

SpeakSharp[®]

How to Be an Effective User of Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English

by Robert Oliphant

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CH 1: SpeakSharp, *Poetry Out Loud*, and the Series, “Toward Global Speech”

The original impetus for what’s here was a desire to offer *Poetry Out Loud* participants some specific help with the actual speech sounds of their presentations, including articulation options, not just pronunciation. But I’ve also gone ahead to cover narrative (fiction and nonfiction) as a literary form that also deserves attention by personal best learners. The result is the final book in a six-book series called “Toward Global Poetry and Fiction — The Healing Role of Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English.”

As the final book, what’s here adds a new perspective to the *Poetry Out Loud* breakthrough on memorization-recitation, and full scale performance. It does this by focusing upon how the spoken arts of articulation and breath control, not just pronunciation, can build a beginning participant’s effectiveness and self confidence.

It also expands the National Endowment for the Art’s “Big Read” approach to encompass a much broader range of fiction and nonfiction narrative, including low cost “reader friendly” testing techniques developed some years back via grants from the Foundation for Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). Finally, and more discursively, it includes a number of chapters dealing with the global speech movement in general, e.g., the current international status of Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English (SWAPE or Ameriphonics, for short), i.e., 120 nations and over 3 billion speakers.

As a start, here are the six titles in the series, “Toward Global Speech: Poetry, Fiction, and Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English.” They are followed by their free access download addresses.

**Shakespeare in the Head for Health: A Reality Orientation
Option for Alzheimer's Worriers**

nonpartisaneducation.org/Review/Resources/ShakespeareHead.htm

**RecitationWhiz®: A Structural Method for Memorizing Poems and
Other Texts**

nonpartisaneducation.org/Review/Resources/RecitationWhiz.htm

**WordEdge®: A Career Mobility Guide to High Speed Dictionary
Based Electronic Learning and Testing**

nonpartisaneducation.org/Review/Resources/WordEdge.htm

The Random House Unabridged Dictionary (electronic version)

www.dictionary.com . . . www.WordGenius.com

**SpeakSharp®: How to Be an Effective User of Standard Worldwide
American Pronunciation English**

nonpartisaneducation.org/Review/Resources/SpeakSharp.htm

Piano for Mrs. Cimino (book and film versions available from
Amazon)

[full details on POL can be accessed via www.poetryoutloud.org.]

SECTION ONE: PERFORMANCE CONFIDENCE

CH 2: Poetry Performances in Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English — Internationally!

Faces, faces, faces — they always speak more loudly than statistics, don't they? Just check out a few of the 50 web sites for our state arts councils and look at the faces of the semi-finalists for the national memorization-performance poetry contest sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. With over 600 poems for participants to choose from in creating their 3-poem programs, it's not surprising that those faces, along with the faces of the poets themselves, are as various and multi-ethnic as our own.

But the programs themselves, again just like us and the rest of the planet, are resolutely mono-lingual. This is to say that they are memorized, rehearsed, delivered, and applauded in "Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English" (SWAPE), as represented by the Random House Unabridged WordGenius electronic dictionary. By way of illustration, the Kaiser Permanente HMO (9 million members) today offers telephone contact for speakers of Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin (that's right, Cantonese and Mandarin but not "Chinese").

From a planetary perspective, consider the unifying force of SWAPE, including its poetry, in multi-lingual India (at least a billion potential SWAPE students and telephone reps), China (another billion), and most of eastern and central Asia. True, the depth of instruction may not be as overpowering as South Korea's, which offers four-year SWAPE residence-immersion programs to many high school students. But there's certainly

enough of it, including SWAPE-poetry memorization, to justify a worldwide version of *Poetry Out Loud* — ideally kicking off a little before the May opening of Expo 2010 in Shanghai.

The foregoing is not meant to assert that as Americans we somehow own the world. Nor is it meant to assert that we somehow “own” Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English and its poetry (over 80% of our working vocabulary, after all, has over the years been borrowed from non-Anglo sources).

Instead, I would argue that right now Planet Earth as a whole somehow “owns” our language and its poetry, enough so to mandate a first unifying *Poetry Out Loud* international spin off. If classical Greek could survive long after its major marbles crumbled or were carried off, why shouldn't the same hold true for SWAPE in the centuries that lie ahead.

CH 3: From Memorization, Recitation, and Performance to Personal Best Achievement

For many Americans over the years, poetry has always been an aerobic sport. As a ten year old sloshing about in the thunder and rain, Theodore Roosevelt loved to recite Longfellow's "King Olaf." Along the same deep breathing lines, President Reagan's fondness for reciting Robert Service's longish "The Cremation of Sam Magee" is as famous in political folklore as Winston Churchill's mega-delivery of Macaulay's "The Lays of Ancient Rome." Even today many high school reunions feature recitations (often word perfect) of poems learned by heart 25 or 50 years earlier.

More passively, it's true that many serious poets today read their poems out loud in public, as opposed to reciting them from memory. But the aerobic-sport tradition has been recently revived by our three-level (school, state, and national) *Poetry Out Loud* competition, which as of 2009 has grown to over 300,000 participants nationwide.

By way of supplementing the excellent study materials on PoetryOutLoud.org, here is some practical help for (1) those who wish to pursue the memorization-recitation-performance route to personal best achievement, public applause, and cash prizes, or (2) those who simply wish to experiment on their own with a personal-best American art form that's as new as Billie Collins and as old as Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln.

Memorization. . . . Call it *learning by heart* if you will, memorization is a necessary first step toward an audience-pleasing recitation of a three-poem

program. The challenge here is far more intellectual than aerobic, of course, which means that testable accuracy — line by line and word by word — is the goal. As an aerobic touch, though, Stanislavsky (in *An Actor Prepares*) would ask his performers to recite their lines while pushing a heavy grand piano across the stage.

But practically considered, word perfect memorization always calls for high-concentration heavy lifting (ten minutes a line overall is a reasonable estimate). Twelve lines, twenty, sixty — anyone who travels this route will always look back to it as a giant first step toward personal self confidence, not just an exercise in personal theater.

Rhymed or unrhymed, it's worth noting here that visually considered a poem is composed of lines and line-groups (stanzas), not sentences. Since a poem's lines customarily fit the same rhythmic pattern, line-by-line recitation of poetry has always been a key tool in basic training and boot camp for building morale and team spirit, as pointed out by William McNeil (himself a WWII veteran) in *Keeping Together in Time*. Call it "sing song" if you will, the combination of rhythmic poetry recitation with physical activity usually works far better for drill sergeants and recruits than trying to keep track of confusing numerals.

Serious recitation, though, requires us to replace lines with sentences as our primary meaning-units, along with subunit-pausing groups as represented in print by colons, semi-colons, commas, dashes, and parentheses. These in turn, depending up the number of words, link up with breath groups — usually a major challenge for both singers and reciters.

Remember, even with a mike, the physical distance of a reciter from his or her audience means that most words must be articulated with higher clarity (“platform speech,” it used to be called), not just higher volume.

ABOUT DICTIONARIES. . . . As indicated in a recent Phi Lambda Theta review, the current Random House unabridged dictionary of standard worldwide American pronunciation English is an essential preparation tool for every poetry reciter, especially its electronic version. Practically considered RHU can be accessed free via dictionary.com, or purchased for only \$39.95 via WordGenius.com. Its phonetics system uses keyboard symbols, not special dots and squiggles, and its audio-pronunciation versions present basic (phonemic) speech sounds, not confusing sound combinations.

ABOUT RECITATION CLARITY. . . . Apart from articulation and sheer volume, a reciter’s most powerful resource is that of expanding the space occupied by a recitation’s speech sounds. Vowels and most consonants, for example, can be stretched out. e.g., GOHHHHHHHHHH for /goh/ and PLEEEEEEZ for /pleez/. The others (mostly “stops”) can be strengthened by emphasizing their aspiration feature, e.g., HIT-UH for /hit/ and SEEEEEEEE-YUH for /see/. For listeners this slowing down doubles the comprehension level; for the reciter it triples the physical-exercise level, very much like weight lifting.

ABOUT “READ MY LIPS” ARTICULATION PRACTICE. . . . As a substitute for overly audible solitary recitation practice, we can always pantomime actual speech slowly while at the same time overemphasizing what vowels and consonants actually look like in action, e.g., opening the mouth very wide for “low” vowels (*oh*), and almost closing it for “high”

vowels (ee and ih). This can be done late at night without offense, incidentally.

THE VALUE OF LOW-PITCHED CHANTING. . . . It's worth noting here that current masters of "poetry-aloud" reading" like Robert Pinsky and the late Thom Gunn (both students of the late Yvor Winters) achieve their spoken authority by lowering both delivery pace and pitch, thereby achieving the effect of a sonorous chant that is often just as artful and "memorized" as a conventional reading.

DEEP BREATHING. . . . A conventional "trick demonstration" for many nurses is that of (1) taking a subject's blood pressure, (2) asking the subject to take several deep breaths, exhaling very slowly, (3) taking the subject's blood pressure a second time, (4) comparing the difference. . . . I've seen process produce a drop of twenty points (from 135 to 105).

I've also seen the process at work as delivery-technique builder, e.g., reciting two 4-line stanzas of a sonnet during the last exhalation. Even late night, the exercise is a splendid way toward letting a held breathe carry the transition from one phrase to another. It also focus the attention upon line-groups, not just individual lines.

Performance impact. . . . A recitation's next step can move up to the level of dynamic and original art. Like the printed pages of a novel or a play, the words of a poem can be linked to a specific imaginary "speaker" like Robert Frost's walker contrasting the "road taken" with the "road not taken." Or the performer himself or herself may create a character who brings the words to life through gestures, movements, tone of voice, and other resources of the actor's art.

It's true that public performances usually demand personal reactions by judges and by the audience as a whole. Hence the suspense inherent in the final stages of a competition like *Poetry Out Loud*. But the primary satisfaction for its participation stems from what might be called "transparent personal growth." Participants, after all, chose their own memory targets and gain confidence by knowing exactly how accurate their personal memorization efforts have been. Though important, the competition element is an added attraction, not the main event, in the *Poetry Out Loud* personal growth experience.

Personal Best Achievement and Self Confidence. . . . For all its participants, the key feature of the *Poetry Out Loud* experience can be summed up in one word: REVERBERATION. This is to say that each participant's three poem memorization-recitation-performance program will remain on file as a resource to be recalled at will as a whole, as a part, or even as an echo of past friendships — far more so than most popular songs.

Also on call will be the strong sense of personal best achievement that comes from the time and concentration needed to master a three-poem program of, say, 90 memorized lines (roughly 750 words), along with hours and hours of recitation-performance rehearsal. As with a marathon or climbing El Capitan, the sheer achievement itself will usually offer plenty of satisfaction, far more than the competitive element.

Even more important, I feel, is the almost explosive feeling of self confidence that comes from successfully meeting a challenge we have set for ourselves on our own, be it memorizing 90 lines or losing 20 pounds.

To hammer the point further: I truly believe that the *Poetry Out Loud* experience (formal or on one's own) should be the first step in any self-improvement program, as opposed to risking our self esteem on an overly ambitious "born to lose" weight loss or exercise program.

On the surface it's true that *Poetry Out Loud* is about great poetry and great poets. But its most powerful impact centers upon the participants themselves, enough so that the program as it stands deserves to be taken very seriously by senior citizens, their advocates, and all of those who believe that honest concentration trumps intelligence seven days out of the week.

A CLOSING NOTE. . . . I suspect what's here will come across to many readers as good-advice chit chat. So by way of establishing credibility, I should say that my own fear of Alzheimer's drove me into poetry memorization about 15 years ago. Since then I've learned over 30,000 words of Ameriphone poetry by heart. As might be expected, some of those words have slipped out of my memory. But a lot of them have stuck, very much like popular tunes or good friends, and I've put them to very satisfying solitary use along the lines described here.

Professionally, my training under Herbert Dean Meritt at Stanford (PhD 1962) has helped me to understand how American English prosody works. But that understanding is offset, I feel, by the sheer mystery of memory itself, especially where individual poems are concerned.

The most important thing I've learned is that different poems work differently for different people. What means that each memorizer-reciter should give new poems an honest try that stops short of frustration. Beyond that, here's hoping what's here makes sense to Americans of all

ages, especially those who want to empower their memories, not just worry about them.

CH 4: *Poetry Out Loud*, Personal Choice Learning, and Personal Confidence

Did anyone actually predict Susan Boyle's sudden rise to fame? Or did any professional educator predict the scale of *Poetry Out Loud's* success? — especially its jump from 40,000 participants nationwide in 2006 to over 300,000 in 2009. Coming closer to home, since many of us, especially those concerned with K-8 students, may want to use the *Poetry Out Loud* approach on our own, let's look at how this brilliant innovation works and how it might be put to use with different groups of learner-reciters.

Texts. . . . As befits its sponsorship by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, *Poetry Out Loud* (www.poetryoutloud.org) offers an immense range of choice to teachers and students, i.e., over 600 individual poems, including a separate sub-listing of over 200 manageable learning targets of 25 lines or fewer. As far as spelling and format go, the list is internationally authoritative, far more so than, say, *Poems to Memorize*, which “modernizes” Shakespeare (b. 1564) but retains the quaint memorization-unfriendly spellings of his younger contemporary John Donne (b. 1572).

Practically considered, what *Poetry Out Loud* offers K-12 students is an easy-to-print access list of established ready-to-memorize targets to choose from, along with biographical information on each poet. To use a Chaucerian phrase, it's as close to *Goddess foyson* (plenty) as any learner

would want — including overseas Ameriphones via the 3 billion speaker status of standard worldwide American pronunciation English (SWAPE).

Time. . . . Memorizing takes time. Hence the practicality of the *Poetry Out Loud* 25-line list for younger learners. Their popularity is underscored by the fact that 40 out of our “top fifty” poems (based on Grangers® data regarding anthology status) meet this 25-line requirement, and are also in public domain, apart from Robert Frost and Dylan Thomas). For learners, since poems vary in their number of lines, line measurements also work well for time on task estimates, i.e., ten minutes per line as a basic figure.

Though just an experience-based estimate, this ten-minute figure gives participants a daunting basis for respecting what lies ahead, e.g., 140 minutes to get preliminary mastery of a 14-line sonnet, which in performance as a “moment’s monument” will take up only 60 seconds. But it also opens the tortoise-friendly door for less verbally agile students to compete successfully by using their most productive resource — time.

Tests. . . . The ultimate testing element in *Poetry Out Loud* is that of stand-up performance, which goes far beyond accurate recollection, spoken or written, to embrace the arts of the orator and the actor. Winston Churchill and Ronald Reagan were eloquent performers of poetry, for example, and so was the great French actress, Sarah Bernhardt, who won her first important audition by dramatically reciting the French national anthem, very much like, say, Sally Field winning the part of Lady Macbeth with a fiery four-stanza dramatic presentation of the Star Spangled Banner.

Our emphasis upon recitation as a primary goal raises serious questions regarding first-step suggestions like “Read the poem aloud.” As

opposed to preparation for a poetry “reading,” even an informal recitation-performance requires a first step far more on the order of “Examine the poem’s line-by-line structure.”

Comprehension first, then the memorization, then the almost endless rehearsals for a spoken and nuanced public triumph — this is what *Poetry Out Loud* participants look forward to, along with the option of repeating that triumph on a smaller scale before subsequent audiences in the many years that lie ahead.

