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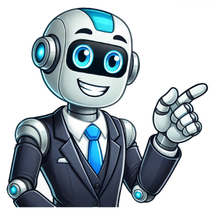

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Snow (Eds.), Literacy and motivation: reading engagement in individuals and groups (pp. 1 – 22). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.Westberg, L., McShane, S., & Smith, L. (2006). Verizon Life Span Literacy Matrix: Relevant Outcomes , Measures and Research-based Practices and Strategies. Washington D.C. Literacy Development. Well, there's a teacher phrase if I've ever heard one! What does this mean really? In simple terms, these are the stages that kids typically pass through in regards to their reading and spelling skills. As you can clearly see, that was too long for a title. ☺ I'm excited to explore literacy development in the next few weeks with you! You'll find all the titles and links listed below as they are published. I will also have printable checklists** for each stage, so be sure to look for those! When it comes to teaching kids, I'm a firm believer in being a student of your student(s). Through observing them as they read and write, we can determine the things they know, don't know, or "use, but confuse" {a phrase I learned from Dr. Francine Johnston of Words Their Way}. Why is it important to know this information? There are two main reasons I'd like to highlight: It guides our instruction. We don't waste our time teaching something the child has clearly mastered or start working on a concept that's way over their head. To make learning meaningful to the child. We want to zone in on what the child needs to know right now. This means that what we're teaching him is a little out of his reach by himself, but attainable if we step in a do a little guiding. This is also known as the zone of proximal development (or ZPD) from Vygotsky. While I will list approximate grade levels or ages for each stage of development, please note that your child/student may not necessarily be in the stage listed for his age. You may even find that your child/student fits the reading signs of one stage and the spelling signs of the stage (or two) below it. It is natural, especially at first, for kids to be able to read a lot more words than they can spell correctly. As children get older, we want to help them bridge that gap. The main thing to keep in mind is that all children are different. Some progress faster (or slower) than others and that's okay. If you teach in the classroom, chances are you'll have students who fit more than one stage of development within the same grade level. And if you teach at home, be careful you don't compare your children to one another, as they will progress at different rates! Literacy Development Links: In each link, you'll find a printable checklist** of reading and spelling behaviors. **DISCLAIMER: Please note that these checklists are not the end-all-be-all for our child(ren) and students. They are not designed to put our readers/spellers into a rigid box. They are simply a tool to help us, as observers, become more aware of what our child/student understands about reading and spelling so we can better guide our teaching. I also want to add that if your child has a learning difference that affects his literacy skills, such as dyslexia, use the checklists with a big dose of wisdom. For example, an older reader who has dyslexia may still struggle with some of the skills on the emergent reader list, like rhyming or syllables. Again, we don't to box in kids. We just want to become more aware of what they know or don't know. ~Becky

Ability to read and write "Illiterate" and "Reading and writing" redirect here. For the 2013 film, see Illiterate (film). For the journals, see Literacy (journal) and Reading and Writing. Part of a series onReading Learning to read Reading readiness Vocabulary development Vocabulary learning Scientific theories and models Dual route theory Simple view of reading Science of reading Scarborough's Reading Rope The active view of reading model Cognitive processes Comprehension Phonemic awareness Phonological awareness Subvocalization Word recognition Reading instruction Analytic phonics Basal reader Concept-oriented Directed listening and thinking activity Guided reading Independent reading Literature circle Phonics Reciprocal teaching Structured word inquiry Sustained silent reading Synthetic phonics Whole language Reading rate Fluency Slow reading Speed reading Words per minute Readability Automatic assessment Legibility Readability test Reading differences and disabilities Dyslexia Hyperlexia Reading disability Reading for special needs Language Alphabetic principle Braille Dolch word list Grapheme History of printing Language Morpheme Orthography Phoneme Sight word Vocabulary Written language Writing Writing system Literacy Literacy rate Critical reading Close reading Distant reading Family literacy Functional illiteracy Great books Literary criticism Literature Children's vte Literacy is the ability to read and write. Some researchers suggest that the study of "literacy" as a concept can be divided into two periods: the period before 1950, when literacy was understood solely as alphabetical literacy (word and letter recognition); and the period after 1950, when literacy slowly began to be considered as a wider concept and process, including the social and cultural aspects of reading and writing[1] and functional literacy.[2][3] Adult literacy rates, 2015 or most recent observation[4] World illiteracy halved between 1970 and 2015. Literate and illiterate world population between 1800 and 2016 Illiteracy rate in France in the 18th and 19th centuries The range of definitions of literacy used by NGOs, think tanks, and advocacy groups since the 1990s suggests that this shift in understanding from "discrete skill" to "social practice" is both ongoing and uneven. Some definitions remain fairly closely aligned with the traditional "ability to read and write" connotation, whereas others take a broader view: The 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (USA) included "quantitative literacy" (numeracy) in its treatment of literacy. It defined literacy as "the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."[5] It included three types of adult literacy: prose (e.g., a newspaper article), documents (e.g., a bus schedule), and quantitative literacy (e.g., the use of arithmetic operations in a product advertisement).[6][7] In 2015, the United Nations Statistics Division defined the youth literacy rate as "the percentage of the population aged 15–24 years who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement on everyday life."[8] In 2016, the European Literacy Policy Network defined literacy as "the ability to read and write [...] in all media (print or electronic), including digital literacy."[9] In 2018, UNESCO included "printed and written materials" and "varying contexts" in its definition of literacy, i.e., "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts."