

FOREWORD

BY THE PUBLIC TRUSTEE

BERNARD SHAW died on 2 November 1950 and his Will, by which he appointed the Public Trustee to be executor and trustee, contained provisions for a new 'Proposed British Alphabet', a subject in which he always had a great interest.

Shaw imposed on his trustee the duty of seeking and publishing a more efficient alphabet of at least forty letters than the existing one of twenty-six letters to enable 'the said language to be written without indicating single sounds by groups of letters or by diacritical marks'. The Public Trustee was also directed to

employ a phonetic expert to transliterate my play entitled *Androcles and the Lion* into the proposed British Alphabet assuming the pronunciation to resemble that recorded of His Majesty our late King George V and sometimes described as Northern English; to employ an artist calligrapher to copy the transliteration for reproduction by lithography, photography or any other method that may serve in the absence of printers' types; to advertise and publish the transliteration with the original Doctor Johnson's lettering opposite the transliteration page by page and a glossary of the two alphabets at the end and to present copies to public libraries in the British Isles, the British Commonwealth, the American States North and South and to national libraries everywhere in that order.

Shaw directed his trustee

to bear in mind that the proposed British Alphabet does not pretend to be exhaustive as it contains only sixteen vowels whereas by infinitesimal movements of the tongue countless different vowels can be produced all of them in use among speakers of English who utter the same vowels no oftener than they make the same fingerprints.

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Shaw's residuary estate was directed to be held for a period on certain trusts for these purposes, but such purposes were declared by a Judge of the Chancery Division of the High Court of Justice in England to be invalid in law. The Public Trustee appealed from this decision, and by way of compromise the British Museum, the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, and the National Gallery of Ireland (who in default of the alphabet provisions in the Will were entitled to the residuary estate) agreed to pay a certain sum to the Public Trustee to be applied in furtherance of the Alphabet trusts.

At the end of 1957 the Public Trustee let it be known that he would award a prize of £500 for the design of a new alphabet complying most nearly with the provisions of Shaw's Will.

In the course of 1958 about 450 designs were submitted from all parts of the world.

On New Year's Eve 1959 the Public Trustee announced that there did not appear to be one outstanding design which might with confidence be said to be as satisfactory as what might be achieved by further effort and that he was not prepared at that time to single out one as the new Alphabet to be adopted for the purposes of the Will. There were, however, four designers who were judged to be of such outstanding merit that the prize money of £500 was divided equally between them, thus closing the competition. Those four designers were Mrs Pauline M. Barrett (of Canada), Mr J. F. Magrath, Dr S. L. Pugmire, and Mr Kingsley Read.

The Public Trustee then asked an expert in this field to collaborate with one or all of the four designers mentioned above to produce the best possible alphabet as envisaged by Shaw's Will. The result is the design which appears in the Key on page 151 and on the detachable

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bookmark between pages 16 and 17 and which has been applied in this publication.

In authorizing the publication of this book the Public Trustee gratefully acknowledges the encouragement he has received from a large number of correspondents throughout the world but must single out for special mention the technical advice given by Mr Alan T. Dodson formerly of H.M. Stationery Office, and by Mr Peter MacCarthy of the Department of Phonetics at Leeds University, and to the latter he is also indebted for the transliteration now published. He also thanks all the very many designers, particularly Mrs Barrett, Mr Magrath, and Dr Pugmire, whose own designs and observations contributed so much to helping the Public Trustee to make a final choice. He is especially grateful, however, to Mr Kingsley Read, whose design has been adopted and to whose typographic artistry the transliteration in this book is its own tribute.

C. R. SOPWITH
Public Trustee

Kingsway
London WC 2
1962

INTRODUCTION TO SHAW'S ALPHABET

HERE is Shaw's alphabet. It has been proved that those who wish to read it can do so after only a few hours of concentrated deciphering.

Why should anyone wish to use it? And why should there be any departure from the familiar forms of the Roman alphabet in which English is printed and written?