STRUCTURAL COMPREHENSION VERSUS ROTE MEMORY. The beauty of structural comprehension is that it opens the door to both self testing and large group multiple choice testing. Even after one silent reading of Frost’s “Stopping by Woods,” most of us can recall in sequence the words which close the first four lines, namely, KNOW, THOUGH, HERE, and (what else?) SNOW. With a little more study, we can also answer questions phrased solely in terms of relative location, e.g., “Please identify the word in your chosen poem which appears immediately before its second “line closer” word. If your chosen poem is “Stopping by Woods,” your answer would be VILLAGE. If your chosen poem is “Trees,” on the other hand, your answer would be A (from “as a tree”), both of which can be represented by a “first spelling vowel letter” multiple choice answer (a, e, i, o, or “none of these”).

Measurable levels of line-learning difficulty and machine-scored tests — these features open the door for the *Poetry Out Loud* vision to work its magic in many new settings as an encouraging first step toward public recitation — and personal confidence building.

Productivity. . . . From the perspective of society and its leaders, the social productivity of time spent in memorizing poems can best be summed up by invoking Daniel Bell’s term “psychological mobility,” which is to say that a functioning society needs citizens who collectively comprehend what is meant by a word when used in the context of a specific sentence.

Hence our use of figurative language (metaphor and metonymy) in tests of our common sense social awareness, e.g., “What does the expression *Two heads are better than one* mean to you personally?” Hence also our concern (frustration, too) regarding exactly how to explain what the “right” answer is to an older person being diagnosed for senile dementia.

Our most authoritative source of answers to such questions are the actual sentence/ phrase examples dictionaries use (e.g., Random House Unabridged) to illustrate specific definitions, as in the question, “In which of the following definitions of HEAD does the phrase *wise heads; crowned head* actually appear? — (a) “a person considered with reference to his or her mind, disposition, attributes, status, etc”. . . . (b) “the head considered as the center of the intellect, as of thought, memory, understanding, or emotional control; mind; brain”. . . . (c) “the matured part of an abscess, boil, etc. [answer: (a)]

BY WAY OF EMPHASIS. . . . Right now several hundred thousand older Americans are being professionally diagnosed on basis of casual questions like out our “two heads” example. Given the importance of figurative awareness as a mainstream social survival skill, both *Poetry Out Loud* as a developmental tool and dictionary-based questions as a measurement tool offer our senior citizens new hope in facing the cognitive hazards of aging.

Personal confidence. . . . The mega-increase in *Poetry Out Loud* participation owes a great deal to its six fold increase in poems to choose from, including, a strong emphasis upon poets who are still living and creating. As we've seen, this new emphasis upon more alternatives for personal-choice learning has clearly increased the number of participants. Even more important, though, it has transformed what was originally a win-lose competition into a personal-confidence builder far more analogous to a local biathlon (biking and running) than to winner-take-all competitions like the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

As opposed to survivalist nightmares like the Iron Man (swim + 112-mile bike + full length marathon), a biathlon is challenging enough to require preliminary training, but manageable enough for competitors of ANY AGE to finish and earn a “personal best” score in their age group, along with a substantial increase — almost a true “high” — in personal confidence.

Along the same lines, as those who've memorized poetry will agree, the lonely and demanding act of learning a 25-line by heart certainly invites comparison with completing a biathlon as a personal challenge. And why not, paralleling the Olympic biathlon (skiing and marksmanship), a new wave triathlon that caps biking and running with a recitation-accuracy challenge?

Indeed, I feel few of us would be surprised next year, thanks to *Poetry Out Loud*, our local 24 Hour Fitness Center were to post an announcement like the following.

Dear Member. . . . Welcome to our equipment and our trainers. If you want to lose weight, though, we strongly recommend that you (a) check the Poetry Out Loud web site (www.poetryoutloud.org), (b) choose 3 poems,

memorize them, and recite them to at least five people as a confidence builder, and (c) come back and start working with your trainer with a much higher chance (at least 300%) of success and personal satisfaction. . . . It's certainly true that Hard Work is the name of our weight loss game; but we've also learned that it's your own personal confidence that brings you here, and will help you achieve your goals. So why not start by stacking the deck in your own favor — energetically!

TO CONCLUDE. . . . Right now *Poetry Out Loud* serves high school students. As far as derivative programs go, I feel grades 6-8 are very practical targets, along with grades 4-5. For K-3, though, I vote for the poems covered by Maud Hill Arbuthnot's *Children and Books* and *Time for Poetry*, along with her views on how to make "verse choirs" work. Beyond that, more fancifully, I can imagine *Poetry Out Loud* spin offs for Alzheimer's-fearful senior citizens, special education students, and even prisoners — memorized poems are well documented as survival tools in solitary confinement, after all.

BY WAY OF A UNIFYING CONCEPT. . . . It's a privilege to express my indebtedness to experts in the new field of "metrology," (cf. the relabeling of "Weights and Measures" in states like California and Oregon as "Measurement Standards"). I believe, for instance, that professional metrologists will accept personal choice poetry memorization as having an "authoritative" standard (i.e., an "official" text) and a measurement system that is "calibrated" (i.e., identifies measurable levels of difficulty and achievement).

I also believe that our need for more elegance in American learning (call it efficiency, if you will,) argues strongly for spin offs based on *Poetry Out*

Loud. Like any good idea, it makes sense; even better, just like a lucky break, it works.

CH 5: Up Front and Personal — A Self-Confidence Builder for *Poetry Out Loud* Performers

To be human is to be a beginner, even if it's just hopping out of bed to begin a new day, ideally with energy and self-confidence. When it comes to meeting new challenges, though, most of us are far stronger in the energy department than in the self-confidence department. This is especially true with a program like *Poetry Out Loud*, which asks its active participants to dig in and produce a word-perfect memorization of three poems, followed later on by their public performance, not just a staggering classroom recitation.

What's here is meant to help you overcome your natural reluctance to take on a frightening challenge like this. My own longtime fear of public speaking began when I saw a fellow high school student walk out to the center of our auditorium's stage, smile at us, go blank, and then walk off — all this without speaking a word. Since then I've learned through experience how to make loud noises in public. But the fear has never really gone away.

More positively, as indicated by the following chapters, I feel your personal experience with *Poetry Out Loud* stands a very, very good chance of strengthening your self confidence in general, not just putting a couple of poems in your head, as in “We stroll along harmonizing a song, or I'm reciting a poem.”

The best parallel I can think of is how small children build up their own self confidence step by step as they conquer their fear and finally immerse

themselves in the shallows of a formidably large body of water, be it ocean or lake.

For both children and adults, the grim feature of self-confidence is that nobody, absolutely nobody, can create it for us. Cheers from the sidelines, brass bands and fancy speeches, helpful advice from a trusted friend or teacher, misguided coercion (is there any sight more saddening than a parent forcing a screaming child into the water?) — none of these work a tenth as well as the mysterious encouragement we somehow manage to produce by ourselves for ourselves.

The chapters that follow will strengthen your self confidence by strengthening your overall confidence in *Poetry Out Loud* as a program and as a national resource for personal best learning. As a resource the *Poetry Out Loud* web site offers students and teachers all the tools they need to participate formally in the three-level competition: local, state (via state arts councils), and national. But this open-access resource can also be used by learners outside the formal program, e.g., home schoolers, and personal best learners of all ages. Given *Poetry Out Loud's* current scope (over 300,000 participants) and status, it's likely that over 50,000 additional learners used its resources productively during 2009.

What's here, I must emphasize, is a speculative document, not an official one. But I feel its perspective will make sense to both program participants and personal best learners of all ages. By way of sharpening that perspective, here's how our *Poetry Out Loud* resources can work as self-confidence builders.

STANDARDS OF MEASUREMENT. . . . Unfamiliar though the term may be to some, authoritative "metrology" is essential in any civilized society, which

is to say that we can't trust our gas pump or meat markets unless we start out with public standards of measurement (cf. the National Institute of Standards and Technology). Since the *Poetry Out Loud* web site presents an authoritative text (spelling, etc.) for each selected poem, a learner's attempt to memorize and write out a specific poem can be matched against the standard version and scored for accuracy — line by line and word by word.

As for the words themselves, their pronunciation, spelling, meaning, and enunciation features (very important for poetry performer's, they can be accessed without charge online via the world-authoritative Random House unabridged dictionary of standard worldwide American pronunciation English at dictionary.com., or its downloadable electronic version at WordGenius.com.

A learner's artistic recitation-performance of a poem cannot of course be matched against an authoritative standard. But it's certainly worth noting that the judging done on the state and national level takes place in a public setting, not in a private office with faceless people making hasty decisions.

LITERARY STATUS. . . . The 400 poems presented by the *Poetry Out Loud* web site represent an authoritative list of performance targets to choose from. One source of that authority stems from the participation of the Poetry Foundation, the publisher of *Poetry*, which has been a recognized source of distinguished poetry for almost 100 years. Another source is represented by the collaborative-sponsor relationship between the Poetry Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, which represents the U.S. government and maintains a close relationship with our 50 states and their arts councils.

As it now stands, the list itself has evolved from a short, relatively traditional list in 2006 to an authoritative list of the best in modern Ameriphone poetry. From the perspective of self confidence, then, learners have good reason to feel their personal choices of poems will be well worth the time spent in mastering them and polishing them for public performance.

ACCESS TO LEARNING MATERIALS. . . . As previously indicated, the poems and a standard dictionary are both available without charge to anyone. So via web site are biographies of the poets, contest requirements, helpful suggestions for learners and teachers, and the web sites of participating state arts councils. These last are fascinating, especially the lists of winners and runner ups, along with their photographs and the titles of poems performed.

From the perspective of self confidence, the availability of these learning materials greatly decrease a participant's chances of failure. Writing-skills exams and sports competitions, for example, clearly reward natural talent and penalize those who lack it. In contrast, especially in its early stages, *Poetry Out Loud* is an "everyone's a winner" activity, since asks us only to invest our natural assets of time and concentration, in return for which it gives permanent in-the-head possession of a recognizably important work of literature which we personally respect and wish to possess.

True, the public performance feature will appear to reward the talented and handsome. But even here, a willingness on our part to go the extra mile, as the saying goes, will take us surprisingly far. As Thomas Edison famously put it, "Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration," a truism which today translates into "Concentration trumps

Talent seven days a week” (I’ve yet to encounter anyone who objects to this statement).

To return to our frightening waves illustration: Small individually chosen steps and persistence pay off for learners just as much as they do for small children. I feel we’re unusually fortunate in having *Poetry Out Loud* as a large-scale successful example of this principle at work.

MAINSTREAM MOBILITY. . . . Vince Lombardi and other coaches to the contrary, winning is far less important than personal growth, especially if it centers upon socially relevant experiences and socially relevant skills linked to those experiences. In this connection *Poetry Out Loud*’s basic scenario for participants — personal choice of memory targets, letter-perfect memorization, and publicly impressive performance — could very well serve as a basic success scenario for anyone who wants to improve his or her personal chances of long term success and satisfaction in American society.

When it comes to choosing memory targets, for example, the more than 600 poems listed offer a wide range of subjects, formats, and even backgrounds (ethnic, political, and even religious). When it comes to exploring the link between performers and their choices, our state arts council web sites, offer a rich source of information, often going back to previous years. My own somewhat sketchy survey indicates very little correlation between performer background and poem choice. So choices that help to put the choosers in the winner’s circle strike me as involving personal chemistry more than social identity, enough so to produce a lot of personal growth in making such choices — successfully or unsuccessfully.

The achievement of letter perfect memorization also involves a lot of personal “know thyself” chemistry. As students in elementary school most of us had a natural knack for memorizing a poem by repeating it line by line again and again until it stuck in our mind’s ear and stayed there a very long time (many octogenarian Americans can still recite poems they learned as small children).

By the time we reach high school, though, many of us begin to lose this primitive skill (like wiggling one’s ears), apart from those of us (about 5%) who have inherited an “Irish ear.” Hence the desirability of learning, say, a target’s line by line rhyming pattern as a basis for reconstructing the target as a whole.

Our final challenge, that of public performance, comes as close as any ambitious could wish in increasing our competitive social skills, most of which involve speaking effectively to strangers, not friends who know what we’re going to say before we say it. As might be expected, such speaking requires a mastery of public pronunciation as represented in a standard dictionary. But it also requires clearly audible enunciation (once called “platform speech”), effective gestures, and consciously controlled pausing — all of which justify the label “performance” for the state and national competitive events.

To put it emphatically, the primary source of energy in mainstream social interaction is standard worldwide American pronunciation English (SWAPE) itself. Like high school debating and dramatics, a poetry performance program develops not just communication skills but what might be called “communication dominance” skills that offer their possessor far more professional and geographical mobility than neighborhood slang and non-Anglophone dialects.

A RECONSTRUCTIVE LEARNING ACRONYM. . . .**S**tandard measurements, **L**iterary status, **A**ccess to materials, **M**ainstream mobility — as indicated by the boldfacing, the initials of these four key phrases form the acronym s.l.a.m. or SLAM, a word which itself is today recognized as a highly popular form of performance poetry. Practically considered, then, any reader who at this point stops turning these papers can use SLAM as a memory key to the four phrases it represents, each of which in turn cues a partial recollection of their accompanying content.

Let's grant here that this kind of acronymic composition is a rather cheap scribal trick that forces oversimplification of the content and is still favored by advertisers, con men, and unscrupulous politicians. On the plus side, though, it equips our minds to do what they do best, namely, to concentrate in the dark upon a structural design and its implications. Granted that our minds themselves are made up of cells and electrical movements, neurologists still have trouble explaining consciousness to us.

To be human, after all, is to be conscious. Nor is it an accident, I feel, that the word *poetry* goes back to Greek *poieîn* to "make." If creating great poetry represents our species at its best, recreating it in our own consciousness certainly represents each of us at our personal best — publicly and productively so.

SECTION TWO: FROM POETRY TO FICTION AND NONFICTION

Preliminaries. . . . Just as our new technology has shifted poetry back to its traditional role as a popular personal-choice recitation target, so our increased personal access to novels and nonfiction narratives (e.g. biographies) was bound to invite the development of new book-access routes for personal best readers. Just as *Poetry Out Loud* moved from 100 poems to 600, so reading programs can now offer their participants a much two or three hundred to choose from in the Kindle program, as opposed to the traditional 20 books held in a reserve reading room. Personal choice for energy, high tech for access and accountability — this combination is bound to reshape traditional reading patterns as much as *Poetry Out Loud* has reshaped poetry study patterns.

CH 6: From Big Read to Fast Fiction Forward — The Transitional Role of *Poetry Out Loud*

If nothing succeeds like success, it follows that nothing is more mystifying. Explanations of a success take shape after the fact, after all, and so do its imitations, including the risk that attempts to translate the success of *Poetry Out Loud* into a program that targets novels will fail — pompously and miserably. Certainly this caveat should color any reader's reaction to the speculations that follow.

Let's start with the assertion that an increase in choice (from 100 poems to over 600) accounts for *Poetry Out Loud's* growth from 40,000

participants to 300,000. A second factor was certainly online access to each target, along with the self-testing that memorization encourages. Third would be the multi-stage recognition that participants received for their recitations, not just the cash prizes.

