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AUTHOR Corey, Kathleen; And Others
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ABSTRACT

The origins, rationale, and design of a program to prepare refugee children for elementary school experiences in the United States are described. The program, conducted in overseas refugee camps, began in 1987 as a complement to adult transitional programs. All children receive 18 weeks of instruction, with a schedule and activities similar to those found in a typical U.S. elementary school. The largest single block of school time is spent on English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instruction, taught thematically through a variety of activities integrating language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and science and social studies content instruction. Additional time is devoted to English literacy, mathematics, and enrichment activities. The report describes program structure briefly; the bulk of the report is an explanation of guiding principles underlying the program, methodologies used for oral language development (the natural approach) and literacy development (whole language approach), and a list of classroom instructional materials used, with publishers' addresses. (MSE)

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PREP

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PREPARING REFUGEES FOR ELEMENTARY PROGRAMS

The Overseas Refugee Training Program

Since 1980 the Bureau for Refugee Programs of the United States Department of State has sponsored English as a second language (ESL) and cultural orientation (CO) programs in refugee camps in Southeast Asia. These programs are now operating in the refugee processing centers in Phanat Nikhom, Thailand and Bataan, Philippines to prepare adult refugees, ages 16-55, from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam for resettlement and employment in the U.S. The curriculum for the 20-week pre-entry training program focuses on the linguistic, cultural, and employment skills needed by adult refugees upon arrival in the U.S.

Development of PREP

Until 1987, however, refugee children were not included in the overseas training program. Many arrived unprepared for the social and academic demands made on them in U.S. elementary schools.

In October 1986, the Bureau for Refugee Programs at the U.S. Department of State brought together U.S. elementary educators of refugee children and representatives from refugee resettlement and overseas refugee training agencies for a conference in Washington, D.C. At that conference, participants shared their expertise and made recommendations on the design and content of the program. The following summarizes the group's recommendations:

1. Affirming the distinction between second language "learning" and "acquisition" (Krashen and Terrell, 1983), the curriculum should provide for developing English language skills through the teaching of content. See Attachment 1 for a description of the principles underlying instruction.
2. While science and social studies need not be studied intensively, activities should be developed to help prepare the children for these content areas.

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3. Reading and writing from a whole language perspective (Goodman, 1986) should receive particular attention, with special literacy activities for non-literate students. See Attachment 2 for a description of these methods.
4. Study skills and interpersonal skills should be stressed throughout all components of the program.

In April 1987 the Preparing Refugees for Elementary Programs (PREP) was begun at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center. The goal of the program, which is operated by the World Relief Corporation, is to prepare children, ages 6-11, for further learning in the U.S. by teaching the linguistic, academic and interpersonal skills needed for successful entry into elementary schools. This program is dedicated to helping children learn how to learn and to develop academic and interpersonal skills through such activities as working in groups, playing at recess, completing homework assignments, doing projects, taking tests, and using the library.

PREP PROGRAM DESIGN

All children in PREP receive 18 weeks of instruction (approximately 400 hours), during which time their parents study English as a Second Language, Cultural Orientation, and Work Orientation to prepare for resettlement in the U.S. To further ease students' transition into U.S. schools, the PREP weekly schedule and school activities are typical of those in a U.S. elementary school.

The first ten minutes of each day are spent on "warm-up". This is when the teacher sets the tone for the day, discusses calendar information, takes attendance, and reinforces concepts that are being developed. On Monday mornings, students and teacher have a "sharing time," when they can talk about events that are important to them. This period is also a good opportunity for the teacher to evaluate informally the language proficiency of the students.