[10] In 2019, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in its Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) adult skills surveys, included "written texts" in its definition of literacy, i.e., "the ability to understand, evaluate, use and engage with written texts in order to participate in society, achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential."[11][12] Also, it treats numeracy and problem solving using technology as separate considerations.[13] In 2021, Education Scotland and the National Literacy Trust in the UK included oral communication skills (listening and speaking) under the umbrella of literacy.[14][15] As of 2021, the International Literacy Association uses "the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context."[16][17] The expression "reading literacy" is used by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which has monitored international trends in reading achievement at the fourth grade level since 2001.[18] Other organizations might include numeracy skills and technology skills separately but alongside literacy skills;[19] still others emphasize the increasing involvement of computers and other digital technologies in communication that necessitates additional skills (e.g., interfacing with web browsers and word processing programs, organizing and altering the configuration of files, etc.).[20] Some researchers define literacy as "particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing" with the purpose of understanding or expressing thoughts or ideas in written form in some specific context of use.[21][22] In this view, humans in literate societies have sets of practices for producing and consuming writing, and they also have beliefs about these practices.[23] Reading, in this view, is always reading something for some purpose; writing is always writing something for someone for some purpose.[24] Beliefs about reading and writing and their value for society and for the individual always influence the ways literacy is taught, learned, and practiced.[25] The concept of multiliteracies has gained currency, particularly in English Language Arts curricula, on the grounds that reading "is interactive and informative, and occurs in ever-increasingly technological settings where information is part of spatial, audio, and visual patterns (Rhodes & Robnolt, 2009)".[26][27][verification needed] Objections have been raised that this concept downplays the importance of reading instruction that focuses on "alphabetic representations".[28] However, these are not mutually exclusive, as children can become proficient in word-reading while engaging with multiliteracies.[29] Word reading is fundamental for multiple forms of communication.[29] Beginning in the 1940s, the term literacy has often been used to mean having knowledge or skill in a particular field, such as: Computer literacy – Skill in using computers and digital technology[30][31] Scientific literacy – Ability to understand science Statistical literacy – Ability to understand and reason with statistics and data[32] Critical literacy – Ability to find embedded discrimination in media[33] Disaster literacy – Proposed model for the ability to understand and use life-saving information, including the ability to respond and recover from disasters effectively[34][35] Ecological literacy – Ability to understand natural systems and their interactions[36] Financial literacy – Ability to make informed choices about money Health literacy – Ability to understand healthcare information[37][38][39] Linguistic literacy – Ability to read, write, understand, and speak any type of language[40] Media literacy – Ability to navigate various types of media and see their claims in a broader context[41] Political literacy – Abilities needed for an effective electorate Social literacy – Literacy gained through social interactions[42] Mathematical literacy, also called numeracy – Ability to apply numerical concepts[7] Visual literacy – Ability to interpret information in images, e.g., body language, pictures, maps, and video[38] Musical literacy – Refers to culturally determined systems of knowledge in music and to musical abilities.[43] Classicist Eric Havelock developed a continuum for a culture's literacy, from pre-literate, through craft-literate, recitation-literate and script-literate to type-iterate.[44] Main article: Functional illiteracy Functional illiteracy[a] relates to adults and has been defined in different ways: Inability to use reading, writing, and calculation skills for their own and their community's development.[46] Inability to read well enough to manage daily living and employment tasks that require reading skills beyond a basic level.[47] Inability to understand complex texts despite adequate schooling, language skills, elementary reading skills, age, and IQ.[48] Functional illiteracy is distinguished from primary illiteracy (i.e., the inability to read and write a short, simple statement concerning one's own everyday life) and learning difficulties (e.g., dyslexia).[49] These categories have been contested—as has the concept of "illiteracy" itself—for being predicated on narrow assumptions, primarily derived from school-based contexts, about what counts as reading and writing (e.g., comprehending and following instructions).[50] See also: History of writing and History of education Script is thought to have developed independently at least five times in human history: in Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus civilization, lowland Mesoamerica, and China.[51][52] Bill of sale of a male slave and a building in Shuruppak, Sumerian tablet, c. 2600 BCE Between 3500 BCE and 3000 BCE, in southern Mesopotamia, the ancient Sumerians invented writing.[53] During this era, literacy was "a largely functional matter, propelled by the need to manage the new quantities of information and the new type of governance created by trade and large scale production".[54] Early writing systems first emerged as a recording system in which people used tokens with impressed markings to manage trade and agricultural production.[55] The token system served as a precursor to early cuneiform writing once people began recording information on clay tablets. Proto-Cuneiform texts exhibit not only numerical signs but also ideograms depicting objects being counted.[51] Though the traditional view had been that cuneiform literacy was restricted to a class of scribes, assyriologists including Claus Wilcke and Dominique Charpin have argued that functional literacy was somewhat widespread by the Old Babylonian period.[56][57] Nonetheless, professional scribes became central to law, finances, accounting, government, administration, medicine, magic, divination, literature, and prayers.