

## PREFACE

The origin of this book lies in an experience which I had when I began to teach in junior high school nineteen years ago.

My eighth-grade class had an excellent reader full of literary gems, one of which was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Evangeline*. I looked forward to glorious days of leading young people into the many byways of good literature. Consequently, I was shocked to find that the students refused to tackle the poem. They argued that the vocabulary was so far beyond them that they would have to use the dictionary all the time.

The poverty of their language was appalling! They had been reading digests and simplifications. They had had no meaningful contact with the beauty of great writing. They wanted to read poems like *Evangeline*, but they were also practical. I had to admit that in the struggle for comprehension much of the grace and beauty would be lost.

The English of great literature was a foreign language to them. What to do about this problem?

We devised a plan: four boys volunteered to look up the words needed for the daily assignment in reading, each one responsible for one fourth of the list. We called these boys Dictionary Dicks.

I read the poem aloud while the class silently followed the text in their readers. When a word was not understood, it was asked for by a raised hand, and the boy who had that word on his list supplied the meaning.

Each day, as the poem unfolded, the enjoyment of the reading increased. I shall never forget the emotion of this class when I read the end of *Evangeline*. It was a memorable experience for all. Of course they wanted more of the same. But I refused. I assured them that their enjoyment would have been many times greater if they had done the

reading themselves. They believed me and were eager to learn how to read fine literature. We discussed the problem and, as usual, the solution turned out to be very simple:

*Build a strong vocabulary!*

It was then that I began my system of KEY building: the system you will find in this book. The method is simple, interesting, and always rewarding. It is an infallible method of vocabulary building.

One KEY a day opens the door to mastery of the English language. I guarantee that if you learn only the KEYS you will know the words. Every KEY has many words. *Do not try* to memorize them! Merely read and understand. Then use them in the practical exercises on the facing pages. Soon your vocabulary will expand greatly and you will begin to understand new words instantly. . . . You will possess an *instant vocabulary*.

You will find the proof of this statement on page 521. There you will find a test to give yourself and readings. You will see that you know the meaning of the longest word in the *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*—a word of forty-five letters. When you read the passages you will understand them.

I am convinced. *You* try it and convince yourself.

You will immediately get into the habit of looking for KEYS to word meaning. You will recognize the KEYS. You will be amazed at the speed of your vocabulary enrichment, at the ease with which you will be able to understand the most difficult words in the language.