Sholes School
Curriculum Information for Teachers

Sholes school provides materials for teachers who bring their classes to the School. We provide slates, McGuffey Readers, and other textbooks from late in the last century and early in this century. Be sure to examine our sample lesson plans available in the Sholes School Teacher Manual.

Language Arts
When we put reading, writing, spelling, and language together, we call it "language arts." This is just about what the teacher of old did, too. Before the advent of educational publishing companies, the ingenious teacher taught everything from the McGuffey Readers. The modern teacher may certainly do it the same way. The Sholes School Museum has prepared some lessons from texts printed as early as 1881. The School has bound copies of the old language texts from which the lessons were designed. The texts are split into three different levels of difficulty and are available at the School for use by classes visiting the School for the day.

- **Level I**
    - The early primary children learn to speak and write simple sentences. They learn the days of the week, months of the year, use of the verbs "is" and "are," and use of homonyms "two," "to," and "too," as well as "here" and "hear." Children are given the opportunity to read, copy, and commit to memory some character-building bits of poetry.
- **Level II**
    - This collection included exercises in learning the abbreviations for the months of the year as well as some famous dates in American history. Lessons give practice in distinguishing "there," "their," and "they're" and admonish students not to use "no" and "not" in the same expression. Pupils are given the opportunity to write a full description of the schoolhouse (which can be a good post-visit exercise).
- **Level III**
    - This collection provides many opportunities for creative writing, copying and memorizing poetry, letter writing, reading descriptive literature such as Whittier's poem, "In School-Days," and more intensive English grammar lessons.

We suggest that visiting classes split into two teams to play the grammar game "Teakettle." In one version of the game, one team selects a pair of homonyms, such as "horse" and "hoarse." Each member of the team takes a turn using the word or words in a sentence, saying "teakettle" instead of the chosen homonyms. For example, one student may state, "The boy who rode the

(teakettle) was a little (teakettle)." The opposing team tries to guess the word. The teams then switch roles.

Some useful homonyms:

- night, knight
- two, too, to
- their, there, they're
- for, four
- do, dew
- blue, blew
- days, daze
- nose, knows
- knew, new
- know, no
- write, right
- some, sum

Another version of the game involves using homographs--words with several meanings--instead of homonyms. For example, a team may choose the word "arm." Possible sentences include "My (teakettle) is sore from playing baseball" and "The (teakettle) of the chair is broken."

McGuffey Readers

McGuffey's Eclectic Readers were first used in 1836 and are considered by many as America's most famous pedagogical tools, and are still in use. The revised edition with the 1879 copyright date may not have been done under the supervision of the original author, W. H. McGuffey, but it was developed out of the same concept as the earlier editions. Sholes School has copies of the 1879 edition in its collection.

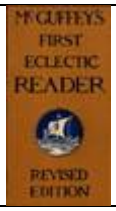
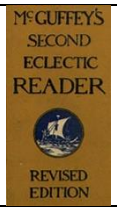
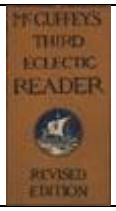
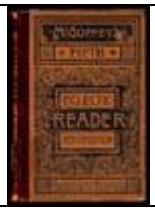
Every level of the Readers, from Primer to Sixth Reader, contains a significant number of moral lessons, including lessons on kindness towards animals, good manners, and consideration of others. War was usually portrayed as evil in concept but was occasionally discussed in a manner of heroism. The virtues presented to American youth were the prime values in which Americans professed to believe. Even today, there are many who believe these values should be preserved or restored through the use of the McGuffey Readers.

Another reason for the popularity of the Readers was that "grade level" and "age" were not necessarily linked. This was especially true in the nineteenth century as students took time off for planting and harvest-time farm chores. The Third Reader has a story, "Beware of the First Drink," indicating that a sixteen-year-old student might get no further than the Third Reader before completing his education.

From the Primer upward, new words were presented in logical progression and simple language gradually introduced the child to an ever-widening vocabulary. Books were routinely read aloud, so there was concern for enunciation and accent. Syllabication, the use of diacritical marks as an aid to pronunciation, phonics, rhyme, and alliteration were all stressed.

The title "...Eclectic" means that the stories and rhymes were culled from a wide range of children's literature. Children of today often comment that the Readers are not easy. The Readers not only taught a youngster to read, they were also a primary source of information about history, philosophy, and science. Every subject was covered. Spelling and handwriting exercises were included. There were phonics charts for teaching spelling and script exercises used to teach reading of script prior to actually learning to write. The Second Reader also included lessons on punctuation marks.

McGuffey Reader covers and title pages are provided for your information. Copies of many of these books are available at Pioneer Sholes School.

				
First Reader	Second Reader	Third Reader	Fourth Reader	Fifth Reader

Handwriting

Regular drill work in handwriting was carried on in all grades. According to the daily schedules, it seems that the most usual time for the whole school to practice handwriting was just before the mid-day lunch break. The younger children worked on the blackboard for part of the time while the older students practiced at their desks. After much practice of the circular and upright script strokes designed to help students develop good form and skill in keeping letters uniform and within the lines, the student would put the final handwriting lesson in the Copy Book.