[58] Egyptian hieroglyphs emerged between 3300 BCE and 3100 BCE; the iconography emphasized power among royals and other elites. The Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system was the first notation system to have phonetic values; these symbols are called phonograms.[59] Writing in lowland Mesoamerica was first used by the Olmec and Zapotec civilizations in 900–400 BCE. These civilizations used glyphic writing and bar-and-dot numerical notation systems for purposes related to royal iconography and calendar systems.[60] The earliest written notations in China date back to the Shang dynasty in 1200 BCE. These systematic notations, inscribed on bones, recorded sacrifices made, tributes received, and animals hunted, which were activities of the elite. These oracle-bone inscriptions were the early ancestors of modern Chinese script and contained logosyllabic script and numerals. By the time of the consolidation of the Chinese Empire during the Qin and Han dynasties (c. 200 BCE), written documents were central to the formation and policing of a hierarchical bureaucratic governance structure reinforced through law. Within this legal order, written records kept track of and controlled citizen movements, created records of misdeeds, and documented the actions and judgments of government officials.[61] Indus script is largely pictorial and has not yet been deciphered; as such, it is unknown whether it includes abstract signs. It is thought that they wrote from right to left and that the script is logographic. Because it has not been deciphered, linguists disagree on whether it is a complete and independent writing system; however, it is generally thought to be an independent writing system that emerged in the Harappa culture.[62] Existing evidence suggests that most early acts of literacy were, in some areas (such as Egypt), closely tied to power and chiefly used for management practices, and probably less than 1% of the population was literate, as it was confined to a very small group.[citation needed] Scholarship by others, such as Dominique Charpin and a project from the European Union, however, suggest that this was not the case in all ancient societies: both Charpin and the EU's emerging scholarship suggest that writing and literacy were far more widespread in Mesopotamia than scholars previously thought.[63][64][65] According to social anthropologist Jack Goody, there are two interpretations regarding the origin of the alphabet. Many classical scholars, such as historian Ignace Gelb, credit the Ancient Greeks for creating the first alphabetic system (c. 750 BCE) that used distinctive signs for consonants and vowels. Goody contests: The importance of Greek culture of the subsequent history of Western Europe has led to an over-emphasis, by classicists and others, on the addition of specific vowel signs to the set of consonantal ones that had been developed earlier in Western Asia.[66] Many scholars argue that the ancient Semitic-speaking peoples of northern Canaan invented the consonantal alphabet as early as 1500 BCE. Much of this theory's development is credited to English archeologist Flinders Petrie, who, in 1905, came across a series of Canaanite inscriptions in the turquoise mines of Serabit el-Khadem. Ten years later, English Egyptologist Alan Gardiner reasoned that these letters contain an alphabet as well as references to the Canaanite goddess Asherah. In 1948, William F. Albright deciphered the text using new evidence, including a series of inscriptions from Ugarit. Discovered in 1929 by French archaeologist Claude F. A. Schaeffer, some of these inscriptions were mythological texts (written in an early Canaanite dialect) that consisted of a 30-letter cuneiform consonantal alphabet.[67] Another significant discovery was made in 1953 when three arrowheads were uncovered, each containing identical Canaanite inscriptions from 12th century BCE. According to Frank Moore Cross, these inscriptions consisted of alphabetic signs that originated during the transitional development from pictographic script to a linear alphabet. Moreover, he asserts, "These inscriptions also provided clues to extend the decipherment of earlier and later alphabetic texts".[68] The Canaanite script's consonantal system inspired alphabetical developments in later systems. During the Late Bronze Age, successor alphabets appeared throughout the Mediterranean region and were used in Phoenician, Hebrew, and Aramaic.[59] According to Goody, these cuneiform scripts may have influenced the development of the Greek alphabet several centuries later. Historically, the Greeks contended that their writing system was modeled after the Phoenicians. However, many Semitic scholars now believe that Ancient Greek is more consistent with an early form of Canaanite that was used c. 1100 BCE. While the earliest Greek inscriptions are dated circa 8th century BCE, epigraphical comparisons to Proto-Canaanite suggest that the Greeks may have adopted the consonantal alphabet as early as 1100 BCE and later "added in five characters to represent vowels".[66] Phoenician, which is considered to contain the first linear alphabet, rapidly spread to Mediterranean port cities in northern Canaan.[68] Some archeologists believe that Phoenician influenced the Hebrew and Aramaic alphabets, as these languages evolved during the same time period, share similar features, and are commonly categorized into the same language group.[69] When the Israelites migrated to Canaan between 1200 and 1000 BCE, they adopted a variation of the Canaanite alphabet. Baruch ben Neriah, Jeremiah's scribe, used this alphabet to create the later scripts of the Old Testament. The early Hebrew alphabet was prominent in the Mediterranean region until Neo-Babylonian rulers exiled the Jews to Babylon in the 6th century BCE. It was then that the new script (Square Hebrew) emerged, and the older one rapidly died out.[66] The Aramaic alphabet also emerged sometime between 1200 and 1000 BCE. Although early examples are scarce, archeologists have uncovered a wide range of later Aramaic texts, written as early as the seventh century BCE. In the Near East, it was common to record events on clay using the cuneiform script; however, writing Aramaic on leather parchments became common during the Neo-Assyrian empire. With the rise of the Persians in the 5th century BCE, Achaemenid rulers adopted Aramaic as the "diplomatic language".[66] Darius the Great standardized Aramaic, which became the Imperial Aramaic script. This Imperial Aramaic alphabet rapidly spread: west, to the Kingdom of Nabataea, then to the Sinai and Arabian peninsulas, eventually making its way to Africa; and east, where it later influenced the development of the Brahmi script in India. Over the next few centuries, Imperial Aramaic script in Persia evolved into Pahlavi, "as well as for a range of alphabets used by early Turkish and Mongol tribes in Siberia, Mongolia and Turkestan".