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**An Analysis of the Advanced Method Corporation (AMCO) approach to
Phonics Instruction in First Grade EFL Education at Santo Domingo De
Guzman School**

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We certify that this research project was presented by **Flores Rengifo, Domenika Gabriela and Larreátegui Castro, Ana Paula** as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **Bachelor's Degree in EFL Pedagogy**.

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**We, Flores Rengifo, Domenika Gabriela and Larreátegui Castro, Ana
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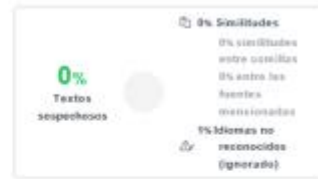
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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzed the Advanced Methods Corporation (AMCO) textbook for EFL and phonics instruction among first-grade students. AMCO is an English program for bilingual education that emphasizes communicative teaching principles and the natural acquisition of the English language. The main objective of this research was to examine the AMCO approach to phonics and early literacy that first-grade students at Santo Domingo De Guzmán School need for second grade. To obtain the results, this research adopted a mixed methods design focused on the following tools: structured interviews with elementary English teachers, adapted phonics awareness tests, and unstructured classroom observation. Our analysis has shown that the AMCO textbook does not have the necessary phonics material that first-graders need to cover before advancing to second grade. Through this paper, we conclude that there is a need for complementary materials to strengthen phonics instruction at first-grade levels.

Keywords: *AMCO Method, Phonics Instruction, First Grade, EFL Education, Phonological Awareness, Emotional Intelligence*

INTRODUCTION

In early EFL education, bilingual institutions adapt different teaching methods to obtain the best results from young learners. The purpose is to prepare students to have all the background knowledge needed to excel in all four areas of English instruction (speaking, listening, reading, writing) at later educational levels.

For pre-reading, young learners require basic phonics skills for upcoming elementary levels. Teaching phonics lays the groundwork for reading fluency because it involves the relationship between letters and sounds. For instance, English textbooks for first-grade students contain activities to practice hearing, recognizing, and playing with the sounds of the spoken language. However, a common downside of many EFL textbooks regarding phonics is the insufficient material for practice. Because of this, first-graders who are not prepared with basic phonological and phonemic awareness skills struggle to adapt to second-grade material. The learning gaps hinder their ability to decode short-syllable words and eventually, the capacity to recognize and blend letter sounds.

Therefore, first-grade English textbooks must incorporate comprehensive phonics material to address these issues. Such material should offer systematic practice of letter-sound relationships, phonological awareness activities, and opportunities for students to apply these skills in context along with technological tools. By enhancing the phonics content in these educational resources, educators can better support students in developing the literacy skills necessary for their academic progression and success in subsequent grades.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In recent years, many private schools in Ecuador have begun to explore the Bilingual Educational Program known as the Advanced Method Corporation (AMCO) and its corresponding approach for first-grade English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. This methodology integrates communicative teaching principles with technological tools to enhance language acquisition. Santo Domingo de Guzman School has implemented this approach, incorporating Language Arts, Reading, and Phonics into its kindergarten and first-grade curriculum.

Despite implementing the AMCO approach, there are several concerns that arose referring to the appropriate phonics instructional materials employed in the Santo Domingo de Guzman School's AMCO Reading & Phonics classes. Phonics education is pivotal as it prepares young learners to decode words, develop phonemic awareness, and establish a solid basis for fluent reading and comprehension, especially in first grade. It also works as a foundation for second grade, where students finally learn to read and write. Yet, some questions need an answer about whether the AMCO approach fully meets the needs of first-grade EFL students in developing these critical phonics skills.

The AMCO approach includes modern teaching strategies using current multimedia such as songs, videos, and computer-based activities. However, it does not have enough practice activities for the development of phonological skills. Through classroom observations, it is visible that there is a lack of motivation among students due to the lack of didactic phonics activities.

This thesis will analyze the AMCO approach to phonics instruction within the first-grade EFL curriculum at Santo Domingo de Guzman School. The analysis will include a review of the textbook, provided by AMCO. First, unstructured observations during Reading & Phonics classes will offer valuable insights into the development of an AMCO phonics class and students' behavior. Next,

phonics assessments will allow researchers to measure students' achievement. An interview with first and second-grade teachers will also provide her perceptions of the AMCO methodology and the phonics activities in her book. Based on these findings, the thesis will propose supplementary learning materials and strategies, if necessary, to enhance the effectiveness of phonics instruction and better support the language acquisition needs of first-grade EFL learners.

JUSTIFICATION

This study aims to shed light on the various factors contributing to the observed challenges in children's learning outcomes. By closely examining the AMCO methodology, its phonics approach, the first-graders book, and lesson plans regarding this subject in Santo Domingo de Guzman School, we seek to uncover the underlying reasons for the difficulties in acquiring phonics skills in the English language among first-grade students.

Additionally, this research aspires to provide additional materials to enhance the learning process and support first-grade students at Santo Domingo de Guzman School as well.

In addition, this project serves as both an exploration and a call to action. Our goal is to create a more efficient learning environment that meets the educational needs of young EFL learners. Recognizing that first graders must be motivated to engage with the content is crucial. Effective interaction with the course materials is essential for a learner's understanding (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

Furthermore, this paper acknowledges the critical stage of first graders and its correlation with a stimulating learning environment. We aim to address the barriers that hinder optimal learning experiences and to highlight specific areas for improvement within the AMCO phonics material.

Additionally, this study aims to identify the gaps between theory and practice and provide effective insight for the institution and elementary English teachers on EFL and phonic awareness acquisition among first-grade students at Santo Domingo de Guzmán School.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the theoretical foundations regarding the AMCO teaching methodology?
- How does the AMCO methodology integrate phonics-based instruction?
- What is the level of phonological awareness of first-grade EFL at Santo Domingo de Guzman?
- What complementary materials could be suitable for teaching phonics to first-grade students to compensate for the lack of resources in the main book?

MAIN OBJECTIVE

To analyze the AMCO methodology approach to phonics on the literacy development of first graders at Santo Domingo de Guzman School.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To identify the specific phonics-based activities, materials, and instructional techniques employed within the AMCO approach to phonics instruction for first-grade EFL students.
- To review theories and studies on children's phonics learning and language acquisition in the context of first-grade EFL education.
- To develop a supplementary phonics skills booklet for first-grade EFL students at Santo Domingo de Guzman School.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Overview of the AMCO Teaching Methodology

According to the Advanced Methods Corporation (2024), the AMCO approach founded in the USA is an English teaching methodology for the Second-First language that suggests naturally learning the foreign language, just as Americans would learn from birth. As stated by Magaña (2024), AMCO requires a focus on all learning styles and intelligences to cater to all students through motivation, empathy, individuality, and regulation of feelings. Therefore, dancing, storytelling, singing, and use of technological resources are key.

Additionally, AMCO emphasizes the importance of full immersion for second language acquisition, as its goal is for students to learn and internalize a foreign language the same way they acquire their native one. They call this second-first language acquisition. Therefore, teachers under this program must conduct all classes in English without using the native language of their students to facilitate code-switching or the switching process they promote.

According to Aragón (2017), the AMCO methodology emphasizes the importance of focusing on student's emotional, intellectual, and social growth. The purpose of this approach is to equip learners to face the challenges of our fast-paced world. AMCO uses modern technical tools and multimedia resources to engage students in interactive learning settings.

When it comes to the methodology, Espinar (2021) assures that AMCO is primarily based on Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory and the Emotional Intelligence Theory, under the perspective of the Generative Voice Theory advocated by Martorell. Gardner's theory supports tailoring teaching strategies to diverse learning styles; Emotional Intelligence Theory emphasizes the importance of managing emotions in learning, especially a second language, while Martorell's Generative Voice Theory focuses on language immersion and active participation, promoting natural language acquisition. Furthermore, the mentioned theories will be defined below.

First, the Psychologist Gardner (1983) expanded the definition of intelligence as the ability to solve real problems and create solutions relevant to their societies. He stated that individuals have a wide variety of intelligence, 8 to be specific, but they should all be allowed to work on that intelligence and discover their potential. The following chart contains the respective intelligences mentioned by Gardner.

Table 1. Gardner’s Eight Intelligences

Intelligence	Description
Verbal- Linguistic	Ability to analyze information and produce work that involves oral and written language, such as speeches, books, and emails. Individuals with this intelligence are typically good at reading, writing, and storytelling.
Logical- Mathematical	Ability to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically.
Visual-Spatial	Capability to identify and manipulate large-scale spatial pictures.
Musical	Ability to create, remember, and make sense of various patterns, rhythms, melodies, and sounds.
Naturalistic	Ability to recognize and distinguish types of animals, plants and weather.
Bodily- Kinesthetic	Ability of the human body to develop products and solve problems. It needs a sense of timing and mind-body connection.

Interpersonal	Ability to understand others and their complex moods and intentions.
Intrapersonal	Ability of individuals to understand oneself, their feelings, moods, motivations and intentions.

Note: Made by Flores & Larreátegui, 2024. Reference: Davis. et al, 2011.

AMCO (2024) states “AMCO believes in the necessity of addressing all types of intelligence, challenging traditional educational approaches by designing a teaching methodology that incorporates them all.” The program reflects this methodology through various activities developed in its textbooks and platform.

Additionally, Pérez (2017) states that this method ensures each student is engaged, boosting their motivation by catering to their intelligence needs. AMCO ensures that if students need help understanding, seven alternative methods are available to help them grasp the concept. Utilizing all eight intelligences demonstrates that students can learn the same content through various approaches.