PREP Weekly Schedule

	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>
8:00-8:10	Warm-up	Warm-up	Warm-up	Warm-up	Warm-up
8:10-8:30	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading
8:30-9:00			English		
9:00-9:30			Language		
9:30-10:00			Units		
10:00-10:30	R	E	C	E	S
10:30-11:00	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
11:00-11:30	Math	Writing	Math	Writing	Math
11:30-12:00	Writing/ Wrap-up	Enrichment	Writing/ Wrap-up	Enrichment	Writing/ Wrap-up

The largest single block of time, nearly two hours, is for the 33 English Language Units, which deal with familiar elementary school topics:

Personal information	Health
Classroom	Personal Attributes
Calendar	Size
School Location	Feelings
Weather	Field Day Activities
Seasons	Animals
School People	Shopping
Clothing	Plants
Family	Maps & Globes

Home	Directions
Safety	Community Places
Body Parts/Senses	Community Helpers
Time	Telephones & Safety
Daily/Weekly Routines	Transportation
Food/Nutrition	Transit

The English Language Units are taught through a wide variety of activities that integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Since science and social studies are not separate subjects in the PREP curriculum, activities in these areas are incorporated in various English Language Units on Weather, Food, Community Places, Animals, and Plants. During the English Language Units, students also learn how to use such academic materials as charts, graphs, maps, and scales.

In addition to ESL, sixty minutes each day are devoted to developing English literacy-- 30 minutes for reading and 30 minutes for writing. This is based on the belief that children need to spend some uninterrupted time reading children's literature and that they need to have the opportunity to communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings through written language. The literacy sessions make the link between oral language and print as natural and enjoyable for the children as possible.

Students study math for eight 30-minute periods per week, participating in many large- and small-group activities. Lessons are carefully sequenced so that students not only develop mathematical concepts, but also learn to talk, read, and write about mathematics in English. Some concepts are introduced outside the math classes through English Language Unit topics, such as those involving money or measurement.

There are seven 30-minute periods allotted weekly to recess and enrichment. Through guided play and sports, children develop social skills for successful peer interaction: sharing, turn-talking, and cooperating. In addition, music, art, drama, puppet shows, board games, and video activities serve to develop motor skills and introduce children to aesthetic experiences.

Linkage with the U.S.

The Overseas Refugee Training Program hopes to enable educators in the U.S. to help students build on the training they have received in PREP. Unfortunately, many refugee students do not learn where they will be resettled in the U.S. until the final weeks of the program. As a result, there are limitations on how closely PREP can coordinate with school districts in the U.S.

Despite these constraints, teachers in U.S. schools can easily learn about their Indochinese students' experiences in PREP through the "PREP Student Profile" (see Attachment 3). This document, issued to every student completing the program, includes accurate biographical information about the individual, and his or her family members. In addition, the teachers in the overseas program rate students' school work habits, as well as their achievements in the areas of math, reading and writing, and listening and speaking. Students' special skills or disabilities may also be noted.

Information about PREP and other aspects of the Overseas Refugee Training Program is available from the Refugee Service Center at the Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037; telephone (202) 429-9292.

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Guiding Principles for the PREP Program: Support of Research

The past several years have seen many advances in second language acquisition research which have resulted in great progress in the way in which English as a second language is taught. Many previous assumptions have changed, and new methods have emerged for helping children acquire English. Some traditional second language teaching methods are not consistent with current understanding of the way in which language naturally develops in children. The old belief that language learning is habit formation, for example, and that the repetition of drills and grammar exercises reinforce "good" habits is in contrast to current theorists' emphasis on allowing language to emerge in natural developmental stages.

To ensure the effectiveness of instruction in PREP, findings from current research on how children learn to speak, read, and write a second language were used as the basis for the curriculum. The following guiding principles for the program were derived from these findings.

1. *Children learn a second language in much the same way as they learned their first language.* Research (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982) suggests that rather than learning a second language formally and through a conscious process, children acquire a second language in a natural, subconscious manner. Much as in learning a first language, young second language acquirers go through a "silent period" before they actually begin to speak, and when they do speak, speech emerges gradually on its own (Krashen and Terrell, 1983).
2. *Students acquire language most quickly when the language they encounter is made comprehensible.* As in first language acquisition, second language acquirers need sufficient "comprehensible" linguistic input so they can begin to make sense of the language (Krashen, 1981). The notion of comprehensible input suggests an environment rich in natural, not formal, language in situations where the focus is on communicating a real message for a real purpose. Even though much of what they hear is unfamiliar to them, children can derive meaning from context and from a speaker's expressions and gestures. For children at the early stages of acquisition, simple vocabulary

and sentences, frequent facial expressions and body gestures to emphasize meaning, and many pictures and actual objects have to be used to enhance understanding.