Fourth (more conjectural at this point) is the productive impact of the program upon each participant's language skills: pronunciation, articulation, comprehension of sentence structure, and awareness of figurative language — all potentially testable in subsequent years.

Choice. . . . The Big Read web site presents an eclectic list of 30 books (Julia Alvarez to Tobias Wolff): some poetry, but mostly novels. By way of expanding the choices participants have (and respond to), this list could well be replaced by a list of over 300, each rankable (as with POL) via its number of pages (assuming 400 words per page).

Access. . . . Contemporary novels still under copyright should not be excluded, especially if they are available via libraries and the Kindle-Sony-Nook option. But a large-scale program serving over a million participants should take advantage of used-book and current online availability, usually indicated by the author's status in the Merriam Webster biographical dictionary, e.g., Mark Twain and Willa Cather on the Big Read list.

In the interest of increasing reading speed, passage-sequence tests are far superior and cheaper than "content-memory" tests. Certainly 500 words a minute is still a reasonable pace for reading novels these days.

Recognition. . . . The ladder of recognition should have many rungs. For *Poetry Out Loud* participants successful memorization is a powerful form of

recognition. But so is the subsequent opportunity to perform (not just recite) poems at the local, state, and national level. Along the same lines, a Fast Fiction Forward should supplement its page-sequence achievement tests with a series of “book review” performances in which participants at the local, state, and national level have the opportunity to present short book reviews that are suitably evaluated and rewarded.

One technique for insuring original reviews is to add a “Spinoza” requirement (based on Spinoza’s dictum that “what Peter tells us about John tells us much more about Peter himself than about John.” For the reviewer, a Spinoza-centered review include the direction, “Please write a short review of Book X that focuses upon how Author A (a writer with whose work you are familiar) would evaluate it, i.e., positively, negatively, mixed. SAMPLE OPENING: “After reading Jane Austen’s “Pride and Prejudice,” I believe that Mark Twain would have detested it. Here’s why.”

By way of classroom dynamics, I require my students to limit their Spinoza reviews to 400 words (one page), read them aloud to the class, and field a few questions (2 minutes worth). The public feature is still linked to traditional oral PhD exams, which in turn go back to medieval ordeals faced by both would be knights and scholars. Poem performance or courtroom cross examination — they still make for a grand show, don’t they?

Productivity. . . . The power to test is fundamentally the power to measure. Hence the desirability of authoritative low-cost tests measuring the impact of high volume fiction reading upon vocabulary size, headword-definition fluency, sentence-structure comprehension, and mainstream figurative-language comprehension (Roman Jakobson’s similarity-

contiguity framework). Although these tests have not as yet been adopted by *Poetry Out Loud*, they will be in its coming extensions (seniors, post-secondary students, etc.), enough so to urge inclusion of this dimension in any Fast Fiction Forward program.

TO CONCLUDE. . . . Though speculative, this case for a Fast Fiction Forward program (ideally administered by the National Endowment for the Arts) has substantial research support, starting with Jerome Bruner's experiment with high volume reading in one of his undergraduate seminars at Harvard (described in a New York Review of Books article). Subsequent classroom use of the concept, including passage-sequence testing, has taken place at California State University, Northridge and in classrooms of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

In addition, the implications and cost effectiveness of this breakthrough have been discussed in over ten articles published in Education News (EdNews.org) during the last five years. Given the impact of Kindle and Nook upon book access and vision-friendly reading, many new perspectives upon reading, especially novels, are bound to emerge in our schools and in the market place. As one of these new perspectives, Fast Fiction Forward deserves serious consideration by scholars, educational institutions, government agencies, and — most of all — individual readers.

CH 7: Reader Friendly Testing and the National Endowment for the Humanities

Has our National Endowment for the Arts planted a time bomb under America's educational establishment? Its recent report, "Reading at Risk" calls for a "nationwide renaissance of literary reading," and cites gobs of statistical evidence to support the personal-best impact of indiscriminate literary reading, including mysteries and romances, thrillers and science fiction, etc.). Nothing earthshaking on the surface, but the underlying NEA assertion seems to be that any inner-city youngster who has demonstrably read 100 personally chosen novels has a better chance of graduating from college than the average entering freshman at UC Berkeley — an appalling notion that clearly threatens the monopoly power of professional educators over examinations and degree credit.

There's nothing new about personal-choice testing. Our local gyms are packed with Americans working out alone (echoing Robert Putnam's "Bowling Alone") and measuring their personal-best achievement. Nor is there anything new about a one-size-fits-all test. Music professors have always given students position-sequence tests that work with a wide range of listening-experience challenges, much like asking a first grader, "Whom did Dorothy meet FIRST on the Yellow Brick Road — the Cowardly Lion, the Tin Woodman, or the Scarecrow?"

As far as books go, long and short, all that's called for in this kind of test is to choose an appropriate number of pages from the target and put them in a random sequence. Afterwards, sequence clues having been removed (page numbers, etc.), the test taker can be asked to put the pages back in

their correct sequence. Here's a short example using full pages selected from Beatrix Potter's "The Tale of Peter Rabbit," the pages of which are conveniently short, often containing no more than one sentence.

A PETER-RABBIT READER-FRIENDLY TEST. . . . Here are four full pages selected at random from our book-target and identified as rpg.1, rpg.2, rpg.3, and rpg.4.

Rpg.1: And rushed into the tool shed, and jumped into a can. It would have been a beautiful thing to hide in, if it had not had so much water in it. . . .

Rpg.2: First he ate some lettuces and some French beans; and then he ate some radishes. . . . Rpg.3: Mr. McGregor hung up the little jacket and the

shoes for a scare-crow to frighten the blackbirds. . . . Rpg.4: "Now run along, and don't get into mischief. I am going out."

ACTIVITY. . . . Please indicate your awareness of the actual Peter Rabbit sequence by designating which page in the following a-b-c question-groups actually appears FIRST in the published version of the book. The question groups are: Gp.1: pg.1, pg.2, pg.3. . . . Gp.2: pg.2, pg.3, pg.4. . . . Gp.3: pg.3, pg.4, pg.1. . . . Gp.4: pg.4, pg.1, pg.2. . . . NOTE: By way of offering you a full range of sequence-possibilities, Gp.3 contains a previously used item (pg.1), and Gp.4 contains two (pg.1 and pg.2). . . . Correct-sequence answers appear down below.

A position sequence test like this, especially with 350-word pages, is much more friendly to unsophisticated actual readers of the book, young and old, than to highly sophisticated nonreaders. It therefore encourages high

speed, high volume recreational reading, since all that's measured is whether each page has gotten a reasonable amount of attention, as opposed to intense study and analysis.

Any personal-best reader can therefore (many have) spend less than half an hour making up his or her book-based test in advance, put it away, read the book, and then use the test as a do-it-yourself challenge — just like stepping on the scales after a week or so of vigorous exercise.

Low-cost reader-friendly tests like this have been used with large-scale fiction programs in the Los Angeles Unified School District and with nonfiction on the university level (CSUN). There's no doubt, of course, that they encourage guessing and that their difficulty will vary with the strength of a target's overall narrative structure (short-story anthologies don't work at all well).

The page-cue booklets, usually ten full pages are admittedly cumbersome. But these weaknesses cancel themselves out in large scale reading programs for either individuals or groups. A hundred novels averaging 300 pages apiece (400 million words of personal-choice reading) translates into 400 study hours, which is roughly equivalent to 15 Carnegie units (a full semester) of college credit.

Books, pages, words, reading rates, study hours — this presumptive time-commitment can be monitored officially or unofficially, as we have seen, with book-based reader-friendly tests. Similarly, the presumptive educational impact of, say, an overall 70% achievement level can be tracked via established achievement tests: spelling achievement, vocabulary growth, general knowledge, and even writing skills. All this with very little input from teachers and other voices of authority — just like a

long term personal-best exercise program monitored by standardized tests covering weight, body fat, muscle tone, pulse rate, blood pressure, blood samples, etc..

Read, read! Test, test! (*lege, lege; aliquid haerebit*, as the saying goes). Our National Endowment for the Arts has clearly tapped into this country's personal-best "working out alone" movement as a major source of energy for both its renaissance in literary reading and its poetry memorization-performance competitions.

In so doing the NEA has placed an accountability bomb under the desks of many professional educators, especially those who are already nervous about testing and the potential link up (and why not?) between physical fitness and mental fitness as sister disciplines.

More than most government reports it's likely that the implications of "Reading at Risk" will stay on with us for some time — and reverberate. . . .
NOTE: The actual Peter Rabbit sequence is for our out-of-sequence pages is pg.4 (p. 13, "going out"), pg.2 (p.21, "lettuces"), pg.1 (p.37, "tool shed"), and pg.3 (p.53, "Mr. McGregor").

CH 8: Alzheimer's Achievement Coaching and Famous-Name Fluency

The purpose of this chapter can be summed up in one phrase: Imaginative Optimism! On the surface what's here simply calls attention to our growing national concern with Alzheimer's disease as a source of self employment for anyone who wants to set up shop as an Anti-Alzheimer's Achievement coach. But it's really an exercise in role playing for the reader.

This is to say that if the reader, unemployed or not, can actually imagine himself or herself setting up shop as an AA coach, then I'm sure this reading experience will be right here and now a personal-best confidence builder. And isn't that what we all will need more of in the Economic Recovery we're headed for?

Proper name slippage. . . . Call it pre-Alzheimer's or a "senior moment," going blank on proper names can have serious consequences for us, especially when someone in a white coat asks us a question like "Who's the President." Though not as serious as word blanking or concentration slippage ("what were we just talking about?"), proper-name slippage is a frightening symptom of cognitive deterioration, enough so that the reality orientation programs of our VA developed tests and activities to deal with it, e.g., requiring 80-year olds to read the daily newspaper every day — all the way through.

An aspiring anti-Alzheimer's achievement coach should avoid the Trivial Pursuit trap (crosswords, too) in testing proper-name fluency, especially with clients in their forties and fifties. Hence the desirability of focusing upon certifiably famous names like Washington and Lincoln and questions (who was born first: Washington or Lincoln?) whose answers are publicly and authoritatively available, e.g., an unabridged dictionary or an authoritative biographical dictionary like the Webster's New Biographical Dictionary (Merriam Webster, 1988) (WNBD).

Where unabridged dictionaries allocate the same amount of space to their proper-name targets, WNBD in effect indicates their level of fame by the

number of lines each gets: 88 for Napoleon, 37 for Washington, 21 for Lincoln, etc. Consequently, even though WNBD can be faulted for a European bias, it's still a far more objective and authoritative question source for ranking "famousness" than the personal judgments of professional current historians and educators.

Nonfiction narrative and position sequence testing. . . . The most efficient route to testable famous-name fluency can be summed up in one longish phrase, namely, "high speed reading (e.g., 600 words a minute) of nonfiction narrative books," especially biography, monitored by reader-friendly testing." Given the goal of fast skimming-style reading, not detail memorization, a reader-friendly test must restrict itself to basic turn-the-pages position-sequence recall, very much like asking a 4-year old who has seen the Wizard of Oz, "Whom did Dorothy meet FIRST on the Yellow Brick Road — the Cowardly Lion or the Scarecrow?"

The standard format for this kind of test (developed via two U.S. Dept. of Ed. grants) calls for presentation of ten random-sequence photocopied pages from a book that has been skim-read, followed by questions on the order of "Of pages a, b, and c, which actually occurs FIRST in their source?" For convenience, read-aloud paragraphs can be substituted for full pages. But on the whole a second encounter with a full page one has read before seems to be extraordinarily evocative — very much like seeing a short film clip from a movie one has previously seen.

Famous names and nonfiction indexes. . . . Our ability to identify and rank famous names via WNBD opens the door to using a nonfiction book's

index as a tool for ranking the potential “famous name” learning relevance of specific books. Since proper names are customarily indexed in nonfiction books, their proportion of “famous” is a good indication, even if we limit ourselves to those beginning with the letter C. Via this criterion, for example, Walter Isaacson’s “Einstein” (675 pp.) offers the reader ten famous C-names, including Calvin, Churchill, and Chopin. In contrast Bill Clinton’s “My Life” offers only Churchill as a C-letter NWBD name in its 979 pages.

With respect to the previously cited DOE studies, it should be emphasized here that ESL participants (2 sections of ESL remedial reading) who read and were tested on one nonfiction book a week outperformed college seniors (a children’s literature class) in famous-name tests. Simply put, following Jerome Bruner’s original experiment (3 books a week for Harvard students), any AA client can expect measurably satisfactory long term improvement in famous-name fluency from skim-reading plenty of appropriate nonfiction at a speed of between 400 and 600 words per minute.

Pick your free books (biographies, preferably) at your public library, read them fast, discuss them one on one with your coach, keep yourself honest by taking reader-friendly position sequence tests, and measure your progress by famous-name fluency tests — what potential client will resist a personal-best scenario like this, including its flavor of an Oxford University tutorial only ten minutes away from home?

Children’s nonfiction biography and history. . . . When it comes to picking library books to read the category of juvenile biography can be surprisingly productive. Even though they deal with adult figures (Washington, Lincoln, etc.), juveniles (their call numbers are prefixed with the letter J) are shorter, clearer, and often written by very skillful and distinguished authors. Even more important, public libraries NEVER throw them away. Any results-centered coach-client partnership should consider this alternative very carefully.

A POSITIVE CONCLUSION. . . . I’m certain that right now a respectable English or history major could set up shop as an Anti Alzheimer’s Achievement coach (no license required, by the way) and build up a respectable clientele in six months or less. For high school dropouts, on the other hand, my guess is that at least 150 hours of test-monitored nonfiction narrative reading would be needed (i.e. the equivalent fifty of 250-page books) — the equivalent of two 3-unit independent study courses on the community college level.

Predictions like these must of course be tested against reality, in which connection it’s worth noting that the Veterans Administration reality-orientation program still lingers on in the many hospitals (e.g., Kaiser, Woodland Hills) that display large signs in each room screaming the name of the day (“Today is. . .”) at each patient, along with its date and month, and sometimes the next official holiday.

As far as reality expectations go, my hope is that aspiring coaches who give what’s here a try will not be disappointed in themselves. Also (no guarantees, of course) that they will be able to help some of their fellow Americans resist what for many of us promises to be a downward slope

into confusion and depression — call it Alzheimer’s, senile dementia, or (more frightening still) “second childhood.”

As announced at the beginning, this is an short exercise in imaginative optimism — persuasively so, I trust.

SECTION THREE: NEW DIRECTIONS

Preliminaries. . . . This section attempts to extract a full service personal best learning program from the *Poetry Out Loud* achievement. Important though its live performance element is, it's the authoritative-model testing element that opens the Poetry Out Loud materials up to use in other programs in other countries, including other groups of poems in Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English. Going further, the use of an authoritative dictionary like Random House Unabridged equips us to bring vocabulary building, including high tech subject fields into our full service corral.

Other targets draw upon the sequence of language loss that characterizes Alzheimer's and other forms of senile dementia. The first of these is represented by going blank on proper names. We therefore use an authoritative biographical dictionary as our testing and name calibration source, along with nonfiction narrative reading (principally biographies) and reader-friendly testing as our source of personal best learning.