Furthermore, social and emotional components are critical for learning a second language. According to Kramsch (1993), the challenging stages of language learning involve much more than the complexity of the language itself. For instance, nervousness, insecurities, inexperience, feelings, projections, and memory problems are factors that influence the process of learning.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive, control, and evaluate emotions. Goleman (1995) emphasizes the importance of understanding and managing emotions in both personal and professional life but highlights its significance in school settings. Traditionally, intelligence has only been measured by IQ tests. However, Goleman suggests that emotional intelligence is as important as intellectual ability (IQ) for success. There are five components to achieving emotional intelligence, which will be addressed below.

Table 2. Emotional Intelligence Components

Components	Description
Self-awareness	It's the ability to notice and understand one's thoughts, feelings, and emotions, which can influence interactions with others.
Self-regulation	It's the ability to manage and control one's emotions. involves clear thinking for deciding what is best for oneself.
Motivation	It's a solid drive to achieve goals for personal reasons beyond external rewards.
Empathy	It's the ability to understand the feelings of others and read social clues. It involves sharing and listening to different experiences.
Social Skills	It includes effective communication, conflict resolution, teamwork, and the ability to build and maintain networks.

Note: Made by Flores & Larreátegui, 2024. Reference: Goleman, 1995.

AMCO (2024), states the following:

“Focusing on students' social and emotional skills is a key part of this program. AMCO believes it is essential to address emotional intelligence in the classroom to enrich the learning atmosphere, improve overall student performance, and, more importantly, lay the foundations for students to lead healthier and happier lives.” (p. 7, Skill Set level 3)

Goleman (1995) indicates that integrating emotional intelligence into education enhances academic success and fosters resilience, empathy, and practical stress management skills. By emphasizing emotional intelligence, students become better learners and more compassionate individuals, capable of building stronger relationships and contributing positively to society.

Third, according to Pan (2017), the Generative Voice Theory is the most innovative and key part of the AMCO methodology. In addition, Martorell,

(1987) the founder of AMCO, states that his theory focuses on how individuals learn languages, aiming to make the process similar to how they understand their first language. It is based on analyzing children's different communication codes to express their ideas, needs, or feelings. These codes include verbal and non-verbal language. His theory is based on several concepts:

Table 3. Angel Martorell's concepts on The Generating Voice Theory

Concepts	<p>Individuals must use both brain hemispheres to obtain the code of communication to acquire a second language.</p> <p>The earlier individuals learn a language, the better. If not, individuals will never obtain the expected fluidity, smoothness, and comprehension results.</p> <p>When more brain zones are stimulated during language learning (sounds, songs, games, physical movements, artwork, mimicry, body language, etc.), the comprehension and retention of the concepts and vocabulary will be greater.</p> <p>It is necessary to involve the student actively in the teaching-learning process so that he/she will acquire the language naturally and without stress, gradually, being the "owner" of the learning, not solely the receptor of what the teacher is saying.</p> <p>The learner must think in the language to be acquired. This occurs when no translations are provided and when the students have activities, games, and experiences using the language, not only doing "learning" activities.</p>
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If English is the target language to be learned, everyone needs to speak only English. This facilitates the process of acquiring English.

When students can create an image of the spoken or written words in their brain, they understand without translating. Being able to THINK in a language is the goal of language acquisition. The generating voice theory is one of the explanations of this process.

The generating voice allows humans to accept and comprehend the language reaching the brain. A physical image of the brain is recorded instantaneously. Whether the child hears or reads "house" or "casa," the image of a house/casa appears in the brain without translating from one language to another. This instant action is the result of the Generating Voice Theory. It emphasizes developing the ability to switch between languages easily without thinking in the native language first, creating a more immersive learning experience.

Thanks to the Generating Voice Theory, the child establishes communication codes naturally. Developing "warehouses" in the brain, wherein each language and information is stored, not mixed, and not translated one to another, permits the student to learn a second language with the same spontaneity and ease with which he/she acquired the first language

Note: Made by Flores & Larreátegui, 2024. Reference: Martorell, 1987.

AMCO (2024) assures the following statement:

The Generating Voice develops storage spaces in the brain and records the information for each language separately, avoiding translation. Natural and total immersion in a language, whether a first or second

language, stimulates the Generating Voice and allows children to learn it with spontaneity and ease.” (p. 8 skill set level 3)

This means that the Generating Voice Theory helps the brain store each language in its own space, so there's no need to translate. When children are fully immersed in a language, just like they are with their first one, they learn it naturally and efficiently, it just takes time.

1.2 AMCO didactic strategies

AMCO utilizes a variety of teaching strategies designed to make learning more effective and engaging for students. According to Pan (2017), these strategies include meaningful learning that enables students to connect new information with their existing knowledge, making the material relevant to their lives and practical for better retention and understanding. A type of learning that goes beyond memorization. Cooperative learning encourages students to work together towards common goals, essential to developing social skills such as communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution. Collaborating with peers facilitates the process of young learners understanding different perspectives and creating a sense of community. Constructive learning involves students building knowledge by being active learners in their classes. This method encourages exploration and discovery, allowing students to construct their understanding. Additionally, fostering thinking skills focuses on developing students' abilities to process information, gain knowledge, and solve problems creatively.

According to AMCO (2024), their methodology naturally focuses on language exposure and authentic communication skills. Students listen, get context clues, infer meaning, and make guesses about what is being said, enabling them to begin to produce the English language slowly. Though students will be exposed to beginning pre-reading skills during this language developmental stage, they are not a program focused on phonics.

1.3 The AMCO Class

AMCO teachers get a day and month lesson plan for every unit of the book. Those lesson plans must be followed as instructed in order to achieve the outcomes and cover all the book content on time. As stated by AMCO (2024), the AMCO Class uses a lesson sequence that includes a daily routine, pre-activity, an activity, post-activity, and the cool-down.

Daily routines are conducted at the beginning of the class to make students switch into the English language, following the Generative Voice Theory. The daily routine not only allows this transition of languages but also reduces stress levels as students know what to expect at the beginning of the lesson. The main topics covered during these lessons are greetings, stating the date, talking about the weather, addressing the state of mind, and reviewing classroom rules, among others. AMCOs classes are student-centered ones; therefore, teachers have to make students active participants in the class. When it comes to the next sections, the teacher has to follow the lesson plans provided by the AMCO methodology as instructed. Those lessons include activities to develop grammar, writing, listening, and speaking skills in a natural way, there being a combination of sections. When it comes to Skill Set 3 lesson plans, pre-activities are provided to introduce a new topic in class; next, an activity in the book is developed; later, a post-activity is conducted for students to apply what they learned in class; and finally, a cool-down at the end for reflection time and saying their goodbyes.

1.4 AMCO Skill Set book structure

The AMCO methodology includes materials such as textbooks, flashcards, classroom mascots, big books, and posters to use in the classroom; a web platform with resources and activities for students; as well as training and certifications for teachers. When understanding how an AMCO class works, knowing how the textbook is structured is essential. Each level of Skill Set 3, first graders book, has ten units divided into two books to be used during the academic year, divided into three trimesters, each textbook for each trimester.

There are three areas of focus throughout each one of these units: Language Skills, Pronunciation Lab, and Pre-Math Skills.

First, the Language Skill Section introduces the unit’s central theme, develops pre-reading skills, and applies vocabulary and basic grammar topics in real-life contexts. This section includes storytelling. According to AMCO (2024), students at this developmental stage are not expected to begin reading, before that they must first develop listening and speaking skills. Nevertheless, allowing young learners to follow along with a story is AMCO’s method to begin generating interest in future readers. Each unit has a story that highlights vocabulary and gets more complex with each grade level. The goal is to improve listening skills, make learning English fun, and help students understand the order and structure of stories.

Second, as stated by Aragón (2017), the Pronunciation Lab section is one of the key components advocated by the AMCO method to achieve proper auditory discrimination in the English language. Not only that but the exercises are also intended to build vocabulary and develop pre-spelling skills. Pronunciation Lab is implemented through a variety of activities, such as “Listening and Identifying Sounds”, “Vocabulary”, “Home Schooling”, “Songs, Poems, and Rhymes”, and “Do these words Rhyme?”

Table 4. Skill Set 3 Pronunciation Lab

Activities	Purpose
Listening and Identifying sounds	Meant to develop auditory discrimination. Presenting a wide variety of sounds accompanied by pictures for students to understand what it represents. This is meant to increase students’ confidence levels to discriminate sounds.
Vocabulary	It intends to introduce and expand students’ vocabulary by also fostering pronunciation and auditory discrimination as much as possible.

Home Schooling	It intends to reinforce vocabulary at home, as this methodology states parents should also be involved in their children's learning process. It contains a single page that contains 24 vocabulary words per unit and its meant be sent home to practice.
Songs, Poems, and Rhymes	Its purpose is to develop and build language skills. One page per week.
Does the word Rhymes?	It intends to enhance phonological awareness. Meant to reinforce beginning, ending, and middle sounds. One page per sound.
Listening to Words 'Sounds / Letters and Sounds	It intends to expose students to basic phonemes to develop and build their phonological and phonemic awareness. It allows students to practice the different phonemes in the English language. One page per letter of the alphabet is found within the book.

Note: Made by Flores & Larreátegui, 2024. Reference: AMCO, 2024.

Third, According to AMCO (2024), this section allows Content and Language-Integrated (CLIL) learning by having students develop skills such as identifying shapes, colors, size, numeral sense, logical reasoning, comparing objects, and more. This integrative approach is designed to enhance linguistic abilities and cognitive skills, providing a holistic learning experience that supports the overall development of the students.

