

Your Guide to Spelling Made Easy



by Violet Brand MBE

BACKGROUND

- Violet Brand spent 5 years researching Spelling and Reading difficulties in young adults from 1975- 1980 at a College of Further Education in Harrow, England.

She compiled diagnostic tests to identify at what point the reading problems arose. These tests were also trialled on children.

- She concluded that whilst c. **25% of children learn to read English by the age of 5 without special tuition, a further 50% needed intervention and the final 25% need a 'tool-kit' to be able to code and decode words and sounds.** At that time Reading and Spelling in the UK were mostly taught through 'Look and Say' which was inappropriate for the 75% who could not read and spell intuitively.

She decided that Reading and Spelling should be taught through phonics – as it had been until the 1960's. But when she tried to source Phonic teaching material she found there was none available - so she decided to write her own.

She took the view that once a child can Spell (code) he/she can Read (decode). However, the reverse is not the case (ie Reading does not enable Spelling) so she concentrated on creating a Spelling method.

- **She also realised that learning the relationship between Symbol and Sound was much easier if it was taught in a 'Multi Sensory' way. ie that the pupil must 'Hear the Sound' as they See it, and 'Feel the Sound' (mouth –shape) as they Say it.**

- From 1980 – 1984 she set out exhaustive structured Phonic word lists covering virtually all the necessary sounds of individual letters and combinations of letters in English.

She also wrote sequential Dictations to be read to pupils who would then write them down by writing what they had heard.

To disguise the fact that these were ‘boring’ dictations she made each one a story using a set of characters – the principal ones being Sam, Jim and Gus the Tramp.

She tested the material and found that the pupils loved the characters! And the exercises improved their spelling too.

- **In 1984 her material was published as ‘Spelling Made Easy’ – Multi-Sensory Structured Phonics. It was an instant success.**

She was invited to lecture throughout the UK and did so extensively and in the next decade travelled to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

STRUCTURE AND PUBLICATIONS in SPELLING MADE EASY

- Her Sound and Word lists are set out in **‘Remedial Spelling’**. This publication also includes Diagnostic Tests to enable a teacher to assess the areas which are causing problems.
- **Four levels of Teacher books - the Original A5 Text Books** – form the backbone of ‘Spelling Made Easy’.

Violet designed these books to be used in the first four years of primary school starting at age 5. (Key Stages had not been invented but were later added as a guide to levels).

She labelled and colour-coded the books and the method as :

Introductory Level (Red)

Level 1 (Green)

Level 2 (Orange)

Level 3 (Purple).

Each book comprises

***The Sound (highlighted in red)**

***A ‘Family’ of words using this sound**

***Dictation – story- based around the main character ‘Sam’, his friends and family**

***Teaching Points to re-inforce learning**

***Basic words to be taught in the early stages.** These are included in the dictation.

Integral to Violet's method is the built-in reinforcement of sounds as they are learned. This is vital to success. Learning does not simply take place in a linear fashion: she believed that it is a dynamic building and reinforcing process.

In 2012 the Four Original Text books were Revised



These revisions include:

- *New updated text for the Purple Level 3 book
- *Amendments to dictations to make them more suitable for pupils throughout the world
- * Highlighting the introduction of 'Synthetic Phonics' sounds in the Red Introductory Book
- *Resetting with a more modern pupil-friendly typeface
- *Resizing as A4.

The Revised books still follow Violet's word and sound sequence.

At various stages Reinforcement material has been published as Photocopiable Worksheets and Activities. All these books follow exactly the same word and sound sequence as the Four Text Books and are labelled and colour –coded for ease. These are :

- **Four Books of Photocopiable Worksheets**

One for each level. Each has a photocopiable story for each sound. Pupils identify elements of the sounds and highlight them in different ways. There are also simple drawing and colouring tasks and some elementary proofreading.

- **Four Books of Photocopiable 'Fun With Phonics' Activities** (written with Katy Brand)

One book at each of the four levels, and designed to put the 'fun' into phonics! Each book takes between two and five word families in the same sequence as the Text Books and provides exercises for reading aloud, comprehension tests, word searches, crosswords and much more.

The series of exercises are based on a continuous story featuring Sam and the well-known characters from the text books.

Four Books of 'Make it Right' Photocopiable Worksheets by Ceri Williams

Proof reading is an essential part of written English – it requires visual scrutiny of a passage as well as comprehension to spot the mistakes. The exercises in these books use sounds correlated with the Spelling Made Easy sequence and will develop and reinforce pupils' reading and spelling skills.

The series also covers some punctuation.

- **Further Spelling Made Easy Publications include**

Be the Teacher – Books 1 and 2. Violet Brand's original proof reading exercises. Still popular.

Put it Right - Designed to be used in tandem with Remedial Spelling these sixty photocopiable proof reading passages enable the eye to recognise errors, and the book also contains diagnostic tests for teachers and parents.

Four illustrated 'at Home' books at each of the Red and Green levels (8 in all) following exactly the content of the Revised Teacher Books with illustrated mouth shapes for each sound.

Additional reinforcement story by Katy Brand in each book with comprehension exercise

Violet Brand



- A founder member of the British Dyslexia Association and set up a Diploma course with OCR dedicated to training Teachers to use Phonics.
- Toured the UK and abroad, lecturing widely on aspects of Spelling and Literacy
- By 1990 Spelling Made Easy was used in over 10,000 UK Primary schools. It is still widely used as a resource as it covers virtually all the sounds in the English Language.
- Violet broadened her teaching work to young adults and then worked extensively teaching illiterate prisoners. At the same time she trained hundreds of teachers.
- In 1992 she was awarded the MBE for Services to Adult Literacy.

For more information and 'Look inside' www.spellingmadeeasy.co.uk