

Name	Born	Field	Big Idea (s)	Notable publications
Marilyn Jager Adams	1948	Psychology	Most American children cannot name or write all of the letters of the alphabet by the time they enter second grade. Changing this will raise literacy standards.	- <i>Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning About Print</i> (2013) - <i>ABC Foundations For Young Children</i> (2013)
Richard Allington	1947	Education research	Special education creates illiterate people 'Balanced literacy' is the perfect antidote to the 'one-size-fits-all' approach of systematic, direct instruction	<i>Reading Instruction that Works: The Case for Balanced Teaching</i> (2014)
Richard C. Anderson	1934	Educational Psychology	Influential researcher on the link between children's reading and their vocabulary growth	- (Chair) <i>Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading</i> (1985)
Elsa Auerbach	c. 1946	Applied linguistics	Education and social justice are inextricably linked	- <i>Making Meaning, Making Change</i> (1992)
Isabel Beck	c. 1932	Education research	Vocabulary instruction can be guided by categorizing words into three tiers (see Vocabulary chapter for more information).	- <i>Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction</i> (2013)
Dorothy Bishop	1952	Psychology and developmental language impairment	Language impairment has a strong genetic component	- <i>Language development in exceptional circumstances</i> (1988) - <i>Handedness and developmental disorders</i> (1990) - <i>Uncommon understanding</i> (1997)
Benjamin Bloom	1913	Psychology	Bloom's Taxonomy: a hierarchy of educational goals	- <i>Taxonomy of Educational Objectives</i> (1956) - <i>All Our Children Learning</i> (1980)
Caroline Bowen		Speech-Language Pathology	One of the more eminent contributors to the field in the subject of evidence-based practice vs. pseudoscience.	- <i>Children's Speech Sound Disorders</i> (2015) - <i>Making Sense of Interventions for Children with Developmental Disorders</i> (2017)
Pete Bowers		Education	Bowers introduced the term "structured word inquiry" (SWI) to describe the instruction in his vocabulary intervention	<i>Bowers, P. N., Kirby, J. R., & Deacon, S. H. (2010). The Effects of Morphological Instruction on Literacy Skills: A Systematic Review of the Literature. Review of Educational Research, 80(2), 144-179. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654309359353 (Original work published 2010)</i>
Brian Cambourne	c. 1935	Education	Author of the 'Conditions of Learning' model which is based on a constructivist theory of education. It has often been erroneously applied to the teaching of reading. This model does not include essential elements of evidence-based instruction and adheres to the discredited notion that all children will learn to read if immersed in a text-rich environment. Cambourne famously described explicit instruction as 'readicide'.	- (& Kiggins, J.) <i>Reforming how we prepare teachers to teach literacy: Why? What? How?</i> (2013)
Anne Castles	1964	Cognitive science	The diverse nature of developmental dyslexia and causes and treatment of different types of dyslexia	- (& Coltheart) <i>Varieties of developmental dyslexia</i> (1993) - <i>Orthographic Processes in Reading</i> (2008)
Jeanne Chall	1921	Psychology & literacy research	Direct, explicit, systematic phonics Readability calculations Beginning reading is different from expert reading	- <i>Learning to Read the Great Debate</i> (1967) - <i>Stages of Reading Development</i> (1983) - <i>The Academic Challenge: What Really Works in the Classroom</i> (2000)
James Chapman	1948	Psychology	Reading Recovery has not served its native country, New Zealand well.	- (& William Tunmer) <i>Excellence and equity in literacy education: the case of New Zealand</i> (2015)
Carol Chomsky	1930	Linguistics	'Repeated Reading', where a child silently reads a passage accompanied by a recording of the passage being read. This was said to enhance reading fluency.	<i>The Acquisition of Syntax in Children From 5 to 10</i> (1969)
Marie Clay	1926	Psychology	Reading Recovery remedial literacy program, which became widely used in English-speaking countries and has been heavily (and largely detrimentally) influential on reading theory and teaching practice. In the past two decades, Reading Recovery has been shown to be ineffective for many children, which many researchers attribute to its	- <i>Reading Recovery: A guidebook for teachers in training</i> (1993)

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Max Coltheart			lack of a systematic phonics component.	