Overall what's in this section can be described as a "spaceman's tool kit." This is to say most of what's here has its foot on the ground, while at the same time recognizing that its usefulness is going to depend upon what kind of planet will be waiting — chronologically, at least — for us as we and our children step into, say, January 1, 2030.

CH 9 Where Will *Poetry Out Loud* Go Next? — Some Positive Predictions

Did anyone actually predict Susan Boyle’s sudden rise to fame? Or did any professional educator predict the scale of *Poetry Out Loud*’s success? — especially its jump from 40,000 participants nationwide to 300,000 in four years. Coming closer to home, since many of us, especially those concerned with K-8 students, may want to use the *Poetry Out Loud* approach on our own, let’s look at how this brilliant innovation works and how it might be put to use with different groups of learner-reciters.

Texts. . . . As befits its sponsorship by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, *Poetry Out Loud* (www.poetryoutloud.org) offers an immense range of choice to teachers and students, i.e., over 600 individual poems, including a separate sub-listing of over 200 manageable learning targets of no more than 25. So as far as spelling and format go, the list is internationally authoritative, far more so than, say, *Poems to Memorize*, which “modernizes” Shakespeare (b. 1564) but retains the quaint memorization-unfriendly spellings of his younger contemporary John Donne (b. 1572).

Practically considered, what *Poetry Out Loud* offers its participants is an easy-to-copy access list of established ready-to-memorize targets to choose from, along with biographical information on each poet. To use a Chaucerian phrase, it’s as close to *Goddess foyson* (plenty) as any learner would want — including overseas Ameriphones (over three billion now) that study and speak standard worldwide American pronunciation English (SWAPE).

Time. . . . Memorizing takes time. Hence the practicality of the *Poetry Out Loud* 25-line list for younger learners. Its popularity level is underscored by

the fact that 40 out of our “top fifty” poems (based on Grangers® data regarding anthology status) meet this 25-line requirement, and are also in public domain. For learners, since poems vary in their number of lines, line measurements also work well for time-on-task estimates, i.e., ten minutes per line as a basic memorization figure.

It’s true that this ten-minute estimate gives participants a daunting basis for respecting what lies ahead, e.g., 140 minutes to get preliminary mastery of a 14-line sonnet which in performance as a “moment’s monument” will require only 60 seconds. But the estimate also opens the tortoise-friendly door for less verbally agile students to compete successfully by using their most productive resource — extra learning time.

Tests. . . . *Poetry Out Loud*’s ultimate test is the frightening ordeal of up front public performance, which goes far beyond accurate recollection, spoken or written, to embrace the arts of the orator and the actor. Winston Churchill and Ronald Reagan were eloquent performers of poetry, for example, and so was the great French actress, Sarah Bernhardt, who won her first important audition by dramatically reciting the French national anthem. In an actual program, though, the memorization element is a confidence builder, and so is the gentle progress from classroom interaction to higher level competition.

Our emphasis upon recitation as a primary goal raises serious questions regarding first-step suggestions like “Read the poem aloud.” As opposed to preparation for a poetry “reading,” even an informal recitation-performance requires a first step far more on the order of “Examine the poem’s line-by-line structure.” Comprehension first, then the memorization,

and only then the almost endless rehearsals for a spoken and nuanced public triumph —

especially in the sense of a major personal challenge met and mastered.

The beauty of structural comprehension is that it opens the door to both self testing and large group multiple choice testing. Even after one silent reading of Frost’s “Stopping by Woods,” most of us can recall in sequence the words which close the first four lines, namely, KNOW, THOUGH, HERE, and (what else?) SNOW. With a little more study, we can also answer questions phrased solely in terms of relative location, e.g., *Please identify the word in your chosen poem which appears immediately before its second “line closer” word.* If your chosen poem is “Stopping by Woods,” your answer would be VILLAGE.

If your chosen poem is “Trees,” on the other hand, your answer would be A (from “as a tree”). Both of these single-letter answers, incidentally can be represented by machine-scored multiple choice alternatives, e.g., a, e, i, o, or “none of these.” Measurable levels of line-learning difficulty and machine-scored tests — these features will open the door for the *Poetry Out Loud* vision to work its magic in many new settings as an encouraging first step toward public recitation. Personal best confidence building, too.

Productivity. . . . From the perspective of society and its leaders, the social productivity of time spent in memorizing poems can best be summed up by invoking Daniel Bell’s term “psychological mobility,” which is to say that a functioning society needs citizens who collectively comprehend what is meant by words when used in the context of specific sentences, not just a vocabulary test.

Hence the need for all of us to understand figurative language (metaphor and metonymy), especially when common sense social awareness is officially tested by questions like “What does the expression *Two heads are better than one* mean to you? Hence also our concern (frustration, too) regarding exactly how to explain what the “right” answer is for questions like these, especially for an older person being diagnosed for senile dementia.

Our most authoritative source of answers to such questions are the actual sentence-phrase examples dictionaries use (e.g., Random House Unabridged) to illustrate specific definitions, as in the question, “In which of the following dictionary definitions of HEAD does the phrase *wise heads; crowned head* actually appear? — (a) “a person considered with reference to his or her mind, disposition, attributes, status, etc”. . . . (b) “the head considered as the center of the intellect, as of thought, memory, understanding, or emotional control; mind; brain”. . . . (c) “the matured part of an abscess, boil, etc. [dictionary-based answer: (a)]

Right now, as many Americans know from direct experience, over a million of us encounter casually chosen diagnostic questions like our “two heads” example. Consequently, given the importance of figurative awareness as a mainstream social survival skill, we can expect future versions of *Poetry Out Loud* to include senior citizens as participants seeking new challenges and new hope in facing the cognitive hazards of aging — especially in the absence of authoritative professional alternatives.

Personal confidence. . . . The mega-increase in *Poetry Out Loud* participation owes a great deal to its sixfold increase in poems to choose from, including, a strong emphasis upon poets who are still living and

creating. As we've seen, this new emphasis upon more alternatives for personal-choice learning has clearly increased the number of participants. Even more important, though, it has transformed what was originally a win-lose competition into a personal-best confidence builder. Emotionally at least, this kind of poetry challenge is far more analogous to a local biathlon (biking and running) than to winner-take-all competitions like the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Given American education's emphasis upon competition, sometimes with a stacked deck, I feel we can expect to see many derivative versions of *Poetry Out Loud* in the next few years. Grades one through eight is the most logical locale, of course. But many of us, I'm sure, can imagine poetry recitation spinoffs for Alzheimer's-fearful senior citizens, and special education students, along with "mentathlons" that require a short, closing recitation requirement for each biathlon competitor. Call it *Poetry Out Loud Redux* or "Personal Best Cognitive Empowerment" — I believe many Americans will respect and support this new perspective and its challenges.

TO CONCLUDE. . . . From a practical perspective (that's what Americans want most, don't they?) I want to express my indebtedness to the new field of "metrology," (cf. the relabeling of "Weights and Measures" in states like California and Oregon as "Measurement Standards"). Looking forward, I have high hopes that professional metrologists will respect innovative programs based on *Poetry Out Loud* as having both an "authoritative" standard (i.e., an "official" text) and a measurement system that is "calibrated" (i.e., identifies different levels of difficulty and achievement).

Though not explicitly mathematical, the arts of poetry are far more quantitative than those of [prose. cf.](#) Pope’s “I lisped in numbers for the numbers came.” Even W. Edwards Deming, who worked out a more singable version of the Star Spangled Banner, and his TQM followers would probably approve the direction in which our *Poetry Out Loud* vision may take us.

Appendix: Poetry and Personal Confidence By way of pursuing the personal confidence theme more vigorously, I’m appending an announcement that some of our local health clubs may well be running a couple of years from now.

Dear Member. . . . Welcome to our equipment and our trainers. If you want to lose weight, though, we strongly recommend that you (a) check out the Poetry Out Loud web site (www.poetryoutloud.org), (b) choose 3 poems, memorize them, and then recite them to at least five people as a confidence builder, and (c) come back and start work with a much higher chance (at least 300%) of success and personal satisfaction. . . . Though Hard Work is the name of our weight loss game, it’s your own personal confidence that brings you here, and will help you to achieve your goals — energetically and productively!

CH 10: High Speed Nonfiction Reading and Famous-Name Literacy

The reason for including this very long chapter can be summed up in one short sentence: IT WORKS! This is to say that thanks to support from the Fund for the Improvement for Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) I was able to test Jerome Bruner's high speed reading hypothesis with 60 ESL remedial reading students, using reader-friendly tests to make sure they had actually each read their 15-book nonfiction sequences, followed by dictionary-based "famous name literacy" tests to ascertain the improvement in their general knowledge as compared with that of college seniors and graduate students.

As might be expected by common-sense philosophers, the results confirmed my belief that anyone — repeat, anyone — who simply turns each page in 15 worthwhile nonfiction books (Peter Drucker, Orville Schell, etc.) is going to meet a lot of famous names and remember a lot of them (checking a nonfiction book's name index under C is a good sample).

Cultural Literacy, bless its heart, still has a place in the American consciousness (2,680,000 internet hits as of 4/20/06). Like many splendid ideas, though, it still hasn't made much of a dent upon day-to-day educational practice. Hence the desirability of salvaging E.D. Hirsch's work by focusing upon proper names and using them as a tool for encouraging nonfiction reading — especially in connection with home schooling and personal-best learning in the noble tradition of Franklin, Lincoln, and other great American auto-didacts.

Proper-name literacy. . . . The philosopher Richard Rorty has correctly nailed us down as a “nation of name droppers.” Whether it be Jeopardy, Trivial Pursuit, PhD exams, pre-Alzheimer’s testing, or casual conversation, our knowledge (and forgetfulness) of who’s who is like a big neon sign telling our neighbors where we’re coming from how seriously they should take what we have to say. (I know a woman, for instance, who stopped seeing her psychiatrist because he didn’t know who Dwight MacDonald was).

To reiterate: E.D. Hirsch’s onomastic choices, though plausible, are unranked and based upon personal whimsy. The personal-whimsy element should therefore be dropped in favor of a practically available and reasonably authoritative source, namely, Webster’s New Biographical Dictionary (Merriam Webster, 1988). If we limit ourselves to entries that get at least 13 lines of coverage, we end up with a ranked list of 666 names (Appendix One) that tells us not only who’s truly who but also who’s more important than whom, e.g., Napoleon (83 lines) as opposed to Carl Zuckermayer (13 lines).

Proper names and nonfiction reading. . . . Hirsch’s most compelling insight is his assertion that effective reading (including both speed and comprehension) requires an adequate cultural literacy vocabulary. His major weakness, though, lies in his suggestion that this vocabulary, including proper names, can be acquired through direct study, e.g., “As a step toward improving your reading skill, please memorize the accompanying 666-name list and be prepared to identify their dates of birth, nationality, and principal occupation.”

We can salvage Hirsch’s insight by turning his equation around. That is, we can use our 666-name list as a criterion for choosing “literacy-friendly” nonfiction books to read. As indicated in Appendix Two, the proportion of names from our list in the index to a nonfiction book is often surprisingly high, especially in Pulitzer prizewinners. This means we can create a “virtuous circle” for ourselves by first reading “literacy-friendly” nonfiction, which will improve our proper-name literacy, along with our reading skills and even our writing skills — as demonstrated by Steven Krashen’s voluminous research.

Nonfiction reading and the importance of testing. . . . Like any respectable physical-fitness program, a nonfiction program requires an honest measurement system. By way of illustration, here’s a relevant statement by J.J. Cannell, M.D. in “Lake Woebegon: 20 Years Later,” < <http://nonpartisaneducation.org/Review/Essays/v2n1.htm> >

The following week, Clinton encountered a front-page story in the states’ largest newspaper about my charges of widespread cheating in Arkansas.²⁰ Clinton then called me and spent thirty minutes asking me questions about things he could do to stop the cheating. I told him the keys to preserving the validity of the test is changing questions every year, having a large bank of questions, maintaining a broad curriculum, testing infrequently, and not focusing on test preparation. [boldfacing added]

Another newspaper quoted Clinton’s response: “When he(Cannell) told me that, I said ‘Gosh’ we’ll look into that. It may

cost a few more thousand dollars but it's worth it if it preserves the integrity of the test."²¹ A few weeks later, Arkansas announced plans for improvements in test security.²² In 1996, then President Clinton went on to recommend a national achievement test with strict security - a proposal refused by the Republican Congress."

COMMENT. . . . For our purposes Cannell's key requirement is clearly (3) having a large bank of questions. This permits (1) changing questions every year, and (2) maintaining a broad curriculum. It also permits, and even invites, (4) testing infrequently and (5) not focusing on test preparation. Along these lines, a 100-book nonfiction reading list would permit low-cost reader-friendly multiple-choice questions at a very, very low cost, thereby permitting a wide range of personal choice and discouraging single-test coaching.

Cannell's requirements are thriftily met in Appendix Two: Nonfiction Proper Names and Do-It-Yourself Testing. Since nonfiction books have indexes, and since indexes include proper names and page citations for those names, we can legitimately use this proper-name feature as the basis for low-cost multiple choice reading-compliance tests that readers can construct on their own — just like stepping on the scales now and then to keep our own exercise program honest.

TO CONCLUDE. . . . The increasing career importance of "high stakes" external testing has breathed new life into Hirsch's notion of Cultural Literacy and Cannell's demand for a "broad curriculum." Right now the

degrees awarded by our “commodity education” system are far less trustworthy than the results of many honest, externally monitored tests.

This development has particular force in a public-record climate where the California Bar Exam results for July 2005 show correspondence-school (Concord) candidates (40 of them) with a far HIGHER first-time pass rate (50%) than many high-priced university law schools (e.g., UCLA and UC Berkeley).

What Hirsch and Cannell have achieved is to remind us is that LEARNING is produced by individual learners who read (and memorize) on their own, NOT necessarily by dedicated teachers and big-ticket management teams. And they are both absolutely right — as far as they go.

Unfortunately, as C.P. Snow pointed out some years back, good ideas need equally good measurement tools to validate them: a Michelson-Morley test for Einstein, a Leeuwenhoek for Galileo. I’m willing to grant that the test construction techniques set forth here are far from being the last work in cultural-literacy research (why not “civilizational literacy,” by the way?) or book-based reading-achievement testing. But they’re at least out in the open like Emerson’s mousetrap: ready to be stepped on, and improved.

To come right out with it, the educational debate in this country is up to its neck in New Ideas. What we really need are some good tests — cheap, replicable, understandable, and honest

APPENDIX ONE. . . . Famous Names and Do-It-Yourself Testing

Any test question thrown at us is itself always worth questioning. Some celebrity names in crossword puzzles disappear rather quickly; others stay on and even find their way into the dictionary. Still others are clearly more familiar than others, as indicated by how well the family as a whole does on specific Jeopardy questions.

Unfortunately, since those who devise tests are invariably very reluctant to describe their premises and procedures, test takers rarely get their questions answered beyond the implicit reassurance of “Trust us — We’re professionals!”

The best way to understand how test makers work (or should work) is to devise one on our own. As far as celebrity names go, our best bet is to let someone else choose them for us, namely, an authoritative biographical dictionary, in which case we can rank them in terms of how many lines appear in their entries. Other ranking criteria could include (a) the number of citations in a data base like Info-Trac, (b) the number of name-as-subject hits in a library catalog, or even (c) the number of hits on an internet check.

