

Chantal Gibson

How to Read Your Book (or What Hegemony Looks Like)

Some lessons are taught, some lessons are imposed. *How to Read Your Book* is a series of large-scale reproductions from an old Canadian grade-school speller. These painted posters are referenced in my debut poetry collection *How She Read* (Caitlin Press, 2019). These are the stories my mother grew up reading as a Black girl in 1950s Halifax. I too remember reading about Pygmies in my 1970s Oshawa classroom. The content of the stories (myths, stereotypes, tropes) and the illustrations unpack the graphic colonial enterprise, highlighting the systemic racism in Canadian institutional texts. The black lines illuminate the silencing and erasure of BIPOC voices – while imagining the lessons learned by the young reader, in particular, what a Black girl, like my mom, might be thinking about herself after reading these texts (again and again).

Following pages:

Chantal Gibson Erasure poems from *The Canadian Vocabulary Speller 4th Grade*, Macmillan Canada, 1948 2019 printed canvas, black acrylic paint 61 x 91 cm

Image credit: Adrian Bisek Courtesy of the artist with support from the BC Arts Council

PUPIL'S NAME

Mrs. Helton

The Canadian PUPILS' OWN VOCABULARY SPELLER

TEXT-WORKBOOK
EDITION



• ARTHUR I. GATES • • HENRY D. RINSLAND •
• ANNA C. SARTORIUS • CELESTE COMEGYS PEARDON •

The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited

Pilgrims and Indians

Although the Pilgrims landed on the famous rock as early as November, it was March before they became friendly with any Indians.

Can you imagine their surprise when suddenly one morning an Indian walked all alone up to the door of a house and began to address the Pilgrims in their own language? True, it was rather broken English. He said his name was Samoset and he was there only in order to fish.



The Indian was hungry, and so the Pilgrims gave him plenty to eat. Since he did not want to leave, they let him spend the night there.

The next day Samoset told the Pilgrims about their neighbours to the south, who were angry with the English because some of the English had tricked them. Samoset finally went away, with presents in his arms. The Pilgrims must have been glad indeed to find one friendly Indian!

The Tiny People

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Smaller than any other race [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] in Africa. They wear very little clothing. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] only a child. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] no language of their own.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] a poison [REDACTED] that kills anything it touches.

Windmill Land

they built steep walls
of earth and stones
walls
that,
keep the
from flooding the land.

Only a careful, hard-working people
produce such fine
crops for
their own colonies.

white
red-cheeked children, clean and shining
— all

To the Teacher

the teacher is urged to study

the pupils to determine the relative importance of each

list in the order of importance.

give the most important the most emphasis.

teach each pupil the gap between

Thus, the major objective of instruction — is achieved.

The method contains few steps and yet provides everything needed.

The pupil first reads a simple, interesting story and rereads the story. Then he writes the words.

Words missed are crossed out and written correctly

The pronunciation of each word should be referred to often

These spellers enrich the child's "thinking"

The entire programme is designed to make the child

useful these exercises go to the heart of

child each

The Authors.