	1939	Cognitive science	The 'Dual Route' theory of reading (sounding out + word recognition from memory) The two-factor theory of delusional belief	- (& Rastle, K., Perry, C., Langdon, R., & Ziegler, J.). <i>DRC: A Dual Route Cascaded model of visual word recognition and reading aloud.</i> (2001)
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John Dewey	1859	Psychology	One of the first major proponents of progressive education. His view of "experiential learning" produced fertile ground for whole language and progressive education.	- <i>My Pedagogic Creed</i> (1897) - <i>Experience and Education</i> (1937)
Andrew Davis		Philosophy of Education	A vocal opponent of phonics (though he says he is not) and is often quoted in arguments for whole language.	- <i>To read or not to read: Decoding synthetic phonics</i> (2013)
Ron Davis	1942	Business	One of the most well known proponents of a non evidence-based approach to developmental disorders of reading. It is called the Davis Method.	- <i>The Gift of Dyslexia</i> (1994)
Stanislas Dehaene	1965	Cognitive neuroscience	That reading relies on activation of the 'visual word form' area of the brain, which is in turn built by exposure to individual letters and their sounds (i.e. not whole words and certainly not contextual clues). "Neuronal recycling": how the brain's circuitry borrows from areas normally associated with object recognition and begins to recognize letters and larger linguistic units. This disproves the theory that children are pre-wired to acquire literacy in the same way that they are pre-wired to acquire oral language.	- <i>Reading in the Brain</i> (2009)
Linnea Ehri	1941	Educational psychology	Beginning readers form connections between the spellings of individual words and their pronunciations. Updated theory of orthographic mapping to include morphemes.	- <i>Research on Learning to Read And Spell: A Personal-Historical Perspective</i> (1997)
Siegfried Engelmann	1931	Philosophy and education research	Direct Instruction: explicit, systematic scripted teaching of a particular set of principles. Zig is also the co-founder of the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI)	- <i>Teach your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons</i> (1999)
Barbara Foorman	c. 1949	Education research	Professor Foorman is one of those researchers whose work has covered a vast array of reading theory and which has driven the great engine of progress in understanding literacy acquisition. To reduce her to one or two big ideas would be a disservice.	- <i>Preventing and Remediating Reading Difficulties: Bringing Science to Scale</i> (2003)
Rudolf Flesch	1911	Author	That the 'look-say' method of learning to read is inferior to phonics.	- <i>Why Johnny Can't Read</i> (1955) - <i>Why Johnny Still Can't Read: a new look at the scandal of our schools</i> (1981)
Uta Frith	1941	Cognitive science	The four stages of acquisition of written language	- <i>The Learning Brain. Lessons for Education</i> (2005)
Susan Gathercole	1958	Cognitive and behavioural neuroscience	How working memory deficits affect literacy acquisition and what can realistically be done about it	- (& Alloway, T.P.) <i>Working Memory and Learning: A practical guide for teachers</i> (2008)
Anna Gillingham	1878	Educational psychology	Sequential, systematic, multi-sensory phonics Syllable types	- <i>Remedial Training for Children with Specific Disability in Reading, Spelling and Penmanship</i> (1935)
Ken Goodman	1921	Education	Reading is a 'psycholinguistic guessing game'.	- <i>What's Whole in Whole Language</i> (1986)
Usha Goswami	1960	Cognitive developmental neuroscience	The neural basis for developmental disorders of literacy and language	- <i>The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Childhood Cognitive Development</i> (2010)
Philip Gough	1934	Cognitive science	The Simple View of Reading	- <i>Some observations on a simple view of reading</i> (1996) - <i>Acquisition of literacy: a longitudinal study of children in first and second grade</i> (1986)

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William S. Gray				- <i>Decoding, reading, and reading disability (1986)</i>
	1885	Education	One of the key proponents of the whole word and silent reading methods of literacy instruction.	- <i>On Their Own on Reading (1948)</i>
Peg Griffin	unknown	Applied linguistics	A contributor to the research on reading acquisition since the seventies.	- (Editor) <i>Knowledge to Support the Teaching of Reading: Preparing Teachers for a Changing World (2005)</i>
Priscilla Griffith	c. 1947	Education research	Researcher, writer and lecturer with a particular focus on teacher education.	(& Beach, S. A., Ruan, J., & Dunn, L.) <i>Literacy for Young Children: A Guide for Early Childhood Educators (2008)</i>