[66] During this period, literacy spread among the merchant classes, and 15-20% of the total population may have been literate.[citation needed] The Aramaic language declined with the spread of Islam, which was accompanied by the spread of Arabic.[70] Until recently, it was thought that the majority of people were illiterate in the classical world,[b] though recent work challenges this perception.This article may lend undue weight to certain ideas, incidents, or controversies. Please help improve it by rewriting it in a balanced fashion that contextualizes different points of view. (May 2024) (Learn how and when to remove this message)[72][73] Anthony DiRenzo asserts that Roman society was "a civilization based on the book and the register" and that "no one, either free or slave, could afford to be illiterate".[74] Similarly, Dupont points out, "The written word was all around them, in both public and private life: laws, calendars, regulations at shrines, and funeral epitaphs were engraved in stone or bronze. The Republic amassed huge archives of reports on every aspect of public life."[75] The imperial civilian administration produced masses of documentation used in judicial, fiscal, and administrative matters, as did the municipalities. The army kept extensive records relating to supply and duty rosters and submitted reports. Merchants, shippers, and landowners (and their personal staffs), especially of the larger enterprises, must have been literate.[citation needed] In the late fourth century, the Desert Father Pachomius would expect the literacy of a candidate for admission to his monasteries:[c] They shall give him twenty Psalms or two of the Apostles' epistles or some other part of Scripture. And if he is illiterate he shall go at the first, third and sixth hours to someone who can teach and has been appointed for him. He shall stand before him and learn very studiously and with all gratitude. The fundamentals of a syllable, the verbs and nouns shall all be written for him and even if he does not want to he shall be compelled to read. During the 4th and 5th centuries, the Church made efforts to ensure a better clergy, especially the bishops, who were expected to have a classical education—the hallmark of a socially acceptable person in higher society. [citation needed] Even after the remnants of the Western Roman Empire fell in the 470s, literacy continued to be a distinguishing mark of the elite, as communication skills were still important in political and church life (bishops were largely drawn from the senatorial class) in a new cultural synthesis that made "Christianity the Roman religion".[76] However, these skills were less needed in the absence of a large imperial administrative apparatus whose middle and top echelons were dominated by the elite.[d] Even so, in pre-modern times, it is unlikely that literacy was found in more than about 30–40% of the population. During the Dark Ages, the highest percentage of literacy was found among the clergy and monks, as they made up much of the staff needed to administer the states of western Europe.[citation needed] An abundance of graffiti written in the Nabataean script dating back to the beginning of the first millennium CE has been taken to imply a relatively high degree of literacy among the general population in the ancient Arabic-speaking world.[77] The rates and forms of literacy in the European Medieval period vary and are controversial: historian Elaine Treharne writes of "a complex era of strategic literacy, generic fluidity, and linguistic competencies beyond our own experiences."[78] Historian Malcolm Parkes contrasts the different expertise of the professionally literate class, cultivated readers, and pragmatic readers.[79] Historian Mark Hailwood suggests another two type of near-literacy in Early Modern England, of "abcederian literates" who could spell out words to read, and of people who knew the letters though not words, were particularly common in Southern English rural areas: 50% of husbandmen could either sign their name or provide an initial.[80] Post-Antiquity illiteracy was made worse by the lack of a suitable writing medium, as when the Western Roman Empire collapsed, the import of papyrus to Europe ceased. Since papyrus perishes easily and does not last well in the wetter European climate, parchment was used, which was expensive and accessible only by the church and the wealthy. Paper was introduced into Europe via Spain in the 11th century and spread north slowly over the next four centuries. Literacy saw a resurgence as a result, and by the 15th century, paper was widespread.[81] Estimates of literacy rates vary by time, class, location, sex and reliability: "Unfortunately, there is no statistical information that allows generalizations to be made in terms of numerical proportions or percentages, either for rates of literacy among the medieval population or for annual book production."[82] However, here are some indicative estimates. Rates are often extrapolated from the number of people who can sign their name on official documents. First, rough estimates by economic historian Robert Allen, based on the urban/rural split of the population:[83] European adult literacy Nation 1500 (%) 1800 (%) England 6 53 Netherlands 10 68 Belgium 10 49 Germany 6 35 France 7 37 Austria/Hungary 6 21 Poland 6 21 Italy 9 22 Spain 9 20 However: In the late 1200s, there were 1,500 notaries in Milan, over 1% of the population, for drawing up contracts.[84]:421 "By 1300, 'everyone knew someone who could read', and there were books in every church and every village."[82] By 1500, in England, "probably more than half the population could read, though not necessarily also write."[82] Thomas More in 1533 claimed that up to 60% of the population could read English, a figure supported by some studies of London but not by others. One study estimates that in the city of York in 1500, about 25% of upper and middle class people were literate.[85] This contrasts with Stevens' estimates of male literacy of 10% by the start of the century (with almost no female literacy)), 20% by the end, and 45% by the end of the 1600s.[86] In Venice in 1587, 33% of men were estimated as literate.[83] Inspired by the Enlightenment, Sweden implemented programs in 1723 aimed at making the population fully literate.[87] Other countries implemented similar measures at this time. These included Denmark in 1739, Poland in 1783, and France in 1794/5.[87] Literacy was well established in early 18th century England, when books geared towards children became far more common. Near the end of the century, as many as 50 were printed every year in major cities around England.[88] In Edo-period Japan, literacy in the three major cities has been estimated at 70% for men, 40% for females, but 1% in the country areas.