

TEACHING READING IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
SOCIAL STUDIES

by

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B.A., Sterling College, 1962

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A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

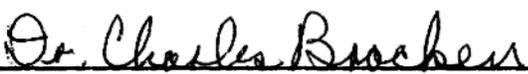
MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1963

Approved by:

  
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## TEACHING READING IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Teaching reading in America's junior high schools has been and continues to be a problem of considerable concern. In fact, it is now widely recognized by both administrators and teachers that reading instruction must be continued throughout the junior high school. Such instruction applies to all subjects taught in the junior high school and is especially true with respect to the junior high school social studies.

Furthermore, it is held that the burden of teaching reading is no longer the sole responsibility of the English teacher. Therefore, since successful achievement in the social studies depends upon the student's ability to read it is quite apparent that there is a need for teaching reading in junior high school social studies classes. It was with these and other views in mind that this study was conducted.

#### The Problem

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to discuss the importance of teaching reading in the junior

high school social studies; (2) to show the relationship of books, vocabulary, and reading skills to the understanding of social studies material; (3) to present various developmental activities to be used in the teaching of reading in the junior high school social studies; and (4) to view the importance of the proper teachers, as well as methods of teaching, to the successful achievement of reading goals in the social studies.

Importance of the study. To a large degree success in the social studies is determined by one's ability to read. The junior high school pupil's range of direct experience in social studies is limited; and so the pupil faces the necessity of gaining much, perhaps most, of his social experiences through reading. Since there is no possibility of changing this situation, the social studies teacher must know how to help readers.<sup>1</sup>

Further evidence of the importance of teaching reading in junior high school social studies is seen in the fact that at least 50 percent of the children leaving sixth grade need both developmental reading instruction and the correction of immature

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<sup>1</sup>Edgar B. Wesley, Teaching Social Studies in High Schools (Boston: D.C. Heath Company, 1958), p. 244.

reading habits.<sup>2</sup> The student entering the junior high school encounters the fact that more reading is required of young people in these grades, and thus there is a greater need for effective skill in reading. The poor reader, then is severely handicapped in his school work and may even dislike school. If his dislike for school becomes sufficiently intense, he may progress by easy stages to truancy, association with undesirable companions, and juvenile delinquency.

The reading program in the junior high school studies must be developmental, corrective, and remedial in nature. It must be a natural continuation of the elementary school program and must be linked to reading instruction in the senior high school. Thus while there is a natural overlapping of reading instruction in the other school levels, this study is designed to look specifically at the improvement of reading in the junior high school through the social studies classes.

#### Definition of Terms Used

Reading. Reading is the meaningful interpretation of verbal

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<sup>2</sup>William D. Sheldon, "The Nature and Scope of Reading Programs Adapted to Today's Needs in the Upper Grades and Junior High School," Better Readers For Our Times. ed. William S. Gray and Nancy Larrick. International Reading Association Conference Proceedings, Volume I (New York: Scholastic Magazine Publishers, 1956), p. 30.

symbols and is an extension of oral communication and builds upon listening and speaking skills. It is a process through which the reader tries to share an author's point of view, his ideas, and experiences in order to communicate with him.

Reading Ability. Reading ability is comprised not only of the more mechanical skills, such as word recognition and phrasing, but also of the ability to comprehend, to interpret and to evaluate the printed or written page.

Vocabulary. Vocabulary is the sum total of words used in a language or in a field of knowledge that the individual has mastered and includes an accurate understanding of the meaning of these words.

Developmental Reading Activities. Developmental reading activities are those in which the main purpose of the teacher is to bring about an improvement in reading skills. The major skills involved are skill in the mechanics of reading and skill in reading comprehension.

#### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There is a large body of literature pertaining to the teaching of reading and the application of methods for reading improve-

ment. This section, however, will be limited to a review of the pertinent literature as it applies to reading and its relation to teaching social studies in the junior high school. However, the literature on teaching reading in the junior high school is limited.

Penty, working with 318 seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade students, demonstrated that boys and girls can make very good gains in reading ability if individual needs are diagnosed and if methods and materials are provided to meet these needs.<sup>3</sup> The students selected for help and study over the two-and-a-half year period were reading two or more years below their mental age; therefore they were deemed to have potential for growth in reading. Most of the children selected were also reading two or more years below their grade level. For the most part, the students were of average, or only slightly below average, intelligence.<sup>4</sup>

Work was undertaken in groups of six students, for an hour period, two days a week. Although students were scheduled for work in groups of six, much of the help given them was individual. To reach each child through a method to which he would best respond a variety of teaching methods were employed.

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<sup>3</sup>Ruth C. Penty, "Remedial Reading Pays in Junior High School," Education (January, 1961), p. 280.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 277.

The range of gain, in years and months of reading ability, made in twelve weeks by all 318 students was as follows: vocabulary, .0 to 4.6; comprehension, .0 to 4.0; total, .0 to 4.3. Only 29 students out of the total number of 318 made no gains in a twelve week period. The average gain, in years and months of reading ability, of the 72 students who remained in the program for the full two-and-a half year period was as follows: vocabulary, .8; comprehension, 1.2; total, 1.0.<sup>5</sup>

Witt, working with superior students, gives attention to means through which students can be stimulated to think critically in the social studies. The experiment undertook to provide a program of guided reading with a two-fold purpose: (1) to improve skill in drawing conclusions from written material; and (2) to develop other reading skills.<sup>6</sup>

A group of ten superior students, four boys and six girls (median I.Q. 120), who had completed the seventh grade were selected to participate in the study. A daily four hour program over a six week summer period was provided with the classroom periods used for instructional purposes and reading completed outside of class.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 280.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Witt, "Developing Reading Skills and Critical Thinking," Social Education (May, 1961), p. 239.

Witt concluded from her work in reading with superior students that:

Measureable gains in reading as found through the use of the Iowa Silent Reading Test can be made to occur in a brief period of time by means of intensive instructional procedures in the classroom. However, major outcomes of critical thinking are difficult to capture in objective test items. They are to be found in certain behaviors which ordinarily have no objective measure. However, an over-all improvement in choices and expression of reasons did occur.<sup>7</sup>

However, time was a significant factor in this study and gains over a short period of time might be expected to be small.

Frey, working with students in reading improvement in the junior high school social studies, reported a successful program with marked reading level improvement among slow readers. In this reading improvement program the students were encouraged to read on a voluntary basis for pleasure and self-improvement. To eliminate the possibility that such reading would be done for rewards, Frey decided that no extra credit would be given to any pupil who participated. It was Frey's opinion that:

The entire project be based on the idea that just as a musician, athlete, typist, actor, or teacher, can improve in his field by practice and repetition, a pupil can improve in his reading by increasing the amount of time he spends on it, providing it is challenging, interesting, and self-motivated.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 241.

<sup>8</sup>Martin Frey, "Stepping Up Outside Reading in Social Studies." High Points, 43:72, 1961.

Park, has explained the procedures employed in teaching social studies to the poor readers in the Washington Junior High School, Fresno, California. All seventh graders are grouped homogeneously by standard reading test scores which are administered during the latter part of the sixth grade. Seventh-grade textbooks and materials are too advanced for these slow readers, so they learn social studies concepts through three other channels: (1) vision, (2) imagination, and (3) current events.<sup>9</sup> The program is designed to let each pupil experience success by learning for himself some new and understandable concept.

These studies and reports cited focus attention on the efforts that are being made to teach and improve reading in the junior high school, particularly through the social studies classes.

#### IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING READING IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDIES

It was stated earlier that to a large degree success in the social studies is determined by one's ability to read. It has also been shown that authorities agree that social studies teachers in the junior high school can, and should do much, to

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<sup>9</sup>Francis H. Park, "Teaching Social Studies to Poor Readers," Social Education (November, 1956), p. 327.

assist students in reading improvement. It is the purpose of this section to present in further detail the importance of teaching reading in the junior high school studies.

