

## Lesson 5.5

### PLAYING SCHOOL

**Objective:** Students will experience the kind of discipline and moral education that was common in a 19th century schoolhouse and will compare that experience to the present day.

**Materials:**

- **Sheet 5.5A:** Morning opening exercise, (to be read by the teacher)
- **Sheet 5.5B:** School in the 1850s Fact Sheet
- **Sheet 5.5C:** Reaction Paper
- **Doc 5.5:** Lessons from *The Second Reader*, by Salem Town, LL. D.

**Timing:** One class period

**Background Reading:** Chapter Five, Section Four

**Procedure:**

1. Inform students a day early that they will be playing school in class the following day. They should be familiar with Section Four of Chapter Five. They should also review the School in the 19th Century Fact Sheet before class that day. See the Further Readings page for more sources on early schools.
2. When students arrive in the classroom, the room should be set up with desks all facing front. If you can, dress according to the period: high-necked blouses and skirts for women, suit and tie for men (approximate). Using quill pens, slates with slate pencils, and copybooks is ideal--all of these can either be made or are available from the Norlands Living History Center. Students must not speak unless asked to speak, and then they must stand when they address the teacher. Students who misbehave must stand and face a corner of the room, or must follow Frank Dingley's example and bend over to touch a certain point on the floor for a few minutes.
3. Read aloud the morning opening exercises. Students should sit quietly, with their heads bent forward.
4. Each student should have the pages from *The Second Reader* in front of them. Call on students individually to read the verses of the stories out loud to the class. When reading, the students should stand up and address the teacher in a loud voice. Ask students to define a difficult word in their verse after they have read it. When a story has been read in full, ask students individually to explain the moral of the story. Continue this way with each of the stories, or else have students follow their regular curriculum, but in a 19th century setting.

5. Toward the end of the lesson, break roles, and hand out the Reaction Paper assignment sheets. Have students finish their reaction papers at home. Papers should be informal, about one page in length.

**Evaluation:** Grade student reaction papers based on thoughtfulness, thoroughness, and clarity.

**Follow up Activities:**

- Have students write their own modern versions of the lessons found in the *Second Reader*.
- Go visit an old school building in your community. Or, if possible, bring students to the Norlands Living History Center's "Little Time Machine"--a 19th century school day experience. Compare the facilities to your own school's facilities.
- Have students interview someone who went to school in their community forty or more years ago. What was it like then? How have things changed?

**Alignment with Learning Results:**

Grade Level: **6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>**

Content Area: Social Studies: **APPLICATIONS**

Standard: **Researching and Developing Positions on Current Social Studies Issues**

Students research, select, and present a position on a current social studies issue by proposing and revising research questions, and locating and selecting information from multiple and varied sources.

Descriptor **A1c:** Locate and access relevant information that includes multiple perspectives from varied sources.

## Sheet 5.5A

### MORNING OPENING EXERCISE

From *School Days, 1850s*, compiled by Billie Gammon, ©1986 by Washburn-Norlands Foundation.

Before reading this exercise to students, make sure they are prepared for its religious content. Explain the historical context of what you are about to read: that public schools in Maine in the 1850s were based on Protestant Christian beliefs and morals. Students should sit quietly with their hands folded on their desks while the morning exercise is read. The text of this prayer comes from *The Teacher*, by Jacob Abbot, ©1836.

Our Father in heaven, who has kindly preserved the pupils and the teacher of this school during the past night, come and grant us a continuance of thy protection and blessing during this day. We cannot spend the day prosperously and happily without thee. Come then, and be in this schoolroom during the day and help us all to be faithful and successful in duty.

Guide the teacher in all that he[*she*] may do. Give him wisdom, and patience, and faithfulness. May he treat all his pupils with kindness, and if any of them should do anything that is wrong, wilt thou help him, gently but firmly to endeavor to bring him back to duty. May he sympathize with the difficulties and trials of all, and promote the present happiness, as well as the intellectual progress, of all who are committed to his care.

Take care of the pupils, too. May they spend the day pleasantly and happily together. Wilt thou, who did originally give us all our powers, direct and assist us all, this day, in the use and improvement of them. Remove difficulties from our path, and give us all fidelity and patience in every duty. Let no one of us destroy our peace and happiness this day by breaking any of thy commands, or encouraging our companions in sins or neglecting, in any respect, our duty. We ask all in the name of our great Redeemer. Amen.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**SCHOOL IN THE 1850S****FACT SHEET**

From *School Days, 1850s*, compiled by Billie Gammon, ©1986 by Washburn-Norlands Foundation.

