

L E A R N I N G

T O

S P E A K

R E A D

A N D

W R I T E

C R E E

GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE

of Native Studies and Applied Research

1987

I. PREFACE

Each language organizes experience in a special way by using unique thought patterns in its expressions.

Many White tribes have the English language. Although their way of life may differ one from the other, the language, with its thought patterns and the twenty-six letters that go to make up the written language, is the same. The basis of the English thought pattern seems, compared to Cree, to be 'abstract', that is, the expression in many cases is not direct and must be understood by inference.

The Cree culture, and the language that expresses that culture, is unique. A person understanding the culture, which is the basis of the thought pattern, appreciates the beauty of the language. The uniqueness and the beauty Cree may be expressed as "a picture thought form with description and action." This idea will become clearer as you study the language.

Cree should be studied along with the thought pattern of the Cree culture. This will enable you to grasp the language more quickly.

II. INTRODUCTION

The Cree syllabics were invented by Dr. James Evans. This invention gave the Cree Indians a written form for their language. Dr. Evans began his work as a missionary in England and emigrated to Canada in 1823. In 1828 he became a teacher at an Indian school at Rice Lake, and, having talent in the study of languages, he mastered the Ojibway tongue and made translations of hymns and portions of the Bible.

While Dr. Evans was stationed at Norway House in Northern Manitoba, he formulated the Cree Syllabics. His first books in the Cree Syllabic were made with birchbark, on which the characters were written in ink from the soot of the chimney. The Bible in Swampy Cree was published in 1861, and the one in Plains Cree, in 1920.

The Cree Indians owe much to Dr. Evans for his hard work, for his accomplishment in learning to speak Cree and his invention of the Cree syllabics. He was also a notable Missionary, and one of the pathfinders of the Northwest, and he is therefore worthy of remembrance as one of Canada's great men. (Dr. Evans died suddenly at Keilby, Lincolnshire, England, on November 23rd, 1846, at the age of 45).

The "Square Method" of learning the syllabics, as illustrated in this book, was formulated by Rev. Tommy Francis in 1986.

The Cree language with its variety and precision makes a highly interesting study, and of all the various Algonkians dialects, it is believed that Cree is the oldest and most original of these. The Cree syllabics are unique in their structure and form. The syllabics represent exactly and completely the phonemics (linguistic sound) of the Cree language.

Example of a Cree syllabic chart found in the Bible.

KEY TO THE CREE SYLLABIC SYSTEM.					
V O W E L S.					
as in hate ā	as in pin e	as in no o	as in pun u	as in pan a	Final Con- sonants
▽	△	▷	◁	◁̇	
W wā ▽̇	we △̇	wo ▷̇	wu ◁̇	wa ◁̇̇	
P pā ▽	pe ^	po >	pu <	pa <̇	'
T tā U	te ∩	to ∪	tu C	ta Ć	/'
K kā 9	ke P	ko d	ku b	ka ĩ	\"
Ch chā 7	che f	cho J	chu l	cha ĩ	-
M mā 7	me Γ	mo J	mu L	ma ĩ	ˆ
N nā 7	ne σ	no 6	nu e	na ĩ	ˆ
S sā 7	se 7	so 7	su 7	sa ĩ	ˆ
Y yā 7	ye 7	yo 7	su 7	sa ĩ	ˆ
Final oo -----					o
Final i -----					.
Aspirated final k ----					x
Extra signs -- X = Christ, 3 = r, 4 = l, : = wi,					
" = h before a vowel.					
" = a soft guttural h when before a consonant.					

I HEAR AND I FORGET,

I SEE AND I REMEMBER,

I DO AND I UNDERSTAND.

SQUARE METHOD CHART

Learning to read Syllabics by the Square method.

