hay for my Ox. The King and the Green Angelica. Tales of  
the Harpen gang. The Key of the Kingdom.* The Lanthorn  
Press.

*The Boy and his Horse.* Beaumont & Drinan, Chalford, Glos.

*On Steiner: his Life and Work*

Bock, E. *The Three Years* 45 Press.  
C. . . . . lge Press.

F  
H 371:15 Christian

H. Teaching Children to ks.  
Ri write. e.

Sh  
Wa r.

DATE	ISSUED TO	SIGN.
------	-----------	-------