Evidence that reading be emphasized is seen by the fact that the demands made on readers among both children and adults were never greater than today. The need is urgent for the development of a generation of readers of increased discrimination, penetration, and self-reliance. The social studies classroom is one of the first places where this challenge can be met.

The array of subtle skills essential for expert reading will rarely be developed by a student independently. He needs continuous, planned instruction and guidance if he is to acquire the finer techniques of judging, discriminating, reasoning, evaluating, and reaching decisions.

With this in mind it would be accepted then that reading is unique among school activities in being both a subject of instruction and a tool for the mastery of all other phases of the curriculum. While primary responsibility at the junior high level tends to be placed with the teacher of English, many attempts have been made to draw the teachers of the other subjects into taking an active part in refining reading skills. The slogan "Every Teacher a Teacher of Reading" has not yet been fulfilled by any means, but progress toward this ideal is being made.

It still remains however that the responsibility for developing effective reading and study skills should be accepted as part of the teaching job in every content area. The demands made on readers vary in the different curriculum fields, for each subject has its own vocabulary, its own body of contents and relationships. Without the help of the teachers of the content areas, the reading instructional program in the junior high school remains incomplete.<sup>10</sup>

The junior high school student himself is ready to embark on advanced reading instruction. He stands at the crossroads of childhood and adulthood and his needs can best be assessed in reference to the basic characteristics and interests which evolve as this transition takes place. Junior high school children have boundless energy and can engage in an activity for long periods of time. Mental activity quickens. There is a readiness for deeper mental experience; ability to do logical thinking develops. Interest in achievement of success is high, and group approval is earnestly desired.

All these characteristics are conducive to skill development. We would do well to capitalize upon them in providing needed extensions of reading skills during the junior high school

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<sup>10</sup>Nancy Young, "How the Conference Proposals Can Be Implemented in the Upper Grades and Junior High School," Better Readers For Our Times. ed. William S. Gray and Nancy Larrick. International Reading Association Conference Proceedings, Volume 1 (New York: Scholastic Magazine Publishers, 1956), p. 172.

years. There is no medium which can meet the junior high school needs so adequately as reading.<sup>11</sup>

Nor can we lightly overlook the needs for success in this age group. Children like adults, need for their happiness a feeling that they are successful in what they try to do. In fact, children are far more sensitive to failure in their endeavors than adults.

Failure in reading is perhaps the worst failure that school can give a child. Reading is so basic. It is the thing that "everybody can do". The child who cannot read, or who cannot read as well as the rest, is marked before all as a failure. His failure is "pushed in his face", as it were, every day and many times a day.<sup>12</sup> Thus lack of success can lead to other problems mentioned on page two.

The problem then lies with how to meet the junior high pupils needs and how these reading needs can be implemented into the social studies instruction in the junior high school. Thus the challenge to meet these needs of the junior high pupil falls

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<sup>11</sup>Nila B. Smith, "The Reading Needs of Junior High School Students", Reading in Action, ed. Nancy Larrick. International Reading Association Conference Proceedings, Volume 2 (New York: Scholastic Magazine Publishers, 1957), p. 93.

<sup>12</sup>Edward W. Dolch, Remedial Reading (Champaign, Ill.: The Garrard Press Publishers, 1953), p. 4-5.

upon the social studies teacher and the inclusion of teaching reading in his content area.

The findings of several different investigations support the general conclusion that, whereas reading ability may function somewhat the same in different subjects, there are certain reading skills unique to each content field studied. These studies emphasize the fact that reading problems vary in different subjects. The obvious conclusion from such studies is that the teacher of each field has the responsibility for providing his students with guidance in the reading problems related to his special field.<sup>13</sup>

Probably one reason for the failure of many teachers to teach reading in the content areas is the fact that they do not understand the place of reading in those areas in the junior high school. The social studies teacher needs to know something of the nature of the reading problem in social studies.

Social studies teachers should realize that perhaps the best single way to develop skill in reading in their subject matter area is to stress the range and depth of vocabulary

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<sup>13</sup>Harold M. Covell, "Reading and the Social Studies", Social Education (January, 1957), p. 14.

associated with the social studies. This does not involve a narrowly conceived drill type of lesson on words met in the social studies context. It does mean that the experiences, both direct and vicarious, of the student should be enriched and extended to provide a background for the work on word meanings that should be an important part of the program.<sup>14</sup> The various skills needed for reading in the social studies will be enlarged in the next section as we are interested here only in the importance of teaching reading.

The responsibility of the social studies teacher to teach reading skills in their subject field is a real and urgent one. The teacher will build upon the abilities previously developed and help students use those which they have and add to them.<sup>15</sup> A trend in the objectives of social studies in the junior high school is toward more stress upon skills, particularly reading.<sup>16</sup>

The development of reading skills through social studies should be the aim of every teacher of the subject to better meet

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>15</sup>Mary Bany and Lois V. Johnson, "Teaching Reading Skills in United States History", Clearing House, 30:374, 1961.

<sup>16</sup>William T. Gruhn and Harl R. Douglass, The Modern Junior High School (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1947), p. 132.

the needs of the junior high students. There is no easy road to its attainment, but the great satisfaction of pupils who have made progress is ample reward for the time and energy that has been spent.

#### READING SKILLS IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES

In the preceding section mention was made of the skills essential for reading in the junior high school social studies. It was also mentioned that each subject has its own vocabulary. The purpose of this section is (1) to discuss in some detail the skills most frequently reported by reading authorities as being necessary in reading in the social studies, (2) to present some aspects of the social studies vocabulary and (3) to show the relationship of the aforementioned items to the books and materials used.

The role of reading skills in making the social studies concepts more meaningful and, conversely, the role of the social studies in contributing to reading development have been discussed by such authorities as McCullough, Strang, and Traxler<sup>17</sup>, Harris<sup>18</sup>, and Bond and Wagner<sup>19</sup>. For example, the aforementioned

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<sup>17</sup>Constance M. McCullough, Ruth Strang, Arthur E. Traxler, The Improvement of Reading (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1961), p. 142-159.

<sup>18</sup>Albert J. Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1961), p. 397.

<sup>19</sup>Guy L. Bond and Eva B. Wagner, Teaching the Child to Read (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1960), p. 270-285.

authorities agree that greater or increased mastery of reading skills leads to increased comprehension of social studies materials while through emphasizing such reading skills as critical analysis and vocabulary in the social studies class the student will emerge as a much improved reader. In addition, these authorities agree that mastery of the following skills are essential for effective reading in the social studies:

- (1) Using context clues in independent reading with unfamiliar words.
- (2) Developing a vocabulary pertaining to social studies.
- (3) Getting the main idea of a paragraph.
- (4) Using the parts of books to find information: index, table of contents, bibliography, glossary.
- (5) Using the dictionary and glossary in learning the pronunciation and meaning of words.
- (6) Using many types of reference materials: encyclopedia, almanac, magazines, dictionary, atlas.
- (7) Using visual aids: globe, maps, pictures, graphs, and charts.
- (8) Reading maps and other materials in social studies.
- (9) Organizing the social studies material for effective learning.
- (10) Gathering information and selecting from it items which applied to specific issues.
- (11) Acquiring skill in critical thinking and analyzing propaganda.

Other authorities point out the specific skills most frequently needed in reading social studies material. Wesley, for example, presents the following extensive list of such skills:

- (1) To recognize the denotation.
- (2) To appreciate one or more connotation.
- (3) To formulate an inclusive concept.
- (4) To interpret figurative meanings.
- (5) To understand abstract words.
- (6) To apply general concepts to particular instances.
- (7) To infer the meaning of a word from the context.
- (8) To recognize synonyms in a series.
- (9) To adjust speed to the nature of the materials.
- (10) To recognize discrete meanings in a series.
- (11) To adjust speed to the purpose of reading.
- (12) To select materials relevant to desired information.
- (13) To relate ideas to previously encountered ideas.
- (14) To relate information to generalizations.
- (15) To read rapidly considering only what is relevant.
- (16) To identify materials relevant to generalizations.
- (17) To formulate generalizations.
- (18) To recognize major points.
- (19) To subordinate minor points.
- (20) To discard preconceptions and secure the author's meaning.