1.5 The importance of phonics

Phonics is the relationship between written language letters and spoken language sounds. It is a way to teach learners about phonemes (a unit of sound in a spoken language) and graphemes (the smallest unit in a written language) to enhance reading practices. Reading research states that various regions in the human brain are necessary to put together uttered sounds, written symbols, and the actual definition of words to be able to read and write adequately. Learners do not begin with settled trails between these regions; they must build them through understanding and practice. Phonics knowledge is an essential attribute of the process where the human brain links sound, letters, pronunciation, and word meaning, also known as “orthographic mapping.” Eisnor (2022) states that students who develop orthographic mapping abilities learn to decode letters and sounds in words they do not know yet; as they gain automaticity, those words eventually become sight words (p. 10).

Furthermore, the importance of phonics also relies on its relation to decoding and encoding. As Thompson (2021) said, intense phonics instruction assists learners in improving their decoding and encoding skills, causing it to be of more significant benefit for English language learners (p.10). Decoding happens when learners can distinguish the sounds of printed words without necessarily having to understand the specific meaning. For example, a child reading “cat” can segment the word into sounds /c/, /a/, /t/. On the other hand, encoding refers to turning spoken sounds into written letters. For instance, in a classroom where young students learn phonics instruction, we call it encoding if the learner can hear the sound /m/ and write down the letter “m.”

Alongside phonics, there's also a direct link to the alphabetic principle, which is the systematic idea that letters are thought to represent a predictable relationship to spoken language sounds. Paris (2019) describes phonics instruction as one of the best-known and globally used approaches to teaching reading and writing in the English language. To be successful at reading, it is essential to teach students to understand the alphabetic principle so they can learn the names of the letters and sounds (p. 2)

In addition, Double et al. (2019), state that phonics interventions are more successful at enhancing reading performance during the early moments of reading development. Studies have shown that phonics lessons in the first grade significantly affect later pre-reading skills than those that start later in life. For instance, research found that 7-year-old students struggling with reading benefit from systematic programs explicitly teaching phonics (p.3). This methodical approach teaches children the basics of language, from identifying simple phonemes to complex skills like blending sounds to form words, among other things. Learners who are proficient in phonics read more accurately and develop a greater understanding of language structure and usage. This early expertise lays the groundwork for lifelong learning, as proficient readers can acquire information across all subjects.

Furthermore, recognizing the importance of phonics instruction among young learners is also a task for teachers and educational institutions. Research on phonics instruction strategies encompasses a range of techniques and activities designed to engage students and build their phonemic awareness and decoding skills. Sanden et al. (2022) found that teachers agree with the effectiveness of phonics for reading practices, especially explicit phonics instruction (p.73), which is one of the various strategies teachers can use to enhance phonics instruction for young learners:

Table 5. Phonics instruction strategies for young learners.

<p>Systematic and Explicit Instruction</p>	<p>Systematic phonics instruction follows a logical sequence, gradually introducing letter-sound relationships. This approach ensures that students learn and practice phonics skills in a structured manner, starting from basic phonemes to more complex patterns. Researchers state the definition of the concept:</p> <p>Systematic instruction means a planned sequence of phonics elements that comprises a logical progression of skills and knowledge. Synthetic phonics is highly explicit and systematic and is characterized by several steps</p>
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	<p>involving grapheme-phoneme correspondence. (Buckingham, Wheldall, & Wheldall, 2019, p. 57)</p>
Phonemic Awareness Activities	<p>Teachers can engage students in activities like sound isolation (identifying initial, medial, and final sounds in words), phoneme segmentation (breaking words into individual sounds), and blending (combining sounds to form words). These activities can be conducted orally, using manipulatives, or through interactive technology tools” (Clemens. et al, 2021).</p>
Play-based learning	<p>Play-based activities in schools are designed to be constructed through directed play, which refers to a play that focuses on specific learning goals set by standards but, at the same time, allows kids to play freely, and it is mainly related to the constructivist model of play. (Alle-Herdon, et al., 2021, p. 7) For example, teachers can incorporate phonics into games, songs, and interactive storytelling sessions. For instance, playing "I Spy" with initial sounds or creating rhyming games encourages children to listen attentively to sounds and identify phonetic patterns.</p>
Letter and Sound Recognition	<p>Teachers can introduce letters and their corresponding sounds using mnemonic cues, songs, or visual aids. For example, using alphabet charts with pictures representing each letter sound helps to associate letters with their sounds and meaningful contexts. Recognizing letters and their sounds is a skill that children should master because it will be the steppingstone to their learning how to read and write. (Contractor, 2023)</p>

Phonics Through Song and Chant	Music and rhythmic activities are powerful tools for teaching phonics to young children. Songs and chants emphasize letter-sound relationships, phonemic blending, or rhyming words, allowing children to internalize phonetic patterns and enhance memory retention. The importance is that “students will find it easier to memorize things and grasp the materials as well as improve their understanding of word order through songs” (Utami & Musthafa, 2022, p. 202)
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Note: Made by Flores & Larreátegui, 2024.

As mentioned above, strategies regarding phonics instruction are used in early childhood education to ensure that elementary students continue to the next levels with the foundation for independent reading. For instance, first graders are not required to master reading skills, yet they still need knowledge of letter-sound recognition, which is essentially phonics instruction. Once first-grade learners reach second grade, they will use their basic phonic skills and implement them for further phonemic activities. However, the AMCO books have a significant difference regarding phonics between the first and second grade. Unlike the first-grade AMCO book, the second grade one does include reading activities. Double. Et al (2019) described why early phonic intervention is key:

Those students who are able to ameliorate their early phonics difficulties fair substantially better in later reading tests compared with children with equivalent difficulties who do not improve in the first year of schooling. These findings support the idea that there is a critical period for the development of phonetic decoding skills around the period of development that occurs at school entry. (p. 12)

Therefore, children who become skillful readers as adults have the basis of phonological awareness, they need to recognize printed words and translate them into their corresponding sounds.

1.6 Phonological awareness in early language learning

For early pre-reading skills, children must become aware of the existence of phonemes, which are part of the words. When young learners are aware of language starting from the smallest units it is easier for them to recognize phonemes and graphemes. According to Pfost *et al.* (2019), the level of phonological awareness in a child determines whether they can manage later reading skills and if they develop accurate phonemic decoding abilities as well as the formation of the orthographic lexicon (p. 2). Furthermore, learning to read starts with knowing the language, especially in the early moments which is a crucial and sensitive age. This learning manifests slowly, going through all the possible stages and challenges. Therefore, phonological awareness is the ability to understand and manipulate sounds and it is the first step to reading. Many researchers consider it as a process that starts as soon as the child has contact with the world, its sounds, and the way they explore and compare with their unique understanding of language.

In addition, phonological awareness is a metalinguistic ability that equips young learners starting school to self-regulate their knowledge of the language codes they have experienced before formal instruction. According to Araya (2019), certain aspects are to be considered when talking about phonological awareness:

- Matching sounds and words.
- Word pairing.
- Rhyme production and recognition.
- Pronunciation of isolated sounds.
- Pronunciation of every sound in a word in order.
- Numbering phonemes
- Phoneme blending and deletion
- Phoneme substitution.

Once children reach school age, they should be knowledgeable on some of these aspects. As stated by Flores *et al.* (2021), phonological awareness appears gradually during the first years of primary education (3 to 5 years old), and most children should be doing practical phonics skills activities in kindergarten and first grade. In this sense, phonological awareness attributes to the child becoming aware of the units of spoken language (phonemes, syllables, words) and manipulating them in different reading and writing situations related to the development of oral language.

Consequently, EFL teachers at the elementary level should follow strategies that implement phonological awareness skills. For instance, Araya (2019) suggests the following:

- Word repetition.
- Beginning, middle, and ending sound identification.
- Rhymes and onsets identification.
- Specific phoneme reproduction and repetition.
- Identification of the number of syllables in a word.

Moreover, in EFL education, phonological awareness is key to reducing the development of future academic difficulties. According to Soto *et al.* (2019), Spanish-speaking EFL learners of a young age are at risk of becoming poor readers if they are not provided with early literacy instruction. It is important to take into consideration the relationship between phonological awareness between English and Spanish, and how to assess their current skills for optimal learning.

1.7 Phonemic awareness in early language learning

Phonics and phonemic awareness are concepts that go hand in hand with slight differences, although both are core knowledge for reading foundations among young learners. According to Lindsey, Kuehl, & Mesmer (2020), people often confuse the terms phonics and phonemic awareness due to the root word

“phon,” which translates to “sound” (p. 160). However, phonics is the teaching method that deals with graphemes, letters, and their corresponding sounds; essentially, it deals with written language and print. It is also a visual and auditory process where students practice reading and writing letters based on their sounds, phonological structures, and spelling patterns. In comparison, the main focus of phonemic awareness leans upon phonemes or sounds, which inherently deal with spoken language. Lessons planned around phonemic awareness are rather auditory and let students work with managing sounds in words.

Moreover, children in first-grade classes are just starting to develop their cognitive and linguistic skills. Usually, their phonemic awareness development progresses slowly. However, it is possible to help students overcome areas of difficulty and accompany them through the learning process. Also, if the goal is for learners to manage future reading material, teachers should assist in their phonemic awareness evolution.

Yopp’s study (1992) supports the following:

To benefit from formal reading instruction, youngsters must have a certain level of phonemic awareness. Reading instruction, in turn, heightens their awareness of language. Thus, phonemic awareness is both a prerequisite for and a consequence of learning to read. (p.206)

Nevertheless, some of these word sounds might be challenging to master, considering that English has 44, and as mentioned above, proper phonemic awareness is an essential capacity for reading, yet it is sometimes overlooked at schools. If learners present problems with basic phonemic skills, they will experience difficulties with later reading materials.