You will notice from the comparisons that Shaw's alphabet is both more legible and one-third more economical in space than traditional printing, and this should lead to a great increase in reading speed. The characters themselves are very distinct. To prove them more legible, open the book and hold it upside down in front of a mirror. Both mirrored pages will thus become equally unfamiliar. Keep the back of the book pressed against your lips, and advance towards the mirror until you are able to see individual characters clearly enough to be able to copy them. Note that the Shaw characters are clearly seen at a greater distance.

The economy in space and greater simplicity of characters ought also to increase the speed and ease of *writing* – even more than it does the ease of reading. Many of the characters easily join into pairs and trios to form syllables which recur frequently in English words; the sounds of the language are completely characterized, thus permitting abbreviation with great reliability. Shaw found traditional script too laborious, and Pitman's shorthand too economical. Though at this time we can only guess, it is probable that an abbreviated handwriting speed of 60–100 words a minute, with complete reliability

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of reading, will be possible for those who attain 'automatic' facility with Shaw's alphabet. In other words, reading may be 50-75 per cent, and writing 80-100 per cent faster, and even 200-300 per cent, by using simple abbreviations.

Shaw insisted that, unless his alphabet were to offer the substantial advantages he himself desired, there would be no reason for adding to the existing media of communication, which include: typewriting, shorthand, morse, semaphore, and braille, in addition to the Roman alphabet which is itself represented by three quite different sets of signs (as in 'ALPHABET', 'alphabet', and '*alphabet*').

The Key on page 152 (duplicated on the bookmark) will enable you to achieve the beginnings of skill and the satisfaction of success within three or four hours. Although this means starting from scratch, remember that Isaac Pitman, whose shorthand Shaw used for all his writings, also did so with a system offering the same advantages as Shaw's alphabet: that is, the saving of time, effort, and money.

Shaw did not want you and me to *abandon* the Roman alphabet. The long-established Roman figures (I,II,III,IV,V,VI,VII,VIII,IX) remain even after the Arabic figures (the newer and handier 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9) have found favour. We now use both, with greater convenience. The new figures were not imposed, nor the old supplanted. Similarly, Shaw believed, uses would be found for a new and handier alphabet *without* abandoning the old one.

If those who tried it found it advantageous, they would use it, and by their example it would gain what following it deserved. If its benefits were substantial enough, it would spread and establish itself through merit - as

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Arabic numerals did despite the then complete satisfaction with Roman numerals.

Utilitarian advantage is thus the principle governing the new alphabet. Shaw was unique in pointing out that substantial economy could be attained only (a) if the designer were to *depart* from a system evolved by the Romans 2,000 years ago for carving their public notices in stone; (b) if a single set of alphabetical characters were used – abolishing the different look of words in capitals, small letters, and linked handwritten letters; and (c) if each distinct sound of the language were spelt with its own unvarying character.

These three factors in designing, taken together, made a non-Roman alphabet essential. Of course, there is nothing revolutionary in that. There are hundreds of non-Roman alphabets – and there are several variations within the Roman alphabet, e.g.

Roman variations	{	HERE IS A SENTENCE here is a sentence <i>here is a sentence</i>
------------------	---	---

Greek	ἡρ ις α σεντενς
-------	-----------------

Russian	ир ис а сентенс
---------	-----------------

Thus these four *English* words may already be represented in a number of existing alphabets.

Those who know Greek and English, Russian and English, etc., will have no difficulty in reading that sentence immediately in as many alphabets as they know – and it is considered at school that once a child has learned his A, B, C, D he is well placed to learn also his a, b, c, d, his *a, b, c, d*, his $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta$ (Greek), and his а, б, в, г (Russian).

Only a few hours will be needed to persuade you that the new alphabet has the potential advantages Shaw

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intended for it. At first you will read and write it in a plodding childlike way, as you once did Roman. Much more rapidly than a child's, your familiarity and ease will grow, until the use of Shaw's alphabet becomes as natural and automatic as your use of Roman – but faster.

In personal and intimate writing the forty-eight (40 + 8) characters of the Shaw alphabet may faithfully portray the pronunciation of the individual; but, as Shaw pointed out, too eccentric a dialect may hamper, and even destroy, effective communication. He considered that, though there was no need to standardize writing if not intended for publication, there was every need for conformity in print; standard spellings being particularly desirable when that print is intended for circulation throughout the English-speaking world.