- (21) To evaluate the reliability of a statement.
- (22) To compare statements.
- (23) To contrast conflicting statements.
- (24) To distinguish fact from opinion.
- (25) To relate effect to cause.
- (26) To know when and how to use the dictionary.
- (27) To read graphs, tables, diagrams, etc.
- (28) To interpret pictures.
- (29) To use aids to map interpretations.
- (30) To recognize words and topic sentences.
- (31) To sense the structure of what is read.
- (32) To understand implications as well as overt statements.
- (33) To recognize the author's assumptions.
- (34) To understand allusions.
- (35) To transfer ideas from one setting to another.
- (36) To image what is described by the author.<sup>20</sup>

Concerning the relationship of reading skills and successful reading in the social studies recent studies have revealed serious deficiencies in both the reading skills and habits of many

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<sup>20</sup>Wesley, op. cit., p. 250-251.

junior high school pupils. Causes of reading deficiencies as reported in these studies include (1) physical defects of the pupils, (2) improper habits in the mechanics of reading, (3) lack of interest and concentration, (4) insufficient practice in reading, (5) the habit of superficial reading, and (6) inadequate vocabulary.

Sheldon, in his study of junior high school reading programs reported that at least 10 percent, and often many more of the students entering the seventh grade need a careful diagnosis of their learning status and then treatment for reading disabilities of a sufficiently severe nature. He held that these students cannot read narrative or expository material beyond the third - or fourth grade level. That their word analysis skills are on a very low level and that their comprehension is limited to the simplest material because of an inability to recognize or analyze words and a lack of certain skills necessary for comprehension.<sup>21</sup> Thus the importance of developing the necessary reading skills to be able to cope with the social studies materials cannot be overlooked.

It cannot be denied that all the important social studies skills acquired in the elementary grades should be maintained and

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<sup>21</sup>Sheldon, op. cit., p. 31.

more highly developed as the child progresses through school. The skills he has acquired in vocabulary usage, whatever skills he may have achieved in adapting the rate with which he reads to the purpose at hand, and the skills he demonstrates as he tries to keep in mind a series of related ideas, will become more effective as these are practiced and extended to serve new purposes. Hence, a first step for the junior high teacher is that of discovering what progress each child has made. Then it becomes possible to help him develop further his skills in reading.

It is also agreed that there are at least four dimensions of the reading act, namely: the perception of words, including both meaning and pronunciation; a clear grasp of the sense meaning of a passage and of the supplementary meanings that are implied but not stated; appreciative, imaginative, and critical reaction to what is read; and the use or application of the ideas acquired. These dimensions have a definite relationship and an inter-relationship to other skills needed in the reading of social studies material.

For some children inaccurate word perception continues to plague them in the higher grades. For others the more difficult aspect of word recognition, such as handling of certain digraphs or the recognition of the meaning of certain prefixes or suffixes,

remains a problem. The perspectives of the child may be somewhat enlarged by building backgrounds about the setting of the times and by focusing attention upon differences between the social and the physical scene of his own knowledge and the social and physical scene about which he is reading.

Critical reading, the process of evaluating the authenticity and validity of material and of formulating an opinion about it, is another skill necessary in the social studies. In this respect, the use of the word reading to denote a definite skill in handling printed material, has been gradually expanded to an inclusive concept involving a range of abilities from simple word-recognition to extensive and complicated critical abilities such as studying, thinking, imagining, constructing, and reading. Since the social studies frequently involves controversial issues it is essential that the student be able to read critically if he is to understand the problem which he faces, remember the problem while reading, and hold himself to the problem.

The ability of the child to read social studies materials critically begins as soon as he can think about and read experience records, pictures, or books with social studies content. The junior high student can compare 'today and yesterday' and gain some insight into the reasons for likenesses and differences.

He can recognize emotional reactions and personal bias and evaluations, separate facts from opinions, determine cause and effect relationships. These are segments, albeit interrelated, of active critical reading in the social studies that can be developed at the junior high level.<sup>22</sup>

In emphasizing the importance of critical reading in achieving an objective view, Rudisill states that:

Research has shown (1) that the reader with pre-conceived attitudes and opinions tends to remember those facts that support his own point of view, and not to remember those that oppose it, (2) that the bias reader tends to interpret the facts to support his own point of view, whether it is pro or con, and (3) that he tends to accuse the author of prejudice because he himself holds an opposite prejudice.<sup>23</sup>

Thus the importance of teaching critical reading skills in the junior high school cannot be overlooked and should be emphasized in the social studies where it is vitally needed.

Organization is another essential skill in reading social studies material. The child must, as he is reading, be able to sense the organization of the presentation. He must be able to

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<sup>22</sup>E. Elona Sochor, "Critical Reading in the Content Areas," Reading in Action, ed. Nancy Larrick. International Reading Association Conference Proceedings, Volume 2 (New York: Scholastic Magazine Publishers, 1957), p. 127.

<sup>23</sup>Mabel Rudisill, "What are the Responsibilities of the Social Studies Teacher for Teaching Reading," Improving Reading in the Junior High School, ed. Arno Jewett. Proceedings of the Conference of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1956 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958), p.96.

use headings, italicization, and other special markings as an aid to sensing the organization. He must, moreover, be able to recognize the material, when necessary, in light of his purpose. A mature type of reading needs to be developed so as to sense organization. There are many instructional opportunities for teaching organization. The making of a time-line by the class is one such opportunity.

Another skill is the need to build backgrounds of understanding. This skill is essential to reading and is rarely more acute than in the social studies. The need to relate the material read to the experience of the child is essential to his understanding of its concepts. Difficulties are also encountered when children have to read and interpret accurately the human relationships involved in various aspects of social studies. This is due to their limited understanding of the setting and background about which they are reading.

Another aspect of reading is skill in reading for different purposes. A student who attacks all reading with the slow, considered approach of study-type reading is swamped. One who skims through all of his reading with the idea of getting general background is shallow. There are many kinds of reading, but according to Flickinger progress cannot go far without the following:

- (1) The ability to read rapidly for general background.
- (2) The ability to read slowly, and probably reread, in order to understand a concept.
- (3) The ability to read comparatively and critically, in order to determine the writer's viewpoint and purpose.<sup>24</sup>

As an initial step, the teacher ought to discover whether or not the students are aware of the fact that they must suit their rates of reading to the reading situation. The value of rapid reading in pursuing a wide range of materials is obvious. But undue emphasis upon speed may result in poor comprehension, especially when reading is being done to note details or to follow a sequence of ideas. On the other hand, very slow reading gives too much time in which to forget the earliest ideas read. Thus when the teacher thinks of speed he should also be concerned with degrees of understanding.<sup>25</sup>

Thus when dealing with the essential reading skills in the social studies teachers should work towards a goal of realizing good readers. According to Hobson the good reader in the social studies class should be able to:

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<sup>24</sup>Alice Flickinger, "Reading Achievement a Guide in Content Areas in Grades Seven Through Nine," Evaluation of Reading, ed. Helen M. Robinson. Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Reading at University of Chicago, Volume 20 (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958), p. 69.

<sup>25</sup>Helen M. Carpenter, Skills in Social Studies. 24th Year-book of the National Council for the Social Studies, 1954 (Washington, D.C.: N.E.A. Publishers, 1954), p. 119.

(1) Acquire the vocabulary of the social studies, (2) Find intrinsic motivation for reading social studies material, (3) Comprehend the material of social studies, (4) Adjust speed of reading to purpose and type of content, (5) Use library methods to locate materials, (6) Read social studies material to achieve specific purposes, and (7) Make accurate self-evaluation of progress in reading.<sup>26</sup>

However, the junior high student needs help in becoming a good reader of social studies material. Help in understanding the organization of basic history reading material; in recognizing major and subordinate ideas; in using appropriate word-recognition techniques; in building a specialized social studies vocabulary; in establishing purposes for reading; and in integrating results of reading for further use. The responsibility for providing help in developing these skills lies with the social studies teacher.

