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HOSPITAL TESTED
DORMIN

She Can Teach You to Read 2,500 Words a Minute!



Teacher Evelyn Wood checks a student's eye movement—the key to learning speed reading.

This Washington, D.C., woman puts wings on the printed page; most of her pupils increase their reading speed by five or 10 times, and some by 100 times!

By CURTIS MITCHELL

IF YOU ARE AVERAGE, you are reading this page at a speed of about 250 words a minute. If you will work one hour a day for 12 weeks and attend classes for 30 hours, Evelyn Neilson Wood of the Dynamic Reading Institute in Washington, D.C., can teach you to increase your speed by 10 times, to 2,500 words. And if you are a rare person, with an affinity for rapid reading, you can learn to cruise through a book at the "impossible" speed of 25,000 words a minute!

Some experts still say it cannot be done. Rather than argue, Mrs. Wood demonstrates. Take a look at some recent graduates:

A high-school girl was told to read 50 short stories and make a report at the end of a six-week period. The girl waited until the final weekend, read all 50 stories, and turned in a detailed report.

A retired businessman said, "I'm too old to learn new tricks." Mrs. Wood raised his speed from 150 to 1,200 words a minute. He was 86 years old.

Mrs. Wood is the first to insist that not every pupil is a high-speed reader. "We're happy when we give him from five to 10 times his original speed," she says.

Out of a class of 30, experience shows that two or three will reach ultra-high speeds. Two or three will not improve at all. The others will attain a speed between 2,000 and 3,000 words a minute.

Since the skill can be mastered by almost everyone, it brings into prospect an astounding harvest of time and manpower.

College students can complete their four years of reference reading in less than one year. Medical specialists can broaden their knowledge. Businessmen can read the whole literature of an industry.

Critics cry, "What about comprehension? When you read so fast, do you learn?"

Mrs. Wood reports, "We've tested and retested. We find that fast reading increases comprehension."

When she was growing up in Utah, Mrs. Wood hungered for books. At the university where she took her master's degree, she studied remedial reading. One day she handed a term paper to her speech teacher and watched him flip through its 80 pages at a startling pace. She resolved to discover how he did it.

After timing his speed at 6,000 words a minute, she began to "collect" other speedsters. When she had found 50, she visited them and analyzed their reading methods.

A CLUE that put Mrs. Wood on the right track was that speed readers never moved their eyes from left to right but instead swept them down the page.

She learned that another "drag" was her acquired habit of sub-vocalizing; the eye sees a word, the larynx responds, the vocal cords spin the message along to the brain. "I knew the word had to go straight from the eye to the brain without the detour."

Finally, through the use of devices known only to her instructors, she made the transition and was on her way.

This moment of victory over the habit of years is known in her classes as "the break-

through." Describing it, an executive says, "The type got fuzzy and then cleared so that I could see the whole page at once, every word in focus."

A professor says, "When I broke through, my jaws ached to beat the band."

Mrs. Wood tells of her own experience. "I was reading Hudson's 'Green Mansions.' All at once, I was living that story. I was walking around among the characters. For weeks afterward, I could feel every emotion. Even now, if I let myself go, I can hear the flames crackling and feel the heat as that child burns in the treetops."

Innovators are seldom popular. Almost nobody, except her husband and a friendly professor at the university, shared the vision of what her discovery might accomplish. "We're trying to teach young people to read as well as their classmates," she argued with school authorities. "Why not teach them to be the best readers in the class?" Her idea was rejected.

Late in 1959, Mrs. Wood brought her revolution in reading to Washington, D.C. With the help

of a friend's teen-age daughter, taught during odd hours, she began to give demonstrations. One year later, she had a booming business and a following as dedicated as if she were the high priestess of a new cult.

A girl who had been an average student took the course and lifted her medium grades to straight A's.

A shy teen-ager told me, "I picked up a book at the swimming pool and was flipping through the pages as we do in reading class when I saw that everybody had gathered around me. They were watching me read that silly book. But you know something? It's nice when folks look at you as if you're something special."

A few heretics have not accepted the faith. They want to know what happens to the human eye when it reads so fast. Trying to solve the riddle, Mrs. Wood once borrowed the best testing machine she could find. The test was a failure; the machine was too slow.

Up to now, nothing faster has been needed be-

cause nobody could read faster than the machine. Engineers are analyzing her techniques, seeking principles that may help computer operations.

Speed reading, if you listen to its disciples, multiplies comprehension and pleasure, too. "When I taught high school, I saw hundreds of bright boys and girls drop out because they couldn't get through their books," Mrs. Wood says. "With the pain removed from reading, think what this can mean to those young people."

Here is a final sobering thought. If you are an average reader, you have spent about six minutes reading this article.

If you were a Wood graduate, you would have gulped it down in less than one minute, saving five minutes. Now what would you do with those five minutes?

Mrs. Wood has the answer. "Why, read, of course. Read all the wonderful books you have missed. Pack your mind with learning.

Just think of it. Some day, your wisdom and leadership might help change the world!"



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