[89] Further information: Industrial Revolution In the 19th century, reading would become even more common in the United Kingdom. Public notes, broadsides, handbills, catchpennies and printed songs would have been usual street literature before newspapers became common. Other forms of popular reading material included advertising for events, theaters, and goods for sale.[90] In the late 19th century, gas and electric lighting were becoming more common in private homes, replacing candlelight and oil lamps, enabling reading after dark and increasing the appeal of literacy.[91] In his 1836/1837 Pickwick Papers Charles Dickens's said that: even the common people, both in town and country, are equally intense in their admiration. Frequently, have we seen the butcher-boy, with his tray on his shoulder, reading with the greatest avidity the last "Pickwick"; the footman (whose fopperies are so inimitably laid bare), the maidservant, the chimney sweep, all classes, in fact, read "Boz".[91] From the mid-19th century onward, the Second Industrial Revolution saw technological improvements in paper production. The new distribution networks, enabled by improved roads and rail, resulted in an increased capacity to supply printed material. Social and educational changes increased the demand for reading matter, as rising literacy rates, particularly among the middle and working classes, created a new mass market for printed material.[92] Wider schooling helped increase literacy rates, which in turn helped lower the cost of publication.[91] Unskilled labor forces were common in Western Europe, and, as British industry improved, more engineers and skilled workers who could handle technical instructions and complex situations were needed. Literacy was essential to be hired.[93] A senior government official told Parliament in 1870: Upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity. It is of no use trying to give technical teaching to our citizens without elementary education; uneducated labourers—and many of our labourers are utterly uneducated—are, for the most part, unskilled labourers, and if we leave our work–folk any longer unskilled, notwithstanding their strong sinews and determined energy, they will become overmatched in the competition of the world.[93]:159 The skills of reading and writing are not the same. In Spain, the total rate of literacy between 1841 and 1860 was constant at almost 25%: in 1841 most of the literate could read but not write, but by 1860 most could read and write.[94] Adult literacy rates have increased at a constant pace since 1950. Data published by UNESCO shows that the worldwide literacy rate among adults has increased, on average, by 5 percentage points every decade since 1950, from 55.7% in 1950 to 86.2% in 2015. Due to rapid population growth, while the percentage of adults who were illiterate decreased, the actual number of illiterate adults increased from 700 million in 1950 to 878 million in 1990, before starting to decrease and falling to 745 million by 2015. The number of illiterate adults remains higher than in 1950, "despite decades of universal education policies, literacy interventions and the spread of print material and information and communications technology (ICT)".[95] Available global data indicates significant variations in literacy rates between world regions. North America, Europe, West Asia, and Central Asia have almost achieved full literacy for men and women aged 15 or older. Most countries in East Asia and the Pacific, as well as Latin America and the Caribbean, have adult literacy rates over 90%.[96] In other regions, illiteracy persists at higher rates; as of 2013, the adult literacy rate in South Asia and North Africa was 67.55% and 59.76% in Sub-Saharan Africa.[97][failed verification] Literacy has rapidly spread in several regions over the last twenty-five years. In much of the world, high youth literacy rates suggest that illiteracy will become less common as more educated younger generations replace less educated older ones.[98] However, in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where the vast majority of the world's illiterate youth live, lower school enrollment implies that illiteracy will persist to a greater degree.[98] According to 2013 data, the youth literacy rate (ages 15 to 24) is 84% in South Asia and North Africa and 70% in sub-Saharan Africa.[97] However, the distinction between literacy and illiteracy is not clear-cut. Given that having a literate person in the household confers many of the benefits of literacy, some recent literature in economics, starting with the work of Kaushik Basu and James Foster, distinguishes between a "proximate illiterate" and an "isolated illiterate". A "proximate illiterate" lives in a household with literate members, while an "isolated illiterate" lives in a household where everyone is illiterate. Isolated illiteracy is more common among older populations in wealthier nations, where people are less likely to live in multigenerational households with potentially literate relatives. A 2018/2019 UNESCO report noted that "conversely, in low and lower middle income countries, isolated illiteracy is concentrated among younger people," along with increased rates among rural populations and women. This evidence indicates that illiteracy is a complex phenomenon with multiple factors impacting rates of illiteracy and the type of illiteracy one may experience.[99] Literacy has rapidly spread in several regions in the last twenty-five years,[95] and the United Nations's global initiative with Sustainable Development Goal 4 is also gaining momentum.[100] The traditional concept of literacy widened as a consensus emerged among researchers in composition studies, education research, and anthropological linguistics that it makes little sense to speak of reading or writing outside of a specific context, with linguist James Paul Gee describing it as "simply incoherent."[101] For example, even the extremely early stages of acquiring mastery over symbol shapes take place in a particular social context (even if that context is "school"), and, after print acquisition, every instance of reading or writing will be for a specific purpose and occasion with particular readers and writers in mind. Reading and writing, therefore, are never separable from social and cultural elements.[102][103][104][105] A corollary point made by David Barton and Rosalind Ivanić, among others, is that the cognitive and societal effects of acquiring literacy are not easily predictable, since, as Brian Street has argued, "the ways in which people address reading and writing are themselves rooted in conceptions of knowledge, identity, and being."[106][107] Consequently, as Jack Goody has documented, historically, literacy has included the transformation of social systems that rely on literacy and the changing uses of literacy within those evolving systems.