Carruth & Charlene (2019) argue that:

Phonemic awareness lays the foundation for future reading success. Basic skills in phonemic awareness range from word awareness to manipulation and deletion of sounds. Specifically, these skills include word comparison (long vs. short), rhyming (hear and produce rhymes),

syllables (blend and segment), onset-rime blending and segmenting, blending and segmenting individual phonemes, and phoneme deletion and manipulation. All of these foundational skills are essential for the development of more complex reading skills. (p.56)

Moreover, investigators usually identify six functions related to phonemic awareness. Lindsey, Kuehl, & Mesmer (2020), state that when children can perform these functions, teachers can notice that they have phonemic awareness, which enables them to map the graphemic representation of those words (p. 162). Table 6 shows the six functions of phonemic awareness:

Table 6. Six functions of phonemic awareness

Isolation	The Wisconsin Department (2024) describes phoneme isolation as a strategy done orally. Learners are asked to identify specific phonemes in words. It could be the first, middle, or last sound. Also, these tasks can be done in conjunction with phoneme segmentation activities (p. 1).
Identification	McBride (2024) describes phoneme identification as the skill of hearing and distinguishing individual phonemes in spoken words. These skills help learners with spelling and sounding out words (p. 1).
Categorization	Phonemic categorization refers to grouping words that share a similar sound. A research experiment by O'Brien, <i>et al.</i> (2018) found a strong relationship between phoneme categorization and reading skills (p. 11).
Blending	The term "blending" refers to the capability to utter words when its phonemes are articulated slowly. The activity of blending occurs verbally and does not involve

	accompanying written information. (Wisconsin Department, 2024).
Segmenting	Segmenting is the opposite of blending, because “segmenting involves identifying the individual sounds (phonemes) in a word. Students should practice segmenting initial sounds, onset-rime, and individual sounds in a word” (Wisconsin Department, 2024)
Deletion	The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2024) describes phoneme deletion as a skill that involves having students manipulate words and delete phonemes accordingly. The teacher can ask students to delete syllables in compound words before deleting specific phonemes.

Note: Made by Flores & Larreátegui, 2024.

1.8 Phonics awareness stages

As explained by Loningan (2020) phonological awareness can be defined as the ability and comprehension of the sound systems present in spoken language. It allows individuals to become aware of all the big sound components, like words in sentences, as well as the smaller and more delicate sound components, like phonemes found in words making up our language. Through phonological awareness, individuals also learn how to combine and use the sound structures of oral language in face-to-face communications such as body language, and handwriting. Thus, phonological awareness is fundamental for unlocking the beauty of language and expressing oneself.

As stated by Partanen et al., (2019) the development of phonological awareness probably starts in the womb. Newborns seem to prefer their mother's voice due to having heard this voice for a long time during their time

in the womb. They do not understand the language of the mother, but through voice rhythm and the patterns of speech, they appear to find it relaxing.

Below pre-phonics stages are listed in a developmental order from one to seven. Although all children are different, and some may need extra support, these stages are very important to consider when preparing for adequate early literacy

Table 7. Phonics awareness stages

Stages	Characteristics
Stage 1 (Unborn - 1 year)	The child will learn to identify, differentiate, and react to speech and non-speech sounds, begin to recognize the words and interpret facial expressions and body gestures. They will start making sounds, copy speech patterns, and begin to use body language to reveal their needs, wants, and thoughts.
Stage 2 (1 year - 2+ years)	The child will start by identifying individual words in a speech stream, engaging in sound play, and realizing sentences are composed of individual words.
Stage 3 (2 years–4 years)	The child will develop an awareness of rhyme through enjoying nursery rhymes, songs, and stories with rhyme alliteration, and repetition.
Stage 4 - (3 years - 5 years)	The child will start to develop an understanding that words can be split into parts (syllables). They will be able

		to say the syllables in a word and put them together to make that same word.
Stage 5 (3 years - 5 years)		The child will learn to group words by sounds, not by spelling. For example, chair, bear, and stare sound alike. They also learn how to divide these words into smaller sounds.
Stage (Phonemic awareness) - (4 years - 6 years)	6	The child will be able to say the first and last sounds of words. They will also be able to say the middle sound in one-syllable words. They will also be able to break words into individual sounds. They can join sounds to form words. It is all hearing and not writing.
Stage (Phonemic awareness) - (5 years - 7 years)	7	The child will be able to swap sounds in words to create new ones. Also understand that moving a sound changes the word's meaning.

Note: Made by Flores & Larreátegui, 2024. Reference: TeachPhonics, 2024

1.9 Phonics instruction theories

The use of phonics instruction in EFL classrooms is supported by the theories defined below.

1.9.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory of knowledge and learning that supports understanding the world through experiences and insights. Instead of passively receiving information, individuals interpret and make sense of the

events around them using past experiences and previous involvement with their surroundings. Brau (2020) describes knowledge as an intersubjective interpretation. In the constructivism theory, the learner must analyze the facts being taught and use cultural context, personal beliefs, and previous experiences to build an interpretation (para. 1).

Many theorists and psychologists have analyzed constructivism in history; however, the three prominent foundational constructivist psychologists are Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and John Dewey. Brau (2020) specifies that Jean Piaget belongs to the radical constructivism movement. In contrast, Lev Vygotsky focuses on the social aspects of experience-based learning. John Dewey falls in between both concepts and has many ideas that are relevant to the two perspectives. The shared belief that brought these psychologists together is that all three considered that the learning theories of the time (humanism, behaviorism, etc.) did not represent the actual learning process. Table 6 details the three perspectives:

Table 8. Foundational constructivism psychologists and concepts

Jean Piaget	His research suggested that knowledge emerges from the interaction of events and ideas. Jean Piaget states that young learners are less capable thinkers than adults, meaning that cognitive development occurs in stages. While Piaget did not directly link his study to education, his hypothesis profoundly impacted educational methods. He stresses two critical processes—accommodation (adjusting mental representations to new experiences) and assimilation (adopting a group's traits)—, essential for understanding how learning occurs.
Lev Vygotsky	He focused on the social dimensions of learning, claiming that knowledge is best acquired by contact with more people. He states that culture plays a role in cognitive development, and social engagement improves essential mental functions. For

instance, a child's memory improves with techniques such as flashcards in a social learning environment.

Vygotsky's theory suggested the importance of the More Knowledgeable Other or Instructor to emphasize the importance of learning through someone with more intellect. Additionally, Vygotsky proposes the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) approach that demonstrates how an instructor's support is most effective in closing the gap between what a student can do and what they can achieve with assistance. However, the ZPD is not restricted to learners and instructors. Vygotsky's perspective motivates learners to approach group intervention. Students who master a specific skill set can help struggling learners.

John
Dewey

John Dewey stands between Jean Piaget's and Lev Vygotsky's theories, specifically constructivism's cognitive and social aspects. However, he leans on Vygotsky for "the role of cultural forms and meanings in perpetuating higher forms of human thought" (Mayer, 2008).

John Dewey also eschews memorization techniques for learning. Instead, he claims that students with greater degrees of knowledge emerge from social environments, creativity, group work, and real-life experiences.

Note: Made by Flores & Larreátegui, 2024. Reference: Brau, 2020.

Apart from Piaget, Vygotsky, and Dewey, many researchers use the famous quote of the United States diplomat Benjamin Franklin to explain constructivism: "Tell me and I forget; teach me, and I remember; involve me and I learn." Hereunder are the principles that support the statement. The Western Governors University (2020) mentions that eight principles of constructivism encapsulate the whole theory:

- Learners develop knowledge through their unique experiences, meaning that knowledge is built upon another knowledge.
- Students use previous knowledge to learn things
- Learning is not a passive activity. Learners need sensory input and engage in real-world experiences to enhance learning.
- Teachers, classmates, family, and friends impact the learning outcomes of the learners. Progressive education supports the importance of peer involvement as a key to learning.
- Facts are not isolated from one another, learning is connected to things we know, believe, and more.
- The way and things students learn and gain from education will all be very different since we all have different prior experiences.
- Besides hands-on activities, mental experiences are necessary for retaining knowledge.
- Students learn best when motivated and relate to the learning elements.

These ideas are also discussed in constructivism at educational contexts. According to Szabó and Csépes (2023), the constructivist educational environment involves being autonomous thinkers while asking questions, cooperating with others, and clarifying challenges. The instructor must be aligned with the student-curriculum engagement while students use creative resources and materials. Some evaluation techniques of constructivism are self-assessment, peer assessment, and student portfolios, utilized to measure progress. (p. 407).

The constructivist theory and its principles are widely used in many classrooms across countries. Teachers adapt aspects of the theory to provide students with the best learning strategies. Owing to this fact, constructivism can also be applied to phonics instruction and reading skills for students of all ages. Doll

(2023) described the correlation between the constructivist theory and phonics:

While Vygotsky's (1979) social constructivist theory does not explicitly apply to early phonics instruction, it does outline the importance of learning through social interaction using syntax and thinking-aloud strategies to gain an understanding of the phonics skills taught by the teacher (p.32).