Successful vocabulary development in relationship to the reading of social studies material and its understanding cannot be overemphasized. Thus a major portion of this section is devoted to presenting some aspects of the social studies vocabulary.

In our highly verbal culture an accurate understanding of the meanings of words is a necessary prerequisite for reading with

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<sup>26</sup>Cloy S. Hobson, "Reading Skills and Habits Needed in the Social Studies," Teaching Reading in High Schools. Kansas Studies in Education, Volume 10. (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Publication, 1960), p. 10-11.

meaning. The development of a reading vocabulary which is both extensive and accurate is a necessary phase of good comprehension in the social studies. It is also well-known that the material read in each curriculum field has its own technical vocabulary, forms of presentation, and basic concepts and principles. This is especially true in the social studies.

Moffatt stresses the importance of the social studies vocabulary when he states that:

The basic skills of reading, writing, and speaking are essential to learning in the social studies. Each of these skills calls for a vocabulary that provides meaning and understanding for the learner.<sup>27</sup>

An understanding of the vocabulary of the social studies is always essential to successful learning. Vocabulary is the key to good comprehension. Thus the teacher ought to find ways of interesting children in new words and their meaning.

To comprehend printed material, the reader must be able to recognize words and understand their meaning as has already been stated. In this respect social studies materials offer unusual difficulty. Some of this difficulty arises because their vocabulary is extensive and specialized. Much of the vocabulary deals

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<sup>27</sup>Maurice P. Moffatt, Social Studies Instruction: Organizing, Teaching, and Supervising Social Studies in Secondary Schools (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1954), p. 205.

with ideas and events which are remote in time and space. Even when the vocabulary deals with today's institutions and events, the concepts involved are likely to be complex and abstract.<sup>28</sup>

If the student applies common meanings to certain words in his regular vocabulary, he may have misleading images and referents. He would find for example that: foreign ministers do not preach, watered stock refers neither to water nor to animals, and that the iron curtain contains no metal drapery.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to materials of the social studies are filled with names of people, civilizations, places, and other proper names. These proper names invariably present reading problems to the child. He must learn to recognize, to identify, and to understand them as well as to ascertain their significance and decide which are worth remembering.

There are also problems of learning the specialized meanings of words already briefly referred to on this page. Words which have, in the social studies, meaning other than the more common ones, possibly familiar to the child; for example, such words as settlement, ford, judgment, and culture, new meanings must be learned. Pupils concepts of words are often clarified

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<sup>28</sup>Rudisill, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p. 91-92

through referring to the use of the word in their experience.

Another type of vocabulary problem to which the child must adjust and which is often encountered in the social studies more than in any other field is learning the meaning of words for which there is no clearly defined meaning—words whose meanings are gradually learned through meeting them in many situations. The meaning of such abstract words as democracy, civilization, community, ancient, and toleration can be learned only gradually.

Several studies have shown that general intelligence and reading ability are closely related to successful development of vocabulary regarding human relationships. In this respect McLendon writes:

Particularly in the social studies, the reader's individual attitudes, interests, and out-of-school experiences are likely to influence his comprehension and interpretation of materials read. To improve the degree to which students develop meaningful concepts of the social world, instruction should include specific and correct rather than vague or inaccurate word-descriptions.<sup>30</sup>

Much of the development of vocabulary in the social studies will come through extensive reading of materials that are rich

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<sup>30</sup>Jonathon C. McLendon, Teaching the Social Studies. What Research Says to the Teacher, No. 20. Prepared by the American Educational Research Association in Co-operation with the Department of Classroom Teachers (Washington, D.C.: N.E.A. Publishers, 1960), p. 23.

enough in verbal illustrations to build the needed backgrounds. Materials in which the vocabulary burden is relatively light and in which new or unusual words are explained through the content are good for this purpose.

As was previously mentioned skill development during the junior high school years is of special significance. For example the vocabulary load in textbooks becomes extremely heavy in these grades and few textbooks are graded vocabulary wise. Children are suddenly thrust into books in which they are confronted with dozens and dozens of new words. Thus the need to continue the use of the word-attack techniques: picture clues, context clues, phonics, structural analysis, and the use of the dictionary.

According to Whipple, children will derive rich gains from systematic instruction in the vocabulary used in their social studies book. Knowledge of the vocabulary insures rapid comprehension and ready retention of the content. These in turn aid the child in interchanging new ideas and reaching new conclusions.<sup>31</sup>

The relationship of the materials used in the social studies at the junior high school level to the aforementioned

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<sup>31</sup>Gertrude Whipple, "Vocabulary Development: Social Studies," Education (May, 1951), p. 564.

skills in this section is very important. As soon as the student begins to use textbooks, inadequate reading skills become a general handicap. The large amount of oral work in the elementary school makes it possible for some poor readers to do acceptable work in content areas. Upon entry into junior high school the student with poor reading skills is soon plagued by the materials used in the social studies.

The task of accurately interpreting the materials read in the social studies and perceiving the author's meaning is not as simple as it may appear at first glance. Every author assumes experiences in common with his readers. He takes for granted that the reader has had certain firsthand experiences upon which he may build because it is through these that the concepts become real. The author of the textbook assumes certain basic reading skills on the part of the reader. The proficiency expected depends on the maturity level for which he is writing. The above assumption implies that the reader has developed sufficient sight vocabulary and sufficiently rapid word-recognition techniques to free him from an excessive word-recognition load. However, if these skills are not present the junior high student may encounter grave difficulties in the reading of social studies material.

Further, if books in the social studies are to be helpful in developing broad reading abilities and at the same time develop the content of the specialized area, their selection should be based upon the reading ability of the student who reads them. Similarly, when supplemental materials, prepared without paying attention to basic vocabulary, are used in the social studies, the vocabulary load can often become unbearably heavy.

Through the reading of books the student must be capable of enriching his social concepts, solving social problems, and satisfying his curiosity regarding history. Through written information he should enlarge his attitudes and appreciations in man's achievements.<sup>32</sup> But there would seem to be some difficulties for the classroom teacher in achieving these reading objectives in social studies.

One difficulty is the type of material used. Admittedly the chief source of reading material is the social studies textbook series. The wise teacher uses a few copies from each of several textbook series. Social studies texts can be encyclopedic in nature and are best used to introduce or conclude a unit.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>J. D. McAuley, "The Social Studies Dependent on Reading, Education (October, 1961), p. 87.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid

It is wise for a teacher to supplement the social studies text with yearly book purchases of fiction and non-fiction suited to the reading ability of the student and related to the social studies concepts of that grade.

Ideally, social studies books should be well organized and written in a straight forward way, i.e., facts should be presented in a logical order with clues as to their relative importance and sequence. Since the author frequently gives no indication of which ideas are most worth remembering, the student is puzzled as to what the author expects him to retain from his reading. At this point the student must begin to rely on reading skills already developed for reading social studies materials.

Another problem related to the materials used in the social studies is that few authors start where the reader is. Most seem to assume that the reader is an ardent historian who needs no motivation and no guidance in journeying from his known world to the strange territories dealt with in the book. In addition, many social studies books present unnecessary vocabulary difficulties. Technical words are introduced too rapidly. If they are defined, the definitions are sometimes as difficult to understand as the words themselves. Thus reading skills must be developed and encouraged to meet these problems.

Reading in the social studies depends upon the use of large amounts of supplementary materials. Therefore, the ability to locate materials is an extremely important one in the social studies reading. In as much as the concepts of the social studies are somewhat abstract and are often written in a contracted fashion, their expansion and further explanation are frequently necessary.