𐑦 - ye

𐑧 - se

𐑨 - me

𐑩 - ke

𐑪 - ne

𐑫 - che

𐑬 - te

𐑭 - pe

𐑮 - we

𐑯 - e

𐑰 - yā

𐑱 - sā

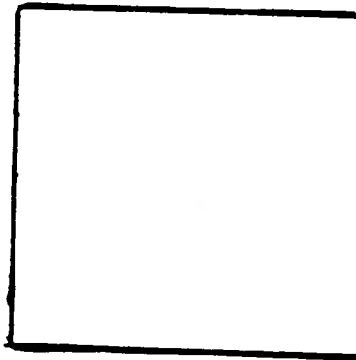
𐑲 - mā

𐑳 - kā

𐑴 - nā

𐑵 - chā

tu pu wu u
 𐑶 𐑷 𐑸 𐑹
 𐑺 𐑻 𐑼 𐑽
 ta pa wa a



o wo po to
 𐑿 𐒀 𐒁 𐒂

𐒃 - ā

𐒄 - wā

𐒅 - pā

𐒆 - tā

𐒇 - cho

𐒈 - no

𐒉 - ko

𐒊 - mo

𐒋 - so

𐒌 - yo

chu - 𐒍 𐒎 - cha

nu - 𐒏 𐒐 - na

ku - 𐒑 𐒒 - ka

mu - 𐒓 𐒔 - ma

su - 𐒕 𐒖 - sa

yu - 𐒗 𐒘 - ya

FINAL CONSONANTS

Final Consonants - two styles.

small syllabics

P	-	!	-	<
T	-	/	-	c
K	-	\	-	b
Ch	-	-	-	l
M	-	c	-	L
N	-	o	-	a
S	-	^	-	h

Final oo - °

Final i - .

Aspirated 'k' - *

Extra marks - ʒ = r

§ = l

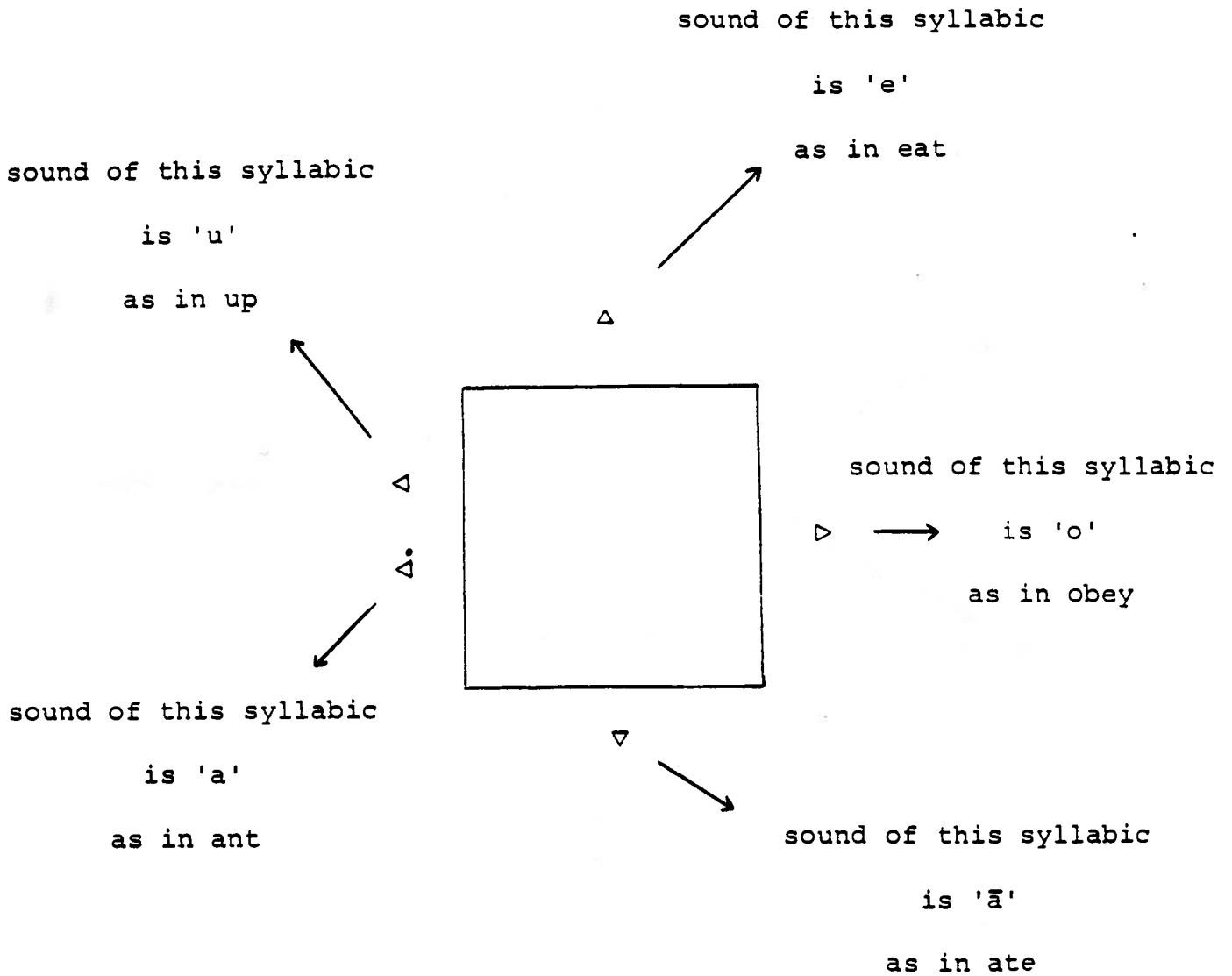
⋮ = wi

" = 'h' sound before a vowel.