Guided reading done by teachers lays the foundation for further phonic skills. The relationship between guided reading, phonics instruction, and constructivism is that while learners pay attention to the readings, they create their interpretations, which are later discussed with the teacher and classmates. Acknowledging the importance of constructivist theory and the Zone of Proximal Development in learner growth will result in meaningful and intentional phonics instruction within a guided reading environment (Doll, 2023)

1.9.2 Bottom-up theory

In an educational context, the Bottom-up theory is defined as a teaching strategy where students learn from the implicit knowledge before the explicit knowledge. The goal is for learners to grasp the small details of a topic and use them for the bigger picture. When talking about language, the Bottom-up theory suggests acquiring and analyzing language by examining the specific meanings and grammatical characteristics of the components of a text before trying to understand it. Marushkevych & Zvarych (2021) connect the theory to foreign language instructions because of the notion of moving from smaller language units to their meaning in various contexts (p. 301).

Amadi (2019) found that the Bottom-up theory is a data-driven process that relates to reading because it defines it as an act that begins with the processing of visual input displayed in a written work. The process goes from the lowest linguistic unit to fully understanding the text's message. Following the Bottom-up approach, learners use the visual input of letters to decode sounds, words, phrases, and paragraphs (pp. 90-91).

Furthermore, because of the importance of reading emphasized in the Bottom-up theory, research supports phonics instruction in early education. Amadi (2019) found that phonics instruction follows the models of the bottom-up theory:

The instructional pattern of phonics follows a sequence as depicted in the bottom-up models of the reading process. The sequence covers all grapheme-phoneme correspondence ranging from short and long vowels, vowel and consonant digraphs, blends of letter-sounds, decoding of sounds to recognizing unfamiliar words, combination of words to form sentences, and then comprehension of texts. Phonics, thus, presents reading in a linear process such that readers are taught to decode text word by word and connect words to form phrases, clauses, and then sentences (p. 95)

As noted, phonics is considered a pre-reading teaching process that follows the order of going from less to more, meaning that children should master the alphabetic system of the English language to understand the connections between letters and sounds, and how to use them to form different words (Amadi, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology used to investigate the Advanced Method Corporation (AMCO) approach to teaching phonics in first-grade EFL classes at Santo Domingo de Guzmán School. The study aims to address the following research questions:

- What are the theoretical foundations regarding the AMCO teaching methodology?
- How does the AMCO methodology integrate phonics-based instruction?
- What is the level of phonological awareness of first-grade EFL students at Santo Domingo de Guzman?
- What complementary materials could be suitable for teaching phonics to first-grade students to compensate for the lack of resources in the main book?

1.10 Design

The research opted for a descriptive design to document the AMCO approach and its features. The aim of descriptive research is to understand the context of educational methodologies. As Kim *et al.*, (2019) stated, descriptive designs are used to demonstrate why and how certain methods are used in real-life contexts. In addition, Gray (2020) and Nassaji (2021), agree that descriptive analysis show a deeper understanding and recognition of different teaching patterns or strategies.

Furthermore, the integrative design that utilizes both quantitative and qualitative data to gain and give quality input in the form of analysis was chosen in combination with the descriptive approach. Creswell *et al.* (2020) put forward the view that mixed-methods research complements quantitative and qualitative data to facilitate a comprehensive grasp of the research question. This method allows for the retrieval and comparison between

different sources of data. In addition, Fetters, Curry, and Creswell (2019) maintain that mixed methods can reveal overlooked areas of a problem and thus, allow evidence for comprehensive exploration of educational problems. Johnson and Turner (2019) state that this type of research fulfills the need in the type for the blending of numerical data with narrative words to create a complete picture of the issue.

By combining both descriptive and mixed-methods research designs, this study not only documents the specific practices involved in the AMCO approach but also evaluates their effectiveness from multiple perspectives. This methodological combination offers a comprehensive understanding of the AMCO approach's impact on first-grade EFL students at Santo Domingo de Guzmán School, providing valuable insights into both the strengths and potential areas for improvement in this teaching framework.

1.11 Participants

The sample for this research consisted of 61 first-grade students, which means three first-grade classrooms at Santo Domingo de Guzman School. The age of the pupils sample ranged from 4 to 6 years old. These students receive 3 hours of Language Arts weekly and 2 hours of Reading & Phonics on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Additionally, the student's performance was registered throughout each class using the observation technique to identify factors that might affect their learning outcomes.

1.12 Instruments

To answer the first research question, articles on AMCO by the researchers Aragón (2017), Magaña (2024), and Espinar (2021), were analyzed to identify the theoretical foundations underlying its methodology.

To tackle the second research question on how the methodology integrates phonics-based instruction, unstructured classroom observations were used to evaluate the way phonics instruction is applied in classrooms using the AMCO methodology. According to O'Leary (2020), classroom observations is a

method of assessing and understanding teaching practices and learning outcomes, meaning that it is an important tool for identifying gaps and key pedagogical skills (p. 6). Additionally, specific phonic activities were recorded as well.

The third research question refers to the level of phonological awareness of first-grade EFL students at Santo Domingo de Guzman. Adapted phonics awareness tests from Literacy Resources INC (2014) were applied to evaluate students' capability to recognize and manipulate sounds in spoken language.

To respond to the fourth research question regarding complimentary materials suitable for teaching phonics, two elementary English teachers from first and second grade were asked to participate in structured interviews. According to Magaldi & Beller (2020) structured interviews are used for qualitative research to gather extensive information on a core topic that allows discovery and exploratory research. The questions were adapted from an interview by Amie Burkholder (2024) with Wiley Blevier on Phonics and literacy. The teachers are responsible for the subjects of Language Arts, Reading, Phonics and Writing. The interviews were carried out to obtain a qualitative understanding of the teachers' first-hand experiences with the AMCO method, the difficulties they faced, and recommendations they made for additional resources for phonics.

1.13 Data collection analysis

61 participants from 1st grade at Santo Domingo de Guzmán School took part in this study. The data was collected in August. The interviews with teachers provided qualitative data on their perceptions of the AMCO methodology, challenges faced and suggestions. Data was analyzed for gathering up relevant information that can answer the research questions.

PROTOCOL

An approved letter of permission by the school authorities was used for the protocol. The institution was visited to conduct the phonics assessments.

The data was acquired over the course of three weeks. Two adapted phonics assessments from Dr. Michael Heggerty, founder of Literacy Resources, Inc. and creator of the Phonemic Awareness curriculum used by Fullerton School District called Heggerty Phonemic Awareness (2014), were administered to evaluate the students' phonemic and phonological awareness. Each test consisted of 5 items to measure different aspects of the students' phonics knowledge. The first assessed capital and small letter recognition, letter-sound recognition, rhyme recognition, and on-set fluency. On the other hand, the second one focused on the identification of final sounds, word segmentation into syllables, blending phonemes, segmentation of words into phonemes, adding phonemes, and changing a letter to form another, such as bell and yell. Each week, a group of students was tested in each course, and by the end of three weeks, all 61 students had been assessed.

Moreover, interviews were implemented with elementary English teachers of first and second grade to investigate if there is a seamless advancement between those levels and confirm if the topics from one level to another have coherent sequence. The purpose of the interview is to understand the effectiveness of the curriculum.

Ultimately, unstructured observations were done to take notes on a regular English class in the first grade at the school. The aim was to observe the student's performance and identify the factors that hinder phonemic and phonological awareness of young learners.

RESULTS

1.14 Theoretical foundations of the AMCO teaching methodology

The AMCO teaching method is founded on several theoretical bases that influence how it deals with language learning. It is based on Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory, which underscores personalized instruction for students to be able to learn in many ways, hence being able to cater to the intelligence type of students which is also a key aspect of the learning process. This is enforced by the Emotional Intelligence Theory. This Theory discusses the factor of emotional control in the educational process, promotes emotional intelligence, and looks for the class's emotional mind stability.

Moreover, the methodology considers Martorell's Generative Voice Theory. It wants the participants to learn the target language the way they acquired their first language in immersed in relevant and motivating situations. The theory addresses that full immersion and student participation in language learning are crucial and when achieved, this goal is less demanding of the students' stress-wise. Additionally, this theory talks about the switching process, which is students getting rid of Spanish-English translation and using mind pictures, allowing them to acquire this second language as naturally as their mother tongue language. By including the whole language learning and learners' satisfaction, the overall student-centered approach created by AMCO becomes holistic and integrates the emotional, intellectual, and social development of the learners in the process of English acquisition.

1.15 Unstructured classroom observations

The AMCO methodology, for first graders, has been found to involve phonics-based instruction mainly in its Pronunciation Lab section, which is there to develop auditory discrimination, vocabulary, and phonemic awareness in young learners. Furthermore, the observations conducted on 3 first-grade classes showed that the AMCO method integrates broader immersive language learning rather than teaching a language in isolation. The activities

that were observed, such as letter hunts, Twister-like games, and the employment of mystery boxes, are genuinely interesting and make the kids be part of the learning process by movement and the gaining of phonemic concepts of letter-sound connections.

The results from the observations imply that phonics is introduced into the curriculum by activities that focus on listening, speaking, and contextual learning; this is coherent with AMCO's stress on full language immersion and natural acquisition. The lessons are frequently infused with games, visual aids and songs, drawn from different learning styles which in turn make the process more alive for the students.

However, the findings have also pinpointed some areas where the inclusion of phonics can be boosted. For example, the lessons monitored normally contained just one activity associated with phonics, say, copying and finding sounds, which might not be satisfactory to teach students the phonics rules perceived. The little emphasis on these activities implies the necessity for more time and resources that are focused on one aspect of phonics, which will in turn help students to grasp and keep clear concepts of phonics naturally.

As summary, the AMCO approach constructs phonics-based lessons inside a setting of language acquisition with the help of a mix of interactive and sensory activities. Though it is successfully used for motivating students and the development of phonemic awareness in minds, it is yet to improve in some areas, like the lack of direct phonics instruction to be followed by the students to be fully competent in future academic years.

Following is the data representation of these findings in a checklist form. The checklist was adapted from TPT (2024).