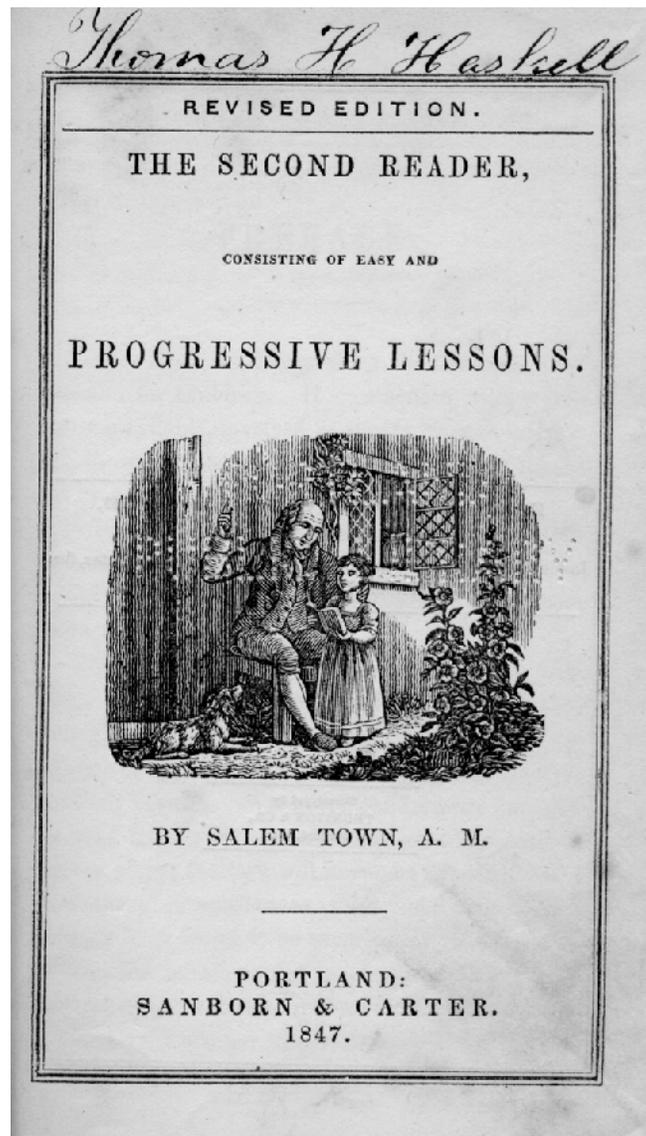
- Many towns had one room schoolhouses, with one teacher who taught children of all ages.
- There was no electricity--no lighting, no central heating, and certainly no computers. Buildings were heated by wood stoves that often let sooty smoke into the classroom.
- Children walked to school--there was no public transportation.
- There were no bathrooms--children had to use outhouses nearby.
- Male teachers were paid about \$15.50 per month. Female teachers were paid \$5.50 per month.
- School lasted from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with an hour for lunch from 12 to 1.
- Paper was limited, so students used slates with slate pencils to practice writing. Sometimes they would make their own copybooks, using goose quill pens dipped in ink to write with.
- Students would study primarily reading, writing, and arithmetic, the three R's.
- Usually there were two terms each year: winter and summer. Winter term was 8-12 weeks long, and usually had more older students. Summer was 6-8 weeks long.
- Students were not required to go to school. Some stayed home to help their parents on the farm or in the house instead.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLAYING SCHOOL  
REACTION PAPER**