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Patrick Groff	1924	Education	A whole language teacher trainer, until conferring with Jeanne Chall in 1968 and understanding the critical importance of explicit instruction in the alphabetic code. Groff wrote several books and hundreds of papers on the subject of direct instruction.	- <i>Preventing Reading Failure : An Examination of the Myths of Reading Instruction (1987)</i>
Diana Hanbury-King	1927	Education	Founder of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators	- <i>A Guide to Helping Your Child at Home: Developing Foundational Skills in Reading and Writing (2015)</i>
Lorraine Hammond		Education	One of the chief proponents of explicit, direct instruction and instructional coaching of teachers. Lorraine’s research and publications have shown, time and time again, that teachers with high quality training can overcome the social and intellectual limitations of their students and bring about literacy for an exceedingly wide population.	<i>Teachers taking up explicit instruction: The impact of a professional development model including directive instructional coaching. (2018)</i>
Kerry Hempenstall	1946	Educational Psychology	One of the keepers of all the details relating to the great debate. If contacted and asked for a reference on a particular subject, Professor Hempenstall can almost instantly provide lists of material from his archives that make Google look like amateurs.	- <i>The three-cueing system in reading: Will it ever go away? (blog post 2013)</i>
Carl Hendrick		Education	Leads research projects that bridge cognitive science, educational psychology, and classroom practice.	<i>How Learning Happens, Instructional Illusions</i>
E.D. Hirsch	1928	Education reform	Romantic, anti-intellectual theories of child education, favouring progressive models, are the major cause of academic decline and social inequality Core knowledge can and should be taught systematically and sequentially rather than ‘discovered’ through play etc.	- <i>The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them (1996)</i> - <i>The Knowledge Deficit: Closing the Shocking Education Gap for American Children (2006)</i>
Don Holdaway	1930	Psychology	Founder of the ‘big book’ and ‘shared reading’ ideas prevalent in whole language classrooms. His disproven theory, that children learn to read by repeatedly experiencing the same text, is called the ‘Natural Learning Model’.	- <i>The Foundations of Literacy (1984)</i>
Charles Hulme	1953	Psychology	Working alongside his wife, another giant in the field, Maggie Snowling, Snowling and Hulme produced a great many books and papers on the subject of literacy, learning and dyslexia.	- <i>Developmental Disorders of Language Learning and Cognition (2009)</i> - <i>The Science of Reading: A Handbook (2005)</i> - <i>Phonological Abilities Test (1997)</i>
Connie Juel	unknown	Educational psychology	Urged caution when teaching early decoding skills to make sure that oral language and vocabulary development were also a focus.	- (co-authorship with M. Graves, b. Dewitz) <i>Teaching Reading in the 21st Century (2011)</i>
David Kilpatrick	c. 1964	Psychology	Kilpatrick has brought the relatively new concept of ‘orthographic mapping’ to light.	- <i>Essentials of Assessing, Preventing and Overcoming Reading Difficulties (2015)</i>
Stephen Krashen	1941	Linguistics	Reading books, not ‘heavy’ phonics teaches children to read. Krashen attempted to apply his knowledge of second language acquisition to learning to read, but	- <i>Does Phonics Deserve the Credit for Improvement in PIRLS? (2017)</i>

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Isabelle Liberman			the mismatch has led to an anti systematic synthetic phonics stance.	
	1918	Psychology	The <i>alphabetic principle</i> and how this relates to phonological awareness in reading.	- <i>Segmentation of the Spoken Word and Reading Acquisition</i> (1973)
Patricia Lindamood	1923	Speech and language pathology	One of the first people in the field to build assessment and intervention around phonemic awareness (which she called auditory discrimination)	- <i>The Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing Program</i> (2011)
Maureen Lovett	unknown	Developmental and educational psychology	Leading research in “treatment-resisters”, i.e. those who struggle to read despite high quality intervention.	- (& Frijters, J.C., Steinbach, K.A., Wolf, M., Sevcik, R.A., & Morris, R.D.) <i>Early intervention for children at risk for reading disability: The impact of grade at intervention and individual differences on intervention outcomes</i> (2017) - (& Lacerenza, L., Borden, S.L., Frijters, J.C., Steinbach, K.A., & De Palma, M.) <i>Components of effective remediation for developmental reading disability: Combining phonological and strategy-based instruction to improve outcomes</i> (2000)
G. Reid Lyon				
