

RUDOLF FLESC H  
24 BELDEN AVENUE  
DOBBS FERRY, N. Y. 10522  
914 OWENS 3-5367

December 4, 1973

Dear Mr. Blumenfeld:

Congratulations on the publication of your book  
The Newilliterates. I have not received a review  
copy and certainly should like to read the book;  
however, I cannot in good conscience ask you to  
let me have a copy since I have no outlet for a  
review and have made it a principle not to  
endorse any specific phonic s book or system.

It's interesting to me that you, as a conservative,  
and I, as a political liberal, have arrived at  
exactly the same conclusions as to the teaching of  
reading. Surely this must prove that we're both  
doing something right.

Very best wishes for the success of your book.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rudolf Flesch", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

December 20, 1973

Mr. Rudolf Flesch  
24 Belden Avenue  
Dobbs Ferry, N. Y. 10522

Dear Mr. Flesch:

I can't tell you how pleased I was to receive your letter with your kind words of congratulations. I am sending you The New Illiterates for your personal library with my compliments. Since I refer to your work quite frequently in my book, I know you'll want to read what I have to say.

The unique contribution of my book is in its identification of the origin of the look-say method. I suppose the reason why you did not make this discovery yourself is because the documentation is not to be found anywhere but in Boston where the method was first tried. Had I written the book in New York I would have never made the discovery.

Although the book has been published by a conservative publisher, I hardly consider myself a conservative. I am more of a libertarian, which is the liberalism of individual freedom. Reading instruction, of course, has nothing to do with politics. Unfortunately, the champions of the look-say method were so closely identified with the progressive-education movement that the reading controversy took on this meaningless political tinge. I should hope that both liberals and conservatives would want their children to learn to read well.

I hope that you will let me know what you think of my book after reading it. You can imagine how much I will value your opinion.

With kindest regards,



Samuel L. Blumenfeld  
171 West Seventh Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02127  
617-268-6903

RUDOLF FLESC H  
24 BELDEN AVENUE  
DOBBS FERRY, N. Y. 10522  
914 OWENS 3-5367

December 26, 1973

Dear Mr. Blumenfeld:

Thank you so much for sending me your book. I read it with avid interest and of course agree with everything you say. The business with Gallaudet is a gem of a historical discovery. I asked myself why I didn't find it, but the fact is that I was much more interested in the scientific comparison studies than in the historical background. Naively, I assumed that once the clear outcome of the 11 or so test studies was known, the battle would be won right then and there. Little did I know what would happen during the next 18 years. Ah well. I've by now arrived at the philosophical conclusion that the end of the American Empire is foreordained, and that Vietnam, Watergate, and our educational catastrophe are all part of the inevitable process of history. If I had found out about Mr. Gallaudet, it probably wouldn't have made a bit of difference.

A few highlights you may be interested in: The Reader's Digest picked up a digest of my book on publication and paid \$2000. Then, obviously after listening to the establishment lobby, they changed their minds, canceled the article and forfeited the \$2000. As to Dr. Chall, she interviewed me for a good hour when she was preparing her book, but was rather hostile and downright inaccurate in her references to me by the time the book came out. I guess she couldn't actually deny the scientific evidence, but her heart just wasn't in the thing, and she did her darndest to bury the truth. I wrote to her correcting her misstatements about my self, but never got an answer. Ah well again.

Best wishes to you. You didn't mention the most hopeful thing of all: the TV shows Sesame Street and The Electric Company. With their invaluable help, truth doubtless will prevail, somewhat belatedly, but nevertheless in plenty of time to make people like you and me feel much, much better.

Sincerely yours,

*Rudy Flesch*

January 19, 1978

Dr. Rudolf Flesch  
24 Belden Ave.  
Dobbs Ferry, N. Y. 10522

Dear Rudy:

As you will see from the enclosed materials, I am presently engaged, with several colleagues, in creating a new organization that can, in time, have a considerable impact on American education. I am inviting you to join our National Advisory Council, a nationwide network of professional and lay experts from whom we hope to draw the best of advice and moral support for this important effort. The enclosed letter, which will be mailed out in a general fund-raising drive, explains what we shall be doing.

I'd appreciate your comments and ideas regarding the enclosed materials and how our organization might become an effective agency for the improvements we should all like to see made. It goes without saying how much I would like to see your name among our advisors, since you are the father of the movement to return to educational sanity.

I do hope that you will be able to join us. With best personal regards.

Sincerely,

Samuel L. Blumenfeld  
President

SLB:gg  
enc.