3. ***Children are developing conceptually as well as linguistically.*** Research suggests that using a newly-acquired language in school is different from using a new language in other settings. Using language in school to learn complex concepts places different demands on second language learners (Cummins, 1982). Whereas most limited English proficient (LEP) adults have developed conceptually and are simply lacking the English vocabulary to express themselves, young children often have not developed certain thinking skills such as how to classify, compare, sequence or infer. Because learners must first understand a concept before applying a label to it, instructional activities must teach the concept first and the language related to the concept second. In addition, because children vary greatly in their ability to grasp certain concepts, and because in many cases refugee children's cognitive skills have not been fully developed, instruction must include a variety of activities to teach or reinforce any given concept.

4. ***Instruction is most effective within a meaningful, natural context.*** Recent research supports what teachers have suspected all along--that focusing on grammar and memorization of dialogues does not help much in learning a second language; that using less structured activities in more natural and meaningful contexts is more motivating and more effective; and that learning to speak, read and write a second language naturally follows many of the same principles of development as the first language.

The teaching approaches that best take into account these findings are the Whole Language Approach and the Natural Approach. Activities used in these approaches take into account the natural developmental stages that children experience and involve real communicative situations where the focus is on meaning rather than form. These activities also revolve around specific content in a natural setting, such as in science experiments.

5. ***Children learn by doing.*** Research has shown that instruction that focuses on learning language *per se* is less effective for children, who acquire language necessarily as a by-product of doing an activity. A curriculum designed for this age group needs to offer a variety of meaningful, interesting activities that will engage the children and stimulate them to generate language.

6. *Students show most progress with their new language if they are confident about using it.* Affective factors may limit or enhance the amount of comprehensible input that children are able to process (Krashen, 1981). Anxiety or low motivation can inhibit acquisition by filtering or blocking the input. This notion suggests that optimum acquisition takes place in a non-threatening, stimulating environment where children feel motivated and self-confident in using their new language to express themselves and communicate with others. This requires that teachers refrain from overt language corrections, which cause children to feel anxious about their abilities. Teachers need to allow for the flow of natural communication rather than concentrate on achieving perfection from the beginning. As students become more comfortable using their new language, teacher modeling brings about student accuracy.

7. *Math and science are best taught through a problem-solving approach.* Children acquire mathematical and science concepts by discovering relationships between objects in their own environment. Through free and guided exploration and hands-on activities, children can discover patterns, classifications, numeration, and characteristics of numbers. By using familiar materials, a teacher can gradually build a bridge to the adult world of abstractions. This approach, called the discovery approach, is especially useful for children who lack the language proficiency to talk about the concept being learned.

8. *Developing literacy in a second language follows the same principles as the development of literacy in the first language.* Most children in literate societies are introduced to reading by seeing parents immersed in the act of reading and by sharing with them the enjoyable experience of "story-time." They learn that reading is rewarding and enjoyable and that print is simply a representation of speech. Children in literate environments also develop the ability to write quite naturally, and they seem to have an intrinsic desire to produce "written language". At these initial stages of writing, which some researchers call mock writing (Graves, 1983), children invent their own spelling, but do so systematically and in a rule-governed way.

Although the emergence of literacy comes naturally to children who are being raised in literate homes, it may be out of reach for children who come from non-literate backgrounds. The need for literacy to emerge in this natural way becomes especially crucial for second language learners.

Students learning to read and write in ESL need to be introduced to literacy in a meaningful way (Goodman, 1986); they need to make the link between oral language and print as naturally as possible (Holdaway, 1979); and they need to be given the opportunity to enjoy reading and writing (Smith, 1978).

9. *Native language support is essential for optimal development of bilingual*

proficiency. Students who have not gained full proficiency in the second language acquire concepts most easily in their native language and transfer the conceptual knowledge to the second language only when that language is sufficiently developed. Students need conceptual input in the native language to ensure comprehension of complex material. In addition, in order for second language to develop most efficiently, a strong foundation must be laid in a child's native language. Due to limited native language resources, however, most educational programs for LEP students, including the PREP program, are able to offer students only limited support in the native language. All possible community resources, such as a member of the community telling a story to the children in the native language, must be tapped to supplement the instruction children receive in English.