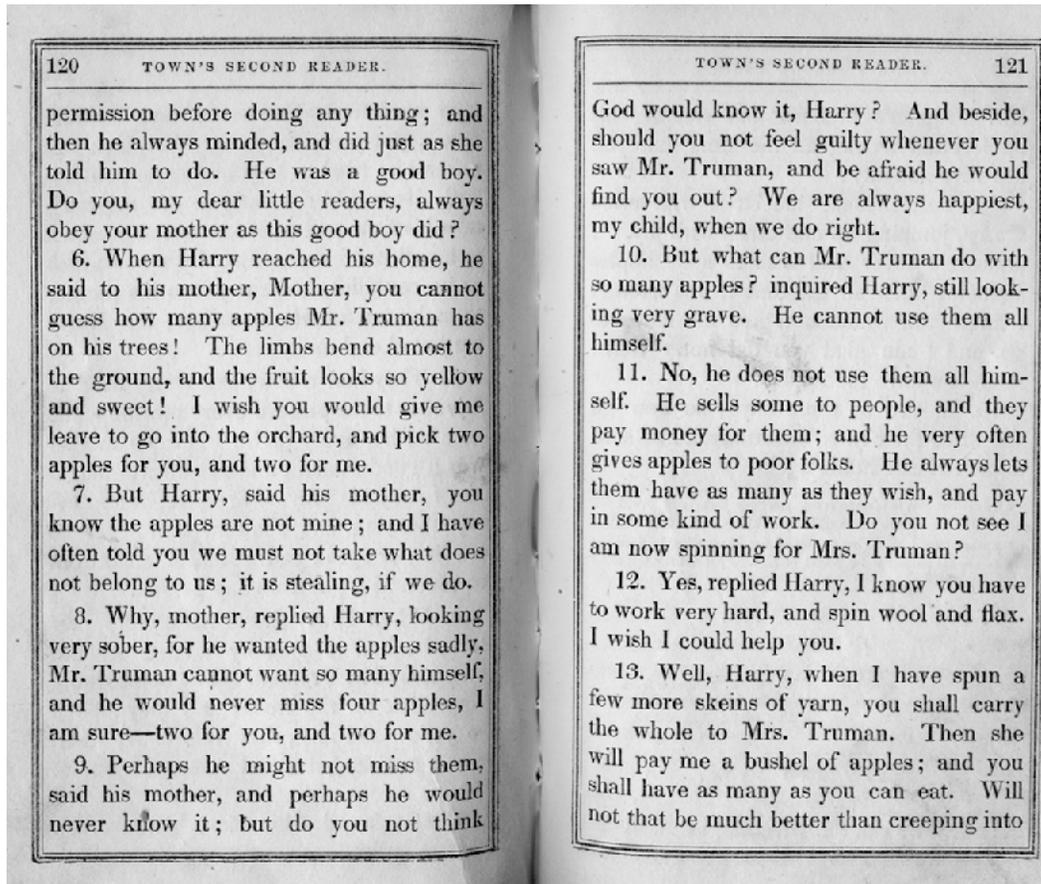
On a separate sheet of paper, write a reaction to your experience as a student in a simulated 19th century school. Use the following questions to guide your writing.

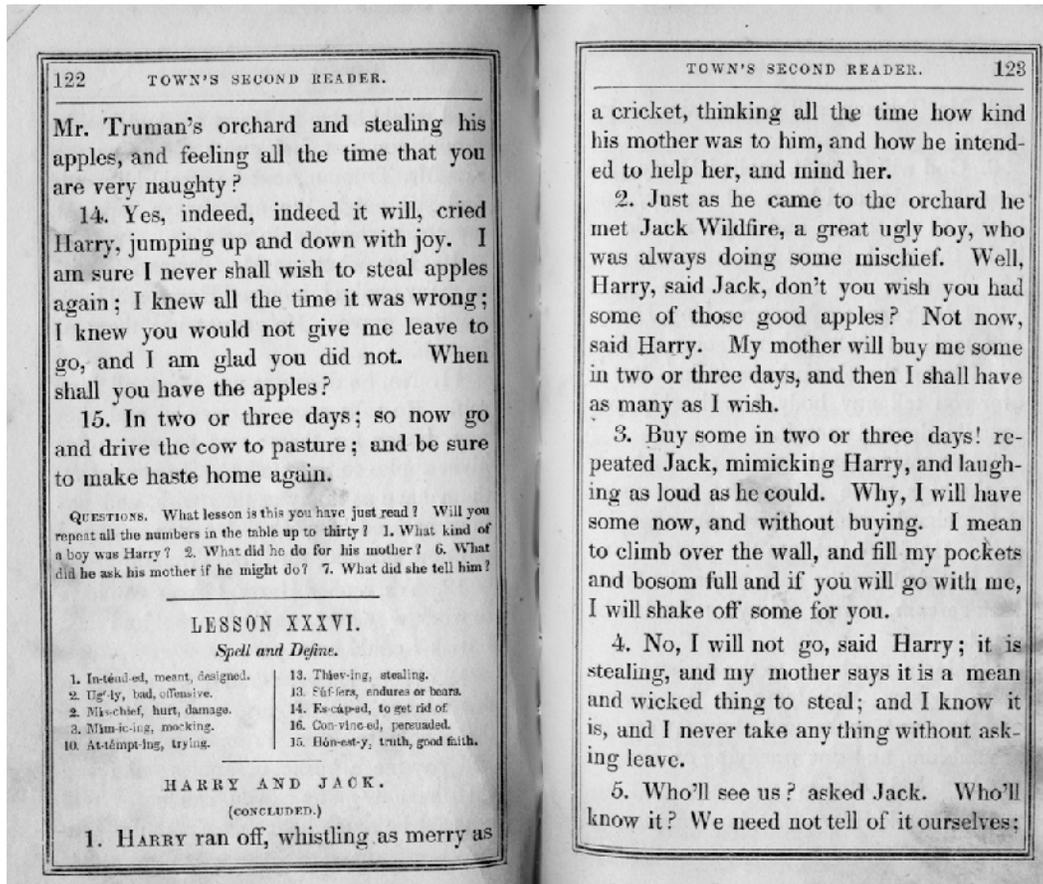
1. How would you compare your simulated experience of going to school in the 19th century to going to school today? What is different?
2. What parts of the simulation or of your classroom were not an accurate reflection of the time period?
3. What was classroom discipline like in the 19th century? How does it differ from discipline today? Do you think it is more or less effective?
4. What did you think of the stories from the *Second Reader*? Did you agree with the morals they taught?
5. Do you learn the same morals in school today? Do you learn different morals?
6. What did you think of the opening prayer? Why might that be controversial in a classroom today?
7. Would you have liked to have gone to school in the 19th century? Why or why not?



