



## Review of “Thai Reader Volume 1”

<b>Title</b>	Thai Reader Volume 1
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The Thai Reader Project was undertaken by the Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia of the University of Wisconsin and funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Title VI International Research and Studies Program. Resulting from this project, the “Thai Reader Volume 1” and “Thai Reader Volume 2”<sup>1</sup> have now been published as an online resource and are also available in PDF-Format, free of charge<sup>2</sup>.

Based on intensive research pertinent to second language acquisition and years of related teaching experience, the authors argue that teaching Thai to non-native learners through sets of well-designed authentic reading materials presents a more effective way to accomplish second language mastery<sup>3</sup>. In short, they suggest that learning a second language with authentic reading materials better equips learners to deal with different textual genres, such as those found in everyday printed media, complex academic literature, literary works, or technical research texts. In comparison to the conventional aural-oral approach, reading authentic texts encourages non-native learners to develop more comprehensive contextualized text interpretation skills. Whereas the aural-oral method tends to rely on a single set of simplified texts or dialogues emphasizing the four language acquisition core skills – namely listening, speaking, reading and writing – in a single lesson, the authentic reading lessons – originally created by and for native speakers of the language – provide learners with real world situations.

“Thai Reader Volume 1” contains a total of 47 well-structured reading lessons. Each lesson consists of 3 sections: pre-readings, during-readings and post-readings. In pre-reading activities, the learners are encouraged to predict the content and context of the text based on its title, photographs, illustrations and the instructor’s verbal cues. In during-reading activities, skimming and scanning techniques are employed to help learners gather a global text comprehension before focusing on detailed or selective comprehension. The post-reading activities are designed to enhance the learners’ newly acquired knowledge. The book covers a wide range of materials from simple texts like menus, time-tables, and newspaper advertisements to more complex reading materials, such as newspaper articles, editorials and short narratives. The contents include many informative topics that can broadly be grouped under practical and useful day-to-day issues, thought-provoking readings, topics on Thai culture, traditions and beliefs, places of interest in Thailand, the Thai way of life, general knowledge, geography of Thailand, and health and environmental issues.

“Thai Reader Volume 1” is a very rich and useful textbook that serves the needs of Thai as a foreign language teachers who intend to emphasise reading. As teachers of Thai as a foreign language to non-Thai students, we have learned from our own experience that it is quite difficult to find a variety of authentic reading texts that are appropriate for foreign learners in terms of length and level of difficulty. In this respect, the authors have done an admirable job. The thoughtfully selected reading materials in this volume are not only of appropriate length, but are also informative and challenging. Many lessons are very practical as they prepare learners to deal with current everyday life situations in Thailand. In addition, the design of the various exercises in each lesson supports the learners in their efforts to gain a deep comprehension of the texts.

Like most textbooks aimed at teaching a foreign language to non-native speakers, “Thai Reader Volume 1” must be used with care. Even though it is a collection of well-structured reading materials, intending to improve learners’ reading skills, teachers should supplement the book with other activities focusing on speaking and listening skills, as suggested by the authors. Given the authentic and non-simplified nature of the Thai-language texts compiled in the volume, learners may find it hard to relate to some unfamiliar topics as they may lack the background knowledge of the country’s culture and history. Therefore, qualified and experienced teachers of the language are needed to provide in-depth knowledge or background information pertinent to Thai history, culture, everyday life, and society when using this textbook in class. Overall, this textbook is suitable for classroom use. It is not intended for independent learning. In reading authentic texts, learners need the support of their teachers to manage some of the more difficult tasks of text interpretation.

Thai Reader Volume 1 is highly recommended for all teachers who teach Thai as a foreign language. We congratulate the authors for publishing a distinctive textbook, which marks a milestone in the field of teaching Thai as a foreign language. It is most suitable for teaching reading to learners who have at least completed a year of elementary language study (novice to intermediate high learners) or who have already acquired some basic literacy in the Thai language. This high quality textbook offers a timely choice for teachers and learners, who wish to enhance their Thai language class with up-to-date and challenging reading lessons.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Thai Reader Volume 2” is not included in this review.

<sup>2</sup> The answer keys can be requested from the authors.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.readingthai.wisc.edu>.