Once we have a ranked list of names, our next challenge is to construct test questions that also have clearly verifiable correct-incorrect answers, such as “Who was born first — A, B, or C?” or (more difficult) “Who died first?” or “Who lived longest?” Since dictionaries also list nationality and profession, another practical question is “What nationality is listed in dictionary X for Name A?” (note how “listed” will produce a clearly verifiable correct-incorrect answer. Still another is “What profession is listed FIRST in dictionary X for Name A? Of the alternatives here, “general” turns up most frequently, along with “author.”

Practically considered, we can give our test a professional appearance if we translate it into an abc (or abcde) multiple-choice format. One way to do this is to list our alternatives on a separate sheet and identify them simply as N1, N2, N3. . . . N100, etc. With this done, we can then phrase each question in general times and score with a simple abcde key, as in the following:

Q-Type 1. . . . Please indicate which of the following (the full names appear on an accompanying list) was born FIRST. Resolve any ties alphabetically. Your alternatives are (a) N1, (b) N2, and (c) N3.

Q-Type 2. . . . Please indicate, if any, is identified FIRST as a “general.” Resolve any ties alphabetically. Your alternatives are (a) N1, (b) N2, (c) N3, (d) N4, (e) none of these.

Professional categories. . . . The prompt “general” can be replaced with a wide range of alternatives. The biographical names section at the end of Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (eleventh editions) lists the following professions first under C: Cabeza de Vaca to Cambaceres: explorer, novelist, navigator, navigator, explorer, founder (of X), poet, statesman, composer, adventurer, novelist, novelist, sculptor, president (of X), dramatist, author, politician, emperor, prime minister, author, soprano, general, sculptor, philosopher, orator, proprietor (of X), theologian, chemist, jurist. As this list stands, incidentally, it’s almost like a crossword-puzzle list, e.g., “a soprano beginning with CAL-, or “an explorer beginning with CAB-.

Regrouping. . . . If desired, these could be grouped under four main headings: (a) warfare and politics, (b) science and technology, (c) literature and the arts, (d) philosophy and religion. . . . This step, however, would introduce a personal-judgment factor, as opposed to the explicitly verifiable citation of dictionary evidence.

Who's Truly Who — A Ranked List of 666 Most Verifiably Famous Names

This ranked list of famous names based upon the number of lines allocated to each in Webster's New Biographical Dictionary, Merriam Webster, 1988 (WNBD). . . . Rank appears first, followed by number of entries, followed by name and other information (as presented in NEBD).

NOTE. . . . For convenience the names appear in groups of ten, the first two of which separate rank and number of entries by slashes. For subsequent economy, the slashes are dropped beginning with the third group. The Preface to WNBD describes it as "wholly revised and reedited," including a "greatly increased" coverage of the "non-English part of the world," while at the same time retaining a relatively "fuller and more detailed" treatment of American, Canadian, and British subjects.

Since living persons are excluded, the WNBD will probably strike some Americans as overly emphasizing Dead White British Male Parliamentarians and Politicians. But as matters stand today, the NEBD as of 2006 is clearly our most accessible and authoritative tool to use in strengthening and testing — onomastically, as it were — the civilizational literacy of Americans, young and old, in 2006.

In our presentation, the first numeral indicates the name's rank, the second numeral indicates the number of lines in its entry. Additional descriptive words (titles, etc.) that appear in NMW have been retained.

- 1 /88 Napoleon I
- 2 /50 Cromwell, Oliver
- 3 /49 Michelangelo
- 4 /44 Charles II, King of England
- 5 /43 Washington, George
- 6 /37 Edward III, King of England
- 7 /37 Hitler, Adolf
- 8 /36 Franklin, Benjamin
- 9 /36 Milton, John
- 10 /36 Scott, Sir Walter
- 11 /35 Charles I, King of England
- 12 /34 Augustus, Gaius
- 13 /34 Louis XIV, King of France
- 14 /33 Crammer, Thomas
- 15 /33 Hyde, Edward, 1st Earl of Clarendon
- 16 /33 More, Sir Thomas, Saint
- 17 /33 Tennyson, Alfred, Lord Tennyson
- 18 /33 Wilson, Woodrow
- 19 /32 Columbus, Christopher
- 20 /32 Drake, Sir Francis

- 21 /32 Edward IV, King of England
- 22 /32 Pitt, William, the Younger

- 23 /31 Churchill, Sir Winston
- 24 /31 Edward I, King of England
- 25 /31 Elisabeth I, Queen of England
- 26 /31 Penn, William
- 27 /30 Churchill, John, 1st Duke of Marlborough
- 28 /30 Defoe, Daniel, MOLL FLANDERS
- 29 /30 Lenin, Vladimir
- 30 /30 Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus
- 31 /30 Swift, Jonathan, GULLIVER'S TRAVELS
- 32 /29 Bismarck, Otto von
- 33 /29 Nelson, Horatio
- 34 /29 Sun Yat-Sen
- 35 /29 William I, King of England, the Conqueror
- 36 /28 Caesar, Julius
- 37 /28 Henry VIII, King of England
- 38 /28 Raleigh, Sir Walter
- 39 /28 Shakespeare, William
- 40 /27 Balzac, Honore de, PERE GORIOT
- 41 /27 Dryden, John
- 42 /27 Napoleon III
- 43 /27 Newman, John Henry
- 44 /27 Prokofiev, Sergey
- 45 /27 Roosevelt, Theodore
- 46 /27 Wagner, Richard
- 47 /27 Wesley, John
- 48 /27 Wordsworth, William
- 49 /26 Byron, George Gordon, Lord Byron

- 50 /26 Chaucer, Geoffrey
- 51 /26 Dante Alighieri
- 52 /26 Darwin, Charles
- 53 /26 Fredrick II, King of Prussia, the Great
- 54 /26 Hugo, Victor, LES MISERABLES
- 55 /26 Mendelssohn, Felix
- 56 /26 Morris, William
- 57 /26 Muhammad
- 58 /26 Mussolini, Benito
- 59 /26 Woolsey, Thomas
- 60 /25 Browning, Robert
- 61 /25 Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor
- 62 /25 Cooper, Anthony Ashley, 1st Earl of Shaftsbury
- 63 /25 Emerson, Ralph Waldo
- 64 /25 Freud, Sigmund
- 65 /25 Galilei, Galileo
- 66 /25 Jesus
- 67 /25 Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots
- 68 /25 Mill, John Stuart
- 69 /24 Bacon, Francis
- 70 /24 Beethoven, Ludwig
- 71 /24 Bolivar, Simon
- 72 /24 Burke, Edmund
- 73 /24 Clemens, Samuel, Mark Twain, HUCKLEBERRY FINN
- 74 /24 D'Annunzio, Gabrielle
- 75 /24 Dickens, Charles, DAVID COPPERFIELD
- 76 /24 Gandhi Mohandas Mahatma

- 77 /24 Grant, Ulysses S.
- 78 /24 Johnson, Samuel
- 79 /24 Leonardo da Vinci
- 80 /24 Liszt, Franz
- 81 /24 Massine, Leonid
- 82 /24 Monck, George
- 83 /24 Montfort, Simon de
- 84 /24 Peel, Sir Robert
- 85 /24 Pilduski, Josef
- 86 /24 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques
- 87 /24 Ruskin, John
- 88 /24 Schilling, Johann
- 89 /24 Shaw, George Bernard
- 90 /24 Sheridan, Philip Henry
- 91 /24 Stanley, Sir Henry Morton
- 92 /24 Wayne, Anthony, Mad Anthony
- 93 /24 Wellesley, Arthur, 1st Duke of Wellington
- 94 /23 Coke, Sir Edward
- 95 /23 Fremont, John Charles
- 96 /23 Irving, Washington
- 97 /23 Jefferson, Thomas
- 98 /23 Picasso, Pablo
- 99 /23 Poe, Edgar Allan
- 100 /23 Rembrandt van Rijn
- 101 /23 Victoria Queen of England
- 102 /23 Wells, Herbert George, THE TIME MACHINE
- 103 /22 Chamberlain, Neville

- 104 /22 Chang Kai-Shek
- 105 /22 Howells, William Dean, THE RISE OF SILAS LAPHAM
- 106 /22 James I, King of England
- 107 /22 Livingstone, David
- 108 /22 Mao Tse-Tung, Mao Ze-Dong
- 109 /22 Nehru, Motilal
- 110 /22 Parnell, Charles
- 111 /22 Pretorius, Andrew
- 112 /22 Roosevelt, Franklin
- 113 /22 Sidney, Sir Philip
- 114 /22 Stravinsky, Igor
- 115 /22 Turner, Joseph
- 116 /22 Vega, Lope, de
- 117 /22 Wycliffe, John
- 118 /21 Antonius, Marcus, Mark Antony
- 119 /21 Chamberlain, Joseph
- 120 /21 Cobbett, William
- 121 /21 Edwards, Jonathan
- 122 /21 Hannibal
- 123 /21 Henry IV, King of France
- 124 /21 Ibsen, Henrik
- 125 /21 Irving, Sir Henry
- 126 /21 James, Henry, THE AMBASSADORS
- 127 /21 Laplace, Pierre-Simon
- 128 /21 Lincoln, Abraham
- 129 /21 Meredith, George, THE ORDEAL OF RICHARD FEVEREL
- 130 /21 More, Hannah

131 /21 Pym, John
132 /21 Shelley, Percy Bysshe
133 /21 Stalin, Joseph
134 /21 Stevenson, Robert Louis
135 /20 Addison, Joseph
136 /20 Attaturk, Kemal
137 /20 Cervantes, Miguel de
138 /20 Charlemagne, Charles the Great
139 /20 Cicero, Marcus Tullius
140 /20 Diderot, Denis
141 /20 Disraeli, Benjamin
142 /20 Edward VII, King of England
143 /20 Goethe, Johann
144 /20 Lully, Jean-Baptiste
145 /20 Meternich, Klemens
146 /20 Owen, Robert
147 /20 Peshkov, Aleksey, Maxim Gorky
148 /20 Pitt, William the Elder
149 /20 Rhodes, Cecil
150 /20 Rupert, Prince
151 /20 Russell, John, 1st Earl
152 /20 Venizelos, Eleutherios
153 /20 Walpole, Sir Richard
154 /19 Antiochus III, the Great
155 /19 Bach, J.S.
156 /19 Benso, Camillo, Count Cavour
157 /19 Coverdale, Miles

- 158 /19 Cowper, William
159 /19 Darius I, the Great
160 /19 Donne, John
161 /19 Gaulle, Charles de
162 /19 Groot, Hugh de, Grotius
163 /19 Hammerstein, Oscar
164 /19 Humboldt, Alexander von
165 /19 Joan of Arc
166 /19 Kant, Immanuel
167 /19 Lafayette, Marie-Joseph
168 /19 Lessing, Gottfried
169 /19 Louis XV, King of France
170 /19 Matisse, Henri
171 /19 Plessis, Armand-Jean du, Cardinal Richelieu
172 /19 Pope, Alexander
173 /19 Priestly, Joseph
174 /19 Sheridan, Richard Brinsley
175 /19 Sullivan, SirArthur
176 /19 Voltaire, Francois-Marie Aroet, CANDIDE
177 /19 Whitman, Walt
178 /19 Wilkes, John
179 /19 Wilkinson, James
180 /19 William I, Stadtholder of the Netherlands, the Silent
181 /19 Zola, Emile, NANA
182 /18 Blucher, Gebhard
183 /18 Calvin, John
184 /18 Carlyle, Thomas

- 185 /18 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
- 186 /18 Cortes, Hernando
- 187 /18 Cromwell, Thomas
- 188 /18 Edward, Prince of Wales, the Black Prince
- 189 /18 Fox, Charles
- 190 /18 Handel, George
- 191 /18 James II, King of England
- 192 /18 Lomonsov, Mikhail
- 193 /18 Louis-Philippe, King of France
- 194 /18 Mehmed II, the Conqueror
- 195 /18 Middleton, Thomas
- 196 /18 Millais, Sir John
- 197 /18 Montague, Charles, 1st Earl of Halifax
- 198 /18 Montessori, Maria
- 199 /18 Murray, Gilbert
- 200 /18 Nansen, Fridtjof
- 201 /18 Paine, Thomas
- 202 /18 Plato
- 203 /18 Pole, Reginald
- 204 /18 Spencer, Herbert
- 205 /18 Thackeray, William, VANITY FAIR
- 206 /18 Webster, Noah
- 207 /18 Whistler, James McNeil
- 208 /18 Wilde, Oscar, THE PORTRAIT OF DORIAN GREY
- 209 /17 Aristotle
- 210 /17 Athanasius, Saint
- 211 /17 Belloc, Hilaire

- 212 /17 Bentham, Jeremy
- 213 /17 Boccaccio, Giovanni
- 214 /17 Brahms, Johannes
- 215 /17 Canning, George
- 216 /17 Carnegie, Andrew
- 217 /17 Clive, Robert
- 218 /17 Constantine I, the Great
- 219 /17 Cook, James, Captain Cook
- 220 /17 Davis, Jefferson
- 221 /17 Dickenson, John
- 222 /17 Diocletian, Gaius, Roman Emperor
- 223 /17 Edward, Anglo-Saxon king of England, the Confessor
- 224 /17 Eisenhower, Dwight
- 225 /17 Gutenberg, Johannes
- 226 /17 Henry II, King of England
- 227 /17 Jackson, Andrew
- 228 /17 Jung, Carl
- 229 /17 Lee, Robert Edward
- 230 /17 Linne, Carl von Linnaeus
- 231 /17 Louis XVI, King of France
- 232 /17 Margaret of Anjou
- 233 /17 Molotov, Vyachelav
- 234 /17 Philip II, King of France, Philip Augustus
- 235 /17 Philip II, King of Spain
- 236 /17 Philip IV, King of France, the Fair
- 237 /17 Pound, Ezra
- 238 /17 Prester, John

- 239 /17 Schonberg, Arnold
- 240 /17 Sherman, William Tecumseh
- 241 /17 Stephen, King of England
- 242 /17 Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Ilich
- 243 /17 Thomson, William, 1st Baron Kelvin
- 244 /17 Welles, Orson
- 245 /17 William III, Stadtholder of the Netherlands and King of England
- 246 /17 Wright, Frank Lloyd
- 247 /17 Wright, Wilbur and Orville
- 248 /16 Abelard
- 249 /16 Albertus Magnus
- 250 /16 Alexander II, Czar of Russia
- 251 /16 Alexander III, the Great
- 252 /16 Aquinas, Saint Thomas
- 253 /16 Bell, Alexander Graham
- 254 /16 Bernini, Gian/ Giovanni
- 255 /16 Boyle, Robert
- 256 /16 Bulow, Bernhard von
- 257 /16 Catherine II, the Great
- 258 /16 Caxton, William
- 259 /16 Cobden, Richard
- 260 /16 Cocteau, Jean
- 261 /16 Conrad, JosephLORD JIM
- 262 /16 Cornwallis, Charles, 1st Marquis
- 263 /16 Curzon, George, 1st Baron
- 264 /16 Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV
- 265 /16 Douglass, Fredrick