The child should approach such supplementary reading with the awareness that an important aim of studying the social studies is to build a useful vocabulary of terms frequently used in the social studies. He should approach such reading with a desire to find the meanings of the words and with the demand upon himself that he understands their use. It is the student reading in the social studies who must expand his meanings. The teachers responsibility is to encourage and to show him how to go about learning new words.

Junior high school students should be encouraged to read critically newspapers, news magazines, and books on current events; to listen to news broadcasts and commentators; and to interpret modern events in the light of historical perspective. In addition, every social studies teacher should know what each student in his class is getting out of the social studies text and reference reading.

Speed or retardation of the reading rate of the student is another reading skill emphasized in relationship to the materials used in social studies. The student needs to vary his rate of reading and his thought processes according to the type of material and his purpose for reading. The difference in effective rate is not so much in the visual work of word recognition as in kind of thinking required.<sup>34</sup>

A major problem connected with social studies reading material is providing it at a level which permits the slow or retarded reader to cope with the content. The librarian can be a very present help to the social studies teacher in finding books, especially for the retarded reader, which are pertinent to the themes his class is studying.

Carpenter and Whitted have conducted extensive research into readable books for slow learners in social studies at the junior high level. These authorities concluded that slow learners can and will read social studies, but their reading needs to be guided in accordance with their interests and abilities.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Rudisill, loc. cit.

<sup>35</sup>Helen M. Carpenter and Dorothy J. Whitted, "Readable Books For Slow Learners," Social Education (April, 1943), p. 168-170.

According to Carpenter and Whitted the major factors in providing readable books for this group is that the book:

- (1) Must deal with a subject related to their interests.
- (2) The presentation must be simple and concrete.
- (3) The importance of pictures be emphasized.<sup>36</sup>

When dealing with slow learners the social studies teacher must realize that the relatively small amount of reading done by these pupils must instruct as well as entertain. Therefore the presentation of materials must be simple and concrete. Teachers may be better able to direct the learning of these adolescents in social studies areas by applying the foregoing factors of readability to books now available. For with patient and appropriate guidance slow-learning pupils can and will read.

#### TEACHING READING THROUGH THE JUNIOR HIGH SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES

In the previous sections the importance of teaching reading in the junior high school social studies was emphasized as well as the skills necessary for reading social studies material. This section will emphasize various approaches to (1) teaching

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid

reading to the poor reader of social studies material, and (2) methods and importance of further improvement of the reading skills of the average and good reader.

Teaching the child to read requires systematic instruction consisting of three basic elements. First, the instructional program should be so organized that for each child desirable growths in basic reading skills and abilities are fostered. Second, the teaching procedures should be rich, varied, and intellectually energetic in order that at all times to each child learning to read is worth the effort. Third, continuous appraisals of each child's progress in reading should be made to make sure it is compatible with his general ability.

Efforts to improve reading should be based on (1) study of the reading program as a whole, (2) recognition of the successive stages of development in reading, and (3) provision at each level of advancement for the kind of training most needed. Furthermore, any effort to improve reading must be based on clear understandings of the characteristics, attainments, and needs of the children taught.

According to Brown, in undertaking the improvement of instruction and the teaching of reading at the junior high school level, three general premises must be accepted. The first is

that the average youngster of twelve to fifteen has learned to dislike social studies. The second is that the junior high school student retains little of the data he learns. Third, the amount of retention, and also the length of retention can be increased by certain factors or conditions.<sup>37</sup>

Dislike of social studies may be caused by poor teaching, by a scarcity of good materials, or by unenthusiastic teachers. Also, a senseless repetition of American history in grades three, five, and eight may play a role here. The amount of factual retention increases with the interests of the pupils, the enthusiasm of the teacher, the depth of the content offered, and the amount of repetition. Herein lies the challenge to the social studies teacher. If he is to successfully teach reading, he must first improve the overall instruction of the social studies.

Study of current practices reveal that methods of reading instruction fall into six broad categories. These categories are (1) teaching word-recognition, (2) oral instruction, (3) formal silent reading, (4) reading experience charts, (5) purposeful activities, and (6) a composite of many methods of instruction.

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<sup>37</sup>Ralph A. Brown, "Improving Instruction in Junior High School Social Studies," Social Education (March, 1961), p. 139.

It is the last of these categories into which the methods used to teach reading in the junior high school social studies should fall.

Certain general principles which should be incorporated into any method of teaching reading are: (1) reading must be made enjoyable, (2) systematic training must be given in the mastery of specific reading skills, (3) the program must be balanced and contain varied activities, (4) provision must be made for individual differences, and (5) special attention must be given to the pupil whose reading is below normal.

Thus, concern is focused first on the poor reader or the pupil who is reading below his ability. This student is characterized by a breakdown of his reading skills; fluency disappears, word-recognition errors are numerous, comprehension is faulty, recall is sketchy, and signs of emotional tensions and discomforts become evident.

Ideally, every student should be taught to read at the level for which he can comprehend the materials presented. For the below-normal reader it will probably be necessary to give some form of test to determine his reading growth to date. While tests vary, factors that should be measured are: ability to interpret pictures, to follow directions, and to work in small groups.

His linguistic maturity, fund of information about common objects, auditory and visual discriminations, and motor control. It is unwise to approach a reading program until it has been determined what skills the student has already mastered.

Many pupils entering seventh grade are retarded. Rather than frustrating these pupils with too difficult activities, the teacher will do well to begin at their point of mastery, perhaps stressing skills ordinarily taught in fourth, fifth, or sixth grade.

Using the results of informal tests, the teacher may form flexible subgroups of four or five who need special instruction and practice in a particular reading skill. Each of these groups should have a student leader who can help while the teacher is engaged with other groups or individuals.

The success of these subgroups depends on their having access to much relevant reading material on different levels of difficulty and on their learning to work together. A goal, such as presenting their findings to the entire class, is an incentive to successful group work. Responsibility for presenting oral reports stimulates effective and improved reading.

Penty, working with 318 junior high school students, described various methods used to teach reading to below normal

readers. Time was devoted to strengthening the students' purposes in working to improve their reading skills and in bolstering their self-confidence. Group discussions and individual conferences were held in this connection. Films which emphasized that reading difficulties could be overcome were shown.<sup>38</sup>

For some students who needed to develop a basic reading vocabulary for social studies and who seemed to have the greater possibilities of learning through the visual approach the New Castle visual method was used. In this procedure 16mm. slides are used in which objects are labeled, words associated to the objects, and then use is made of the words in an experience story.<sup>39</sup> Studying words removed from context and anticipated as those which would cause trouble is another visual method that can be used. Assisting devices include word cards, turn wheels, and word games.

Phonic helps aimed at understanding, mastering, and applying principles can be used for the student who has high auditory retention. Learning of consonants, long and short vowel, digraphs and diphthongs, understanding how to blend consonants, and knowing

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<sup>38</sup>penty, op. cit., p. 278.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

how to divide words into syllables can help to give the poor reading student some of the skills which he needs.

The slow reader is often not capable of achieving reading objectives in the social studies though much reading material is available. It would seem to the teacher that this student never finishes his reading assignment; his reading pace never allows him to complete his work. Thus it becomes necessary to use an individualized approach to the below normal reader. There are several techniques that the teacher may use.

The teacher may ask the student to place a card under the line he is reading and thus use the card line by line. The student's attention is focused on the immediate reading material and does not wander all over the page. Suggesting that the student read an important selection several times through and using a stopwatch to motivate his speed on each reading can be effective in increasing the poor reader's pace. Changing the student's reading material to one containing a similar central concept can help him to skim.

According to McAuley, a student is often a slow reader because he reads one word at a time. Instructing the student to find quickly a particular concept in a paragraph is one remedial

technique. Another is to have him read orally to a group of students or to the teacher or to himself. Many slow readers do not know how to attack new words. Reviewing the use of the dictionary, assigning dictionary games based on the social studies, and reviewing the basic phonetics are aids to these students.<sup>40</sup>

Then there is the below normal reader in the social studies who isn't able to secure from his reading answers to fact questions. He reads, but he is not able to comprehend what he reads. Such a student should be given specially designed questions which are short and to the point and which require definite and precise answers. Composing riddles built about the social studies reading is one method of helping these students. Unison oral reading of the group gives this student auditory aid in securing meaning from the reading assignment.

