

Raindrops

Book 1

Textbook in English for Class I
(Special Series)



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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
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Foreword

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of pedagogic practices which overlook the children's own efforts to learn by observing their natural and social environment and by finding meaning in their everyday experience. The consequences of this legacy have been especially grim for rural children. Their everyday life experiences are either ignored or represented in a patronising manner in conventional textbooks. The new syllabi and textbooks brought out by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in the wake of NCF-2005, attempt to provide a somewhat equitable share of representation to rural and urban content, themes and images. In the context of English at the primary level, rural children deserve an altogether distinctive series of textbooks. *Raindrops* marks an unprecedented attempt of this kind. The textbooks in this series not only privilege the rural child's world and life, they also utilise the insights of modern theories in linguistics to make the experience of learning English an experience of joy and confidence-building for boys and girls studying in village schools.

The success of this effort now depends on the steps that school authorities and teachers will take to motivate children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that children are born with the capacity and skills to learn languages. These inborn capacities grow spontaneously in a positive environment in which children are encouraged to speak and write without the fear of being caught for making common mistakes. Teachers can create such an environment in the classroom by giving children frequent opportunities to participate. Easy access to attractive reading material is another positive factor. The NCF emphasises the importance of pursuing a multilingual approach in the teaching of any particular language. What ultimately matters in language learning is the child's confidence to articulate and interpret. *Raindrops* exemplifies the kind of relationship that a teacher should form with children in order to get the best out of them in terms of motivation and participation.

These objectives imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective the textbook proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. NCERT has prepared a series of source books on assessment in the primary classes. This series marks a major shift away from conventional tests and English is one of the subjects covered in this assessment series. We hope that schools will use the English source book in conjunction with *Raindrops*. All the textbooks in this series attempt to provide opportunities for fantasy and wondering, interaction in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

NCERT appreciates the hard work done by the Textbook Development Committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chief Advisor for

this book, Professor Malathy Krishnan of The English and Foreign Languages University (EFL-U), Hyderabad, for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. The Council acknowledges with appreciation the dedicated and creative work put in by Dr Varada Mohan Nikalje, Department of Languages, NCERT, in coordinating the preparation of this textbook, and also the support and encouragement provided by Professor R.J. Sharma, Head of the Department of Languages, NCERT. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G. P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution, and to Professor M.L. Tickoo formerly of CIEFL (now EFL-U), Hyderabad, and Professor S.C. Dubey, Department of English, University of Allahabad, Allahabad, for going through this book and offering valuable suggestions.

As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

New Delhi
1 March 2010

About the Book

The National Curriculum Framework, 2005, suggests that plurality of textbooks is a necessary requirement for curricular freedom. A single textbook does not meet the expectations and aspirations of teachers and learners uniformly. The same idea has been reinforced in the *Focus Group Position Paper on the Teaching of English* which suggests that the earlier practice of choosing from a range of available texts can be revived. It would be reasonable to expect that with a multiplicity of English textbooks, the diversity of English language environments in the country would be addressed better.

A series of textbooks in English, *Raindrops*, for the primary stage (Classes I to V) has been developed, keeping in mind first-generation school-goers as well as children whose only exposure to English is in school (and even within the school, usually, with limited time duration and constraints in quality).

The criterion that we must meet is people's aspirations for their children: the spontaneous and appropriate use of English for at least everyday purposes; in other words, to speak English, as against merely passing examinations in it, or knowing its grammar. The aim, therefore, is learners' exposure to the language (in this case, English) in meaning-making situations so as to trigger the formation of a language system by the mind.

Conventional textbooks presented the letters of the alphabet in the beginning itself, in the 'A for Apple' mode. This is no longer the case. Research on syllable recognition and letter-sound correspondence have shown that exposure to a series of words focussing on a particular sound facilitates learning. We need to develop a focus in which the research on language learning is integrated with the language teaching.

In this textbook the alphabet is presented in two ways:

1. *Letter Recognition*: The complete English alphabet (both small and capital letters) is presented at certain intervals. It has been given either horizontally, for instance, where a lesson ends, or vertically, as a sort of add-on border to the lesson. These would indicate to the child the order as well as the number of letters in the alphabet, which he/she would glance at, perhaps trace with a finger, or simply chant along with others in the class.
2. *Tracing the Letters*: The letters of the alphabet have been grouped in such a way that: the letters using the downward stroke, such as 'd', 't' etc. are in one group; the letters using curved lines such as 'c' and 'o' are grouped together. Each group of letters has been given at intervals throughout the book, in dotted outline forms, along with space for the child to practise further.

There is no inherent contradiction in these two ways of presentation. The letter groups for tracing are based on the hand movement required, and the letter recognition indicates the alphabetical order of the letters, which is necessary for reference skills later, to look up dictionaries, directories, and so on. A decision was taken to teach the lower case first, because capital letters account for only about five per cent of the written word. Also, the

lower case letters are the ones that children see more frequently in their environment.

It is found that some children confuse between 'b' and 'd'. For, in writing 'b' the semicircle comes on the right side of the vertical stroke; in 'd' the semicircle is on the left. A conscious attempt has been made to address this problem, through illustrations.

Four poems have been put in the beginning of the text. These are to expose the child to little songs and rhymes as they would have had in their mother tongue. As with rhymes for children everywhere, the sounds are the main focus in these poems and not so much the meaning. A deliberate decision was taken not to include any kind of activities or exercises with the first few poems. They are meant to be read for enjoyment only.

Phonological awareness is the ability to discriminate between similar sounding words (the difference between 'gate' and 'late', for instance). Since a child who is phonologically aware is more likely to have reading success, it was thought important to find ways of developing it. Most importantly, children would be encouraged to have fun and play with words. The present textbook is one step in this direction.

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