266 /16 Dudley, Robert, 1st Earl of Leicester
267 /16 Duns Scotus
268 /16 Eden, Sir Anthony
269 /16 Edison, Thomas Alva
270 /16 Edward VIII, King of England
271 /16 Einstein, Albert
272 /16 Farragut, David
273 /16 Fletcher, John
274 /16 George III, King of England
275 /16 Gershwin, George
276 /16 Gluck, Christoph
277 /16 Gregory VII, Saint
278 /16 Gustavus II, King of Sweden
279 /16 Hamilton, Alexander
280 /16 Hauptmann, Gerhart
281 /16 Henry VI, King of England
282 /16 Hung Hsiu-Chuan, Chinese religious leader
283 /16 Huxley, Thomas Henry
284 /16 Jeanneret, Charles le Corbusier
285 /16 Kaganovich, Lazar
286 /16 Kipling, Rudolf, KIM
287 /16 Laban, Rudolf
288 /16 Marie Antoinette
289 /16 Melanchthon, Philipp
290 /16 Mommsen, Theodore
291 /16 Montmorency-Bouteville, Francois-Henri
292 /16 Moore, George

- 293 /16 Moore, Thomas
- 294 /16 Nero, Roman Emperor
- 295 /16 Neville, Richard, Earl of Warwick, the Kingmaker
- 296 /16 Pasteur, Louis
- 297 /16 Peary, Robert
- 298 /16 Peter I, Czar of Russia, the Great
- 299 /16 Petrarch, Francesco
- 300 /16 Selden, John
- 301 /16 Siddartha Gautama, the Buddha
- 302 /16 Smith, Joseph
- 303 /16 Southey, Thomas
- 304 /16 Strindberg, August
- 305 /16 Sullivan, John
- 306 /16 Vaughn Williams, Ralph
- 307 /16 Vecelli Tiziano, Titian
- 308 /16 Wallenstein, Albrecht
- 309 /16 Wieland, Christoph
- 310 /15 Akbar, the Great
- 311 /15 Alexander I, Czar of Russia
- 312 /15 Ambrose, Saint
- 313 /15 Attila, the Scourge of God
- 314 /15 Auden, Wystan Hugh
- 315 /15 Balfour, Arthur
- 316 /15 Brecht, Bertholt
- 317 /15 Briand, Aristide
- 318 /15 Britten, Benjamin
- 319 /15 Bryan, W illiam Jennings

- 320 /15 Calderon de la Barca, Pedro
- 321 /15 Canute, the Great
- 322 /15 Casaubon, Isaac
- 323 /15 Charles, Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold
- 324 /15 Charles VII, King of France
- 325 /15 Chekhov, Anton
- 326 /15 Chopin, Fredric
- 327 /15 Christian IX, King of Denmark
- 328 /15 Cleopatra VII, Queen of Egypt
- 329 /15 Cooper, James Fennimore
- 330 /15 Davenant, Sir William
- 331 /15 Diaz deVivar, Rodrigo, El Cid
- 332 /15 Douglas, Stephen, the Little Giant
- 333 /15 Eleanor, Queen of England and Aquitaine
- 334 /15 Eugene, Prince of Savoy
- 335 /15 Francis I, King of France
- 336 /15 Fredrick William, the Great Elector
- 337 /15 Freneau, Philip
- 338 /15 Galsworthy, John, THE MAN OF PROPERTY
- 339 /15 Garcia Lorca, Federico
- 340 /15 Gide, Andre, THE COUNTERFEITERS
- 341 /15 Giraldi Giambattista, Cinthio
- 342 /15 Gladstone, William Ewart
- 343 /15 Gordon, Charles, Chinese Gordon
- 344 /15 Gossec, Francois
- 345 /15 Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm
- 346 /15 Harun al Rashid

- 347 /15 Hastings, Warren
- 348 /15 Hayden, Franz
- 349 /15 Hearst, William Randolph
- 350 /15 Hemholtz, Hermann
- 351 /15 Henry, Patrick
- 352 /15 Henry III, King of England
- 353 /15 Hobbes, Thomas
- 354 /15 Holmes, Oliver Wendell, the Older
- 355 /15 Houston, Samuel
- 356 /15 Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester
- 357 /15 Ibn Saud
- 358 /15 John, King of England, Lackland
- 359 /15 Kandinsky, Wassily
- 360 /15 Kokoschka, Oskar
- 361 /15 Leibniz, Gottfried
- 362 /15 Louis XVIII, King of France
- 363 /15 MacCleish, Archibald
- 364 /15 Marlowe, Christopher
- 365 /15 Masefield, John
- 366 /15 Mazzini, Giuseppe
- 367 /15 Mies van der Rohe, Ludwig
- 368 /15 Mill, James
- 369 /15 Morris, Gouveneur
- 370 /15 Nietzsche, Fredric
- 371 /15 Ockham, William of Occam
- 372 /15 Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople
- 373 /15 Pius II, Pope, Aeneas Sylvius

- 374 /15 Porter, Cole
- 375 /15 Ptolemy I, Ptolemy Soter
- 376 /15 Pushkin, Aleksandr
- 377 /15 Rameau, Jean-Philippe
- 378 /15 Robespierre, Maximilien
- 379 /15 Rogers, Richard
- 380 /15 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel
- 381 /15 Sandburg, Carl
- 382 /15 Seneca, Lucius, the Younger
- 383 /15 Shostakovich, Dimitry
- 384 /15 Smollett, Tobias, RODRICK RANDOM
- 385 /15 Steele, Sir Richard
- 386 /15 Strauss, Richard
- 387 /15 Tallyrand, Perigord
- 388 /15 Theodosius the Great
- 389 /15 Thompson Benjamin, Count Rumford
- 390 /15 Trajan, Roman Emperor, Germanicus
- 391 /15 Trumbull, John, American painter
- 392 /15 Vanderbilt, Cornelius
- 393 /15 Wallace, Alfred
- 394 /15 Webb, Beatrice
- 395 /15 William I, Emperor of Germany
- 396 /15 William IV, King of England, the Sailor King
- 397 /15 Williams, Roger
- 398 /14 Agassiz, Louis
- 399 /14 Alcott, Amos Bronson
- 400 /14 Ashurbanipal

- 401 /14 Berlioz, Hector
402 /14 Bjornson, Bjornstjerne
403 /14 Burns, Robert
404 /14 Cabot, John
405 /14 Calder, Alexander
406 /14 Cardano, Geronimo
407 /14 Chamberlain, Sir Austen
408 /14 Charles, Archduke of Austria
409 /14 Chateaubriand, Francois
410 /14 Chesterton, Gilbert Keith
411 /14 Cochrane, Thomas, Lord
412 /14 Danton, Georges
413 /14 Devereux, Robert, Earl of Essex
414 /14 Digby, Sir Kenelm
415 /14 Drayton, Michael
416 /14 du Pont de Nemours, Pierre
417 /14 Duffy, Sir Charles
418 /14 Eliot, Sir John
419 /14 Ferdinand I, Holy Roman Emperor
420 /14 Ferdinand II, King of Aragon
421 /14 Franco, Francisco
422 /14 Fulton, Robert
423 /14 Garibaldi, Guiseppe
424 /14 Gautier, Theophile
425 /14 Hawthorne, Nathaniel, THE SCARLET LETTER
426 /14 Henry IV, King of England
427 /14 Hogarth, William

428 /14 Hooke, Robert
429 /14 Hsuan-yeh, Chinese Emperor
430 /14 Hunter, John
431 /14 Hus, Jan
432 /14 Huygens, Christian
433 /14 Ibn al-Arabial Andalus
434 /14 Ibrahim Pasha
435 /14 Ignatius of Loyola, Saint
436 /14 Ivan IV, Czar of Russia, the Terrible
437 /14 Jacoba, Countess of Holland
438 /14 James III, King of Scotland
439 /14 Jaspers, Karl
440 /14 John of Austria, Don Juan
441 /14 Josephus Flavius
442 /14 Kemal, Mehmed
443 /14 Kepler, Johannes
444 /14 Kettering, Charles
445 /14 Kiesler, Fredrick
446 /14 Kleist, Heinrich von
447 /14 Klopstock, Freidrich
448 /14 Kotzebue, August
449 /14 Kung Chiu, Confucius
450 /14 Kuo Mojo
451 /14 Lagrange, Joseph-Louis
452 /14 Lamarck, Jean-Baptiste
453 /14 Lamb, Charles
454 /14 Lang, Andrew

455 /14 Llull, Ramon, Raymond Lully
456 /14 Mantegna, Andres
457 /14 Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor
458 /14 Maria Theresa
459 /14 Marin, Thomas
460 /14 Marston, John
461 /14 Marvell, Andrew
462 /14 Marx, Karl
463 /14 Massinger, Philip
464 /14 Mauriac, Francois
465 /14 Maurras, Charles
466 /14 Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico
467 /14 Mithradates VI, Eupator, the Great
468 /14 Moliere, Jean-Baptiste
469 /14 Montherlant, Henri-Marie
470 /14 Mordaunt, Charles
471 /14 Morgan, John Pierpont
472 /14 Morse, Samuel
473 /14 Muir, John
474 /14 Ney, Michel
475 /14 O'Connell, Daniel, the Liberator
476 /14 O'Donovan, Michael, Frank O'Conner
477 /14 Pascal, Blaise
478 /14 Pepys, Samuel
479 /14 Pessoa, Fernando
480 /14 Petrie, Sir Flinders
481 /14 Petty, Sir William

- 482 /14 Philip, Landgrave of Hesse, the Magnanimous
- 483 /14 Pirandello, Luigi
- 484 /14 Pitty-FitzMaurice, Henry
- 485 /14 Poincare, Raymond
- 486 /14 Porter, William Sidney, O Henry
- 487 /14 Quiller-Couch, Sir Arthur
- 488 /14 Rambert, Dame Marie
- 489 /14 Sadat, Anwar
- 490 /14 Seleucus I
- 491 /14 Solon
- 492 /14 St. John, Henry, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke
- 493 /14 Steuben, Baron Friedrich von
- 494 /14 Stevens, John
- 495 /14 Stewart, Lord James
- 496 /14 Stowe, Harriet BeecherUNCLE TOM'S CABIN
- 497 /14 Strauss, Johann, the Waltz King
- 498 /14 Swedenborg, Emanuel
- 499 /14 Theoderic, the Great
- 500 /14 Theotokopulos, Domenikos, El Greco
- 501 /14 Tiberius, 2nd Roman Emperor
- 502 /14 Tieck, Ludwig
- 503 /14 Tolstoy, Lev, Leo WAR AND PEACE
- 504 /14 Trotsky, Leon
- 505 /14 Velasquez, Diego
- 506 /14 Verdi, Giuseppe
- 507 /14 Walker, William, the filibuster
- 508 /14 Walpole, Horace, THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO

- 509 /14 Wheelock Eleaszar
- 510 /14 Whitefield George
- 511 /14 William II King of England, Rufus
- 512 /14 Wodehouse Sir Pelham Grenville THE INIMITABLE JEEVES
- 513 /14 Xavier, Saint Francis
- 514 /14 Zangwill, Israel THE CHILDREN OF THE GHETTO
- 515 /14 Zinoyiev, Grigory
- 516 /13 Abdul Hamid II
- 517 /13 Alexander I, Prince
- 518 /13 Alexander VI, Pope
- 519 /13 Alfred the Great
- 520 /13 Arnold, Benedict
- 521 /13 Augustine, Saint
- 522 /13 Baker, Sir Samuel
- 523 /13 Blake, William
- 524 /13 Brougham, Henry
- 525 /13 Bruno, Giordano
- 526 /13 Buchanan, George
- 527 /13 Carteret, Sir George
- 528 /13 Cecil, William
- 529 /13 Chambers, Sir Robert
- 530 /13 Charles XII, King of Sweden
- 531 /13 Charles Edward, the Young Pretender
- 532 /13 Chatterton, Thomas
- 533 /13 Cohan, George M.
- 534 /13 Coligny, Gaspard II, Admiral
- 535 /13 Conde, Louis II, the Great Conde

- 536 /13 Cruikshank, George
- 537 /13 Dalton, John
- 538 /13 Daly, Augustin
- 539 /13 Dampier, William
- 540 /13 Darrow, Clarence
- 541 /13 DavySir Humphry
- 542 /13 DawesCharles
- 543 /13 DekkerThomas
- 544 /13 Desmoulins Camille
- 545 /13 DeweyJohn
- 546 /13 DouglasGavin
- 547 /13 Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan
- 548 /13 Dumas, AlexanderDumas, Pere
- 549 /13 Eliot, Thomas Stearns
- 550 /13 Emin Pasha, Mehmed
- 551 /13 Erasmus, Desiderius
- 552 /13 Eyck, Hubert van
- 553 /13 Faraday, Michael
- 554 /13 Faulkner, WilliamAS I LAY DYING
- 555 /13 Francis of Meyronnes
- 556 /13 Fredrick II, Holy Roman Emperor
- 557 /13 Fredrick William III, King of Prussia
- 558 /13 Gamow, George
- 559 /13 Gascoigne, George
- 560 /13 Gates, Horatio
- 561 /13 Gaugin, Paul
- 562 /13 Giotto

- 563 /13 Granville-Barker, Harley
- 564 /13 Griffith, Arthur
- 565 /13 Hadrian, Roman Emperor
- 566 /13 Hearn, Lafcadio
- 567 /13 Hecht, Ben
- 568 /13 Hegel, Georg
- 569 /13 Henry, Prince of Portugal, the Navigator
- 570 /13 Henry VII, King of England
- 571 /13 Heraclius, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire
- 572 /13 Herder, Johannes
- 573 /13 Hindemith, Paul
- 574 /13 Hood, Thomas
- 575 /13 Howard, Thomas II, 3rd Duke of Norfolk
- 576 /13 Howard, Thomas III, 4th Duke of Norfolk
- 577 /13 Hung-Li, Chinese Emperor, Chien Lung
- 578 /13 Innocent III, Pope
- 579 /13 Ives, Charles
- 580 /13 John Maurice, Count of Nassau, the Brazilian
- 581 /13 John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy
- 582 /13 Jonson, Ben
- 583 /13 Knox, John
- 584 /13 Koch, Robert
- 585 /13 KomenskyJan, Comenius
- 586 /13 Langley, Samuel
- 587 /13 Lavoisier, Antoine-Laurent
- 588 /13 Lawrence, David Herbert WOMEN IN LOVE
- 589 /13 Lawrence, Thomas EdwardShaw

- 590 /13 Lee, Richard Henry
- 591 /13 Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor
- 592 /13 Leveson-GowerGranville, George
- 593 /13 Lewes, George Henry
- 594 /13 Lewis, WyndhamTHE APES OF GOD
- 595 /13 Locke, John
- 596 /13 Lowell, James Russell
- 597 /13 Lubbock, Sir John
- 598 /13 Lubitsch, Ernst
- 599 /13 Lucas van Leyden
- 600 /13 MacArthur, Douglas
- 601 /13 Madison, James
- 602 /13 Marot, Clement
- 603 /13 Marshall, John
- 604 /13 Martinozzi, Gyorgy
- 605 /13 Masaryk, Tomas
- 606 /13 Mason, George
- 607 /13 Massena, Andre
- 608 /13 Mather, Cotten
- 609 /13 Maurice of Saxony
- 610 /13 Mead, Margaret
- 611 /13 Mencken, Henry
- 612 /13 Minamoto, Yoritomo
- 613 /13 Moses ben Maimon, Maimonides
- 614 /13 Moutbatten, Louis, 1st Earl Mountbatten of Burma
- 615 /13 Mussorsky, Modest Petrovich
- 616 /13 Nabokov, Vladmir

