

The **Story Behind It:**

Why I **Designed Noah **Text****

You're probably wondering what that funny looking text above is all about. My name is Sarah K. Blodgett, and I'm the creator and developer of that funny looking text, aka, **Noah Text**. It's a tool to help new readers, struggling readers, and those with dyslexia. As simple as it looks, there is quite a story behind it, and it spans the past 15 years of my life. Whether you're interested in this special tool or not, please take the time to read my story, as it affects us all immensely.

It all started with my son during his early school years. His reading curriculum consisted of a blend of phonics and whole word memorization, and he was struggling severely with it. He was one of those smart kids that loved to learn and was extremely curious, but hated school. Both his teacher and I were concerned, so I turned to Dr. Miriam Cherkas-Julkowski.

Dr. Cherkas-Julkowski is a respected educational diagnostician and consultant with clients throughout the United States. After working with my son, she recommended an explicit and systematic reading program that attunes young readers to patterns within words, specifically emphasizing the rime, as in: AG in rAG, AGE in rAGE, OUGHT in bOUGHT. As simple as it sounds, it did wonders. It typically takes a struggling reader awhile to work through the program, however, as our language is vast, but I was amazed.

Unfortunately, once the program was complete, he still struggled with reading speed and fluency when reading higher level books. However, this is typical of struggling readers. So, I devised a little system of my own, as he was anxious to read big kid books. Using a pencil, I went through the first several pages of each book and slashed out the syllables of words that I knew he would struggle with, as in: cre/ate.....di/ag/no/sis....un/be/liev/a/ble. This helped him tremendously. It sped up his reading and gave him the confidence to read on. I was essentially continuing on with Dr. Cherkas-Julkowski's recommendation by highlighting patterns to help guide him through. I developed a set of training wheels for my new reader, so to speak. The sad thing was I wished all our books had the multi-syllable words segmented and slashed out throughout the whole text. Certainly, a new reader doesn't tackle Harry Potter overnight! Anyway, we carried on, and as the years progressed, my son's speed and fluency continued to grow, slowly but

surely. Again, this is the typical path of a struggling reader; it's a long road. In fact, many kids continue to need accommodations in their later schooling to receive extra time on tests, and sadly, many suffer from anxiety and depression. Many drop out of school. The statistics are astoundingly sad. Though, let it be known, this is not a sign of less intelligence, far from it. In fact, some of the most brilliant, successful people in the world have this struggle. Just take a brief look in your history books, and you'll see.

Throughout the years, the idea of books with modified word text never left my mind. The idea would come back to me over and over again when I came across reading statistics and debates on our literacy crisis. So, a few years ago I started toying with the idea of modifying books on my own and started playing with various fonts and symbols. The idea was to modify books in the public domain, such as Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, or write my own little series of books to get it started, as I've always been a good storyteller. I contacted Dr. Cherkas-Julkowski to see if she thought this was a crazy idea, and she gave me her full support. The thought of starting a new career, and at the same time helping children and adults with literacy issues, was literally a dream come true for me, as I was always very passionate about this subject.

Since I'm technically not an educator and just a "mom", I wanted to conduct my own research to back this up. Essentially, I wanted to be prepared to bring this to the market and not make a fool of myself. I've worked as a paralegal for years, and do have a good mind for research, so for me that was a good place to start. But, once I started researching, I couldn't stop; I probably spent a good two to three years pouring over scholarly articles, statistics, and reported facts. Not only did I convince myself I was on the right path in developing this product, I became convinced we "Americans" have inherited a bum deal that very few are aware of...

For instance, did you know that our language has one of the deepest, most inconsistent, and irregular writing systems in the world? Such, that it takes our children two to three times longer compared to most other languages to learn to read. One of the reasons is that half of our language is of foreign origin. Thus, English is essentially a mixture of various languages all wrapped into one deep, arduous system.

Did you know that the key predictor of children requiring intensive reading instruction in English is poor phonological awareness skills? Yet, it is rarely a concern in languages with consistent, regular writing systems, as the predictability

of the language itself remediates this issue. In other words, our irregular crazy writing system trips our kids up!

Also, did you know that reading itself is not hard wired in our brains, as from an evolutionary perspective it is a fairly new system? Let's think about this one for a moment. Humans developed our writing systems, so that we can better communicate with one another, and these systems are subsequently passed down through the generations to be mastered. The critical part here is this – as our societies have become more modern, the necessity to be fully literate is critical to survival. Thus, we cannot take the writing system that we inherit lightly. And, remember, this is a man-made system; we created it! And, the writing system that we've inherited right here in the United States is causing us a lot of problems.

You see it in the news all the time...the U.S. is falling behind in literacy, math, and science compared to most other countries. And, the deep concern is that this trend is not stopping; countries are continuing to pass us by, as their educational systems become stronger. You may be wondering why we're behind in math and science, as you're reading this... The answer is pretty clear. We spend so much time throughout our school day focused on reading instruction we simply don't have as much time to spend on these other critical subjects. Note, Finland is consistently a top ranking country in all subjects, and they have one of the simplest, most regular writing systems in the world, such that it only takes six to twelve months to master. Think about the higher level thinking and vocabulary that develops with such early mastery to read. This totally puts us at a disadvantage both personally and globally. Also, take note, comparative studies have been conducted across languages taking economics, culture, and other variables into account; they consistently show our language is a big problem!