	1952	Neuroscience	Dr Lyon’s research has succeeded in translating scientific findings into real action at the policy-making level. He has been the effective bridge between research and practice in the modern era.	- (& Riccards, P., Blaunstein, P) <i>Why kids can’t read: Challenging the status quo in education.</i> 2015)
Diane McGuinness	1933	Cognitive psychology	Not all phonics is created equal: synthetic phonics is superior. ‘Code overlap’: symbols can stand for more than one sound Dyslexia results from a complex code, poorly taught	- <i>Why Our Children Can't Read, and What We Can Do about It</i> (1997) - <i>Early Reading Instruction: What Science Really Tells Us about How to Teach Reading</i> (2004)
Bruce McCandliss	c. 1968	Neuroscience	Experiments showing that beginning readers who focus on letter-sound relationships, or phonics, increase activity in the area of their brains best wired for reading.	- (& Yoncheva, Y. & Wise, J.) <i>Hemispheric specialization for visual words is shaped by attention to sublexical units during initial learning</i> (2015)
Louisa Moats	1944	Psychology	How spelling supports reading How popular, but pseudoscientific ideas in teaching reading can be avoided	- <i>Speech to Print; Straight Talk About Reading</i> (2000) - <i>Basic Facts About Dyslexia</i> (2008) - <i>LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) professional development program for teachers</i>
William Nagy	c. 1949	Linguistics	Helped develop the idea that teaching vocabulary improves comprehension	- <i>Teaching Vocabulary to Improve Reading Comprehension</i> (1989) - (& Steven A. Stahl) <i>Teaching Word Meanings</i> (2006)
Samuel Orton	1879	Medicine	One of the first individuals to identify and classify what is known as dyslexia Proponent of multisensory structured literacy lessons	- <i>Reading, Writing and Speech Problems in Children: A presentation of certain types of disorders in the development of the language faculty</i> (1931)
David Pearson	c. 1942	Education	Reading comprehension involves interaction between the reader, the text and the context. Therefore too much (whatever that means, as Pearson has consistently failed to quantify it) attention to the text and not the ‘meaning-making’ qualities of the reader, result in poor reading scores.	- <i>Comprehension Going Forward and What Every Teacher Should Need Know About Reading Comprehension Instruction</i> (2011)
Charles Perfetti	c. 1937	Psychology	The Lexical Quality Hypothesis: That comprehension skill relies on word-reading skill, not the other way round.	- (& Verhoeven, L.) <i>Learning to read across languages and writing systems</i> (2017)
Jean Piaget	1896	Psychology	Children learn through physical interaction with their world (hence constructivism)	- <i>Science of education and the psychology of the child</i> (1970)

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Kathleen Rastle		Psychology	Researcher aiming to uncover the nature of the mental representations and computations that underlie aspects of language, literacy, and learning.	- <i>Ending the Reading Wars : Reading Acquisition From Novice to Expert (2018)</i>
Sir Jim Rose	1939	Education	Independent reviewer for the UK government. Promotes systematic synthetic phonics.	- <i>Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading. a.k.a. The Rose Report (2006)</i>
Mark Seidenberg	1953	Psycholinguistics	One of the modern researchers helping to refine our understanding of the nature of skilled reading, reading acquisition and impairments to reading.	- <i>Reading at the Speed of Sight (2016)</i>
Linda Siegel	1942	Psychology	Another example of a research powerhouse, responsible for hundreds of journal articles further refining the process of reading and reading impairment.	- <i>Not Stupid, Not Lazy: Understanding Dyslexia and Other Learning Disabilities (2016)</i>
Timothy Shanahan	1951	Reading research	Learning to read and learning to write is a connected process and not something to be taught in isolation.	- (<i>& Lonigan, C.J.</i>) <i>Early Childhood Literacy: The National Early Literacy Panel and Beyond (2013)</i>
Donald Shankweiler	c. 1930	Psychology/ cognitive science	Researcher investigating the neural basis for developmental problems of speech and reading.	- <i>Reading and phonological processing (2012)</i>
Sally Shaywitz	c. 1943	Paediatric medicine	Co-founder of the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, Dr Shaywitz has led the field in refinement of research pertaining to dyslexia for many decades.	- <i>Overcoming Dyslexia (2003)</i>
Catherine Snow	1945	Psychology/ applied linguistics	The way in which social factors contribute to literacy.	- (<i>& Burns, C. & Griffin, P.</i>) <i>Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (1998)</i> - <i>Preparing Our Teachers: Opportunities for Better Reading Instruction (2002)</i>
Pamela Snow	1960	Psychology/speech pathology	The impact that oral language and literacy have on juvenile mental health and social justice.	- (<i>& Bowen, C.</i>) <i>Making Sense of Interventions for Children's Developmental Disorders: A Guide for Parents and Professionals (2017)</i>