[108] Adult literacy rate, male (%), 2015[109] Adult literacy rate, female (%), 2015[110] Gender parity indices in youth literacy rates by region, 1990–2015. Progress towards gender parity in literacy started after 1990. According to 2015 data collected by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, about two-thirds (63%) of the world's illiterate adults are women. This disparity was even starker in previous decades, and from 1970 to 2000, the global gender gap in literacy decreased significantly.[111] Around the year 2013, however, this progress stagnated, with the gender gap holding almost constant over the last two decades.[96] In general, the gender gap in literacy was not as pronounced as the regional gap; that is, differences between countries were often larger than gender differences within countries.[112] Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest overall literacy rate and the widest gender gap: 52% of adult women and 68% of adult men are literate. A similar gender disparity exists in North Africa, where 70% of adult women are literate versus 86% of adult men. In South Asia, 58% of adult women and 77% of adult men are literate.[96] The 1990 World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, brought attention to the literacy gender gap and prompted many developing countries to prioritize women's literacy.[113] In many contexts, female illiteracy coexists with other aspects of gender inequality. Martha Nussbaum says illiterate women are more vulnerable to becoming trapped in an abusive marriage, given that illiteracy limits their employment opportunities and worsens their position when negotiating within the household. Moreover, Nussbaum links literacy to the ability for women to effectively communicate and collaborate with one another "to participate in a larger movement for political change."[114] Social barriers can limit opportunities to increase literacy skills among women and girls; making literacy classes available can be ineffective when it conflicts with the use of the valuable limited time of women and girls.[115] School-age girls may face more expectations than their male counterparts to perform household work and care for younger siblings.[116] Generational dynamics can also perpetuate these disparities; illiterate parents may not readily appreciate the value of literacy for their daughters, particularly in traditional, rural societies with expectations that girls will remain at home.[117] A World Bank and International Center for Research on Women review of academic literature concluded that child marriage, which predominantly impacts girls, tends to reduce literacy levels.[118] A 2008 analysis of the issue in Bangladesh found that for every additional year a girl's marriage is delayed, her likelihood of literacy increases by 5.6%.[119] Similarly, a 2014 study found that in sub-Saharan Africa, marrying early significantly decreases a girl's probability of literacy, even after accounting for other variables.[120] Therefore, a 2015 literature review recommended marriage postponement as part of a strategy to increase educational attainment levels, including female literacy.[121] While women and girls comprise the majority of the global illiterate population, in many developed countries, a literacy-gender gap exists in the opposite direction. Data from the Programme for International Student Assessment has consistently shown the literacy underachievement of boys within member countries of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).[122] In view of such findings, many education specialists have recommended changing classroom practices to better accommodate boys' learning styles and removing any gender stereotypes that may create the perception that reading and writing are feminine activities.[123][124] Many policy analysts consider literacy rates to be a crucial measure of the value of a region's human capital. For example, literate people can be more easily trained than illiterate people and generally have a higher socioeconomic status;[125] thus, they enjoy better health and employment prospects. The international community has come to consider literacy as a key facilitator and goal of development.[126] In regard to the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN in 2015, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has declared the "central role of literacy in responding to sustainable development challenges such as health, social equality, economic empowerment and environmental sustainability."[127] A majority of prisoners have been found to be illiterate, and in Edinburgh prison, winner of the 2010 Libraries Change Lives Award, "the library has become the cornerstone of the prison's literacy strategy", reducing recidivism and reoffending and allowing incarcerated people to work toward attaining higher socioeconomic status once released.[128] As socioeconomics affects brain development and brain functions are heavily involved in processing both input and output, a learner's environment can affect the cognitive process of learning how to read and write.[129] Before a child enters a school setting, their executive function is influenced by their home environment.[130] Research demonstrates that for children who grow up in poverty, their socioeconomic circumstances severely strain their "neuro-endocrine and brain function".[130] This affects a child's ability to regulate environmental stimuli, process and structure information, and plan and effectively execute tasks that involve their working memory[129]—all of these are necessary cognitive facilities to successfully learn how to read and write. Living in poverty is stressful for all involved but is cognitively damaging for young children.[131] A study done by NICHD indicates that socioeconomics plays a role for children who are young when the family experiences poverty, but shows no indication of adverse effects on reading achievement or behavior for adolescents entering poverty.[132] The data extensively shows that children from low socioeconomic backgrounds had poorer literacy performance, especially in reading. A study done by the OECD, which included over 25 countries in Europe, found that in all studied countries, students who lived in low-income households scored lower in reading than students who lived in high-income households.[133] Parenting also affects a child's literacy. Field research was done by collecting data from families that were upper, middle, or lower class, or on welfare. The results found that, in a 100-hour week, children in upper-class households experienced an average of over 200,000 words, those in middle- and lower-class households heard about 125,000 words, and children from households on welfare were exposed to the fewest words—62,000 words. This indicates that a child from an upper-class family would be exposed to 8 million more words than a child from a family on welfare.