In his Will, Shaw specified just such a standardization for this play. He laid down for it a 'pronunciation to resemble that recorded of His Majesty our late King George V and sometimes described as Northern English'. He was an expert in stage direction and, so it may be supposed, considered this pronunciation to be the best basis for comprehension with acceptability in reading as he had found it to be in speech from the stage.

But by all means *write* as you think fit, and leave experts to standardize printers' spelling.

This book costs very little. Get your friends to buy one and to learn the alphabet so that you can write to one another – or, if you become so skilled that you no longer need to 'keep your eye in', give it away.

JAMES PITMAN

House of Commons
London
1962

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NOTE: I have offered, if there is the demand, to organize what were known as 'ever-circulators' in the early days of my grandfather. Send me a letter in Shaw's alphabet, mentioning your particular interests or circumstances. Give me your name and address in ordinary writing on an enclosed envelope. I will then try to arrange 'circles' of five or six who, drawn together in a friendship by Shaw's alphabet, will all circulate their own letters to which each in turn will add.

I have also offered, if there is a demand, to get further material published in the Shaw alphabet. When you have learnt to read and write fluently, and want more than your ever-circulator correspondence to read, please write to me, Sir James Pitman, K.B.E., M.P., at the House of Commons, London, S.W. 1, England, saying which of Shaw's works or other literature you would like to read in a printed transcription. I can make no promises – other than to consider your suggestions most sympathetically. Meanwhile, if anyone wishes to get printed their own material in Shaw's alphabet, they are permitted to do so, since the copyright for the alphabet and for the type-faces is public property. Messrs Stephen Austin & Sons, Ltd, of Caxton Hill, Ware Road, Hertford, England, hold a supply of the types and are willing to undertake the work. For the moment, type available is confined to 12-point size in the three founts exemplified in this book.

NOTES ON THE SPELLING

THE 'transliteration' was spelt in accordance with certain guiding principles that had to be laid down in advance. Though it is claimed that the decisions taken were wise ones, there is nothing binding about the resultant spellings; it is merely proposed that the spellings here shown be looked upon as standard, unless and until others come to be widely preferred, and when good reasons can be found for making a change.

(1) It is desirable that a given word should appear always in a given spelling and not vary from time to time. (This does not preclude individual writers from regularly using some spellings that differ from those in *Androcles*; it merely recommends consistency.)

(2) It follows from (1) above that a choice of possible spellings has to be made in the case of those very common short words that are differently pronounced at different times by one speaker – those having what are called 'strong and weak forms'. The decision was taken in principle to spell such words with their fullest pronunciation (since reduced forms can always be derived from fuller ones, whereas the converse is not possible). For the two kinds of exception to this, see (3) and (4) below.

(3) WORD-SIGNS. The design chosen to be the Shaw Alphabet has the characteristic feature incorporated in it of four 'word-signs' for the four most frequently occurring words of the language – *the*, *of*, *and*, *to* (it is estimated that one word in six is either *the* or *of* or *and* or *to*). These word-signs each consist of a single letter – that for the single sounds of *th*, *v*, *n*, and *t* respectively. The word-signs save valuable time and space.

(4) THE INDEFINITE ARTICLES. The words *a*, *an*

are here transliterated *not* to rhyme with *day*, *Ann* (which would be their 'fuller' pronunciation), but with the central, neutral, or shwa vowel actually heard in 'a man', 'another'. This has the advantage that the two words *a*, *an* can then be spelt with the same vowel – which would not otherwise be the case. Moreover, the 'fuller' pronunciation of these two words is hardly ever used. This constitutes the second exception to the principle in (2) above.

(5) Many English words have alternative pronunciations, each speaker generally using one of them consistently, e.g. *azure*, *subsidence*, *acoustic*, *controversy*, *laboratory*, and countless others. Clearly, the principle in (1) above required that a choice be made. In general, individuals are of course at liberty to spell in conformity with their own pronunciation. Alternative standard spellings of such words are likely to emerge; but until they do, the spellings in *Androcles* may be taken as standard.

