

Tools for Learning

READING FOR TEACHERS

HELEN F. STOREN

SOME OF THE "sacred" adages which helped condition our culture a century ago seem to continue to influence members of our teaching profession. For example, the ideas back of "a little learning is a dangerous thing" and "jack of all trades and master of none" may well be responsible for the narrow interests of many teachers.

It is not uncommon for us as teachers to refuse to even comment on atomic energy, world politics, or modern art because we do not have time to become expert in these fields. However, with our newer concept of general education and our beliefs that teachers should play a prominent part in community life, it becomes imperative for us to have at least a little "learnin'" in all fields which affect our daily living.

Wise teachers, of course, will not make dogmatic pronouncements concerning problems which require expert knowledge they do not possess. But, if we read widely and judiciously, we will be able to listen intelligently, to become cognizant of various points of view, and to know where to go for additional information.

This broad knowledge of the major concerns of our times does not mean that we need to neglect our fields of specialization. Whether that field is an academic subject, a particular age group, administration, or supervision, we should be continuously aware of the recent research and experimentation described in professional literature.

Try These Professional Ones

Three books on secondary education which are proving helpful to curriculum workers are: *The American High School*,¹

a publication of the John Dewey Society; Alberty's *Reorganizing the High School Curriculum*;² and Leonard's *Developing the Secondary School Curriculum*.³ Alberty's volume, particularly concerned with the core curriculum, draws from sound experience and should be heartening to teachers who are beginning to experiment with this type of high school organization.

Alice Miel's *Changing the Curriculum*, a study of curriculum as a process of social change cannot help but challenge some of the superficial thinking that has dominated certain of our curriculum planning ventures.⁴ The publications of the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute should give additional aid to curriculum planning groups.⁵ The account of an exciting experience with the use of psychotherapy in class discussion is given in Cantor's *Dynamics of Learning*.⁶

Legion are the books coming off the press in the field of human relations—we should watch for the Taba and the Cook studies of the American Council on Education which will be published soon. Additional accounts of action research studies may be found in the new periodical, *Human Relations Quarterly*.⁷

¹ Hollis Caswell, editor. 1946 yearbook, Harper & Brothers.

² The Macmillan Co., 1947.

³ Rinehart & Co., 1946.

⁴ D. Appleton-Century, 1946.

⁵ Teachers College, Columbia University.

⁶ Foster & Stewart, 1946.

⁷ Research Center for Group Dynamics, Cambridge, Mass.

Now For Broadening Interests

Perhaps the best way to select general reading is to acquire the book review habit. *The Saturday Review of Literature*, *Harper's*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and the *New York Times* and *Herald Tribune* book sections all provide excellent reviews. Keep your selection broad so that within a period of time you will have read a book or two on world affairs and national problems, something in an entirely new field (be it existentialism or interior decorating), and a few books that follow your natural interests.

The titles in the following lists are but a few of the worthwhile volumes published during 1947:

A Study of History—Arnold Joseph Toynbee.⁸

Try this *one* volume edition. Probably you have threatened for years to read the six. This publication is proof that even the author thinks a little Toynbee is better than none.

Why They Behave Like Russians—John Fisher.⁹

Perhaps the fairest account of Russia to come off the press in recent months.

Inside U.S.A.—John Gunther.¹⁰

Experts say Gunther is superficial and Gunther admits it, yet I doubt if the majority of our teachers will not be more astute appraisers of American life after having read his book. (Recommend it, also to your high school students.)

Our Fair City—Robert Allen.¹¹

We know too little about present-day local politics. Allen gives us the low down on several American cities.

The Roosevelt I Knew—Frances Perkins.¹²

Miss Perkins, from her close association with Roosevelt, gives us new insights into the character and activities of our past president.

Don't Scorn Fiction

Gentleman's Agreement—Laura Z. Hobson.¹³

A Gentile poses as a Jew in order to write an article on anti-semitism, and discovers the tragic consequences of discrimination. Well written.

Kingsblood Royal—Sinclair Lewis.¹⁴

Not Lewis at his best, but a powerful story of the reactions of a community toward a man who insists upon proclaiming his Negro blood.

The Other Room—Worth Tuttle Hedden.¹⁵

A white southern girl's experiences as a teacher in a Negro college. Rings true.

Accent on Boys and Girls

Children of Vienna—Robert Neumann.¹⁶

Can anyone read it without acknowledging our immediate obligations to European children?

Knock On Any Door—Willard Motley.¹⁷

Read this even if you shock easily. A tragic story of youthful criminals who are victims of the Chicago slums.

The Mountain Lion—Jean Stafford.¹⁸

Poignant and subtle story of childhood written with brilliance and clarity.

Try a Few Magazines

To keep posted on current affairs, subscribe to a weekly news magazine, particularly if your local papers have but meager coverage. Turn to *Harper's* and *Atlantic Monthly* for a more comprehensive and profound analysis of some of our significant problems. We should not shy away from such *avant garde* magazines as *Partisan Review* and *Politics*, either.

If you are not a *New Yorker* sub-

⁸ Oxford, 1947.

⁹ Harper & Brothers, 1947.

¹⁰ Harper & Brothers, 1947.

¹¹ Vanguard Press, 1947.

¹² The Viking Press, 1947.

¹³ Simon & Schuster, 1947.

¹⁴ Random House, 1947.

¹⁵ Crown Publishers, 1947.

¹⁶ E. P. Dutton & Co., 1947.

¹⁷ D. Appleton-Century Co., 1947.

¹⁸ Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1947.

scriber, beg, borrow, or steal the June 14 issue. The account of the lynching trial in Greenville by Rebecca West, an English journalist, is without exception the best piece of reporting I have come across this year. After reading this one issue you may want to include *New Yorker* in your weekly reading. The letters from Europe and the "Profiles" alone are worth the twenty cents.

THE LISTENING POST

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legislation affecting the welfare of children and youth. When the total picture is known, it will undoubtedly reveal many substantial gains for education in the various states.—*Don S. Patterson, Elementary Division, U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C., for the Association Legislative Committee.*

Tools for Learning in December will be introduced by Ruth Ersted, state supervisor of school libraries, State Department of Education in Minnesota, and will deal with recreational reading for children.

For Forward-looking Education Courses

THE HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Edited by HARL R. DOUGLASS, Director, College of Education, University of Colorado.
Prepared by 27 Contributing Authorities.

THIS important new contribution records and correlates the more outstanding of the new developments now being tested and put into practice in high school curriculums in the United States. It presents the more important considerations of contemporary curriculum thinking and practice, principles and techniques of curriculum construction and revision, the current

general trends and specific trends, and considerations in the subject matter divisions. The various chapters have been written by men and women who have distinguished themselves for sound thinking and leadership in the particular fields in which they were asked to contribute. *A volume of the Douglass Series in Education.*

635 pages, \$4.50

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