[134] Outside of word exposure, which is essential for word acquisition, the National Center for Educational Statistics found that 41.9% of children from low-income families scored substantially lower on most reading achievements for grades 4, 8, and 12 in 2013.[135] According to a study performed by ANOVA, multiple socioeconomic variables influence children, such as parental education level, parental occupation, health history, and even usage of technology within the home. With these factors in mind, their study showed that young children are especially susceptible to environmental factors, meaning socioeconomics affects them cognitively and can have adverse effects as their brains continue to develop.[citation needed] However, another study done by the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) around 2012 suggesteda slightly different conclusion.[136] While the study agrees that poverty negatively affects childhood literacy, some nuances are added. In both studies, children who experienced poverty scored lower in reading assessments, but the NLSY's study noted that the duration of poverty altered the literacy outcome.[137] It found that children ages 5–11 who experienced "persistent poverty" were more adversely affected than their peers who never experienced poverty. The study acknowledged that other factors affected these children's reading scores, particularly maternal influence. The mothers of these households were scaled based on a "home environment" score, which measured their emotional and verbal responsiveness, acceptance, and involvement with the child and organization. Households experiencing poverty tended to have lower scores, and lower scores correlated with lower reading levels. The study also showed that the effects of poverty on child literacy differed by ethnicity, culture, and gender.[137] Print illiteracy generally corresponds with less knowledge about modern health, hygiene, and nutritional practices, and a lack of knowledge can exacerbate a range of health issues.[138] Within developing countries in particular, literacy rates also have implications for child mortality; in these contexts, children of literate mothers are 50% more likely to live past age 5 than children of illiterate mothers.[116] Therefore, public health research has increasingly focused on the potential for literacy skills to allow women to more successfully access healthcare and thereby facilitate gains in child health.[139] A 2014 descriptive research survey project correlates literacy levels with the socioeconomic status of women in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study shows that developing literacy in the region will bring "economic empowerment and will encourage rural women to practice hygiene, which will in turn lead to the reduction of birth and death rates

"That is a remarkable 8 percent increase." In addition, the literacy rate for youths aged 15–24 has substantially increased and now stands at 65%.[235] However, there are still a large number of people who lack literacy and opportunities to access continuing education. There is also a substantial gender gap: the literacy rate for men stands at 55%, while for women it is only 29.8%. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has provided technical support to the government of Afghanistan since 2012, with the aim of improving the literacy skills of an estimated 1.2 million people.[246] To improve the literacy rate, the US military taught Afghan Army recruits how to read before teaching them how to fire a weapon. In 2009, US commanders estimated that as many as 65% of recruits may be illiterate.[247] Main article: Education in the People's Republic of China The Chinese government conducts standardized testing to assess proficiency in Standard Chinese, known as Putonghua, but this is primarily for foreigners or those needing to demonstrate professional proficiency in the Beijing dialect. While literacy in Chinese can be assessed by reading comprehension tests, just as in other languages, historically, literacy has often been judged by the number of Chinese characters introduced during the speaker's schooling, with a few thousand considered the minimum for practical literacy.[citation needed] The CIA World Factbook says 96.7% of Chinese people are literate;[237] however, social science surveys in China have repeatedly found that just over half the population of China is conversant in spoken Putonghua.[248][249] In classical Chinese civilization, access to literacy for all classes originated with Confucianism, where previously literacy was generally limited to the aristocracy, merchants, and priests.[citation needed] Main article: Literacy in India Literacy is defined by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India as the ability of "a person aged 7 years and above to both write and read with understanding in any language." According to the 2011 census, the literacy rate stood at 74%.[250] In 2023, the Iranian government stopped a literacy campaign that had begun in 1930, despite 9 million people still being reported as illiterate.[251] The government reported that elementary school education cost 5–40 million toman (approximately US$12–95 or €11–89) per child per year,[252] and 27% of children did not sign up for first grade because of the cost.[253] Three Laotian girls sit outside their school reading. Laos has the lowest level of adult literacy in all of Southeast Asia, other than East Timor.[254] Obstacles to literacy vary by country and culture, as writing systems, quality of education, availability of written material, competition from other sources (television, video games, cell phones, and family obligations), and culture all influence literacy levels. In Laos, which has a phonetic alphabet, reading is relatively easy to learn—especially compared to English, where spelling and pronunciation rules are filled with exceptions, and Chinese, with thousands of symbols to be memorized. However, a lack of books and other written materials has hindered functional literacy in Laos.[255] Many children and adults read so haltingly that the skill is hardly beneficial.[citation needed] A literacy project in Laos addresses this by using what it calls "books that make literacy fun!" The project, Big Brother Mouse, publishes colorful, easy-to-read books, then delivers them during book parties at rural schools. Some of the books are modeled on successful western books by authors such as Dr. Seuss; the most popular, however, are traditional Laotian fairy tales. Two popular collections of folktales were written by Siphone Vouthisakdee, who comes from a village where only five children finished primary school.[256] Big Brother Mouse has also created village reading rooms and published books for adult readers about subjects such as Buddhism, health, and baby care.