(6) It is obvious that the spellings in *Androcles* will fit the speech of some English-speaking people better than others. Nevertheless, it is claimed that none will find it hard to read from the spellings shown, i.e., to get the meaning from the printed page. It is to enable the greatest number of people to read from the spellings easily that words are in general written out in their fullest form (see (1) above), especially since most readers of Shavian are already readers of English in Roman letters, and since this will be their first experience of reading English in the new script.

(7) It is for the reasons given in (1) and (6) above that the letter R is transliterated wherever it now occurs in Roman. The non-pronunciation of R in certain positions, which is characteristic of certain types of English speech, can easily be inferred from the spellings shown here – as

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it is now from our traditional orthography; but it would not be possible to deduce the pronunciation of R from a spelling which did not show it. Here again, the fuller form of words is the one shown, thus incidentally making the transliterated spellings more acceptable to, because conforming more closely to the speech of, a much larger number of speakers of English in all parts of the world.

(8) Even so, the spellings in *Androcles*, while not committing anyone to specific *qualities* of sound (since each reader will read his own qualities, e.g. of vowel sound, into each different letter), do nevertheless commit to a particular *distribution* of sounds, and this distribution may be at variance with the usage of different speakers, not only with respect to the alternative pronunciations within a given type of English (see (5) above), but as between the usage in the various areas of the English-speaking world. It is probable that, for example, American writers would favour other spellings in a number of instances, and that therefore further alternative spellings of some words will emerge. These are not likely to interfere greatly with the intelligibility of a text. It is in any case fitting that this first publication in an alphabet constructed in accordance with Shaw's wishes should show spellings in conformity with the kind of pronunciation he thought should be represented.

NOTE: It would be possible to extend the number of word-signs beyond the four provided for in the design. Thus, common words such as the following could regularly be spelt with a single consonant (the corresponding Roman letter is shown in brackets after each word): *for* (f), *be* (b), *with* (w), *he* (h), *are* (r), *so* (s), *do* (d). Further economies could be made by writing other common words with *two* letters, omitting the vowel between

NOTES ON THE SPELLING

initial and final consonants, e.g., *that* (t^ht), *was* (wz), *have* (hv), *not* (nt), *this* (t^hs), *but* (bt), *from* (fm), *had* (hd), *has* (hz), *been* (bn), *were* (wr), and so on. If such spellings became standardized, these invariable written forms would stand equally well for strong and weak forms in pronunciation, each reader supplying whichever he found appropriate in the context (which is what he does now). Naturally, it would always remain possible for a writer to indicate, by spelling out in full, any particular form he wished – to avoid ambiguity, or for the sake of emphasis, or in order to specify, for example in stage dialogue, some particular reading. For the reasons given in (6) above, *Androcles* has been transliterated without any abbreviations save those mentioned in (3) above. It is possible, however, that other abbreviations would come into use for private purposes but not for printing; it is also possible that some might come to be adopted in print as well.

PETER MAC CARTHY

The University
Leeds
1962

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

1. While learning to form the letters, write larger than usual. Once their shapes are thoroughly mastered, letters will be written fast without undue distortion.

A sheet of guide-lines can be inserted beneath your writing paper if you need them.

2. Use pencil, or a ball-point pen, or a nib pen giving only slight variation of stroke-thickness. Test your pen and your size of writing on the eight small-curve letters **out** to **err**. If your pen is too broad to write these clearly, either change it or write larger.
3. Cultivate an upright rather than a sloping handwriting. It will be more like printed letterpress and more distinguishable.
4. Make Tall and Deep letters about twice the height of Shorts, to allow for the inexactitudes of free handwriting.
5. Leave ample space between words. Write the letters of each word closely together. Avoid linking letters unnaturally.

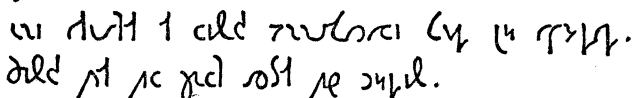
There is no need to link letters at all. But it frequently happens that the end of one letter naturally runs into the beginning of another; and the alphabet is so designed that this cannot produce alternative readings.