617 /13 Nash, Thomas
618 /13 Necker, Jacques
619 /13 Noyes, John Humphrey
620 /13 Oates, Titus
621 /13 Offenbach, Jacques
622 /13 Patrick, Saint
623 /13 Perry, Matthew
624 /13 Pinero, Sir Arthur Wing
625 /13 Piozzi, Hester, Mrs. Thrale
626 /13 Pizarro, Francisco
627 /13 Prynne, William
628 /13 Pui,. last Emperor of China, Henry Pu Yi
629 /13 Pusey, Edward
630 /13 Radek, Karl
631 /13 Ramsay, James Andrew
632 /13 Raphael, Sanzio
633 /13 Ravel, Joseph-Maurice
634 /13 Ray, John
635 /13 Reynolds, Sir Joshua
636 /13 Richard III, King of England
637 /13 Root, Elihu
638 /13 Rosecrans, William
639 /13 Rossini, Gioacchino
640 /13 San Martin, Jose
641 /13 Satie, Erik
642 /13 Schlegel, Fredrich von
643 /13 Schurz, Carl

- 644 /13 Sennacherib
- 645 /13 Skelton, John
- 646 /13 Smith, John
- 647 /13 Soult, Nicholas
- 648 /13 Stanley, Edward George
- 649 /13 Suarez, Francisco
- 650 /13 Swinburne, Algernon
- 651 /13 Szilard, Leo
- 652 /13 Taft, William Howard
- 653 /13 Temple, Henry John
- 654 /13 Tesla, Nikola
- 655 /13 Tilden, Samuel
- 656 /13 Tokugawa Ieyasu
- 657 /13 Tyndall, John
- 658 /13 Victor Emmanuel II, King of Italy
- 659 /13 Webster, Daniel
- 660 /13 Wesley, Charles
- 661 /13 Williams, Tennessee
- 662 /13 Winthrop, John
- 663 /13 Wotton, Sir Henry
- 664 /13 Young, Brigham
- 665 /13 Yuan Shih-Kai
- 666 /13 Zuckermayer, Carl

APPENDIX TWO. . . . Nonfiction Proper Names and Index-Based Do-It-Yourself Testing

Fiction for fun and nonfiction for serious thought — the equation is turning many young Americans into compulsive note-scribblers and highlighters. It's also slowing their overall reading speed down, to the degree that very few high school students in California are able to meet their state's official requirement (on the books, at least) of a million words read independently each year over and beyond specific classroom assignments.

Fortunately, most nonfiction books are actually designed to be read almost as fast as fiction. A nonfiction book's table of contents, for example, gives us a snapshot of what lies ahead. Its index is even more valuable, especially the number of proper names that we can recognize.

Proper names and reading difficulty. . . . Some years back, for example, I unwisely tackled Anton Dvornik's "The Slavs in European History," whose index lists over a thousand very strange and unfamiliar Slavic names, the equivalent of two bearded strangers on each page. Apart from a humbling sense of my own ignorance, the hours spent reading this excellent study (a Christopher Award winner, incidentally) were far less productive than they might have been if my Slavic-names vocabulary had been more powerful.

As far as proper names go, familiarity breeds reading mastery, not contempt. This means that recognizing a lot of familiar proper names in the index to a nonfiction book signals its readability to most of us, if not its literary quality.

It also means, by way of encouraging faster reading, that a reader's memory can be jogged by asking him or her to identify which names

appear most frequently in a specific book. A nonfiction book's index, after all, lists the number of times each proper name appears in the text itself. If we've read Anthony Arthur's "Literary Feuds" (St. Martins), for example, the following test will measure how well we remember its basic content.

A Nonfiction Book-Based Proper Names Test. . . . Based on your reading of "Literary Feuds," by Anthony Arthur, please indicate your personal recollection of its content by identifying on an a/b basis which of the following pairs gets MORE attention in the text (this is verifiable via the number of page citations listed for each in the book's index)). . . .
Q1: Adams, Henry, OR Anderson, Sherwood. . . . Q2: Berlin, Isaiah, OR Birkerts, Sven Q3: Clinton, Hilary, OR Cowley, Malcolm. . . . Q4: Einstein, Albert, OR Emerson, Ralph Waldo Q5: Harte, Bret, OR Hawthorne, Nathaniel.

COMMENT. . . . This is a specific-book test, not a general knowledge test. Generally considered, the overall relative importance of each name is today signaled by its current number of Internet hits for each name. Such a check for 10/13/05 indicates substantial popular disparity between each pair: Adams (1,020,000) versus Anderson (122,000). . . . Berlin (40,000) versus Birkerts (3,950). . . . Clinton (802,000) versus Cowley (21,000). . . . Einstein (991,000) versus Emerson (154,000). . . . Harte (26,000) versus Hawthorne (121,000).

In contrast, the relative importance of each name in a specific book, as indicated by its number of page citations will often not correspond at all to its Internet status. Here are our pairs again, this time with their number of

page citations in the index to “Literary Feuds”: Adams (2), Anderson (9); Berlin (1), Birkerts (3); Clinton (1), Cowley (9); Einstein (1), Emerson (7); Harte (35), Hawthorne (2).

Test performance and reader-encouragement. . . . On the basis of this contrast between in-the-book importance and Internet importance, it is highly likely that readers who have actually read this particular book, will do better on our book-based proper names test than will readers, even highly educated ones, who had not read it. Even better, since factual minutiae are avoided, it’s also highly likely that a test like this will both encourage high speed recreational reading and help to break slow move-the-lips reading habits that many students today acquire in high school and never lose

It should be emphasized here that this kind of test permits many low-cost variations. The number of alternatives, for example, can be extended from two to three or more. Also the alternatives can be listed on a separate sheet and identified as A1, A2, A3, etc., thereby permitting a separate question sheet and word-processing economies (index-scanning, deletion of page-citation numbers, etc).

Most important, the personal-best reader can construct this kind of test in advance, read the book, and then take it as a way of proving to himself or herself that speed reading does not rule out getting plenty of intellectual benefit from a nonfiction book — measurably so.

CAVEAT. . . . Teachers should be cautious and sly in using this kind of test. Clever students are apt study the names instead of read the book itself. Practically considered, page-position sequence tests are still the

most cost-effective way of ascertaining whether a student has read an assigned book and paid a reasonable amount of attention to each page.

TO CONCLUDE. . . . Speed reading and proper-name vocabulary growth are natural partners. As Frank Smith has put it, we comprehend what we read because we already know 50% of what's on the page in front of us, including proper names and allusions. And conversely, we expand our knowledge of proper names by encountering them again and again in nonfiction books intended for the general reader. Most literary nonfiction prizewinners fall into this category, just as most of them consistently cite the same thousand culturally important proper names (Caesar, Julius, and Churchill, Winston, still have impressive index visibility, I have noticed).

And there's more. . . . Call it Alzheimer's or pre-senile dementia, going blank on proper names is, or is going to be, a major worry for all Americans, especially after we reach the age of fifty. Just like a sense of physical space, our awareness of general-knowledge proper names and their relatedness can help us stay on track in the real world, as opposed to sliding down in a swamp of personal fantasies and confusion.

Working crossword puzzles is of course a good antidote to proper-name confusion. But reading quality nonfiction books, including biographies and history, is even better, if only for the reason that it challenges our attention span and memory power in the process. The more we do it, as long as our eyes hold out, the better we get — including our speed, comprehension, and retentiveness. Speed reading and proper-name awareness — the combination can, and should, be a winner today for many Americans, young and old.

CH 11: *Poetry Out Loud* and Dictionary-Based Metrology

Americans need no vendor of mutual funds to tell them that History as we live it day by day is rarely More of the Same. What drives it, as Thomas Kuhn pointed out some years ago, are usually new and deep currents that take shape, almost by themselves, and then gradually flood their way into our consciousness and behavior. The global warming movement is one such novelty. So, more modestly, is the *Poetry Out Loud* poetry memorization-plus-recitation program, whose participants have in four years increased from 40,000 high schoolers to a nationwide total of over 300,000.

Apart from its scope, it's the novelty of *Poetry Out Loud* that compels attention. For almost a hundred years professional poets have read their works from a piece of paper, as opposed to meeting the personal best challenge of reciting them from memory. Speculatively, then, we can surmise the program's appeal (some participants have competed as freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors) links up with our newly acquired personal-best interest in rock climbing, marathoning, triathloning, and other challenge-yourself activities — including the horrendous Iron Man ordeal.

From personal best to public leadership. . . . Going further, we can plausibly link *Poetry Out Loud*'s growing popularity to the linguistic conquest of our planet by Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English (SWAPE). The most obvious instance of this is the flood of

offshore Ameriphones we encounter when calling service-contact telephone numbers. But even more important is the use of SWAPE in multi-lingual nations like China and India (each over a billion) as a de facto national language to be mastered by all, especially in science and technology.

Going still further, taking into account *Poetry Out Loud*'s link to the practical SWAPE arts of memorization and oral performance, we can see the American Presidency itself is shifting back to the traditional “bully pulpit” role it had for the Roosevelts, Kennedy and Reagan— especially its concern with public metaphor (carry a Big Stick, a New Deal, New Frontier, etc.). Whether by accident or design, then, *Poetry Out Loud* comes as close as any high school principal would wish as a confidence-building training program for young men and women who in tomorrow's America will be able to speak clearly and effectively in public — and lead.

***Poetry Out Loud* and measurement standards.** . . . The wider range of the *Poetry Out Loud* model can be summed up by the equally wide ranging new term *metrology*, which refers to the science of measurement, cf. the renaming of “Weights and Measures” in states like California and Oregon as “Measurement Standards.” The measurement standard employed by *Poetry Out Loud*'s memorization component has both authority (the authorized text of each poem) and calibration properties (number-of-lines levels of difficulty), enough so that the putative impact of a participant's achievement can be inferred from before/after comparison with other metrologically measurable fields.

The most obvious field of impact to measure is that of mainstream pronunciation skill as represented in a standard authority dictionary.

Another field, though less closely linked, is that of multiple definition fluency, e.g., the crossword puzzles which many of us work each day. But the most poetically relevant is that of mainstream figurative awareness. Informally this awareness is represented by our ability to “get” jokes (even bad ones) like “She was only a whiskey salesman’s daughter, but everybody loved her still.” More formally it is represented by commercially marketed “aptitude tests” like the Miller Analogy Test (MAT), e.g., “ WALK is to LEGS as A. *blink* is to *eyes*, B. *chew* is to *mouth*, C. *dress* is to *hem*, D. *cover* is to *book*. E. *grind* is to *nose* [correct answer, B].

Dictionary-based mainstream figurative awareness. . . . Though intuitively acceptable, our Miller Analogy test question lacks both dictionary authority and a system for calibrating levels of difficulty. Fortunately, full service dictionaries like *Random House Unabridged* offer specific phrases and sentences to illustrate many of their definitions, thereby permitting us to construct thousands of mainstream figurative questions. Here are two illustrative examples.

(Q1) For the headword RUN please indicate which of the following definitions in *Random House Unabridged* actually cites the phrase *to run in huge shoals*: (a) to move with haste; act... (b) to make a quick trip or informal visit for a short stay at a place... (c) to migrate, as fish. . . . (Q2) For the headword JUMP please indicate which of the following definitions in *Random House Unabridged* actually cites the phrase *The robbers jumped town*: (a) to skip or pass over; (b) to abscond from; leave: (c) . to move or change suddenly. . . . [answers: Q1, c; Q2, b].

As indicated earlier, the authority requirement is met by the use of a full service dictionary, as opposed to ad hoc surveys and private data. In

addition, the calibration requirement is met via the sequence-position of individual definitions (based on date of entry into the language). Definition 10 for RUN, for example, would probably strike most test takers as more familiar and hence less difficult than definition 30 for JUMP. Consequently, transparent norms regarding different levels of mainstream figurative awareness can easily be determined, along with reasonable inferences regarding the positive impact of the *Poetry Out Loud* experience upon the figurative awareness of its participants.

The importance of mainstream figurative awareness. . . . Americans should not underestimate the importance of mainstream figurative awareness in their society. The preschooler who screams “Share!!” and means “gimme” or the local thug who equates “respect” with “fear” are both outside the mainstream. So, though less dangerously, are first graders who can’t understand first grade jokes or senior citizens who can’t explain the meaning of proverbs like “Too many cooks spoil the soup” or “Two heads are better than one” (still used in diagnosing Alzheimer’s). To the degree that *Poetry Out Loud* and related programs demonstrably improve mainstream figurative awareness, they certainly justify public support.

TO CONCLUDE. . . . I believe that *Poetry Out Loud* will help greatly in restoring the basic respect of Americans for their literature in general, not just poetry. Horace’s “teach and delight” (*docere et diligere*) formula may still get cited, but its current translation as “literature makes us better people” comes across as laughable to most youngsters. Hence the need, especially today, to recognize that that large civilizations require both a mainstream language and a mainstream literature, as opposed to a Babel

of unfriendly cultural competitors (an ESL class writ large, some might say).

What's here simply takes *Poetry Out Loud* out of the spelling bee category and moves it to center stage as a national and international resource for empowering all speakers of Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English with a common-sense awareness of its nuances as expressed in its poetry, songs, and even its jokes. Simply put, *Poetry Out Loud*, especially its web site, is today a world-class tool that should be recognized as such — and put to wholesome, measurably productive use.

CH 12: America's Four Upscale Electronic Dictionaries and Their Offshore Competition

Civilization is fundamentally a Big Vocabulary and good dictionaries, officially or unofficially, are the authoritative custodians of that vocabulary. It is of course true, as Franz Boas insisted in *Race, Language, and Culture*, that the grammar and phonology of all languages are equally complex world wide and that there are no "primitive languages." But it is also true, as Charles Ferguson demonstrated ("Diglossia," *Word*, 1959) that the vocabularies of individual languages vary greatly in size and complexity.

Right now, to underscore the point, fewer than ten languages, including English, stand at the top of a of a vocabulary-size pyramid as international languages suitable for the publication and circulation of original scientific research. Hence the desirability for an up to date review of where America's electronic dictionaries now stand, especially in view of the offshore competition they may soon face regarding their treatment of the language of Beowulf, Chaucer and Shakespeare

An offshore public domain challenger. . . . As matters also now stand, "Beowulf," beards and all, has recently appeared as a whacking good film based on the Old English epic poem ("Hwaet, we gardena," etc.) that still turns up in story form for youngsters and in the original for a few graduate students. Thanks to a happy chance, the film's release coincides with the imminent entry into public-domain of another Old English epic, namely, the Merriam Webster Second International Dictionary of 1934, a work which

still enjoys international respect and reverential multi-copy shelving in most of our university libraries.

We can therefore surmise that alm-eyed computer scientists in the far away labs of Zurich, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Bombay are now scrutinizing American dictionaries as a prelude to reissuing this venerable Old English hero and sending him out to do space age lexicographical battle in the worldwide English dictionary market place.