10. *Individual differences must be taken into account in the instructional approach*

used with LEP students. LEP children, in general, and refugees in particular, differ vastly from one another educational background, learning styles, and native language proficiency. Since these individual characteristics make a significant difference in the way in which a child learns, provisions must be made to address individual children's needs in a classroom setting. This can be achieved by setting up cooperative learning groups, learning centers, and peer tutoring.

11. *Parents' involvement in their children's education is essential for an effective*

instructional program. Research shows that when parents are more involved in school, their children do better (Simich-Dudgeon, 1987). Parents can provide a valuable resource by bringing their native culture into the classroom and by providing support to their children in the native language. Whenever possible, parents must be invited to join in school activities; they can attend parent/teacher conferences and must be invited to participate in special artistic and athletic events with their children.

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Methodology Used in the PREP Program

Oral Language Development: The Natural Approach

The Natural Approach forms the basis of the PREP English Language Units. This methodology rests on two assumptions: 1) Speech is not taught directly, but rather is acquired through comprehensible input in low anxiety environments, and 2) Speech emerges in natural stages: comprehension, early production, speech emergence and intermediate fluency.

The comprehension stage. During this stage, learners begin to glean meaning from the input presented to them. Children begin to associate sound and meaning and begin to make some sense of the way language relates to their environment. They need time to develop listening strategies and comprehension skills. Initially, children do not make much attempt to communicate using words; rather, they indicate their comprehension nonverbally. At this stage, teachers must do everything possible to make a message comprehensible to children. For example, the teacher may draw a picture of a body, describing each step along the way:

"Let's draw a body. What do I need? Do I need a head? OK, let's draw a head.

Now, do I need some hair? Yes, let's draw some hair", etc.

During this stage, learning activities do not require children to speak, although some children may naturally do so. This stage is particularly important in the PREP program because children's success in school depends more on comprehension skills than production skills. Children need time to acquire enough passive vocabulary to understand what is going on in the classroom.

Total Physical Response (TPR) (Asher, 1982) is especially useful in improving comprehension strategies and teaching new vocabulary. The underlying assumption of TPR is that language is most easily acquired if combined with body movement or appropriate actions. Asher maintains that children learn their first language by following the commands of the parents. Children acquire language through performing tasks that require them to do something or make something. By focusing attention on the activity, they concentrate on what they are doing rather than on the language; performing actions gives meaning to the language. Vocabulary becomes comprehensible through gestures, actions and pictures.

Early production stage

In this stage students naturally begin to produce a limited number of words they have heard and understood many times. It is important to continue providing listening activities, but at this stage, opportunities must also be provided for the children to respond to the teacher. These four types of questions encourage single-word responses:

1. Yes/No : Is this the head?
2. Choice: Is this the head or the nose?
3. Completion: This is a small, red _____.
4. Single-word questions: What is this?

Questions like these are easy to use with pictures, i.e., "Look at the picture. What do you see? (Man). Yes, good, that's a man. Is he young or old? (Old). Yes, he's old. What's he doing? (Gardening). Good, he's gardening. Do you like gardening?" And so on.

Speech Emergence

In this stage, students spontaneously begin to produce word combinations. Language Experience activities provide a good basis for the emergence of speech. The activity must be sufficiently meaningful and interesting to engage the students' attention and generate oral language. In this stage, students should be provided opportunities to produce simple sentences. This can be done by asking questions that require simple comparisons, descriptions and sequencing of events.

Rather than correcting errors explicitly, teachers can expand simple utterances as a model:

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Student</u>	<u>Teacher</u>
What is the monkey doing now?	(He play).	Yes, he's playing.
What is Danh doing to the monkey?	(Danh pet).	Yes, he's petting the monkey.
Does the monkey like it? Why?	(Feel good).	Yes, the monkey likes it because it feels good.

In the early stages of second language development, especially in a class where the majority of children speak the same language, most casual talk is in the children's native language. Rather than trying to prevent children from using their native language, teachers should use the concrete actions of an activity to help the children associate their spontaneous utterances in the native language with their equivalents in English.