Table 9. 1st grade A Checklist.

7 must-haves Amco class	Totally	Somehow	Not at all
Were class rules reinforced during the lesson?	x		
Were rewards provided for participation/use of English?	x		
Were attention grabbers used during the lesson?	x		
Were transitions used during the lesson?		x	
Was there a time management tool applied during the lessons?			x
Were celebrations carried out for participation?			x
Were instructions provided according to their English level?		x	
Amco Lessons Plan			
Was a daily routine carried out at the beginning of the class?	x		
Was there a pre-activity to introduce the lesson?	x		
Was an activity carried out in the book?	x		
Was a post-activity conducted for students to apply what they learned in class?	x		
Was there a cool-down at the end for reflection time and saying their goodbyes?	x		
AMCO: Phonics based instruction			

Was the lesson fully conducted in English?	x		
Was the lesson a student-centered one?	x		
Did the lesson address Garner's eight intelligences?		x	
Did the lesson address student's emotional intelligence?		x	
Did the lesson promote the students' "switching process"?	x		
AMCO Skill Set Book 3 Phonics resource			
Did the book contain an activity to introduce the letter of the day?	x		
Did the book contain activities (more than one) that taught the sound associated with each letter?			x
Did the book provide engaging activities and supportive illustrations?		x	

Checklist findings:

-Engagement and Learning

Activities like the letter hunt and a Twister-like game effectively engaged students, helping them connect physical actions with phonics concepts. The lesson also incorporated attention-getters and student-led routines, which maintained high levels of engagement.

-Instructional Techniques

The lesson was conducted fully in English and was student-centered, with emphasis on almost all multiple intelligences such as visual, kinesthetic, and

linguistic. The teacher used student-centered learning methods, providing support while allowing students to take the lead in activities. However, the observation noted limited reinforcement activities in the Skill Set book 3 for the letter "D" letter-sound relationship, letter identification, and capital and small letter identification. Transitions were well-managed, but time management tools were not prominently used

-Behavior Management

Classroom rules were reinforced, and disruptions were managed effectively with attention-getters, ensuring a focused learning environment.

Table 10. 1st grade B Checklist.

7 must-haves Amco class	Totally	Somehow	Not at all
Were class rules reinforced during the lesson?	x		
Were rewards provided for participation/use of English?	x		
Were attention grabbers used during the lesson?	x		
Were transitions used during the lesson?	x		
Was there a time management tool applied during the lessons?	x		
Were celebrations carried out for participation?			x
Were instructions provided according to their English level?		x	
Amco Lessons Plan			

Was a daily routine carried out at the beginning of the class?	x		
Was there a pre-activity to introduce the lesson?	x		
Was an activity carried out in the book?	x		
Was a post-activity conducted for students to apply what they learned in class?	x		
Was there a cool-down at the end for reflection time and saying their goodbyes?	x		
AMCO: Phonics based instruction			
Was the lesson fully conducted in English?	x		
Was the lesson a student-centered one?	x		
Did the lesson address Garner's eight intelligences?		x	
Did the lesson address student's emotional intelligence?		x	
Did the lesson promote the students' "switching process"?	x		
AMCO Skill Set Book 3 Phonics resource			
Did the book contain an activity to introduce the letter of the day?	x		
Did the book contain activities (more than one) that taught the sound associated with each letter?			x

Did the book provide engaging activities and supportive illustrations?		x	
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Checklist Findings:

-Engagement and Learning

Activities like the letter hunt and Twister-like game effectively engaged students in Class B, helping them connect physical actions with phonics concepts. The use of interactive tools such as the mystery box and colorful slides catered to different learning styles, maintaining high levels of student engagement.

-Instructional Techniques

The lesson was fully conducted in English and maintained a student-centered approach, incorporating multiple intelligences such as visual, kinesthetic, and linguistic. The teacher provided support while encouraging students to lead activities. However, there was a noted limitation in reinforcement activities in the Skill Set book for the letter "D." Transitions were smooth, but the use of time management tools was not prominent.

-Behavior Management:

Classroom rules were reinforced effectively, especially when addressing disruptions caused by loud shouting and students using their native language. Attention-getters and clear instructions helped maintain a focused and orderly environment, despite minor distractions among a few students.

Table 11. 1st grade C Checklist.

7 must-haves Amco class	Totally	Somehow	Not at all
Were class rules reinforced during the lesson?	x		

Were rewards provided for participation/use of English?	x		
Were attention grabbers used during the lesson?	x		
Were transitions used during the lesson?		x	
Was there a time management tool applied during the lessons?		x	
Were celebrations carried out for participation?			x
Were instructions provided according to their English level?		x	
Amco Lessons Plan			
Was a daily routine carried out at the beginning of the class?			x
Was there a pre-activity to introduce the lesson?	x		
Was an activity carried out in the book?	x		
Was a post-activity conducted for students to apply what they learned in class?			x
Was there a cool-down at the end for reflection time and saying their goodbyes?		x	
AMCO: Phonics based instruction			
Was the lesson fully conducted in English?		x	
Was the lesson a student-centered one?	x		

Did the lesson address Garner's eight intelligences?		x	
Did the lesson address student's emotional intelligence?		x	
Did the lesson promote the students' "switching process"?	x		
AMCO Skill Set Book 3 Phonics resource			
Did the book contain an activity to introduce the letter of the day?	x		
Did the book contain activities (more than one) that taught the sound associated with each letter?			x
Did the book provide engaging activities and supportive illustrations?		x	

Checklist Findings:

-Engagement and Learning Activities like the letter hunt and the use of flashcards effectively engaged students in Class C, helping them connect physical actions with phonics concepts. However, managing engagement was challenging, particularly at the start of the lesson, as students were easily distracted. The teacher's shift to a brain-break activity helped regain focus and set the tone for the lesson.

-Instructional Techniques The lesson was not entirely conducted in English, as there was a need to take a pause to address behavioral issues which delayed the lesson plan for the day. The lesson maintained a student-centered approach, incorporating multiple intelligences such as visual, kinesthetic, and linguistic. The teacher provided basic instructions and used visual aids like flashcards and slides, though classroom management required significant attention due to behavioral

disruptions. The Skill Set book had limited reinforcement activities for the letter "D," which might have hindered further practice.

-Behavior Management
Classroom rules were reinforced, but managing student behavior, especially distractions and disruptions, was a significant challenge. The teacher used attention-getters and a strict tone when necessary to maintain order, though some students required repeated reminders to follow instructions.

1.16 Quantitative Data from Performance Report on Phonological Awareness

Tasks

Phonics Assessment Test 1

This section presents the performance analysis of 61 students across five distinct phonological awareness tasks. The tasks evaluated included:

- Circling and coloring letters
- Identifying rhyme pictures
- Finding the correct initial sounds

The results revealed a notable variation in student performance across the tasks.

- Identifying Rhyming Pictures: Students excelled in this task, achieving an impressive 78.68% correctness.
- Coloring the Correct Small Letter: Conversely, this task posed significant challenges, with students achieving only 52.45% correctness.

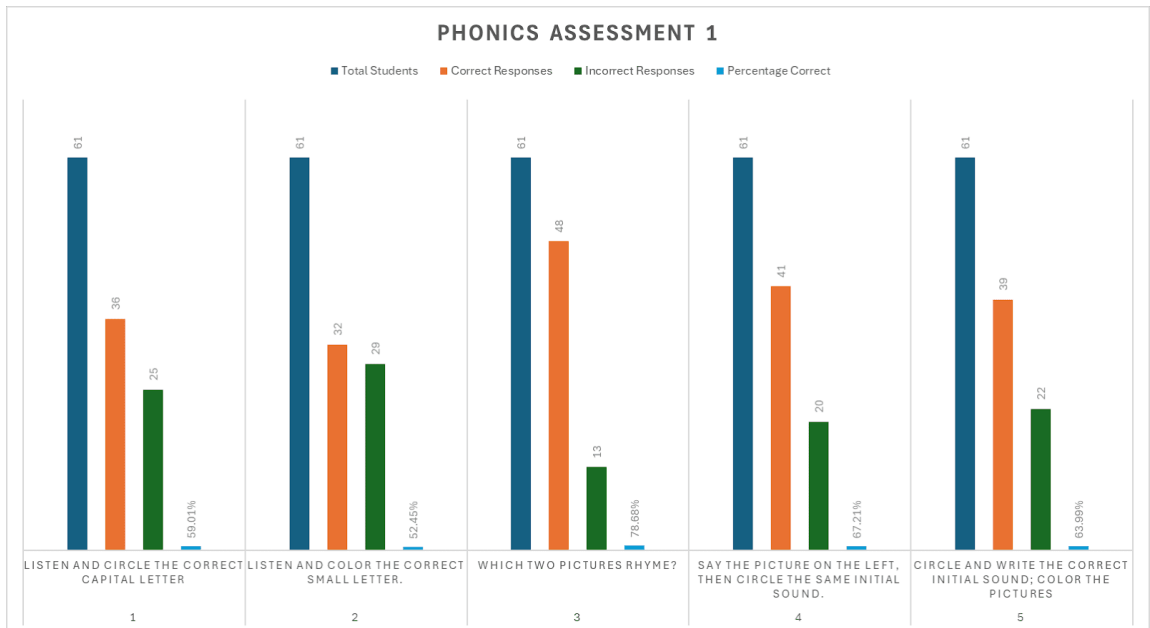
From these results it was learnt that, even though some students have a good idea of the phonological concepts, there are still those who have difficulty with such tasks as identifying capital and small letters, as well as sound recognition of letters.