*The Second Reader*, by Salem Town L.L.D. As reprinted by the Washburn-Norlands Foundation, 1978.  
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<p>14. But for fear that I ever should dare From all your commands to depart, Whenever I'm saying my prayer, I'll ask for a dutiful heart.</p> <p>QUESTIONS. What things are called sweet in this lesson? 5. What are called far more sweet? 8. What should children who have brothers and sisters do? 11. How should children treat their parents?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LESSON XXXV. <i>Spell and Define.</i></p> <table border="0"><tr><td>1. Sup-pôrt, to gain a living.</td><td>6. Reach-ed, arrived at.</td></tr><tr><td>3. Steal, to take without leave.</td><td>10. Grave, sober, serious.</td></tr><tr><td>5. Con-sent, permission.</td><td>10. Skein, a knot of thread.</td></tr><tr><td>5. Per-mis-sion, leave.</td><td>10. In-quired, asked.</td></tr></table>  <p style="text-align: center;">HARRY AND JACK.</p> <p>1. LITTLE HARRY was a good boy, about seven years old. Harry's father was dead, and his mother had to work</p>		1. Sup-pôrt, to gain a living.	6. Reach-ed, arrived at.	3. Steal, to take without leave.	10. Grave, sober, serious.	5. Con-sent, permission.	10. Skein, a knot of thread.	5. Per-mis-sion, leave.	10. In-quired, asked.
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<p>very hard to support herself and her little boy. Harry was very sorry for his mother, and he tried to help her all he could.</p> <p>2. He would rise early in the morning, take his little pail on his arm, and go down to a spring of water, and dip up as much as he could lift, and carry it to his mother to make tea for her breakfast; but Harry ate bread and milk.</p> <p>3. They had a cow, and Harry used to drive her to the pasture every morning, and go after her every night. Harry's mother was a good woman, and she always taught him to say his prayers every night and every morning, and she told him never to tell lies, or speak bad words, or steal even so much as a pin from any person.</p> <p>4. When Harry drove his cow to pasture, he had to pass by a large orchard owned by Mr. Truman. The apples hung very thick on the trees; and they looked so yellow and nice, that little Harry wished, and wished, he had some of them to eat.</p> <p>5. But he always asked his mother's</p>									





and Mr Truman will never miss a few apples.

6. God will know it, replied Harry. He sees all we do, and hears all we say, and knows all we think; and I will not do so bad a thing. I should feel afraid to see Mr. Truman.

7. I don't care for your preaching, Harry, said Jack. I shall pick me some apples, and I know there's no harm in it. But if ever you tell any body, I will whip you soundly, depend upon it.

8. So saying, Jack sprang to climb upon the high stone fence, that surrounded the orchard, while Harry ran after his cow. He drove her into the pasture and was just shutting the gate when he heard Jack scream, Harry! Harry! as loud as he could.

9. Harry ran back to the orchard, and there he saw Jack lying on the ground and the great rocks and stones were all around him, and one was lying on him, so that he could not rise.

10. He told Harry, that, in attempting to

jump over the wall, his foot caught between two stones, and he fell backward; and the stones fell on him, and he feared his leg was broken.

11. But, Harry, continued he, do try and lift this stone off my leg and help me home, and I never will attempt to steal again. I cannot take off the stones, said Harry, they are so large and heavy; but I will run and call Mr. Truman.

12. O! don't call him! don't call him! He will whip me for trying to get into his orchard, and throwing down his wall; I would rather lie here all day than let him know it.

13. I knew you would be ashamed to have him know it, said Harry, but I shall call him. So Harry ran to Mr. Truman's, and told him the whole truth, and Mr. Truman told him he was a good, honest boy; but as for Jack, said he, he is called an ugly, lying, thieving rogue, and if he has broken his leg, people will not care much for the pain he suffers; though they will pity his poor mother. O! it is a sad