Intermediate fluency stage

This is the stage when there is very perceptible development of student speech. Because students develop fluency most readily when they have a need to express themselves, activities in the content areas provide good opportunities for language interaction and vocabulary expansion. Furthermore, this is the stage when the most time should be devoted to literacy development.

Literacy Development: Whole Language Approaches

Traditional teaching methods to develop literacy in a second language have often failed because reading and writing were not allowed to emerge in natural developmental stages. Traditional ESL "readers" that focus on the mechanics of reading rather than the content of the material, are often meaningless and therefore uninteresting to children (Goodman, 1986). Traditional readers also use phonics methods to teach reading, reducing reading (and writing) to a matter of matching letters with sounds. Additionally, readers focus on the visual recognition of words in isolation rather than the context in which natural language occurs.

Traditional methods of teaching writing in ESL are also at odds with the natural way in which literacy develops in children. Traditional writing activities often lack intrinsic communication value and rarely build on students' oral language, consequently ignoring the strong relationship that exists between oral and written language. In a traditional approach, children are explicitly discouraged from making errors; accurate spelling is one of the earliest goals. Given that invented spelling is a natural stage through which each child must pass, the value of these traditional ESL literacy approaches and materials is questionable.

The inadequacy of traditional methods of teaching reading and writing in a second language has made it necessary to turn to more innovative methods that take into account the learner's total language needs (Goodman, 1986). In the Whole Language Approach for example, the focus of instruction is on meaning, and learning activities revolve around specific content in a real communicative situation.

The PREP program uses three "whole language" methods to promote reading: Shared Reading with Big Books, The Language Experience Approach and Sustained Silent Reading. Although all three of these methods are to be used to teach reading, they are not used simultaneously. Teachers usually begin with Shared Reading with Big Books. They may introduce a Language Experience activity a few weeks later and continue to review a big book for one or two days of that same week. Sustained Silent Reading, which requires independent reading on children's part, begins later in the instructional term.

Shared Reading with Big Books

Shared Reading with Big Books simulates the experience of bed-time story reading. Through the use of high-interest stories written in enlarged print specifically for children, every child in the classroom can share in the process of hearing and seeing a story unfold. The reading of good children's literature is at the center of this instructional program. Children participate in any way they like: as listeners, as choral readers, or as individual readers.

This approach is particularly useful for children from non-literate backgrounds, since they have not been introduced to literacy in the natural, enjoyable way that most children in a literate society have. Shared reading relies on children's natural search for meaning. By the very nature of the situation, an adult reading a story aloud is a shared experience that invites participation by the children. When listening to a favorite story they have heard often, children will usually join in the reading in any way that is comfortable to them. They may mumble along with the teacher, and eventually their mumbles will turn into recognizable words. They may echo-read, repeating parts of the story as it is being read. As children become more fluent, they become "expert readers", playing the role of the teacher.

The Language Experience Approach

One of the best ways to help students make the transition from their oral language to standard printed English is the Language Experience Approach (LEA). LEA is based on the notion that children are better able to read materials which stem from their own experiences and are based on their own oral language. A large portion of LEA involves eliciting oral language from children and shaping it for use as written material. LEA involves whole language by allowing children to read stories rather than isolated words or sentences since the only vocabulary controls over the material are the limitations of the child's own speaking vocabulary, reading material is natural. Since children are given reading material that they themselves compose orally, success in reading is ensured. This approach also ensures that the interrelationship of oral and written language is made very clear and in a natural way.

Sustained Silent Reading

In Sustained Silent Reading, everyone in class -- including the teacher -- chooses a book and reads silently at his or her own pace. This experience provides an opportunity for children to view reading and writing as something to be enjoyed rather than something that causes stress, anxiety, or embarrassment. Allotting school time for children simply to read whatever they wish, and for no reason other than enjoyment, is especially important for children who do not live in a highly literate home environment and thus do not spend much, if any, time at home reading for pleasure.

The PREP program uses three methods of developing writing skills in ESL that are based on the whole language approach: Dictated Stories, Dialogue Journal Writing, and Creative Writing.