" = a soft guttural 'h' when
before a consonant.

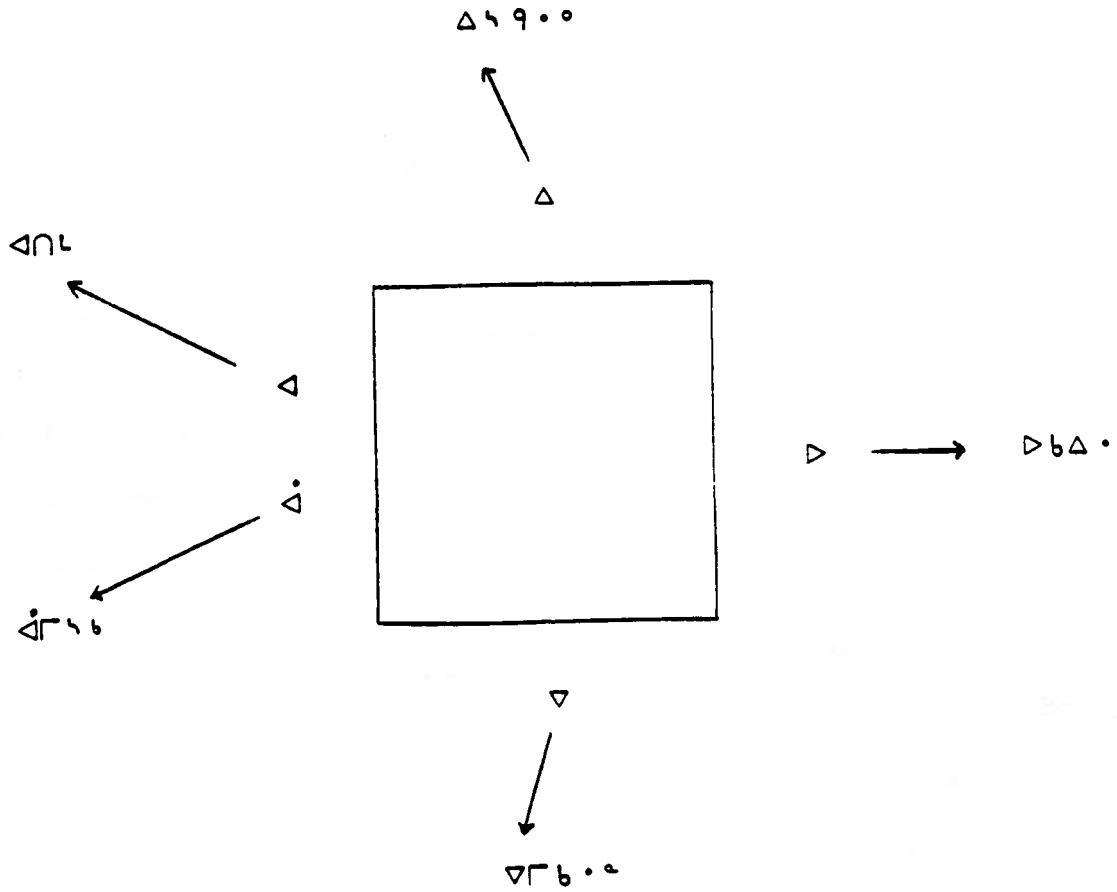
VOWELS

There are five vowels in the Cree syllabic system.