An effective exercise for the student who has difficulty in securing meaning from his reading is to have him place his finger on that section of the paragraph where he believes the answer to the question may be found. Another good exercise is to have selected social studies questions on flash cards. These are kept on his desk as the student skims easily digested reading materials for answers. Thus the student has the question continually before him as he searches for the precise answer.

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<sup>40</sup> McAuley, op. cit., p. 88

Children who appear to learn better through their muscles than through their eyes or ears can be encouraged to apply kinesthetic and tactual procedures to assist with the development of a basic reading vocabulary. An effective method that can be used is the Fernald or V.A.K.T. Method, by which the child traces with his index finger a word which has been written large on a tagboard or paper, first pronouncing and then spelling it. When he has mastered the pronunciation and spelling, he writes the word on the reverse side of the tagboard or paper. Later these words can be used in experience stories.

Many below normal readers can pronounce words, but require help in understanding what they read, in organizing the material read, or in retaining the ideas which they gain from reading. In this area application of the SQ3R Method can be helpful. It involves: (1) Surveying the material to be read; (2) changing headings into Questions and recording these on cards; (3) Reading to find answers to questions, (4) Reciting-answering questions on the reverse side of the card; and (5) Reviewing-testing to determine if questions could be answered.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>penty, op. cit., p. 279.

One of the major problem areas of teaching reading in the junior high social studies is vocabulary. Pupils have little interest in social studies when they cannot understand the concepts and ideas presented by the printed word. As previously mentioned in the preceding section, the social studies has its own specialized vocabulary, which only serves to increase the problem. The teacher, whenever he can, should anticipate vocabulary difficulties, or possible misconceptions, and, through discussion, clarify and expand word meanings for the child.

However, it is not always easy to reduce such definitions to terms within the experience of the junior high students. Using sentences with the same word in varied context helps. Despite the danger of oversimplification, it seems wiser to define meanings by making use of junior high vocabulary.<sup>42</sup>

Adequate understandings are not lightly arrived at. Necessary discussion and evaluation of a typical social studies chapter could take several weeks so that the student might gain a clear understanding of the vocabulary. Thus a prudent teacher does well to have a highly developed time sense.

Interest is likely to be maintained in vocabulary development through varying the teaching methods. According to Whipple,

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<sup>42</sup>Richard P. Sawyer, "A Reading Teacher in the Social Studies Class," Social Education (December, 1956), p. 364.

several methods have proven their value in vocabulary development. These are: first-hand experience; visual methods; verbal methods; recognition of context clues; word study; and games, puzzles, and special exercise.<sup>43</sup>

First hand experiences are perhaps the most effective method of insuring that the new vocabulary will be given meaning, when such experiences are not possible, visual aids are good substitutes. Also, a section of a notebook devoted to "new vocabulary" is valuable. Very often newspaper clippings, pictures, and cartoons can be utilized to illustrate new words as they are added to the notebook. Junior high students can also benefit by games calling for the use of new vocabulary. Giving or listening to individual reports should provide practice in the use of new vocabulary for poor readers.

Practice should be given in reading various types of content to point out that reading speed is regulated by the kind of material read. Establishing a purpose for reading, skimming for topic sentences, and timing are among the techniques used to improve speed. However, the necessity for increasing speed of comprehension, rather than merely increasing speed of reading words, should be stressed with those who need to improve reading skills.

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<sup>43</sup>Whipple, op. cit., p. 564-565.

The teacher should never regard speed as more important than understanding. Rate of comprehension should be considered in relation to the material the poor reader is to assimilate. Since rate of comprehension is reduced as the reading material becomes more difficult, the teacher can increase rate by anticipating and overcoming the reading difficulties in pre-reading activities. Occasionally work sheets may be designed to give pupils practice in applying proper rate of reading regardless of type.

Poor readers who have difficulty reading the regular social studies material can often work in smaller groups of four or five. Whenever possible, the teacher should secure easier materials for them which fit their reading abilities. Usually simple and easy to read picture books, small books, and books with large print are desirable. The slow or poor reader is able to finish a short book before he forgets what was at the beginning.

There are several other factors which should be considered in the teaching of reading to the below normal reader of social studies material. If he has an extra assignment in social studies, he should complete it during the time of day when he is most alert for reading and, if possible, in a quiet corner of the room. Also, library reading should be encouraged as the reading skills of the

poor reader are developed. However, help needs to be given in the selection of books on their interest and reading level.

Singing, too, has a place in the social studies class, especially for the poor reader. Many songs written about historical events, legends, and people arouse interest in and supply background for the reading of history. In addition, the reading program should provide day-by-day appraisal of reading gains made by students.

With correction of some difficulties, many poor readers can be freed of handicaps which would reduce their efficiency and often discourage further growth in reading. However, the instruction will require a large variety of interesting activities and much easy reading. Explanations will need to be simple and detailed with extended demonstrations being essential. Yet genuine enthusiasm on the part of the teacher has a way of transferring itself to students and resulting in reading gains.

Ideally, the teaching of reading in the junior high school social studies class should contain, in addition to group and individual work for the below normal reader, provisions for the further improvement of the reading skills of the average or good reader. Not only should their present skills be improved but

finer techniques of critical analysis, greater comprehension and depth in reading, and a broader scope of reading should be encouraged for this group.

Aforementioned authorities state that the following characteristics should be emphasized for the average or good reader:

- (1) To be more critical.
- (2) To reflect more adequately.
- (3) To organize more effectively the contributions from many sources.
- (4) To be more rigorous in thinking with the content of the material.
- (5) To demand that authorities consulted be qualified to express opinions.
- (6) To select authorities with which the reader would like to communicate to fulfill his own immediate needs.

According to Bond and Wagner reading skills and abilities are developed in two ways. One is through the re-reading of the selection, silently or orally, for new purposes which emphasize a specific skill or ability. The other is by assigning tasks specifically designed to aid in the development of particular skills and abilities.<sup>44</sup> The latter will be emphasized here.

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<sup>44</sup>Bond and Wagner, op. cit., p. 87.

The major goal of reading-instruction is to aid each individual to become as able and as diversified a reader as his capabilities and the instructional time will allow. Thus for the good reader there should be an emphasis on the maturing of skills: in word-study, in comprehension abilities, in adjusting to the reading demands of each disciple of human experience, in basic study skills, in oral reading, and in reading habits, attitudes, interests, and tastes.

It is important that while learning to be a good reader of social studies material the student develop the habits of establishing purposes for reading; that he build habits of independence in reading which enable him to rely on his own resources and to institute self-initialed reading activities; that he develop habits of demanding accuracy; that he build habits of enjoying what he reads; and that he build attitudes of social responsibility in reading settings.

Teachers should realize that pupils cannot read efficiently unless they have a definite purpose for reading. Purposeful teaching transforms the assignment of the next day's work from "read the next ten pages" into a search for ideas and information needed for the next day's discussion. Thus, for the good reader

emphasis should be placed on having a purpose for each reading act.

According to Hobson there are numerous methods that can be used to encourage purposeful reading among good readers. Hobson states that methods that might be used to help pupils in the social studies to achieve specific purposes are:

- (1) Motivate the pupils to read for specific purposes such as: locating a certain fact, answering a certain question, determining a general concept, verifying information or opinion, and comparing different points of view.
- (2) Discuss in class the steps to follow in problem solving.
- (3) Point out the need for understanding why there are conflicting points of view on many social problems and how, by wide reading and critical thinking, an individual can develop his own point of view.
- (4) Make active use of projects which aid in clarifying meanings and aid in developing initiative and planning in reading activities.
- (5) Use the discussion method which encourages each pupil to give his own opinion and explain why he arrived at his conclusion.
- (6) Use analysis of current news to estimate truth and falsity.
- (7) Ask examination questions that involve reflective thinking rather than memory of facts.