Dictated Stories

In the early stages of second language development, when children are at the pre-production stage, group-writing activities are most appropriate. Dictated stories introduce to children the experience of composing a piece of writing. After completing an oral language activity, children prepare to compose a group story by recounting the sequence of steps in the activity and reviewing the vocabulary to include in the story. The children then dictate a story about the activity to the teacher. Using large, lined newsprint, the teacher takes down the dictation from the students. For children who

are very limited in English proficiency, the teacher may need to modify children's utterances slightly.

Dialogue Journal Writing

In Dialogue Journal Writing, children take 5-10 minutes each day to write to the teacher in a notebook about a topic of their choice, and the teacher writes back as an active participant in a written conversation that continues throughout the school year. This on-going, daily writing consists of topics that children themselves choose and write about at their level of language proficiency, however minimal (Kreeft et al., 1984).

Dialogue journal writing helps create a strong emotional bond between teacher and child. The context for the interaction is non-threatening. The focus of dialogue journal interaction is on communication rather than form. While the teacher does not evaluate the student's language, the teacher's writing serves as a language model for the child within the context of the message being communicated (Staton et al., 1985).

Dialogue journals are a practical instance of reading and writing bound together in a single functional experience. The language input the child receives from the teacher's entry is slightly beyond the student's language ability. As children read the teacher's guided response to their own journal entries, they gradually adjust their writing by providing more information about their own experiences, and thus their language improves. Journal entries by students may start with single words or pairs of words, but research indicates that children's journal entries expand significantly by the end of the school year. As in LEA stories, students' printed words become meaningful and personal, and comprehension is generally insured.

Creative Writing

The use of creative writing as a teaching tool is based on two premises: first, the essence of writing is to communicate ideas and feelings; second, children have a natural urge to creatively express their thoughts and feelings in "writing." In this approach, children are given the opportunity to write about anything they wish. They are encouraged to produce "written" language and, by means of feedback from the teachers, are led to organize their thoughts better, and eventually to follow the

conventional rules of writing. Grammar and spelling are explicitly taught only after children experience the thrill of uninhibitedly expressing themselves in writing. Children taught in this way take pride in their work and in themselves.

By using this approach, children's writing initially takes the form of drawing, which may be combined with squiggles representing verbal language. If children are exposed to enough written language -- in the form of LEA stories or children's literature -- and if the teacher gives the appropriate feedback, their mock-writing will gradually be transformed into acceptable forms of writing. In that process, children will follow their own unconventional rules of writing. They will also use invented spelling: TNK U FOR THE EARGS I JUS LUV THOS EARGS (*Thank you for the earrings. I just love those earrings*).

As with oral language, children need to receive feedback focusing on the content and meaning of the message rather than its form. Feedback can be given to children by means of "conferences," where the teacher reacts to a child's writing and comments on the piece that the child has produced. There are two types of conferences: content and process. In a content conference, the teacher comments on the ideas-- the what; in a process conference, the teacher comments on the ways in which the piece is written-- the how.

Like any other author, the child needs to share his or her writing with others. Thus, a very important component of the creative writing approach is the "publishing" of children's work. A book or a story written by the child may be photocopied, it may be exhibited in an author's corner, or it may be exchanged with another class.

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

MATERIALS USED IN THE PREP PROGRAM

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Addison-Wesley Publishing

Jacob Way

Reading, MA 01867

Phone: (607) 944-3700

A Closer Look

An American Sampler

Yes, English for Children Level A, Teacher Ed. Activity Book, Level A

Jazz Chants for Children

Open the Lights

Elementary Math, Students Book K-6

Elementary Math, Teachers K-6

Math Their Way

Math a Way of Thinking

Wright Group

10949 Technology Place

San Diego, CA 92127

Phone: (800) 523-2371

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Fables From Aesop 1-12

And What Else

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95 Church Street

White Plains, NY 10601-1505

Phone: (914) 993-5000

Odyssey, Books 1 and 2

Longman's Photo Dictionary

MacMillan-Glencoe Publishing

Front & Brown Streets

Riverside, NJ 08075

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Scholastic

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Jefferson City, MD 65102

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National Textbook Company

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Phone: (800) 323-4900

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Alemay Press

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Hayward, CA 94545
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The Biggest Christmas Tree on Earth
Here Comes Alex Pumpernickel
Sleep Tight Alex Pumpernickel

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