Junctions or links can occur only along one of the double guide-lines (used or imagined) within which Short letters are written. No links are permissible

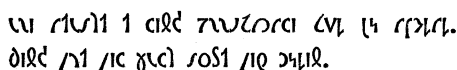
SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

between the guide-lines, nor above them, nor beneath them.

Fast writers are likely to make such natural junctions as these:



— in which it is easy to recognize these separate letters, and no others:



6. Be sure to distinguish properly between these Short letters:



7. While taking care, avoid over-anxiety. Avoid cramped fingers and heavy pressure of pen on paper. Only with a light touch will you write well, freely, and fast. As soon as hand or brain is fatigued, take a rest.

Little and often — but very often; that is the way to practise. You can practise on a newspaper's margin as happily as doing its crosswords. Earnest practice for a single week enables one to write with assurance if not with speed. You will be surprised at the brevity and simplicity of Shavian writing.

8. Re-read your practice writing. Learn by your own writing and spelling slips. Make sure that a reader would not hesitate.
9. If you have already learnt to read this book's Shavian pages without reference to any key, you will have no difficulty in spelling when you write.
10. This is a good first exercise in spelling and writing: From the Writers' Alphabet take the first pair of

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING

letters (consonants) and, from its righthand column, the first three pairs (vowels). Write down all the words these will make. A few minutes will show you how simple spelling is, and you will have mastered once for all the shapes of eight letters.

11. You can be perfectly understood without spelling quite 'like a book'. We shall all tend to spell words as we see them printed; but nobody should complain so long as spelling is intelligible. *To communicate* – more easily, sensibly, economically – is the whole purpose of Shavian writing.
12. Mutual encouragement helps. Interest yourself and fellow writers by joining an 'ever-circulator' as page 16 invites you to do. It is the way to get sufficient reading as well as writing practice. Have a shot at it; and good luck!

KINGSLEY READ

Abbots Morton
Worcester
1962

The Shaw Alphabet for Writers

Double lines = between pairs show the relative height of Talls, Deeps, and Shorts. Wherever possible, finish letters rightwards; those starred * will be written upwards. Also see heading and footnotes overleaf.

	Tall	Deep	
peep	l	=	l bib
tot	1	=	l dead
kick	d	=	p gag
fee	J	=	r vow
thigh	ð	=	q they
so	S	=	z zoo
sure	L	=	7 meaSure
church	℄	=	7 judge
yea	\	=	/ *woe
hung	ℓ	=	γ ha-ha

	Short	Short	
loll	C	=	o roar
mime*	∫	=	∖ nun


	Short	Short	
if	l	=	h eat
egg	ℓ	=	℄ age
ash*	J	=	7 ice
ado*	r	=	7 up
on	∖	=	o oak
wool	V	=	Λ ooze
out	℄	=	7 oil
ah*	∫	=	℄ awe
are	∫	=	∖ or
air	∫	=	∖ err
array	∫	=	∖ ear


		Tall	
Ian	r	=	ℓ yew














































































































The Shaw Alphabet Reading Key

The letters are classified as Tall, Deep, Short, and Compound.

Beneath each letter is its full name: its *sound* is shown in **bold** type.

Tall:  r l d j o s c z l l l

Deep:  **b** **ib** **dead** **gag** **vow** **they** **zoo** **meas** **ure** **judge** **woe** **ha-ha**

Short :                                                                                                             

Roar	nun	eat	age	ice	up	oak	ooze	oil	awc
2	7	4	5	9	7	0	A	>	3

Compound:

are	or	air	err	array	ear	Ian	yew
-----	----	-----	-----	-------	-----	-----	-----

The four most frequent words are represented by single letters: the ϱ , of ς , and \imath , to \mathfrak{l} .

Proper names may be distinguished by a preceding 'Namer' dot: e.g. ˙202, Rome.

Punctuation and numerals are unchanged. Learn the alphabet *in pairs*, as listed for Writers overleaf.