- (8) Use debate-type presentation of beliefs and supporting factual evidence to teach pupils how to collect and evaluate facts and how to relate facts to points in an outline.
- (9) Teach pupils to locate facts about an area of concern; then determine the truth or falsity of statements about it.
- (10) Draw a pupil into expressing an opinion based on material read; then ask him to defend his opinion by showing how the material read is related to it.
- (11) Develop in pupils a habit of determining the implications of historical events for present day situations.
- (12) Teach pupils to read critically, that is, to look for facts rather than opinion, to consider the qualifications of the author in the area on which he writes, and to test whether the idea presented is consistent with known facts.<sup>45</sup>

The development of critical reading skills among good readers is especially important in the junior high school. Methods for the development of critical reading skills include: (1) identifying main ideas, (2) evaluation of main ideas, and (3) distinguishing propaganda techniques. Other methods may be found in exercises from Art of Efficient Reading.<sup>46</sup> Rudisill suggests that the good social studies teacher helps students to understand the author's meaning, judge statements as being fact or opinion, judge

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<sup>45</sup>Hobson, op. cit., p. 14-16

<sup>46</sup>Witt, op. cit., p. 240.

the validity of assumptions, examine the adequacy of evidence given in support of opinions, and discover the fallacies in their own hasty conclusions.<sup>47</sup>

To develop critical reading it is first necessary for the student to comprehend the meaning of the passage. To do this, he must understand the multiple meanings of the words and jobs that words do and how they influence people. McLendon states that:

The classroom teacher should encourage students toward wide reading of larger treatments of problems since such reading leads toward greater comprehension of social phenomena. While an understandable vocabulary is desirable, mere simplification of words does not simplify the social complexities that the words describe.<sup>48</sup>

Comprehension may be vastly improved by using aids in social studies materials. Thus, the teacher is responsible for teaching his pupils the use of tables of content, indexes, lists of tables, graphs, maps, and globes.

Comprehension is closely related to the speed of reading, but undue emphasis on speed may result in poor comprehension. Thus for the good reader it is important that he be taught to adjust the speed of reading to the purpose and to the type of content.

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<sup>47</sup>Rudisill, op. cit., p. 94-96

<sup>48</sup>McLendon, op. cit., p. 23-24

It must then be emphasized, even among good readers, that it is impossible for all pupils to cover the same material in the same amount of time and that each must try to adjust his reading speed to his comprehension level.

Witt, in her study with above-average students in the social studies emphasized several techniques used to improve both speed and comprehension among good readers:

- (1) Students read for one minute, circled the last word read at the end of one minute, then completed the selection. Reading was followed with a check for comprehension.
- (2) Students read a complete article found in the Advanced Reader's Digest Skill Book. Each student checked his own speed and completed selected exercises to evaluate his comprehension.
- (3) Each student read for five minutes, using a required book. Ideas read were summarized afterwards in a group discussion.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore the social studies teacher should work to improve the reading skills of the good reader. In this respect he could easily set as his goal the characteristics of a good reader stated by Bond and Wagner. The characteristics stated by Bond and Wagner are that:

- (1) A person who would become a good reader must develop basic reading skills and techniques.

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<sup>49</sup>Witt, op. cit., p. 239.

- (2) One who would become a good reader must develop the ability to group words into thought units.
- (3) An able reader must have study skills at his command.
- (4) A person who would become a good reader must develop many vivid and varied backgrounds of understanding.
- (5) A good reader must develop a wide repertoire of comprehension abilities.
- (6) A good reader is a purposeful reader.
- (7) A good reader builds an attitude of demanding an understanding of what he reads.
- (8) A good reader must be able to perceive relationships between what is read and the problem he faces.
- (9) A good reader must be able to read critically.
- (10) A good reader develops many and varied reading interests, as well as improves the quality of his reading tastes.
- (11) A good reader must be able to read for enjoyment.
- (12) A good reader must be skilled in interpretative oral reading.
- (13) A good reader is an independent reader who makes full use of his reading ability.<sup>50</sup>

That every social studies teacher must assume some responsibility for the teaching and improvement of reading cannot

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<sup>50</sup>Bond and Wagner, op. cit., p. 19-21

be overlooked. Reading complements the social studies, which are rich in reading materials and offer endless opportunities for both the below normal reader and the good reader to practice and develop such abilities. Social studies material challenge the student to explore and widen his reading horizons.

Yet, unless the teacher gives the students some guidance in what they read for and how to read, they cover the pages in a desultory way and emerge from the reading with a few scattered ideas. Thus through well-planned assignments and conscientious effort the junior high school social studies teacher can emphasize the importance of and teach reading to pupils with varied reading abilities.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER TO THE TEACHING OF READING

Present day thinking tends to regard the building of reading skills as the continuous process extending from school entrance to the twelfth grade and beyond. Within this framework every teacher becomes a teacher of reading. This is an easy doctrine for a reading teacher to preach, but he must not be surprised to find something less than universal acceptance.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Sawyer, loc. cit.

Yet it is necessary that the social studies teacher in the junior high school accept the responsibility for the teaching of reading. Acceptance of this responsibility is vital in all curriculum fields, but nowhere is it more important than in the social studies. Therefore, it is the purpose of this section to briefly emphasize the importance of the social studies teacher to the successful achievement of reading goals through the social studies.

Gruhn and Douglass also emphasize the importance of every teacher assuming their responsibility for teaching reading. These authorities state that:

The point of view concerning responsibility for the teaching of reading in the junior high school has changed. Today the teachers of every subject is thought to share in the responsibility for increasing reading ability.<sup>52</sup>

Teachers know that the child's growth in reading ability must be continuous as he progresses through the grades, for only then will he attain the necessary development in reading to enable him to be successful in all subjects. In addition, teachers are becoming increasingly aware that instructional problems of many varieties are closely allied with the inability of the child to read. These problems were emphasized in the preceding sections. Yet the greatest importance is the fact that the teacher must

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<sup>52</sup>Gruhn and Douglass, op. cit., p. 145.

continually be aware that to a large degree reading competence of the child will determine his overall school success.

If the reader is to become proficient in using reading as a means of communication, he must be taught by one who is aware of the complexities involved in securing meaning from the printed page. In the social studies this is very important as it has certain reading difficulties unique to its area of study.

Rudisill emphasized the importance of being taught by a teacher who not only understands reading problems, but also their relationship to the social studies. Rudisill states that:

The teachers, if they are professionally competent, have reckoned with the abstractness of social studies concepts. They have anticipated vocabulary difficulties, giving attention to both pronunciation and meaning. They have utilized existing backgrounds of experience as a basis for developing understandings, and they have used pictures and concrete activities for filling gaps in these experiences. They have helped pupils to learn to use contextual clues for inferring meanings, and to check such inferences by reference to the glossary or dictionary. These are just a few of the responsibilities of the social studies teacher in the teaching of reading.<sup>53</sup>

It is especially important that teachers remember that children vary in their potentialities in reading. Because of this variation, as well as the modern heterogeneous scope of reading interests, the reading program must be largely individualized if the teacher is to be successful.

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<sup>53</sup>Rudisill, op. cit., p. 92.

In this respect, Bond and Wagner have listed the essential characteristics needed for effective reading instruction and these in return can serve as a guide for the social studies teacher:

- (1) The reading instruction must be vital to the child.
- (2) The reading situation must be stimulating but must free the child from undue pressure.
- (3) Once reading instruction is started, the child should not be allowed to experience repeated failure.
- (4) The methods should adjust to specific reading needs and capabilities.
- (5) The instruction should be one that recognizes the strengths and limitations of each child.
- (6) Reading instruction should progress by steps that the child can take readily.
- (7) Reading instruction should be organized instruction.
- (8) The process should be made meaningful and purposes made real for the child.
- (9) Procedures should be fostered that induce cooperative and individual reading while at the same time active use should be made of the results of reading.
- (10) Reading instruction should build favorable attitudes and develop the child's interest in reading.
- (11) Reading instruction should use and encourage the child's initiative while at the same time build habits of independence.
- (12) Materials should be plentiful, of many types and appropriately graded.
- (13) Reading instruction should be efficient instruction and whenever possible should aid in the development of other educational outcomes.