As indicated by *Time Almanac—2007* figures, roughly half of our six billion planetary residents now live in nations where English is either the primary language or an explicitly designated official alternate. Even more to the point as far as American dictionaries are concerned is the favored-pronunciation status today, especially in Asia, of American English, not British, thanks to its consistent initial stress patterns (LABoratory rather laBORatory) and its listener-friendly “flat A,” which Beowulf’s fellow warriors certainly used: e.g., *hwaet* rhyming with *cat* (HWAET/ KAET in phonetic notation).

In addition the Merriam-Webster 1934 dictionary (henceforth identified as “MW34”) also includes the complete vocabulary of Shakespeare, an author whose works are studied worldwide, and Chaucer, who’s certainly more of a world contender than many current writers. With commercial possibilities like these, it’s not surprising that offshore computer scientists are beginning to look at the American electronic dictionary market appraisingly, very much like the Martian scientists chillingly described in H. G. Wells’ *War of the Worlds*.

From a worldwide market perspective, we should also note the international concern with Alzheimer’s disease, especially its early-warning signals represented by going blank on words and proper names. Since

both of these invite personal preventive steps (e.g., crossword puzzles) that involve dictionary resources, it's highly probable that MW34 with its 600,000 entries will be attractive to residents of Kansas and Florida, not just to offshore Ameri-phones — surely a more accurate term today than the confusing “Anglophone.”

An American bookstore stocks many different kinds of so-called English dictionaries, and the internet offers even more, as represented by 3,530, 000 hits on 2/9/2008 for the phrase “dictionaries of English.” For practical purposes, though, we can assume our scientific gnomes in Zurich, etc., will be studying the four the most important American print+electronic dictionaries against whom their MW34 Beowulfian hero will have to compete.

The American Heritage Dictionary, Houghton Mifflin: 4th ed., 2002. . . .

Where MW34 was respected as a national authority in schools, news rooms, and courts of law, the criticisms of its 1961 revision greatly eroded public confidence in it, especially with respect to matters of usage. Hence new competitors entered the market for “college size” dictionaries, which had long been dominated by the “Merriam Webster Collegiate” (a copyrighted term) version of MW34. The current electronic edition of the college-size American Heritage Dictionary therefore offers an impressive listing of the over 100 authorities on English usage who comprise its “usage panel (e.g., Garrison Keillor, Nina Totenberg, and William Least Heat Moon, etc.).

Questionable though its usage panel may seem (how many of them could read “Beowulf” in its original Old English, for instance?), the electronic version that American Heritage offers includes some highly

desirable innovations. One of these is the presentation of word pronunciations in audio form, not just phonetic transcriptions. A second is a detailed presentation of “root” relationships between native English like FOOT and their Graeco-Latinate fellow members of the “Indo European” language family, e.g., POD-IATRIST and PED-ESTRIAN. . . . Traditionally a grasp of these relationships (FATHER/ PATERNAL, etc.) has helped students to learn new words in a logical, patterned manner in the same way that they now help senior citizens to re-learn and remember non-native English words they are beginning to forget.

Unfortunately, the audio pronunciation innovation has turned out to be cripplingly expensive. To be more specific, the CD ROM version of American Heritage takes up 600 megabytes (I acquired this figure via telephone query) of disk space on a computer. Purchasers therefore usually uninstall the audio component as a burden and potential threat. As for the Indo-European “roots,” these much be accessed in a series of steps, as opposed to encounter them in the etymology section of a word’s entry or as a cross-reference.

It should be pointed out here that the direct source of this information regarding roots is Julius Pokorny’s the *Indo-Germanisches Wörterbuch* is not explicitly acknowledged, even though “Indo-Germanic,” like the Soviet academician Marr’s “Japhetic” (from the Bible) is a far more accurate label than Indo-European, since Finnish and Hungarian, though European, are not linguistically “Indo-European.”

For prospective users, including elementary-school children with laptops, these two flaws are serious and visible, far more so than the use of keyboard-unfriendly phonetic script and the pictorial parade of now out-of-date celebrities in the print version. If MW34 returns to the American

market in a disk-friendly CD ROM version, it will have little to fear from American Heritage as a dictionary competitor.

Webster's New World Dictionary, John Wiley: 4th ed., 2006. . . .

Webster's New World, another college-size dictionary, was an established work well before the perceived flaws of MW61. As part of a reference-book firm (Worldbook, etc.), it was quartered in Cleveland, Ohio, for many, many years prior setting up shop in New York, where its fourth edition was published. Surprisingly enough, once MW61 was exiled as a authority from national newspapers like the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times, it is desk-size Webster's New World which has acquired quasi-official lexicographical status in the USA, not American Heritage, Merriam Webster, or Random House.

The reason for this perceived excellence can be summed up in one phrase: UMBACH'S ETYMOLOGIES. . . . William Umbach was a professor of German and Germanic languages (including Beowulf's Old English) at a small denominational college (Redlands University in Redlands, California), along with being a lexicographical Hercules who single-handedly contributed over a thousand newly corrected etymologies to Webster's New World (compare its entry for BLIMP with how our other three handle it). Even more important Bill (I knew him via a mutual friend) developed a crystal-clear etymological format using "angles" to indicate not only a word's source (<) but also its subsequent development as a cognate (literally "co-born" in other Romance languages.

This feature (>) is especially helpful for Spanish-background learners of American English, since a modern Spanish dictionary has a far richer store of "learner-friendly" cognates than can be found in an English-Latin

dictionary of the same size (c.f., antidote/ *antidoto*, antipathy/ *antipatia*, aphorism/ *aforismo*, aplomb/ *aplomo*, etc.)

The result of Umbach's "etymological logic" is that learners can actually see how a specific word's meaning is literally the "sum of its parts." As indicated by his treatment of NOSTALGIA (cf. the very sketchy American Heritage entry), this feature is especially helpful with "borrowed" Graeco-Latinate words, which now comprise 80% of the entries in a college-size dictionary. Unfortunately, Chief Etymologist William Umbach died in 1991, nor has the post of chief etymologist been filled since then. Though his contribution is acknowledged in the third edition, his name does not appear in the fourth edition (the entertainer Jerry Lee Lewis, curiously enough, was similarly banished.).

For CD ROM customers, a far more serious problem is the disk space, 147 megabytes, which Webster's New World requires. Consequently, even though it still has official status at the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times, my informal surveys indicate that many of the editorial staff refuse to download it, claiming that it slows down their computer. Electronically considered, the electronic version of MW34 offers will certainly be a far more attractive personal choice option than American Heritage or Webster's New World, especially if it uses current technology and design acumen to solve the disk space problem.

Webster's Third International Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, 1961 and subsequent editions. . . . Though not substantially re-edited since its appearance in 1961, this official successor to MW34, which we'll identify henceforth as MW61, will get plenty of respectful attention from offshore

electronic lexicographers. Although it offers almost 500,000 entries, its disk space requirement is only 226 megabytes, which is proportionately far less than the 147 megabytes Webster's New World requires for its 70,000 entries. Chaucer's vocabulary, regrettably, has been exiled, but a lot Shakespeare's vocabulary is retained, covered by specific definitions, often labeled as archaic or obsolete. From a current marketing perspective, though, MW61 has a number of lexicographical features which will greatly weaken its ability to compete against a CD ROM version of MW34.

VERBAL NOUNS. . . . Merriam Webster's First International Dictionary was edited by William Torrey Harris (at the time also U.S. Commissioner of Education) with Leo Weiner (father of Norbert, the founder of cybernetics) as its chief etymologist, Dictionary. As indicated in its 1923 edition (available online) it includes "verbal noun" (often called *gerund*) as a primary part-of-speech category, even though it has the same ING-ending as the "present participle" form. The importance of the distinction is illustrated by Noam Chomsky's oft quoted example "flying planes can be dangerous," where *flying* as a verbal noun would produce the interpretation, "the act of flying planes can be dangerous," as opposed to the present-participial "planes which are flying can be dangerous" (i.e. more dangerous than planes on the ground).

As far as scholarly authority goes, it's important to note that Merriam Webster's Second International (MW34) was edited by William Allen Neilson, a former president of Smith College and a medievalist whose works still occupy several pages in the online catalogs of UCLA and other universities. Its chief etymologist, Harold Bender, was at the time professor of oriental languages at Princeton and the author of "The Home of the Indo-Europeans." Although they removed the verbal noun from its entry status

as a part of speech, they nevertheless continued to recognize its importance by listing it as a separate entry, e.g., FLYING: the act of flying.

Merriam Webster's Third International (MW61) was edited by Philip Gove, author of a biography of Noah Webster, with Charles Sleeth, author of an edition of the Old English "Christ and Satan." Despite the overpowering national authority of MW34, especially in court trials, they elected to reject its authority and abolish the distinction between verbal nouns and present participles as inflectional forms, with the result it is now impossible to explain, especially to children, why SWIMMING (1) is identified under its first definition as a participle and under the second as a *gerund*, while SWIMMING (2), is identified as a noun, and GERUND under its second definition is explicitly defined as "the English verbal noun."

WORD ENTRIES WITH INTERNAL SPACES. . . . The standard definition for a printed word, e.g., MW-collegiate WORD def. b-2, is "any segment of written or printed discourse ordinarily appearing BETWEEN [emphasis added] spaces. Practically considered, as we all know, some phrases used frequently with a special meaning can achieve word status in the eyes of a lexicographer, e.g., INFERIORITY COMPLEX (listed in MW61), as opposed to PERSECUTION COMPLEX (not listed). But judgment calls like these can vary greatly: MW-collegiate lists *personal tax*; Webster's New World omits it. American Heritage lists *personal watercraft*, which MW61 omits. Nor does any of them list the high frequency form *personal best*, which most of us would agree has a better claim on "dictionary-hood" than *personal digital assistant*. Without a clear rationale behind them stronger than what Philip Gove proposed in the journal American Speech AFTER

the publication of these whimsically selected phrasal words raise serious questions regarding the lexicographical integrity of MW61.

REDEFINING THE HOMOGRAPH. . . . Following standard lexicographical practice, Random House College defines *homograph* as “a word of the same written form as another but of different meaning AND USUALLY. ORIGIN” [emphasis added], citing the date of its first appearance as 1800-10. In contrast MW61-collegiate defines it as “one of two or more words spelled alike but different in meaning OR derivation OR pronunciation [emphasis added], citing the much later day of 1873.

What the MW definition does is to allow “double entry” lexicography via which the entries SWEAT (1) and SWIM (1) are listed as verbs, while SWEAT (2) and SWIM (2) are listed as nouns. In marketing terms this innovation means is that MW can list many more “entries” than its competitors in the same page space. But the price in lexicographical integrity, since it conflicts with established practice, along with rewriting the history of the English language to justify its behavior.

Competitively considered, the text of MW34 as a dictionary is far superior to that of MW61. It has more entries (600,000, as opposed to 470,000), Public domain MW34’s entries list fuller etymologies, and its lexicographical policies accord with world wide practice. If its electronic version takes up less than 300 megabytes of disk space, it will be far more attractive to consumers than MW61, even without an updated supplement to cover new words and proper names.

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The Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, Random House, 2nd ed., 2000, 2006. . . . Respectable lexicography and state-of-

the-art computational linguistics — this combination means that MW34, unless extensively updated, will have a lot of trouble competing against what we'll identify as RHU, both worldwide and in the USA. Despite its 315,000 entries, RHU takes up only 14.5 megabytes — that's right, only 14.5 megabytes!! — of disk space: a fraction of that taken up by MW61. The phonetic representations in its electronic version, like those of the Scholastic Children's Dictionary, use keyboard characters that reproduce with far greater fidelity than the dots, lines, and squiggles of the IPA-based systems used by MW61, American Heritage, and Webster's New World.

Even more impressive is are the phonemics-based audio-pronunciation presentations for each entry-headword; like a careful speech therapist, these present each individual speech sound in sequence, not as a blurred gust of phonetic wind. In addition, RHU represents a primary-stress syllables with a following double-quote mark, e.g., ree-doos" for reduce, that comes across much more visibly than a boldfaced single line or apostrophe, e.g., ' in boldface contrasting with non-boldfaced ' for secondary stress.

As with other CD ROMs, the users of RHU can search for target words in definitions. But they can do it in a much more sophisticated manner, enough so to produce long lists of technical terms for several hundred different subjects: medicine, pathology, music, prosody, etc. Given the importance of vocabulary building for the young and vocabulary re-empowerment for the old, RHU (2000), practically considered, is today America's only 21st century dictionary, largely thanks to editor Stuart Flexner, who learned his craft from Sir William Craigie, editor (with J.R. Hulbert) of the four-volume Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles: 1938-1944.

TO CONCLUDE. . . . Echoing our Beowulf analogy, it's not impossible that our offshore computer scientists could give MW34 much stronger software equipment (armor?) with which to compete against RHU, especially in view of MW34's greater size and scope (Shakespeare, Chaucer, etymologies, etc.). Part of that equipment, though, should encompass sound lexicographical and etymological training, which has traditionally required a knowledge of Old English and the Beowulf poem itself, along with other texts.

In this connection, it's worth noting that Flexner and Craigie's collaborator, J.R. Hurlbert, also coauthored the Bright-Hurlbert Anglo-Saxon Reader, which many of today's philologists and lexicographers may have studied, along with Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Primer. Henry Sweet, incidentally, was a moving spirit behind the International Phonetic Alphabet many years ago, a close friend of George Bernard Shaw, and — you guessed it! — the model for Henry Higgins/ Rex Harrison in Shaw's "My Fair Lady." All of which should go to remind us that computer linguists should know something about the history of their language and other languages, just as linguistic scholars should know something about modern information technology.

Such a historical perspective would surely cry the importance and healing power of reputable lexicography in a civilization of any size and scope. As Arnold Toynbee pointed out, we've had relatively few civilizations worthy of the name on this planet (only 21), and they have all thus far (present company excepted) disintegrated into Balkanized chaos linguistically, militarily, and civilizationally. A civilization, after all, is its total lexicon, all 600,000 words of it, not its dialectal varieties, argots, slang, and ephemeral professional jargons. Hence the need for an authoritative

“international” unabridged dictionary, as opposed to an “academy of immortals,” to keep our three billion users of Standard Worldwide American Pronunciation English singing from the same page.

For three billion Ameri-phones (half of the planet), it can fairly be said that Worldwide English is too important to be left to the Americans. There’s no doubt in my mind that our offshore electronic lexicographers will be driven by marketing imperatives in the production of a world class electronic dictionary based upon Webster’s Second Third International. But I also believe that the emotional energy behind their efforts will stem, and should stem, from their conviction that such a project, though modest in cost (under \$2 million), will give all of us a tool for preserving mutual intelligibility, traditional knowledge, scientific effectiveness, and mutual survival on a planet where our species is perhaps beginning to wear out its welcome.

It was Dr. Johnson who famously defined a lexicographer as “a harmless drudge.” But he knew better and so did his contemporaries. More than a useful art, lexicography is a tool for acquiring maturity in the young and protecting sanity in the old, especially in a nation where according to a recent Harris Poll over half of us now fear Alzheimer’s more than heart disease, diabetes, and stroke. Call us featherless bipeds or naked apes, we are a language-using species that needs its dictionaries — honest and compendious — for its survival far more than it needs its weaponry and the illusion of progress.