Most of the Sholes School desks are sized for nine-year olds upward to the sixteen year olds. These larger desks contain a hole designed to hold an inkwell. After age eight or nine, the students could supply themselves with straight pens and writing paper. The school has a few of the inkwells in the museum display and keeps one for showing the students in the teacher's desk. It is understood that often an older, responsible child was assigned the task of filling the inkwells from a large bottle of ink. Problems sometimes arose during extremely cold weather, as the little inkwells would freeze and, as one student described it, explode.

Spelling

In the early days, the ability to spell was not as important as the ability to form beautiful letters. This was all changed when Noah Webster and his spelling book came along around 1782. He published *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language* which was in three parts: a spelling book, a grammar book, and a reader. The spelling section, especially, won very wide acceptance because of its useful simplification of English spelling. The publication found a place in most of the schools of the United States.

One of the first effects of the publication of the "Grammatical Institute" was to make spelling a craze. Teachers began to pay attention to spelling and the pupil who could "spell down the whole school" ranked second only to the person who surpassed the rest of the students in arithmetic. In some schools, there was a prize for the best speller each day. The prize might have been a coin with a hole drilled through it. The coin was strung on a leather thong or on a cord and worn like a necklace by the good speller until the next day. At the end of the year, the best speller in the school was given the coin to keep. Sometimes the child who was the best speller was given a written certificate of good scholarship to take home.

Once a week, frequently on Friday, the school would choose sides for a spelling match. The match often lasted for half of the afternoon. We can easily imagine that this was the most exciting part of the school week.

The spelling craze spread throughout the community. On winter evenings, neighboring districts had their best spellers compete. Learning to spell correctly has always been part of learning a language. However, learning spelling by speaking, as in spelldowns, made spelling more difficult than necessary for many students. There's a delightful story in *Singing Wheels,* written by Mabel O'Donnell for the Reading Foundation Series published by Row, Peterson in 1952 about pioneer education and a spelldown.

The ultimate winner of the spelldown described in *Singing Wheels* found an effective method of learning to spell. Besides the McGuffey Readers, the Sholes School library contains many early spelling books including the Elementary Spelling Book by Noah Webster (American Book Company, 1857, 1866, 1880, 1909) and a reproduction of the old "Blue Back Speller." Pages have been copied for spelling lessons and lists for all grades from The Horn-Ashbaugh Fundamentals of Spelling (J. B. Lippincott Company, 1928) and Essentials of Spelling by Pearson and Suzzallo (American Book Company, 1919). Note that the methods used to study spelling words used sixty years ago are the same methods used in modern spelling books.

Arithmetic

Arithmetic textbooks of all descriptions and levels are in our Sholes School library. Many pages from well-known late 1800 and early 1900 books have been copied for teacher use.

By 1850, most schools had arithmetic books in addition to the traditional reading book. A progressive arithmetic book started with simple addition and subtraction, and went on to fractions, percentages, extraction of square and cube roots, and complicated geometric measurements. Sometime after 1881 a book called *Common School Book-Keeping,* by Packard and Bryant, adapted to "individual and class instruction in schools and academies." It was important that the rural youths must be able to "figger." Many of the story problems in their texts dealt with familiar situations.

Geography

Geography was usually taught in two separate sections-one for the older students and one for the younger students. Student participated in formal geography lessons as soon as they could read. Seven, eight, and nine year olds started with simple talks on local geography including the school grounds, village, township, and county. A county map with the townships named and a township map with the sections numbered were often available, but all instruction continued to be oral until about the fourth grade level. At about that level, globe lessons were planned as well as some free drawing of maps of the continents. When geography books first became available, there was a great deal of memorization.

History and Civics

Both history and civics lessons were often integrated within the reading and geography lessons. By the eighth grade, history was sometimes listed as its own subject area.

Classroom teachers frequently correlate their visit to Sholes School with a time in history which the students are studying, such as pioneer history, local history, and state history. Present-day docents tell about Sholes School and sometimes use a time-line to relate its history with other prominent historical events.

Civics lessons for classes of today could include lessons on flag history and the government. Sholes School also has some old maps available for classroom use.

Games/Physical Education

The following games can be used to provide a break from studies, as well as to teach students about recreation in early schools.

Games for Young Children	**Games for Older Children**
London Bridge	Hide and Go Seek
Drop the Handkerchief	Run Sheep, Run
Follow the Leader	Tug of War
Simon Says	Pom-Pom Pullaway
Cat and Mouse	Three Deep

The Mulberry Bush	Catch Ball
Ring Around Rosie	Andy, Andy, Over

Examples of games that a full class can play:

Squat Tag
There are many, many tag games in existence. One of the more popular ones is Squat Tag. In this game, children can avoid being tagged by squatting whenever "IT" is about to pounce. Each child is allowed only three squats. After using up the three squats, the child must depend on his/her running and dodging ability to escape.

Andy, Andy, Over
One needs a building over which a soft ball (not a softball) can easily be thrown and sufficient space on either side to make good playing territory. Any number may play. Choose two teams and place one team on each side of the building.

A player starts the game by throwing the ball over the building, shouting, "Andy, Andy, over!" The team on the opposite side tries to catch the ball. If anyone does, all run around to the opposite side of the building. The one with the ball tries to tag as many of the other players as possible, but all on the other team try to escape to the other side of the building without being hit with the ball. Those who are caught become players for the side catching them.

If the ball is not caught, the side missing it must return it across the building, calling out, "Andy, Andy, over!" as the signal to the other side. The ball must be caught on the fly and not on a rebound.

The game ends when one team has captured all the members of the opposing team.