

Introduction

Yes, I Can Read! was written for fourth graders through adults who are nonreaders, beginning readers, or struggling readers, those who speak English as well as ESL learners. The workbook was designed for learners who may be working with minimal assistance in a one-on-one, small group, or classroom setting, and its reading levels range from 0 to 5.9.

I had two goals in mind when I wrote *Yes, I Can Read!* First, my purpose was to simplify the reading process, and second, to provide learners with a technique, a method by which they could decode unfamiliar words within an age-appropriate format. The workbook focuses on the syllable and six syllable types (Peterson, 1998) combined in an Orton-Gillingham-based approach and page format. If the learner knows that the words he or she encounters can be divided into syllables, and that nearly all those syllables fit into only six groups, the reading process is simplified. As a result, using *Yes, I Can Read!*, the learner can acquire a significant sight vocabulary of over 2,000 words and a method he or she can utilize to decode unfamiliar words and become an independent reader.

The Three Approaches Explained

First, students are instructed to underline vowel sounds in featured words, as the number of vowel sounds equals the number of syllables. They are then able to divide a word based on its number of syllables. Second, learning the six syllable types enables them to look for syllable patterns, sound out syllables, and thus the word. Third, learning is maximized using the Orton-Gillingham-based multi-sensory approach, as students/learners see, say, hear, trace, and write the words. Specifically, the learner's knowledge of consonant and vowel sounds, syllables, and sight vocabulary, as well as his/her spelling and handwriting skills are solidified, all of which in turn promotes his/her automaticity and fluency (Lyon, 1998).

Sequence

With some modifications, *Yes, I Can Read!* is based on the "Stern Center Sequence of Phonological Awareness, Word Analysis and Spelling Skills" which follows a traditional, structured sequence found in most reading programs that graduate from beginning reading instruction through the end of the fifth grade.

The Remedial Student

Research shows that many students who have had trouble learning to read lack phonemic awareness, or the concept of a sound-letter connection (Lyon, 1998). As a result, explicit, sequential phonics as well as the multi-sensory approach (VAKT technique) are two research-based, effective methods of instruction that are central to *Yes, I Can Read!* In the same way, running through the entire workbook is the decoding method students learn and use so they can become independent readers. Although there is no one approach or material that holds the key to teaching someone to read, this workbook offers the above-mentioned approaches combined with extensive lessons, repetition, practice, and words in context.

In addition to effective materials, encouragement is an essential component of a reading program. All students need encouragement, but none do more than the remedial student, who has experienced frustration and failure. Offer support, praise, and congratulatory comments such as *good, yes, good job, okay!*, etc. whenever possible. Stickers, trinkets, certificates, or other rewards are also effective. Furthermore, offer encouragement during assessments using nonverbal and facial cues that he or she is doing well: It helps calm a learner's nerves.

Flexibility

First, *YICR** can be used as a decoding program wherein the student starts on his or her reading level and progresses through the book. Second, one can teach the six syllable types by using the six units in the workbook devoted to those syllables. Third, *YICR* can be used as a supplement in conjunction with other materials to reinforce learning in particular areas. *Yes, I Can Read!* is an essential component of a balanced literacy program.

Diagnosis and Prescription

Administer a standardized reading test or informal reading inventory, phonics checklist, or other assessments to determine the student's reading level and diagnose strengths and weaknesses. Keeping a folder on each student in which ongoing assessment, interviews, interest surveys, and informal notes (anecdotal records) on the student documenting reading errors, such as *bog* for *dog*, *guess* for *guests*, etc. is invaluable in keeping track of strengths, weaknesses, progress or lack of progress, assigned materials and how they work with your student. Even if your student is not beginning with the unit that corresponds to his reading level, your diagnosis will help determine the particular lessons you assign in the workbook. This practice also helps establish a rapport with your learner, which is important if he or she is to have a positive attitude about working with you.

Where to Start

Unit 1 is the best place to start for nonreaders, and they should proceed in order through the units.

