

ă LESSON 89: Intermediate Sound of A (ă as in ask)

CLASSIC POETRY COPYWORK • DIACRITIC HUNT

1 Read the verses aloud. Copy each line carefully, then place a dot (ă) over each a that sounds like a in ask:

Rule: intermediate ă before -ss, -st, -nc-

STANZA I • LUCY LARCOM
“It makes my heart bound, just to pass
The sunbeams dancing in the grass.”

STANZA II • SIR WALTER SCOTT
“Summer eve is gone and past,
Summer dew is falling fast.”

Verse 1: Copy Stanza I, Line 1 • carefully dot the 1 intermediate ă:

Target: 1 word with ă

Verse 2: Copy Stanza I, Line 2 • carefully dot both intermediate ă's:

Target: 2 words with ă

Verse 3: Copy Stanza II, Line 1 • carefully dot the 1 intermediate ă:

Target: 1 word with ă

Verse 4: Copy Stanza II, Line 2 • carefully dot the 1 intermediate ă:

Target: 1 word with ă

Intermediate Ă Defective • Check off each word after marking it above:

☐ pass

☐ dăncing

☐ grăss

☐ păst

☐ făst

blue / blew LESSON 90: Words Pronounced Alike (Homophones)

SAME SOUND /blu:/ • DIFFERENT SPELLING & MEANING

blue /blu:/ • adjective / noun
Definition: The color of the clear sky, ocean, or sapphire; spelled with -ue.
“Blue is the color of heaven,
And blue is the color for me.” — Lucy Larcom

blew /blu:/ • irregular verb
Definition: Past tense of blow (moved rapidly as a current of air); spelled with -ew.
“The merry wind that blew and blew
O'er the fields where the ripe grain grew.” — J. W. Riley

2 Wheeler's Socratic Questions • Answer each prompt in neat, complete handwriting:

Full Sentence Practice

1. What is the color of the sky? (Answer in a complete sentence using blue):

(Line 1: Primary Answer • Line 2: Descriptive Detail)

2. What did the wind do yesterday when it took your hat off? (Answer using blew):

(Line 1: Action Sentence • Line 2: What Happened Next)

3. Master Synthesis Challenge: Write one original sentence using BOTH blue and blew:

(Combine color + wind action)

1. Lesson 89 Diacritic Master Key • Intermediate Ä in Poetry

Students copy the two classic couplets and mark each intermediate a with a single dot (ä). Exactly 5 words in the passage take the intermediate dot.

Full Marked Text for Student Verification:
“It makes my heärt bound, just to päss
The sunbeams dāncing in the grāss.” — Lucy Larcom
“Summer eve is gone and päst,
Summer dew is fālling fāst.” — Sir Walter Scott

Target Word	Phonetic Mark & IPA	Phonetic Environment	Orthoepic Teaching Note
pass	päss • /pa:s/ or /pæs/	Before voiceless sibilant -ss	Avoid flat short /æ/; vocal tract opens intermediate between /æ/ and /a/.
dancing	dāncing • /'da:nsɪŋ/	Before nasal cluster -nc-	Root word dānce carries intermediate ä; inflection -ing is neutral.
grass	grāss • /gra:s/	Before voiceless sibilant -ss	Rhymes acoustically with päss, clāss, and glāss.
past	päst • /pa:st/	Before consonant cluster -st	Pre-fricative lengthening rule common in 19th-century elocution.
fast	fäst • /fa:st/	Before consonant cluster -st	Rhymes with päst, läst, and mäst.

Vowel Discrimination Alert: Students must NOT put the dot over: mākes (long ā), heärt (Italian ä before r), ānd (short ä), or fālling (broad a /aw/).

2. Lesson 90 Homophone Analysis: Blue vs. Blew

Word	Part of Speech	Vowel Team	Etymology	Syntactic Function
blue	Adjective / Noun	-ue (/u:/ or /ju:/)	Old French bleu; Germanic blao	Describes color: “blue sky”, “eyes of blue”.
blew	Irregular Verb	-ew (/u:/)	Old English blēow (past of blāwan)	Indicates past air movement: “The wind blew hard”.

Exemplar Student Answers (Wheeler's Questions):
Question 1: What is the color of the sky?
→ Exemplar: The color of the sky is blue. On a bright sunny morning, the sky looks clear and light blue.
Question 2: What did the wind do yesterday when it took your hat off?
→ Exemplar: The wind blew my hat off yesterday. The sudden gust blew it right across the green lawn.
Master Challenge (Both Words):
→ Exemplar: The chilly autumn wind blew my favorite blue woolen cap right off my head.

3. Wheeler's Standard Dictation Protocol & Socratic Prompts

3-Pass Dictation Method:
1. Acoustic Impression: Teacher recites each couplet at moderate tempo. Students listen attentively without writing.
2. Phonemic Transcription: Teacher dictates line by line. Students write and visualize vowel teams (-ue vs. -ew).
3. Orthographic Audit: Teacher reads the entire poem again. Students verify capitalization, punctuation, and diacritics.

Socratic Questions for Oral Discussion:
• “When you hear the sound /blu:/, how do you decide whether to write b-l-u-e or b-l-e-w?” (By the context and grammatical function: color vs. past action).
• “Look at the words ‘grass’ and ‘fast’. How does the sound of ‘a’ in these words differ from ‘cat’ or ‘father’?” (It is intermediate: higher and shorter than father, but deeper than cat).

4. Orthoepic Teaching Directives & Historical Context (Wheeler, 1901)

Wheeler's Orthoepic Standard for Intermediate Sound ä:
“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.”

Literary Context & Homophone Etymology:
Lucy Larcom (1824–1893) and James Whitcomb Riley (“The Hoosier Poet”, 1849–1916) provide rich, authentic context. Emphasize that blue and blew converged in sound through Middle English vowel shifts despite unrelated Germanic origins.