[257] This section does not cite any sources. Please help improve this section by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. (September 2023) (Learn how and when to remove this message) In Pakistan, the National Commission for Human Development aims to bring literacy to adults, especially women. While speaking at a function held in connection with International Literacy Day, Islamabad Director Kozue Kay Nagata said: Illiteracy in Pakistan has fallen over two decades, thanks to the government and people of Pakistan for their efforts working toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Today, 70 percent of Pakistani youths can read and write. In 20 years, illiterate population has been reduced significantly. She also emphasized the need to do more to improve literacy in the country, saying: The proportion of population in Pakistan lacking basic reading and writing is too high. This is a serious obstacle for individual fulfillment, to the development of societies, and to mutual understanding between peoples. Referring to the recent national survey carried out by the Ministry of Education, Trainings and Standards in Higher Education with the support of UNESCO, UNICEF, and provincial and area departments of education, Nagata pointed out that in Pakistan, although 70% of children finish primary school, a gender gap still exists as 68% of girls finish compared to 71% of boys. Referring specifically to Punjab, she said that while the primary school completion rate is higher at 76%, there is a gender gap of 8 percentage points: 72% of girls compared to 80% for boys. She also noted that the average cost per primary school student (ages five–nine) was higher in Punjab at Rs 6,998 (approximately US$24 or €22.5). In Balochistan, although almost the same amount (Rs 6,985) is spent per child as in Punjab, the primary school completion rate is only 53%: 54% for girls and 52% for boys. The Literate Pakistan Foundation, a non-profit organization established in 2003, is a case study bringing to light solutions for improving literacy rates in Pakistan. Their data shows that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the primary school completion rate is 67%, which is lower than the national average of 70%. Furthermore, a gender gap exists, with only 65% of girls completing primary school compared to 68% of boys. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the education expenditure per student at the primary school level (age five–nine) is Rs 8,638 ($30, €28). In Sindh, the primary school completion rate is 63%, with a gender gap of 67% of girls completing primary school compared to 60% of boys.[clarification needed] In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the education expenditure per student at the primary school level (age five–nine) is Rs 5,019 ($17.50, €16.50). Nagata, referencing the report, said that the most common reason for children ages 10–18 (both boys and girls) leaving school is "the child [is] not willing to go to school", which may be related to quality and learning outcome. She added that the second-highest reason for girls living in rural communities dropping out is that their "parents did not allow" them to continue school, which might be related to prejudice and cultural norms surrounding girls. Main article: Baybayin About 91.6% of Filipinos ages 10–64 were functionally literate in 2019, according to the results of the 2019 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey; this translates to around 73.0 million out of the population of 79.7 million.[243] Starting in 300 BCE, early Filipinos devised and used their own writing system derived from the Brahmic family of scripts of ancient India. Baybayin became the most widespread of these derived scripts by the 11th century. Early chroniclers, who came during the first Spanish expeditions to the islands, noted the proficiency of some of the natives, especially the chieftain and local kings, in Sanskrit, Old Javanese, Old Malay, and several other languages.[258][259] During the Spanish colonization of the islands, reading materials were destroyed far less than during the Spanish colonization of the Americas. Education and literacy were introduced solely to the Peninsulares and remained a privilege until the arrival of Americans, who introduced a public school system to the country, and English became the lingua franca in the Philippines. During the brief Japanese occupation of the Philippines, the Japanese were able to teach their language and teach the children their written language.[citation needed] Main article: Education in Sri Lanka The University of Peradeniya's Sarachchandra open-air theatre, named in memory of Ediriweera Sarachchandra, Sri Lanka's premier playwright With a literacy rate of 92.5%,[244] Sri Lanka has one of the most literate populations among developing nations.[260] Its youth literacy rate stands at 98%,[245] its computer literacy rate at 35%,[261] and its primary school enrollment rate at over 99%.[262] An education system that dictates nine years of compulsory schooling for every child is in place. The free education system, established in 1945,[263] is a result of the initiative of C. W. W. Kannangara and A. Ratnayake.[264][265] Sri Lanka is one of the few countries in the world that provides universal free education from the primary to the tertiary stage.[266] A 2016–2017 survey of adult skills conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on behalf of the OECD found that one in five adults of working age has low literacy skills, numeracy skills, or both.[267] The Australian Early Development Census National Report for 2021 reported that 82.6% of five-year-olds are on track to develop good language and cognitive skills.[268] In 2012–2013, Australia had 1515 public library service points, lending almost 174 million items to 10 million members at an average per capita cost of just under AU$45.[269] By 2020–2021, this had increased to a total of 1690 library outlets with just over 9 million registered or active members.[269] Balanced literacy – Taking in the meaning of letters or symbols Book desert – Geographic area where books are hard to find International Literacy Day – International observance, 8 September International Literacy Foundation Legal literacy – Empowerment of individuals regarding issues involving the law List of countries by literacy rate Literacy in the United States Postliterate society – Society in which literacy is uncommon due to technological advancesPages displaying short descriptions of redirect targets Psychological literacy – Capacity to use knowledge from psychology Right to education – Human right Structured literacy – Taking in the meaning of letters or symbols Teaching reading – Taking in the meaning of letters or symbols ^ The condition of not being able to read or write well enough to do things that are needed for living and working in society - Cambridge Dictionary[45] ^ See for example: Harris, 1991.[71] ^ Pachomius, Rule 139. ^ This connection is pursued in Alan K. 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