Unit 2 provides practice with the 21 consonants in initial position (beginning consonants). If your student knows the alphabet, knows the consonants and vowels, and can discriminate among beginning consonants in words, start here.

Unit 3 focuses on ending consonants and rhyming words, or word families. If your student has difficulty with ending consonants, start here.

Unit 4 If the student does not know the short vowel sounds, but he knows the skills practiced in the first three units, begin with Unit 4. If he is to make progress, the student must know the short vowel sounds. Unit 4 is also the first of the six units which focus on the six syllables. Once the learner reaches Unit 4, teaching the six-syllable concept can begin.

The six syllable types are taught in Units 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11. For any students using this workbook, the author recommends teaching the six-syllable concept (See Lesson Plan). The remaining units can be used in order, or unit pages can be used as needed. For students who are at the fourth grade level and need syllabication, teach the six-syllable concept; then learners can complete Units 12 and 13.

The author recommends a three- or four-pronged approach wherein as soon as students are able, a primer, or basal reader on their instructional reading level is added to the workbook in order to have students reading in context. Also, as soon as possible, they should be reading a book they enjoy on their independent reading level. Assign other materials such as one that targets comprehension, and a high-frequency word list such as the Dolch sight words. As students progress and your ongoing assessment dictates, change and modify assignments, keeping in mind that three to four of these types of materials are recommended as part of a balanced literacy program. With their growing skills, students will gain fluency and confidence by practicing reading.

* *Yes, I Can Read!*

Units and their corresponding grade levels are listed below.

Where to Start	
Units	Grade Levels
1 – 4*	Beginning – 1.9
5 – 7	2.0 – 2.9
8 & 9	3.0 – 4.8
10 – 13	4.9 – 5.9

Success

The six-syllable concept is featured in *Yes, I Can Read!* because it is successful and doable, especially for “older” students who are struggling readers. The author introduced the concept by pointing to an unabridged dictionary in her classroom of adults, whose reading levels ranged from 0 to 5.0, and asked them what they would think if she told them that nearly all of the words in the English language, words in that dictionary, could be divided into syllables, and that those syllables could be placed into just six categories or groups: They were immediately on board with the idea. The author taught the concept to the class as a whole, teaching one syllable type at a time, in the same order they are taught in the workbook. After all six syllables were taught, reviewed, and practiced, students used the same procedure individually, in writing, on the GED spelling list. Most students scored over 90% on the list, and, on the TABE test (Test of Adult Basic Education), most motivated students progressed one year per month.

Daily Lesson Plan (20-30 minutes)

- Overview

At the board, teach the concept to the class as a whole, teaching one syllable at a time. Have several copies of Appendix D, the six-syllable worksheet, to hand out so students can record syllables in the proper category during lessons. In *Yes I Can Read!*, start with Unit 4 and go in order, using the opening pages of units 4,5,6,7,10, and 11. These pages provide instructional content and examples. Following your classroom lessons, you can assign *YICR* pages in the appropriate unit for students to complete.

- Instruction

If students have their own copies of *YICR*, work with them using the material at the beginning of Units 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 11 to teach the six syllables. In any case, they will have the six-syllable worksheet. Teach the defining characteristics of each syllable type. For example, beginning with Unit 4, the first syllable is a closed syllable which ends with a consonant and has a short vowel. List and call for examples, directing students to record them in the square on their worksheet. Write a word on the board, like *hat*. At students’ direction, underline and count the number of vowel sounds. If they have difficulty hearing the vowel sounds, have them tap out sounds with thumb and finger or on the edge of their desks. Exaggerate the short *a* sound if necessary, and encourage them to say the word out loud. This is an interactive lesson which calls for participation. The number of vowel sounds equals the number of syllables. “How many vowel sounds?” (response: 1) “How many syllables?” (response: 1) The numbers must be the same. Write the number on the board to the right of the word.

* Students working in Units 1-4 require one-on-one attention.