

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade / Room: _____

Score: _____

LESSON 88 • THE INTERMEDIATE A SOUND (**Ǻ AS IN ASK**)

The 3 Sounds of A: **Ǻ** • **Ǻ̇** • **Ǻ̈** • Page 49

Ǻ
Short A: bat, ran, gas, tag
(Flat tongue, front of mouth)

→ →

Ǻ̇
Intermediate A: pass, class, grass, glass
(Half-way sound between Ǻ and Ǻ̈)

→ →

Ǻ̈
Italian A: far, star, calm, balm
(Dropped jaw, deep throat)

1 The Five Columns • Copy & Diacritic Practice: Read each word aloud, copy onto the handwriting line, and mark each a (Ǻ, Ǻ̇, or Ǻ̈):

20 TARGET WORDS

Ǻ SHORT SOUND	Ǻ̇ INTERMEDIATE	Ǻ̈ ITALIAN SOUND	Ǻ̇ -ASK • -AST	Ǻ̇ -ANCE • -AFF
bat	pass	far	task	lance
ran	class	star	mask	dance
gas	grass	calm	last	chance
tag	glass	balm	past	chaff

2 Wheeler's Orthoepic Rule & Acoustic Discovery: Give the sound of each column aloud, then answer the questions below:

PAGE 49 DIRECTIVE

🔊 Wheeler's Teaching Note (Page 49):
"Notice that in the words in the second column a has a sound half-way between the sound which it has in the first column (Ǻ) and the sound which it has in the third column (Ǻ̈). These words are often mispronounced."

🔊 Oral Articulation Test:
Pronounce this acoustic triad in sequence: bat → pass → far.
Feel your jaw drop slightly more for each sound! Avoid a harsh twang in grass or an exaggerated drawl.

Explain in your own words why pass is called "half-way" between bat and far:

(Mouth opening & acoustic tone)

3 Dictation & Sentence Writing: Write each sentence neatly from teacher dictation or compose your own:

WRITING APPLICATION

1. Sentence with class and grass (Intermediate Ǻ̇):

(e.g., The class ran on the grass.)

2. Sentence with task, last, and chance (Intermediate Ǻ̇):

(e.g., Finishing the task was my last chance.)

3. Sentence with calm and star (Italian Ǻ̈):

(e.g., The calm night had a bright star.)

4. Sentence with dance and past (Intermediate Ǻ̇):

(e.g., They dance past the glass door.)

KEY ORTHOGRAPHIC RULES TO REMEMBER (WHEELER'S THREE SOUNDS OF A)

1. Short A (Ǻ): Marked with a breve (Ǻ̇), this is the flat open sound heard in bǺt, rǺn, gǺs, and iǺg.

2. Intermediate A (Ǻ̇): Marked with a single dot (Ǻ̇), heard in pǺss, clǺss, tǺsk, and dǺnce. It sits midway between Ǻ and Ǻ̈.

3. Italian A (Ǻ̈): Marked with two dots (Ǻ̈), this is the deep open sound in fǺr, stǺr, cǺlm, and bǺlm.

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE • LESSON 88 (THE INTERMEDIATE A SOUND Ä)

Acoustic Phonetics, 19th-Century Orthoepy & Articulation

1 Classroom Dictation Sentences (Administer at Natural Cadence)

DECODABLE APPLICATION

Sentence 1:

"The entire class ran out to play on the green grass behind the school."

[Targets: class, grass • Intermediate ä before -ss]

Sentence 2:

"Finishing the difficult task was his last chance to pass the test."

[Targets: task (-sk), last (-st), chance (-nce), pass (-ss) • Intermediate ä]

Sentence 3:

"A gentle sweet balm brought calm to the traveler beneath the bright star."

[Targets: balm (silent l), calm (silent l), star • Italian ä]

Sentence 4:

"He held a long lance and joined the merry dance before the festival was past."

[Targets: lance, dance (-nce), past (-st) • Intermediate ä]

2 Acoustic Phonetics & Orthoepy Matrix

LINGUISTIC DECODING

Sound / Mark	Target Words	Acoustic Characteristics & Dialectal Context
Short A (ä)	bat, ran, gas, tag	IPA [æ]. Front low unrounded vowel. The tongue lies flat and forward in the mouth with the jaw moderately open. Stable across all American dialects.
Intermediate A (ä)	pass, class, grass, glass, task, mask, last, past, lance, dance, chance, chaff	Historical 19th-century "ask sound" (Webster/Worcester/Wheeler). Positioned acoustically midway between [æ] and [a:] (often transcribed [a]). In modern General American it largely merged with [æ], while in RP British it lengthened to [a:].
Italian A (ä)	far, star, calm, balm	IPA [a:]. Back low unrounded vowel. Produced by opening the throat with dropped jaw. In calm and balm, the letter l is silent, preserving pure open [a:].

DIACRITIC MARKING KEY

20 TARGET WORDS

• Column 1 (ä):

bät, räñ, gäs, täg

• Column 2 (ä):

päss, cläss, gräss, gläss

• Column 3 (ä):

fär, stär, cälm, bälm

• Column 4 (ä):

täsk, mäsk, läst, päst

• Column 5 (ä):

länce, däñce, chäñce, chäff

• Students write clean words on handwriting lines and place the exact single dot (ä) over intermediate a words.

ORTHOEPEY PEDAGOGY & ARTICULATION

VOCAL TRAINING

Why Wheeler Emphasized Intermediate ä:

In 19th-century elocution, orthoepists warned against two dialectal faults: the overly flat, nasal short ä (/bæt/, /pæs/) and the affected British broad ah (/pa:s/). Wheeler trained pupils to hit the elegant middle tone in words ending in -ss, -sk, -st, -nce, -ff.

3 Socratic Discussion & Multi-Sensory Teaching Notes

PEDAGOGICAL TIPS

1. The 3-Step Mouth Mirror:

Have children hold their hand 1 inch from their mouth. Say bat (mouth barely opens), then pass (mouth opens slightly wider), then far (jaw drops completely).

2. Diacritic Dotting Practice:

Show the difference between a breve (curved smile ä), a single dot (one eye ä), and two dots (two eyes ä). Fun visual memory hook!

3. Silent Letter Check:

Remind students that in calm and balm, the letter l is silent, but the vowel is Italian ä (/ka:m/, /ba:m/).

4 Historical Orthoepy & Wheeler's Elocutionary Standards (1901)

PRIMARY SOURCE

"The sound of a in ask, pass, grass, is one of the truest marks of refined orthoepy. In careless speech, it is either flattened into the short sound of cat, or broadened into the full Italian sound of arm. The student should be trained to utter a sound half-way between them without harshness or drawl." — W. H. Wheeler, Elementary Speller, 1901.

TEACHER EVALUATION & MASTERY STANDARDS

Mastery Criteria: 100% precision in distinguishing the three sounds of A; accurate placement of the single dot over intermediate ä words; proper handwriting alignment on 26px guidelines; and clear acoustic vocalization during oral reading.