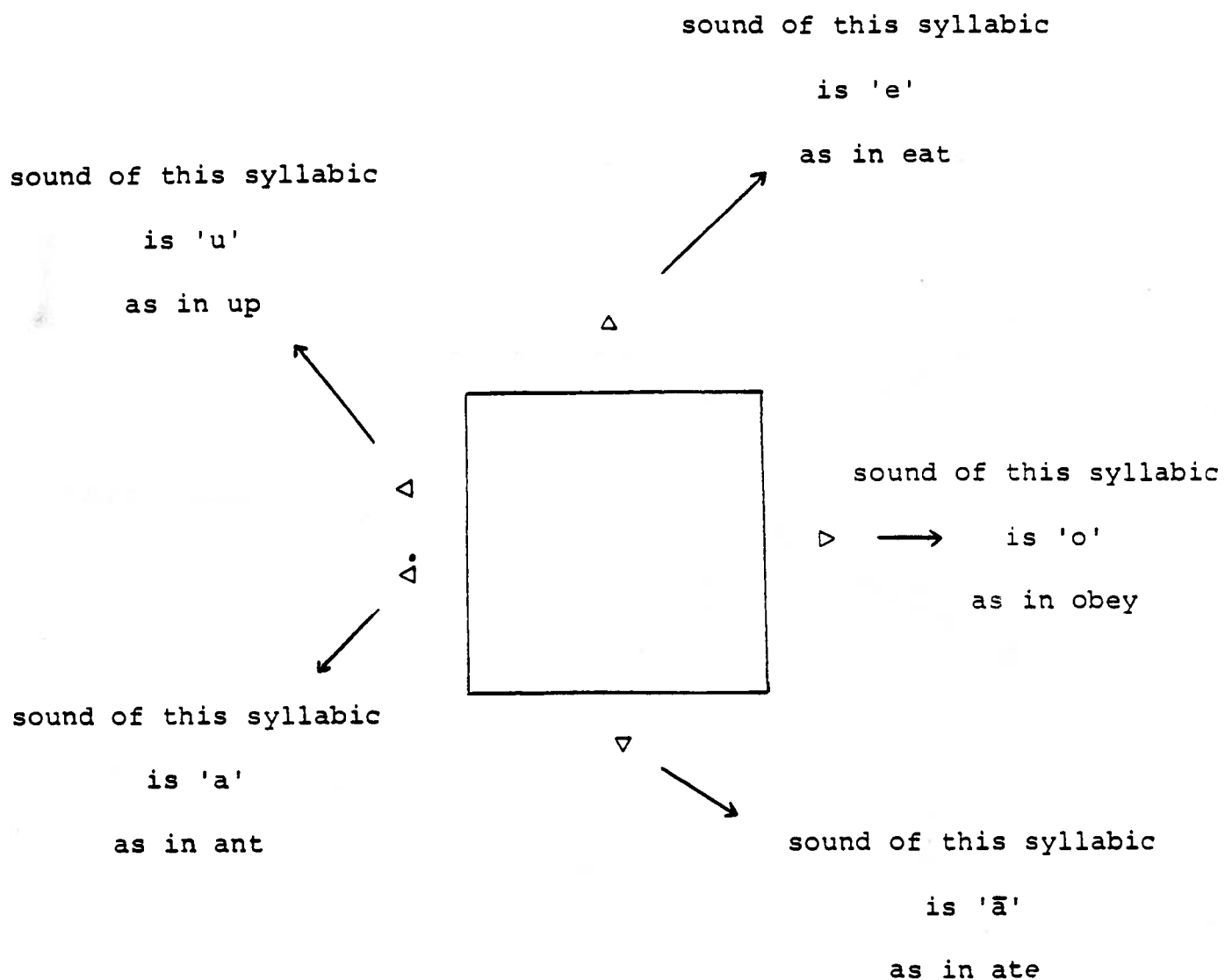
၁"Δ>Δ. L၂a"Δbσဟ်

၅၂၃၃ Δ>Δ. b σbσ ΔΠC b · P ၁"Δ>Δ. L၂a"Δbσဟ်.
Δ · << ΔCΓ b .