RUDOLF FLESCH  
24 BELDEN AVENUE  
DOBBS FERRY, N.Y. 10522

(914) 693-5367

January 25, 1978

Dear Sam,

Thanks very much for your letter and the material on the National Council for Better Education.

As you know, I am an old Viennese socialist and ever since 1955 I've been torn between my abiding interest in systematic phonics and political disagreements with all the good people who rallied to its banner. So, being at the opposite pole from people like James Kilpatrick, Dr. Max Rafferty etc., I cannot possibly join in your efforts. I do wish the blessings of phonics had been discovered by my natural friends the liberals, but unfortunately there seems to be a blind spot there.

Best regards,



May 9, 1980

Dr. Rudolf Flesch  
24 Belden Avenue  
Dobbs Ferry, N. Y. 10522

Dear Rudy:

It was delightful talking with you after such a long hiatus.

I'm enclosing the recent article I did for Boston Magazine containing my interview with Dr. Cole, plus two speeches I gave at two Reading Reform Foundation conferences. I think you'll find useful material in all three articles. In "Twenty Years After Rudolf Flesch" I attempted to explain why so little progress had been made in that time.

On the matter of Sallaudet, please don't underestimate the importance of his work. I doubt that whole-word methodology would have entered the pedagogical mainstream without him. It is significant that the whole-word method was adopted as the preferred method at the Lexington Normal School, the very first state teachers college established in the U. S. in 1839 by Horace Mann. It was through the normal school system that the whole-word method was preserved during the McGuffey years for later rehabilitation and use.

Incidentally, the very first critique of the new whole-word method was written in 1844 by Samuel Greene, one of the Boston masters, in response to Mann's Seventh Annual Report. The entire text is reprinted in the Appendix to The New Illiterates. Everything that was wrong with the whole-word method was recognized quite early in the game. I strongly recommend that you read it. The problem with Greene's critique is that it never got beyond the Boston controversy and lay buried until I managed to find it. Yet, what Green had to say about reading instruction was far more important than what Mann had to say, for Green was an educator while Mann was an attorney. Yet today's professors of education quote Mann as the expert and ignore Greene!

I shall send you additional material based on my tutoring experiences as soon as the present article in progress is out of the way.

Best regards,

2502 Greenlawn Street S.E.  
Lacey, Washington 98503  
February 1, 1986

Dr. Samuel L. Blumenfeld  
Hillsdale College  
Hillsdale, Michigan 49242

Dear Dr. Blumenfeld:

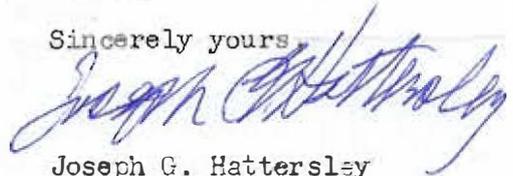
I have your "Who killed excellence" in Imprimis. I am much concerned about the problem of illiteracy. One of my hobbies, inactive until I will retire, before long, is tutoring teen-age or young-20s students who have lost their self-esteem because of being subjected to look-and-say "teaching".

Rudolf Flesch, in the enclosed letter, expresses the idea that the research results showing phonics to be far superior are rejected for a different reason entirely. He suggests, as you can see from the letter, that the people who did the research fear for their livelihoods if they push the matter.

What do you think of that? Does that seem realistic to you, or do you think the conspiracy against good literacy continues?

I hope, in time, to lead a campaign to substitute phonics for look-and-say teaching in the public schools. I am very much interested in your thinking, for it will help me determine the strategy to use in my campaign.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joseph G. Hattersley".

Joseph G. Hattersley

RUDOLF FLESCH  
24 BELDEN AVENUE  
DOBBS FERRY, N.Y. 10522

(914) 693-5367

January 24, 1986

Dear Mr. Hattersley,

Thank you very much for your thoughtful and interesting letter. I'm much interested in your experiences with older students who had long been victims of look-and-say and whom you had to teach to regain their self-esteem.

You ask how I explain the rejection of research data without the conspiracy hypothesis. Here's how: The people who do the research are never those in powerful positions. They are just people who have teaching jobs in the system and would lose tenure or worse if they went head-on against what's going on. This explains people like Dr. Jeannette Chall of Harvard or Dr. Richard C. Anderson of the U. of Illinois. They're cowards, but understandable cowards.

Yesterday I saw a program on asbestos and the Johns Manville Corporation on TV. Since 1930 they've known that asbestos kills, but they went right on manufacturing it for profit. The research was not done by the board of directors.

Thanks for your kind words about my books on writing.

Sincerely yours,

*Rudolf Flesch*