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ON THE  
TEACHING OF ENGLISH

*Issued by the Incorporated Association of  
Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools*

NEW AND REVISED EDITION



CAMBRIDGE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1927

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107594395](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107594395)

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First published 1927

Re-issued 2015

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-1-107-59439-5 Paperback

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## PREFACE

### TO THE REVISED EDITION

THE publication of this Memorandum in 1923 was immediately followed by a demand for copies, which showed that the need for the kind of guidance which it provided was great. Indeed, the first impression was quickly exhausted and two further ones were necessary. These, too, have also been exhausted. The Executive Committee of the Association responsible for the publication decided that, before another edition was printed, the Memorandum ought to be brought up to date, and they placed the revision in the hands of the Sifting Sub-Committee of the original Committee. Unfortunately, the Sub-Committee was unable to obtain the assistance of Mr J. F. Usherwood, who was to such a great extent responsible for the success of the original Memorandum. Another member of the Sub-Committee, Mr T. Crockett, is now a Headmaster and his help also was not available. Nor could Mr Lissant, now a House Master, attend meetings. Consequently, nearly all the work of the revision has fallen upon the shoulders of Messrs Palser and Phillips, who received, however, valuable assistance from Mr Goodman.

The Sub-Committee, following the lines upon which the Committee worked in 1922, issued Questionnaires to all members of the full Committee and the revision is based upon the replies received.

But few alterations have been made in the first two chapters. It was found necessary to rearrange Chapter III, and a very full treatment of *Précis*—hardly touched in 1923—has been added. Chapter IV, however, has been entirely replanned and new matter added, including an interesting experiment on the teaching of composition through story-writing and a third list of books read. A separate chapter has been assigned to School Examinations. It contains a considerable amount of additional matter, including lists of modern essays, novels, and drama which correspondents consider typical of what should be read for First School Examinations.

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Not the least valuable part of the original Memorandum was its Bibliography. This has been enlarged to nearly double its former size by the addition of books published since 1923 and of others also found useful by correspondents. The Sub-Committee desires to acknowledge fully its indebtedness to the publishing firms, over twenty in number, who so kindly placed at its disposal copies of all books in the least likely to be of service to readers of the Memorandum. The Bibliography has been rearranged on a somewhat elaborate plan which the Sub-Committee hopes will enable users to find readily their exact requirements.

Two valuable aids in the teaching of English are School Drama and Home Reading. Two Appendices have been added: the one consists of an account of the origin and development of a School Dramatic Society; the other of a very elaborate scheme, now in actual working, for Home Reading. Both have been specially written for this revision of the Memorandum.

J. H. ARNOLD  
CHAIRMAN

The Revising Committee desires to express its appreciation of the assistance which it received from Miss K. M. Edwin, who acted as secretary.

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## PREFACE

### TO THE ORIGINAL EDITION

#### ORIGIN AND AIM OF THE MEMORANDUM

IT has long been evident to all thoughtful people interested in education, and not least to teachers, that English instead of being the very foundation of all education in this country has, in practice, received but scant attention when questions of organisation and curriculum have been decided. The fact is hardly in dispute, and is supported by paragraph after paragraph of the epoch-making Report of the Departmental Committee of the Board of Education published at the end of 1921 (*The Teaching of English in England*). One quotation may serve as typical: "From the evidence laid before us it became speedily clear that in many schools of all kinds and grades that part of the teaching which dealt directly with English was often regarded as being inferior in importance, hardly worthy of any substantial place in the curriculum and a suitable matter to be entrusted to any member of the staff who had some free time at his disposal" (pp. 9, 10).

This inferior position held by English has certainly not been due to lack of capability, or lack of interest on the part of the teachers specially responsible for the organising of the English teaching in the schools. Investigations have shown what originality, what zeal, what readiness to try new ideas and to sacrifice time and energy in promoting the success of their work these teachers possess. The fault has lain almost wholly in lack of sympathy on the part of the school authorities, shown partly by a failure to allot adequate time to the subject and partly by a reluctance to give the Senior English Master the same power of supervision and of direction as is given to the Senior Classical, Modern Language, Mathematical, or Science Master. The increased cost of books, too, especially in these days of strict economy, presses more heavily on those who are striving to make English an instrument of true education than on any others.

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Teachers have long known how unsatisfactory the position has been; the importance of the Departmental Report lies largely in the fact that it has focussed attention upon the handicap from which English teaching has suffered. Not only has the educational world been forced to stop and give the matter consideration, but the more thoughtful section of the lay press has tried to interest public opinion. The Departmental Committee indeed, to paraphrase the words of Siéyès, found English nothing and will only be content when it is everything. Such enthusiasm is bound to produce results, for a more eloquent yet reasoned appeal for English to be put into its rightful place could hardly have been written.

Dealing with the teaching of English in all stages of education from the Elementary School to the University, the Departmental Committee indicated very clearly the aims which teachers should place before themselves and the general lines along which they should proceed. It made little attempt, and it could hardly have done otherwise, to translate theory into practice, to help the actual teacher to apply, in the classroom and elsewhere, the principles so admirably laid down in its Report. *What* should be done was rendered abundantly clear; *how* it could best be done was a problem which had obviously to be faced by the teachers themselves.

Accordingly, in January, 1922, the Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters in Secondary Schools set up a Committee whose terms of reference were "to endeavour to reduce to system the various and often ill-defined methods of teaching English which at present obtain in English and Welsh Secondary Schools." This Committee consisted of some eighty members of the Association, practically all specialists in the teaching of English and representative of every type of Secondary School: Preparatory, Public, Endowed, Grammar, County, and Municipal. It has worked in two sections: a Corresponding Committee whose members supplied records of their various methods and experience, and a Central Committee which, after correlation by a smaller Sifting Sub-Committee, used these results as a general basis for discussion and conclusion.

This Memorandum must be regarded not as an essay on ideal aims but as a plain summary of experience, complementary to the Departmental Report; it embodies the considered opinions of the members of the Committee on methods of teaching English in Secondary Boys' Schools. It is



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not claimed that the methods here advocated are exhaustive; the members of the Committee would be the first to agree that they are not, for they are fully aware indeed that investigation and experiment are daily bearing good fruit. They recognise, too, that more perhaps in the teaching of English than in that of any other subject in a school curriculum, the most successful teachers are born, not made; yet they venture to hope that the Memorandum will be of some service to other teachers in Secondary Schools, particularly to younger men who may find a value in this brief summary of the experience of practical teachers who have had to face the actual difficulties inherent in classroom teaching.

It should be noticed that often, to the considered opinion of the Committee as a whole on some point, there are appended quotations from the opinions of individual members. These represent the record of personal experience, and as such are of extreme value, but the Committee, though approving of them in general, does not necessarily endorse every detail.

Of the two appendices to this Memorandum, one deals with the Report of the Joint Committee on Grammatical Terminology and the other consists of a Bibliography.

The Committee desires, here, to thank the numerous Educational Publishers for their generosity in placing at its disposal an almost overwhelming selection of books for its consideration. Of the books mentioned in the Bibliography all have been either carefully examined by the Sifting Sub-Committee, or specially recommended by members of the Committee itself as of proved value either to teacher or to class.

The success or failure of the work of any such Committee as this must always depend, to a considerable extent, upon its Honorary Secretary. In this case the Committee was fortunate in that it had the assistance of a specialist of ability and sound judgment. It wishes to express its deep appreciation of the work of Mr J. F. Usherwood, to whose energy is due to a large extent whatever value the Memorandum may possess.

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† Members of the Sifting Sub-Committee.

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