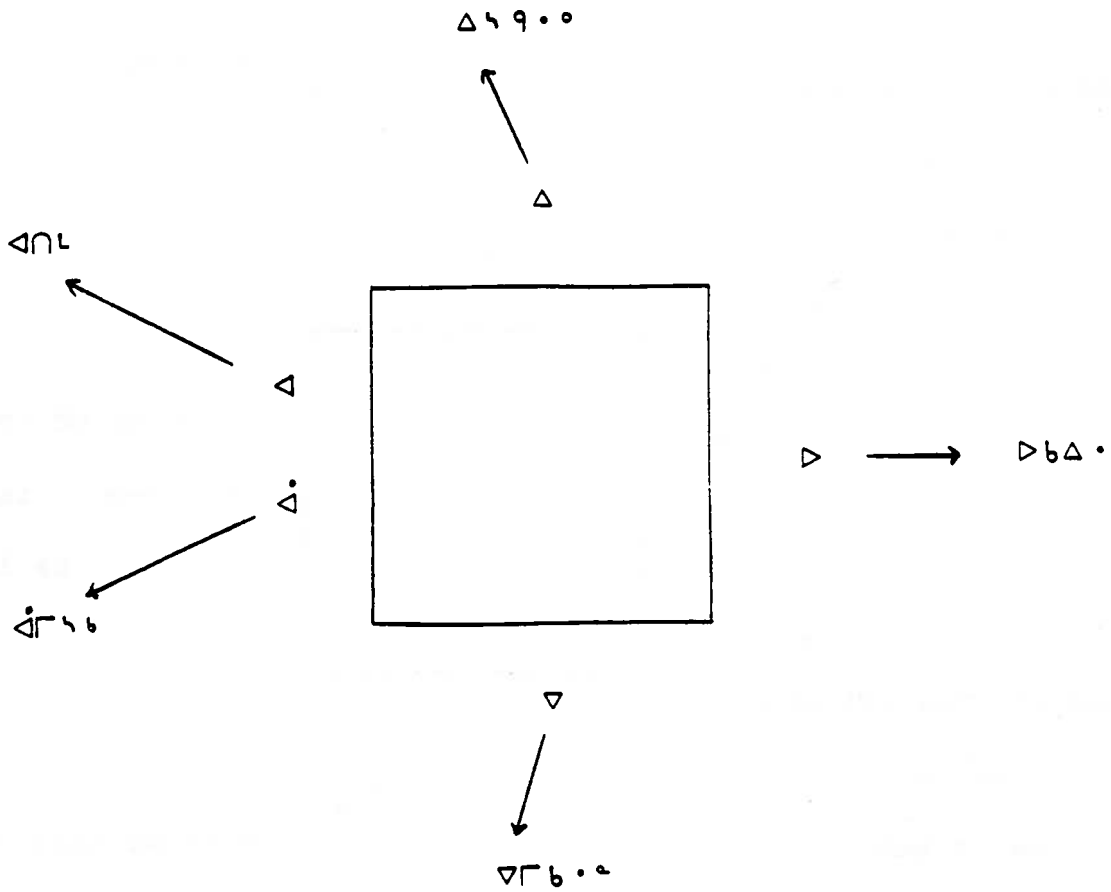
VOWELS

There are five vowels in the Cree syllabic system.



၁"Δ>Δ. L၂a"Δbσ၂

σ၂a° Δ>Δ. b σbσ ΔΠC b · P ၁"Δ>Δ. L၂a"Δbσ၂.
Δ · << ΔCΓ b .



PATTERN FOR TEACHING

	Δ ʌ 9 0 0	Δ Δ	Δ
	Δ 0 r ʌ e	Δ 0 Δ 0	Δ 0
	ʌ r ʌ b e	^ ^	^
	ʌ ʌ ʌ b 0	∩ ∩	∩
	r ʌ e	r r	r

Basic Pattern For Teaching Charts

Teach each line.

What is this? (point to the picture)

Say Δ ʌ 9 0 0

This is the word (point to the word)

Read Δ ʌ 9 0 0

Teach the sound of the syllabic.

Δ ʌ 9 0 0 begins with the sound Δ.

Say Δ (In making the sound Δ, start to say Δ ʌ 9 0 0, but only give the first sound)

Again, again.

Review the word and the syllabic.

What is this word?

What is this syllabic?

	Δ 900	Δ Δ	Δ
	Δ 0 9 5	Δ 0 Δ 0	Δ 0
	Δ 9 0 0	Δ Δ	Δ
	Δ 0 9 5	Δ Δ	Δ
	Δ 9 0 0	Δ Δ	Δ

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5 Δ 9 0 0 Δ 0 9 5

Δ SYLLABICS

Their form and their sound.

You will note the syllabics with the 'e' sound ('e' as in eat)
six syllabics point to the top left corner of the square. Four
syllabics point upward at the top of the square.