- (14) Reading instruction should foster the child's personal growth.
- (15) The child should be allowed to know his progress and the child's progress should be interpreted to his parents.<sup>54</sup>

Thus it becomes increasingly important that the social studies teacher teach the subject matter of reading as it relates to social studies. That he organize and plan his procedures so as to better aid the student in reading growth. The good teacher constantly studies the reading growth of the individuals he is teaching and seeks through planned methods to improve this growth.

There is a close connection between remedial and regular classroom teaching, therefore, no reading program is complete unless the teacher makes provisions for carry-over of the remedial activities into the normal reading of materials in the social studies. Because of the importance of reading to the success in the social studies, the teacher should emphasize all the relationships between reading and the social studies. Vocabulary building, for example, is an area of social studies where special emphasis should be placed in the development of reading skills.

Since training in the teaching of reading has not been a part of the professional preparation of most secondary school

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<sup>54</sup>Bond and Wagner, op. cit., p.38-39

teachers, some in-service training in the teaching of reading in the social studies would appear necessary if the teaching of such reading is to be adequate. Furthermore, if greatly improved reading programs are desired all teachers should have training in the specific teaching of reading. This view is supported by John W. Gardner in the Report of the President's Commission on National Goals. Gardner states that:

The first step to improve the teaching of reading is to improve the teachers. It is a mistake to suppose that reading can be taught by an untrained person. Every teacher who gives any instruction in reading should have had courses in the specific methods of teaching reading.<sup>55</sup>

To avoid having an untrained person teaching reading, school systems often meet the reading needs of students through a special remedial class. Yet the distinction between remedial teaching and classroom teaching has become less sharp because superior teachers have incorporated into their daily procedures the principles which are fundamental to good remedial work.<sup>56</sup> The incorporation of the principles which are fundamental to good remedial work should be the goal of all teachers including the social studies teacher.

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<sup>55</sup>John W. Gardner, "National Goals in Education," Goals For Americans. Report of the President's Commission on National Goals (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 86.

<sup>56</sup>Harris, op. cit., p. 276.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purposes of this study were (1) to discuss the importance of teaching reading in the junior high school social studies, (2) to show the relationship of books, vocabulary, and reading skills to the understanding of social studies materials, (3) to present various developmental activities, and (4) to view the importance of the social studies teacher to the teaching of reading.

Literature concerning the teaching of reading in the junior high school is limited, however, several studies were found. Penty, working with 318 slightly below-average junior high students, demonstrated that these students can make very good gains in reading ability if (1) individual needs are diagnosed and (2) methods and materials are provided to meet these needs. Witt found that measureable gains in reading resulted from intensive instructional procedures with superior students while Frey and Park, working with slow readers, sought to employ pleasureable and varied activities to increase the reading abilities of these students.

The study revealed that students entering junior high school are much more dependent upon reading for success in school work than are elementary school students whose work is largely oral, therefore, the importance of teaching reading at this level must

be emphasized. Nor can it be overlooked that failure to develop reading abilities while in the junior high school can greatly handicap further educational pursuits of the student.

Numerous skills needed for a good reader of social studies material were evidenced from the study. These skills include (1) a specialized social studies vocabulary, (2) accurate understanding of time and place concepts, (3) strength in paragraph and sentence comprehension, (4) proper rate of reading, (5) ability to organize materials read, (6) critical analysis of materials read, and (7) extended development of general reading skills.

The study revealed that the attitudes and skills needed for effective reading are not simply and quickly acquired. With training and experience, they develop in depth and power and in widening areas of application. It is difficult to say that at any given level any one of them is begun, or that any one of them is completed. Where the junior high school teacher can begin to develop student's reading abilities depends upon student skills, interests, and previous training. At whatever point that may be, the junior high school social studies teacher can make a vital contribution.

In addition, the study showed that there are various methods of teaching reading in the junior high school. However, care should be taken that provisions are made for the teaching of

reading to the below normal reader as well as improving the skills already acquired by the good reader. General principles that should be incorporated into any method of teaching reading are: (1) reading must be enjoyable, (2) systematic training must be given in the mastery of specific skills, (3) the program must be balanced and contain varied activities, and (4) provision must be made for individual differences.

It was also shown that success in the teaching of reading at the junior high school level will depend largely upon a qualified teacher as well as adequate materials. In addition, the teacher will need to base the program on diagnosis, starting from what the pupil knows, selecting appropriate materials, and securing motivation. However, all teachers at the junior high school level must participate in seeking to improve reading skills.

It may be concluded that teaching reading at the junior high school level is essential and that it is no longer the lone responsibility of the English teacher but is a role that all teachers must assume. If adolescents are to successfully complete further work in the secondary school their reading needs must be met at the junior high school level. In this respect the social studies teacher must play an important part in the teaching of reading.

It may be further concluded that useful habits and wholesome attitudes make it more likely that reading will become a permanent aid in the continued growth of the individual in the social studies classroom. At the junior high school level the social studies teacher must be an ardent, patient teacher of reading to make this a reality.

It may also be concluded that while every teacher should have a responsibility for the teaching of reading, it is especially important in the social studies that the teacher assume this role. Furthermore, the competent social studies teacher should accept this responsibility, plan a definite reading program for his class, and if necessary secure training in the various aspects of teaching reading.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer wishes to express his appreciation to Dr. Charles Bracken, major instructor; for his patience, guidance, and help in the preparation of this report.

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TEACHING READING IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
SOCIAL STUDIES

by

JAMES ROBERT TURNER

B.A., Sterling College, 1962

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

School of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1963

The purposes of this study are: (1) to discuss the importance of teaching reading in the junior high school social studies, (2) to show the relationship of books, vocabulary, and reading skills to the understanding of social studies material, (3) to present various developmental activities to be used in the teaching of reading in the junior high school social studies, and (4) to view the importance of the proper teachers, as well as methods of teaching, to the successful achievement of reading goals in the social studies.

The following procedures were used in making this study: (1) a general review was conducted of the literature pertinent to the teaching of reading, and (2) attention was focused on specific materials relating to the teaching of reading in the junior high school and the importance of such teaching in the social studies classes.

There is a definite need for the teaching of reading in the junior high school. Due to the large amount of oral work in elementary school, the student faces increased reading demands upon entry into junior high school, therefore, his reading needs must be met. In addition, success in meeting the reading needs of the student in the junior high school will determine, to a large degree, his future educational success.

There are numerous reading skills needed for successful reading of social studies material. These skills include: (1) a specialized social studies vocabulary, (2) accurate understanding of time and place concepts, (3) strength in paragraph and sentence comprehension, (4) proper rate of reading, (5) ability to organize materials read, (6) critical analysis of materials read, and (7) extended development of general reading skills.

There are certain general principles that should be incorporated into any method of teaching reading. These principles are: (1) reading must be enjoyable, (2) systematic training must be given in the mastery of specific skills, (3) the program must be balanced and contain varied activities, and (4) provision must be made for individual differences.

Success in the social studies is determined largely by one's ability to read. Due to the uniqueness of the materials used in the social studies, the teacher of social studies must take an active part in overcoming this difficulty through proper methods and the teaching and improvement of reading skills.

Any improvement in the reading skills of junior high school students is dependent upon the training, ability, and actions of the teachers. No longer is the teaching of reading the sole responsibility of the English teacher, but is a responsibility that all

teachers must assume. The participation of social studies teachers in seeking to improve reading skills of junior high school students is essential.