Margaret Snowling	1955	Psychology	Has written and researched extensively on the subject of literacy, learning and especially dyslexia. She and her husband, Charles Hulme, have co-authored many well-known publications on these subjects.	- <i>Dyslexia, Speech and Language (2006)</i>
Frank Smith	1928	Psycholinguistics	Founder of the modern whole language approach to reading instruction	- <i>Understanding Reading: A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Reading and Learning to Read (2004)</i>
Romalda Spalding	1899	Education	Student of Samuel Orton. Wrote a phonics-based, total language arts program based on how children learn to read and write.	- <i>The Writing Road to Reading 6th Edition (2012)</i>
Katherine Dougherty Stahl	1954	Education	Translating research into practice; early comprehension and assessment	- (<i>& McKenna, M.C.</i>) <i>Assessment for Reading Instruction (2015)</i> - <i>Developing Reading Comprehension: Effective Instruction for All Students in K-2 (2015)</i>
Keith Stanovich	1950	Applied psychology and human development	The Matthew Effect in education 'Dysrationalia': the presence of irrational thinking and action despite adequate intelligence	- <i>Progress in Understanding Reading: Scientific Foundations and New Frontiers (2000)</i>
Robert Sweet	1937	Education policy	U.S. government advisor responsible for writing research proven application of reading science into U.S. law Founder of the National Right to Read Foundation Founding member of the International Foundation for Effective Reading Instruction (IFERI)	- (<i>& Lyon, G.R.</i>) <i>Reading First (2002)</i>
Joseph Torgesen	1943	Developmental Psychology	Another research powerhouse whose work spans many and varied subjects, but chief contributor to notions of characteristics of	- <i>Co-author of the Comprehensive test of Phonological Processes (CTOPP 2013)</i> - <i>Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE 2012)</i>

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Rebecca Treiman			effective instruction for children with reading disabilities.	
	1954	Child developmental psychology	Research on writing systems and how they are learned and used.	- <i>How Children Learn to Write Words</i> (2014)
William Tunmer		Educational psychology	Powerhouse researcher on early literacy development, literacy learning difficulties, and reading intervention.	(& Chapman, J.) <i>Excellence and equity in literacy education: the case of New Zealand</i> (2015)
Frank Vellutino	c. 1935	Psychology	Assessment and explanation of core deficits in perception that lead to delayed literacy acquisition.	- <i>Dyslexia Theory and Research</i> (1981)
Richard Venezky	1938	Education research	Groundbreaking researcher in the field of literacy and learning whose work with computers helped to provide a strong theoretical basis for the argument that English spelling is predictable and regular and has spelling to sound patterns that help in learning to read.	- <i>The American Way of Spelling: The structure and origins of American English Orthography</i> (1999)
Lev Vygotsky	1896	Psychology	Coined the 'zone of proximal development' theory and was a major influence in the 'learning through play' movement still popular in schools (though his works may have been distorted and misinterpreted to fit progressive education views).	- <i>Play and its role in the Mental development of the Child</i> (1933)
Natalie Wexler		Education	Natalie's publications and work are based on the importance of writing in every aspect of education, and on the importance of knowledge-rich curricula.	Beyond the Science of Reading: Connecting Literacy Instruction to the Science of Learning (ASCD 2025) and The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America's Broken Education System—And How to Fix It (Avery 2019). She is also the co-author, with Judith C. Hochman, of the first and second editions of The Writing Revolution: A Guide to Advancing Thinking Through Writing in All Subjects and Grades (Jossey-Bass, 2017 and 2024).
Kevin Wheldall	1949	Educational Psychology/ Special Education	Writer and researcher of scientific evidence-based reading interventions for young struggling readers and older low-progress readers (and latterly beginning readers). Founder of Making Up Lost Time in Literacy (MultiLit).	- (& Beaman, R.) <i>An evaluation of MultiLit</i> (2000) - <i>Effective instruction for socially disadvantaged low-progress readers: The Schoolwise program</i> (2008)
Daniel Willingham	1961	Psychology	Debunking the 'Learning Styles' myth The importance of knowledge in driving reading comprehension	- <i>Why Don't Students Like School</i> (2009)
Maryanne Wolf	1947	Cognitive neuroscience	Research into the role that rapid automatized naming (RAN) plays in literacy acquisition.	- <i>Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain</i> (2007)