∟ - ye

┐ - se

┌ - me

ρ - ke

∩ - te

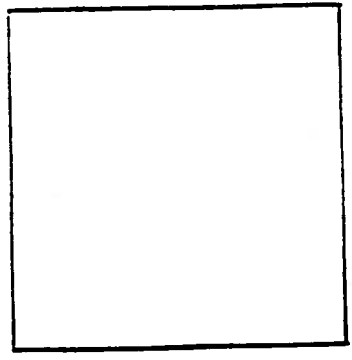
σ - ne

∧ - pe



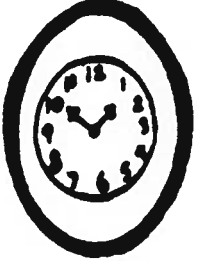

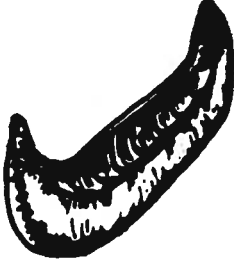
└ - che

Δ· - we




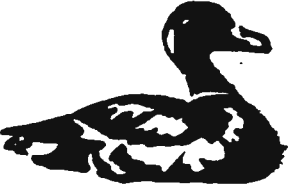

Δ - e



Lesson 1

	<p>ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ</p> <p>woman</p>	<p>ᐱ</p> <p>ᐱ</p>	<p>ᐱ</p>
	<p>ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ</p> <p>brother or sister</p>	<p>ᐱᐱ</p> <p>ᐱᐱ</p>	<p>ᐱᐱ</p>
	<p>ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ</p> <p>clock</p>	<p>ᐱ</p> <p>ᐱ</p>	<p>ᐱ</p>
	<p>ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ</p> <p>night</p>	<p>ᐱ</p> <p>ᐱ</p>	<p>ᐱ</p>
	<p>ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ</p> <p>canoe</p>	<p>ᐱ</p> <p>ᐱ</p>	<p>ᐱ</p>

Lesson 2

	<p>מַטָּה bed</p>	<p>מַטָּה</p>	<p>מַטָּה</p>
	<p>זָקֵן older person</p>	<p>זָקֵן</p>	<p>זָקֵן</p>
	<p>יָד hand</p>	<p>יָד</p>	<p>יָד</p>
	<p>דָּוֶק duck</p>	<p>דָּוֶק</p>	<p>דָּוֶק</p>
	<p>גַּלְטָה glove</p>	<p>גַּלְטָה</p>	<p>גַּלְטָה</p>

ᐃᐅᐱ ᐱ

Read



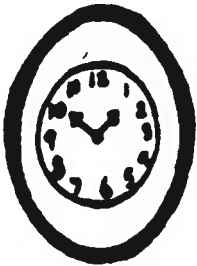
ᐅᐃᐱ ᐃᐃᐱ ᐃᐱᐱᐱᐱ

This is a woman



ᐅᐃᐱ ᐃᐃᐱ ᐱ ᐃᐱᐱᐱᐱ

This is your brother or sister



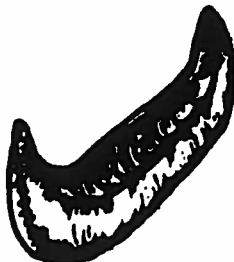
ᐅᐃᐱ ᐃᐃᐱ ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ

This is a clock



ᐱᐱᐱᐱ ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ

It is now night

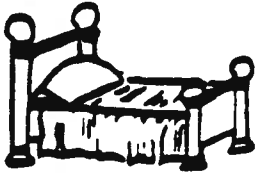


ᐅᐃᐱ ᐃᐃᐱ ᐱᐱᐱᐱ

This is a canoe

↔ΓĊ

Read



▽Δ·d ΔL ΓVΔ·e

This is a bed



▽Δ·d ΔΔ· PΔΔ̂

This is an older person



▽Δ·d ΔL ΓΓΔ̂

This is a hand



▽Δ·d ΔΔ· ΔΔ̂

This is a duck



▽Δ·d ΔΔ· ΔΔ̂Δ̂

This is a glove

A short story including the ten key words.

ᐱᕐ: ᐱ ᐱᕐᕐᕐ.

It was already night.

ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱᕐᕐᕐ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ.

The clock showed 10.

ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱ ᐱᕐᕐ.

The older-person sat on the bed.

ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ.

He does not use the bed.

ᐱᕐᕐᕐ ᐱ ᐱᕐᕐᕐ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ.

We rode the canoe today.

ᐱ ᐱ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ.

We saw one duck.

ᐱ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ.

My sister tried to catch the duck.

ᐱ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐ.

She hurt her hand.

ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ.

The woman helped her.

ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ.

The glove was in the canoe.

Write your name.

Write your address.

Write your phone number.