Sadly, this critical issue is not well known, yet it has been debated in the past. In fact, there are prominent figures throughout our history that recognized this problem, and in turn, campaigned to have our spelling system reformed. These figures included the likes of Benjamin Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt. Yet, reforming our language at this point in time is highly unlikely, as English is deeply embedded throughout the world. It would be a massive undertaking to say the least.

The final question is this – does my funny looking text make a difference in solving this problem? I am proud to say, yes, it does. All of the studies and statistics convinced me that the backbone of mastering any form of language is predictability, which makes perfect sense. We look for regularities and patterns to

understand our world in all subjects. We look for predictability! Thus, you give a child a reading program that systematically and explicitly teaches word patterns. You give that child plenty of practice to see those patterns in text. And, eventually, that child will become a fluid reader. Eventually, the training wheels come off, as intuition will take over. You are essentially bringing predictability to a system that is otherwise very unpredictable! And, you are doing it in a very logical manner, such that the patterns eventually come to life on their own.

When the media covers our educational rankings, this issue should be at the forefront. Politicians, parents, and educators take note. The United States is the most creative, entrepreneurial country in the world. We can solve this problem! **Noah Text** is one creative solution. Hopefully, my story, in-depth research article, and program, which you can access at www.noahtext.com, will bring this issue to light and bring **Noah Text** to individuals that so deeply need it.

Noah Text – The Facts...

Predictable written languages have clear syllable breaks, and predictable vowel patterns. The importance of this is obvious. When we don't know a word, those are the first things we look for. Thus, to "simulate" a predictable language, we must simply highlight these important factors. We highlight syllable breaks and accentuate long vowels, similar to an acute accent mark, which is used in many languages. We also highlight patterns (rimes) within one syllable words. We do all this while keeping the words intact. The result is this:

This is an example of the way words look in a higher level book modified in **Noah Text** (Syllables + Long Vowels):

The **pronunciation of **nantion** is **different** from **nanational**, as well as the words **real** and **reality**, **sign** and **signature**. This is **confusing** to new and **struggling** **readers** and to those that are **duslexic**. That's why **Noah Text** **highlights** **critical** **patterns**. It's **like** **giving** the **reader** a **key** to the **puzzle**!**

This is an example of the way words look in a simple early reader modified in **Noah Text** (Rimes + Long Vowels):

These small words teach us how to
read when chunks are in bold,
such as would, could, should, and
light, night, right, and fight!

Noah Text comes in several versions to give educators and individuals optimum flexibility.

Early Readers – Noah Text (Rimes + Long Vowels)*
For maximum benefit.

Early Readers – Noah Text (Just Rimes)*
For slightly more skilled readers.

Chapter Books – Noah Text (Syllables + Long Vowels)
For maximum benefit.

Chapter Books – Noah Text (Just Syllables)
For slightly more skilled readers.

Chapter Books – Plain Text
For proficient readers.

Noah Text is currently endorsed by Educational Diagnostician and Consultant, Dr. Miriam Cherkes-Julkowski, which she outlines in a letter at the beginning of each book. As well, Noah Text falls within the National Reading Panel’s guidelines of evidence-based reading instruction and can be used as an instructional scaffold.

*Note: The word “rime” is a linguistic term and refers to the pattern of letters starting with the vowel and going to the end of the syllable.

Noah Text is a creative way of tackling our literacy crisis and was developed with the following in mind:

The English writing system is highly inconsistent and extremely deep, requiring extensive reading instruction and practice.

The English writing system causes a further barrier to those born with dyslexia exasperating its effects.

We know the proper way to teach reading, with programs such that Dr. Miriam Cherkes-Julkowski endorses, ones that systematically teach word **patterns** making our language less ambiguous and phonologically more accessible. However, many kids tend to fall off without consistent reading practice and continuous exposure to print. Thus, reading higher level texts becomes a burdensome task.

Noah Text fills the gap – from instruction to fluency. It continues where instruction and decodable texts leaves off by continuing to guide the reader toward the most critical information within our print system – **patterns**.

According to the National Reading Panel, phonological awareness is crucial for reading development and onset/rime instruction, syllable segmentation, and individual vowel sound instruction are critical features of the NRP's recommendations. **Noah Text** highlights these critical features while keeping words intact and imbedding it into text.

Many languages clearly identify their long vowels with acute accent marks. **Noah Text** is utilizing this same technique without altering the current print system.

Noah Text, coupled with the right instruction, brings transparency and regularity to our complex writing system.

Noah Text allows the reader to tackle both multisyllable words and single syllable words with ease.

Noah Text promotes self-teaching by “simulating” a predictable writing system.

Noah Text allows the reader to read with comfort, eliminating anxiety, while promoting further independent reading experiences.

Noah Text alleviates the burden it puts on working memory, so that the reader has better comprehension.

Noah Text may be utilized by anyone that struggles with reading speed and fluency, whether they are new readers, struggling readers, those with reading disabilities and delays, or ESL students.

Noah Text can be used as a short-term tool or as a long-term tool, depending on the reader's comfort and skill level.

Noah Text is currently being offered under its own book series with the anticipation that it will be picked up by other authorized publishers, computer software companies, etc.

This information is brought to you by **Noah Text** (patent pending).