To sum it up, the obtained results indicate that students have, to a certain extent, a moderate level of phonological awareness, therefore, there are areas that can be improved.

Table 12. Phonics awareness assessment 1 results

Task Number	Task Description	Total Students	Correct Responses	Incorrect Responses	Percentage Correct
1.	Listen and circle the correct capital letter.	61	36	25	59.01%
2.	Listen and color the correct small letter.	61	32	29	52.45%
3.	Which two pictures rhyme?	61	48	13	78.68%
	Say the picture on the left, then circle the same initial sound.	61	41	20	67.21%
5.	Circle and write the correct initial sound; color the pictures.	61	39	22	63.99%

Figure 1. Phonics awareness assessment bar graph 1



Among the 61 students, the outcomes of the phonics assessment depicted a diversified degree of phonological awareness that varied from activity to activity. Students had the most success finding pairs of pictures that rhymed with each other. This occurred in nearly 79% of the cases, which in turn, suggests a relatively strong comprehension of rhymes, a topic that is included in the AMCO program. Nevertheless, the task of finding and coloring the correct small letter was the most problematic, with a return rate of only 52.45%. Other activities, for example, identifying the capital letter, drawing the initials, or writing the first letter, were performed at a moderate level, with the correct rates lying between 59% and 67%. These figures propose that while most students are capable of decoding letters and words, there are specific areas, like being able to differentiate between upper-case and lower-case letters, that need to be developed in a more focused and repeating way.

Phonics Assessment Test 2

The scores of the second phonological awareness test gave showed that there are significant problems among the 61 experimented students. The figures obtained by task 1 are as follows: students only achieved 42.62%. However, the next problems were more difficult. The students could only give 18.03% of solutions in task 2, which means that they found syllable recognition too

hard. Task 3 was also a low performer, with a score of just 4.90% for correct answers. It was already the lowest among the four tasks but Tasks 4 and 5, which were based on word segmentation; as well as word reconstruction, were not scored at all, which signifies the impossibility of finishing such tasks by any student.

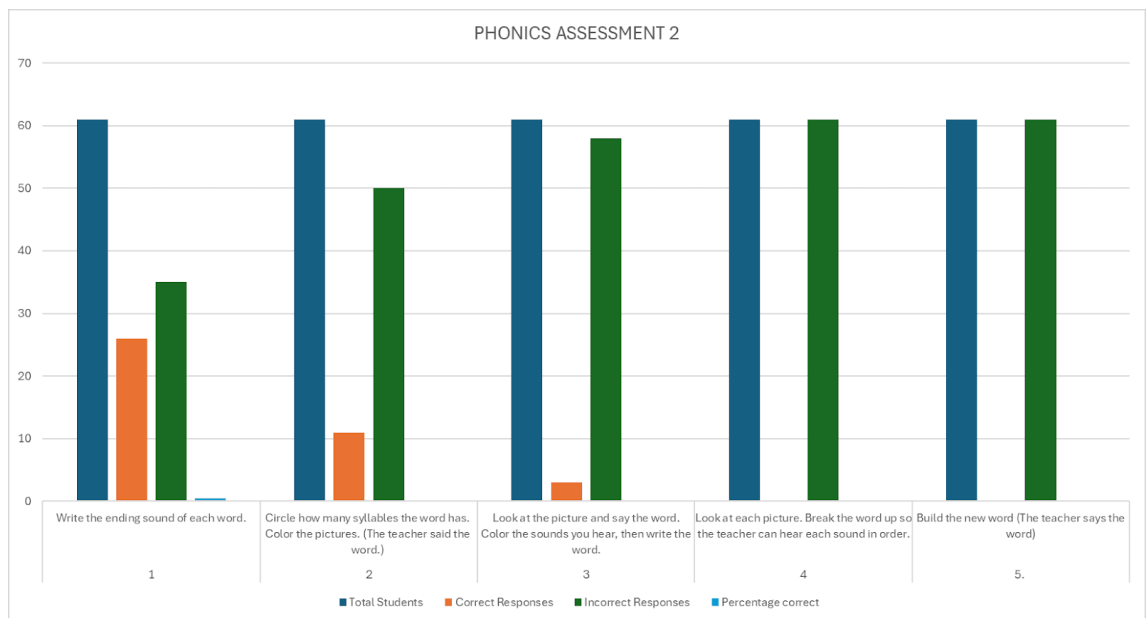
These findings highlight the need for practical strategies that will boost students' phonological knowledge, particularly in the areas of syllable recognition and sound manipulation, which are crucial to their overall literacy development.

Table 13. Phonics awareness assessment 2 results

Task number	Task Description	Total Students	Correct Responses	Incorrect Responses	Percentage correct
1.	Write the ending sound of each word.	61	26	35	42.62%
2	Circle how many syllables the word has. Color the pictures. (The teacher said the word.)	61	11	50	18.03%
3.	Look at the picture and say the word. Color the sounds you hear, then write the word.	61	3	58	4.9%
4.	Look at each picture. Break the word up so the teacher can	61	0	61	0

	hear each sound in order.				
5.	Build the new word. (The teacher says both words)	61	0	61	0%

Figure 2. Phonics awareness assessment bar graph 2



The graphic illustrates the Phonics Assessment 2 amongst 61 first-grade student participants. For Task 1, to be more precise, the task required the students to write the ending sound of each word. A total of approximately 42.62% of the students got the correct answers, which shows that this

fundamental ability is still difficult for many but does get more practice at school. Task 2 was the most demanding of the three, being students needing to identify and count syllables, and only 18.03% of the students got it right. Task 3 was a visual one in which students needed to point, color, and write words depending on the picture. This activity had a much lower percentage of success than the other ones; only 4.90% (four students) could do it; Task 3 was the most difficult for the children. The two prior activities, which required the kids to isolate the single sounds of the words and make up a couple of new words, respectively, saw no success as 0% of them did it right, which means that none of the happy kids performed the above-mentioned parameters. By and large, as a result of their performance, the following conclusions are drawn about those first graders 1) they have no knowledge of blending phonemes into words, 2) they have not gained any knowledge of segmenting words, and 4) they are completely oblivious to replacing/adding letters. These are all skills of higher levels, which indicates they are being taught appropriate content in their classes according to their age: working on their listening and speaking skills, rhyme awareness, oral wordplay, and beginning, middle, and ending letter recognition. It just needs more practice. 5) They are currently in stage 5, moving on to stage 6 of the phonics awareness stage.

1.17 Qualitative Data from Interviews with the First and Second-Grade English Teachers

As part of this research project, structured interviews were conducted with two elementary English teachers at the school where this study took place. The objective of the interviews was to explore the teachers' understanding of phonics, how it is integrated within the AMCO methodology, and their perspectives on the effectiveness of the provided resources and the potential need for supplementary materials.

First, the two teachers engaged with the idea of phonics being a method to relate letters and sounds. Both of them seemed to have knowledge regarding phonics as a subject, due to previous experience in the area. The two participants pointed out the use of both formative and summative assessments

in classes, some of them being daily observations, phonics tests, and portfolio-based assessments to measure student phonics skill development. However, both teachers identified shortcomings in the present AMCO textbooks, as they indicated there are not enough activities/opportunities for explicit phonics assessment. Therefore, whenever teachers see the need, they come up with additional materials and activities to assess students' phonological development, which, on the other hand, leads to a slowdown of the AMCO program, as they have to follow strict daily lesson plans. Finally, the teachers mentioned that if some adjustments in phonics teaching materials were to be made, AMCO program would provide an even more reliable and solid base for literacy learning.

Second, when addressing how they integrate phonics into their lessons, the teachers mentioned that the AMCO curriculum incorporates phonics, putting an emphasis on enhancing students listening skills, this as a way to make them confident auditory discriminators and later focusing in the letters as a whole. The first-grade teacher indicated that the books section called Pronunciation Lab emphasizes listening skills, repeating new vocabulary, and addressing pronunciation, not only that but also identifying rhymes in songs and poems, and recognizing between lowercase and uppercase letters. However, there is a need to adapt the provided lesson plans to address their students' needs better, as not all students tend to learn at the same rhythm. Therefore, they mention that they occasionally adjust activities that they find either too difficult or lacking in reinforcing phonics skills.

Next, the interviewees were asked to assess the resources provided by the AMCO program. While one teacher found some activities within the Pronunciation Lab section of the book particularly effective, the other highlighted the benefits of the second-grade interactive digital resources.

Lastly, despite recognizing the value of these materials, both teachers agreed on the need for additional materials to complement the AMCO phonics instruction. Moats (2020), states that the recurrent and substantial practice of various activities is an essential means for students to internalize phonics

knowledge, which is the basis for their reading fluency and comprehension. The lack of practice activities could lead to children becoming hesitant readers in the future. This would support teachers suggestions regarding the need for more activities within the book to aid students in reinforcing their phonics awareness skills. The first grade teacher suggested that more activities focusing on the ABC would aid students in recalling phonics content in a better way. The teacher suggested, as an option that can help the learners, having an additional workbook students could take home or that they could use to reinforce phonics content in class.

CONCLUSIONS

The current research aimed to analyze the Advanced Methods Corporation (AMCO) methodology and its relationship with phonics-based instruction among pre-elementary school learners. Based on the analysis carried out, it can be said that the primary objective of the AMCO approach is to facilitate the natural acquisition of the English language. However, first-grade textbooks contain limited activities related to the alphabet and sounds. Consequently, students are not adequately instructed in the phonological and phonemic awareness skills essential for their progression to second grade.

Results from phonics awareness assessments reveal that learners do not reach the expertise that the AMCO curriculum aspires them to have. Additionally, they do not possess the appropriate phonics knowledge they need for their current developmental stage. This result establishes a need for more comprehensive phonics instruction to ensure the future of the learners as successful readers.

The AMCO methodology does not provide activities that focus on the development of strong pre-reading skills at elementary levels, therefore there is a phonological awareness gap among young learners. Furthermore, Constructivism and Bottom-up theory are theoretical frameworks that support phonics instruction in early education as a means to recognize words before the children attempt to read full texts.

To address this problem, this research paper proposes the development and implementation of complementary phonics materials that teachers can use in classrooms to enhance and reinforce the content of the AMCO curriculum. This research suggests the use of a first-grade phonics booklet with didactic activities that promote letter-sound recognition, beginning-sound identification, and segmentation of one-syllable words.

The current paper has shown that young learners benefit from additional material that is fun, educational, and easy to manipulate to accompany their daily classes. English teachers at Santo Domingo de Guzmán School should explore engaging strategies to promote early literacy skills that are useful, and enjoyable, and encourage a positive learning environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For high-quality instruction, institutions offering bilingual education must ensure a comprehensive development of their students' proficiency in English, particularly in areas that are more challenging to master. One such area is phonics, which is crucial for children learning to read. Research has shown that children benefit greatly from acquiring background knowledge in phonics from an early age. For this reason, it is highly recommended that:

- Bilingual schools prioritize the implementation of a robust phonics instruction program that aligns with best practices and research-based strategies.
- Teachers receive training in effective phonics instruction techniques to ensure consistent delivery across all classrooms.
- Teachers dedicate time to practice phonological and phonemic awareness activities according to the English level of the students.
- Teachers implement additional material to reinforce lessons from the textbook. For instance, a practice booklet, songs, group activities, and games.
- Students are constantly revising the alphabet and how each letter sounds.
- Students do activities that help them to translate letters into sounds, as well as, recognizing the beginning and ending sounds.
- Teachers assess students regularly and keep track of their progress so they can first detect the weak points of their students.
- Schools and parents work together to help students learn phonics even at home, creating a continuous and strong learning atmosphere.

PROPOSAL

Recognizing that first-graders face challenges with their phonics skills, a targeted project was developed to address this issue. The proposal seeks to provide supplementary materials designed to enhance phonological and phonemic awareness activities, complementing the theoretical framework presented in the AMCO Skill Set Book for first grade. The booklet is organized into units, each containing up to five pages of engaging exercises focused on specific topics. Additionally, the materials include a comprehensive teacher's guide for easy reference, ensuring that educators have the support they need to effectively implement these resources in the classroom.

General Data	
Project Title:	A journey through sounds
Project Team:	Domenika Flores - Ana Larreategui
Main Objective:	To implement a structured phonics program that focuses on one-syllable words and beginning sounds, improving 75% of first-graders' decoding skills during the scholastic year.
Specific Objectives:	To conduct a needs analysis to obtain information about specific areas of difficulty
	To administer beginning, middle, and ending sound assessments to evaluate a child's understanding of the relationship between the letters and the sound they produce, as well as how they blend to form a word.
	To create a booklet for introducing ABC letters, one-syllable words, and beginning sounds.
	Create a guide for teachers to understand how to work with the booklet

Execution time:	Starting	June 2024	Ending	December 2024
Evaluation time:	Starting	December 2024	Ending	December 2024
Project Description				
<p>"A Journey Through Sounds" aims to enhance the phonics content provided by the AMCO curriculum to supplement first graders' learning process throughout the school year. The main objective of this project is to implement a structured phonics program focused on ABC recognition, beginning and ending sounds, as well as one-syllable words with the goal of improving the decoding skills of 75% of first graders during the academic year. Before implementation, a needs analysis will be conducted to identify specific areas of difficulty among first-grade students. This will ensure targeted intervention and support tailored to their learning needs. Then, students will undergo assessments to evaluate their understanding of the relationship between letters and the sounds they produce, as well as their ability to blend these sounds to form words. Finally, a booklet will be created to introduce ABC letters, beginning and ending sounds, as well as one-syllable words. This resource seeks to support and reinforce the phonics content provided by the AMCO curriculum. Additionally, a guide will be developed to assist teachers in effectively utilizing the educational booklet within their classroom instruction.</p>				

Execution Matrix						
Objective (number)	Activity	What will be done	What change is expected - Outcomes	Resources	Time	Responsibility

S.O.1	To conduct a needs analysis for obtaining information about specific areas of difficulty regarding phonics	Assess first-graders' decoding skills through Elkonin boxes to segment one-syllable words into sounds.	-To keep track of students' knowledge of letter-sound relationships.	Didactic Elkonin boxes	1 session	The teacher
S.O.2	To administer beginning, middle and ending sound assessments to evaluate a child's understanding of the relationship of the letters and the sound they produce, and how they blend to form a word.	-Picture cards with words for students to identify the first, middle, and last sounds (phonemes) of the words. -Listening exercises where students will listen to a word and say the sounds. -Written tasks where students circle or underline the beginning, middle	-Use the assessment results for planning the activities. -Customize the activities by focusing on the areas where the students need more practice or clarification thus ensuring continued positive development of phonemic awareness and word decoding skills.	worksheets, flashcards, audio recordings	4 sessions	The teacher

		and end sounds.				
S.O.3	To create a booklet for introducing ABC letters, beginning and ending sounds, as well as one-syllable words.	Development of a complete, functional and didactic booklet with ABC letter recognition, beginning and ending sound identification and decoding exercises on one-syllable words.	This supplementary resource could help enhance the core phonics instruction by providing additional practice and reinforcement at school or home, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding and retention of phonetic concepts.	Booklet	1 Month	Booklet creators
S.O.4	Create a guide for teachers to understand how to work with the booklet	Provide a full scope & sequence regarding the booklets' use that will be found within the first pages of the text.	Teacher will be able to understand how to use the booklet and apply it in their classes	Digital Booklet	1 week	Booklet creators

Gantt Chart

	Strategy	Starts	Ends	2023 - 2024					
				August	Sept	oct	nov	dec	
1	Design and planning of the proposal	01/08/24	15/08/24						
2	Diagnostic phase	16/08/24	30/08/24						
3	Needs analysis	02/09/24	06/09/24						
4	Beginning. middle, an ending sound assessment to first-grade students	10/09/24	17/09/24						
5	Create a phonics booklet for first graders	18/09/24	18/12/24						
6	Create a teacher's guide for the booklet	12/11/24	08/12/24						
7	Evaluation of the project	09/12/24	23/12/24						
	Starts	01/08/24							
	Ends	23/12/24							

Budget List

PROJECT	A journey through sounds		
RESPONSIBLE	Domenika Flores - Ana Larreategui		
DATE	August 10th, 2024		
INSTITUTION	Santo Domingo De Guzmán School		
		UNIT COST	SUBTOTAL
	Equipment		
	Laptop	\$300	\$300
Diagnostic phase	Printer use	\$0.50	\$61

	Internet	\$30	\$60
	Transportation spendings	\$20	\$20
Implementation phase	Material resources		
	Office Supplies		
	Paper sheets	\$5	\$5
	Printer ink	\$10	\$10
	Software		
	Website for booklet design	\$55	\$55
	School supplies		
	Erasers	\$0.15	\$9.15
	Pencils	\$0.50	\$30.5
	Project evaluation	Office supplies	
	Computer use	\$1	\$5
	Subtotal	\$421	\$516
	Contingency reserves	5%	\$26
		TOTAL BUDGET	\$542

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APPENDIX 1

Unstructured classroom observations

Observation #1

Unstructured Observation. The 3 Cs Observation Template

Project: An Analysis of the Advanced Method Corporation (AMCO) approach to Phonics Instruction in First Grade EFL Education at Santo Domingo De Guzman School.

Document Type: Unstructured field observations

Date: 08/12/2024

Location: Santo Domingo de Guzmán School

Research Questions: How does the AMCO methodology integrate phonics-based instruction?

Expected outcome: The objective of the study is to determine which AMCO activities enable first-grade EFL students to enhance their phonemic awareness and letter-sound connection skills. The researchers anticipate that students will be able to learn and apply phonics correctly through activities that are based on listening, speaking, and using interactive games. The researchers are aiming to determine specific AMCO techniques that facilitate students' phonetic skills and to prepare them for the more complex reading and writing tasks of the next academic year.

Participant: 1st Grade A 7M 14F

Language: English

Context

This observation took place in a first-grade classroom (Classroom A) at an elementary school. The focus of this study is to explore how the AMCO methodology aligns with its theoretical foundations and integrates phonics-based instruction. The observation was conducted by a researcher new to the field of educational research, aiming to understand the practical application of

AMCO's phonics approach in a real classroom setting. The classroom environment was observed during a phonics lesson, with a particular focus on how various activities and interactive methods, such as the letter hunt and Twister-like game, were used to enhance students' phonemic awareness and letter-sound connections.

Content:

- For first grade A, this would be their third- and fourth-class hours (9:00-9:30, 9:30-10:00 AM) in their schedule, just before recess time.
- According to what's observed once inside the classroom, first-grade A only uses this area to receive their respective classes, except music and sports classes, as this researcher was told. The classroom desks are arranged in small groups rather than traditional rows. Based on the information shared with this researcher, teachers continuously change students' seats to promote interaction and collaboration among peers. This setup reflects AMCO's emphasis on cooperative learning and student engagement. This researcher noticed no visual aids on the walls aside from an interactive calendar, letters Aa-Bb-Cc, numbers from 1-20, and some classroom rules hanging from some wall hangers. According to what this researcher was told, no visual aids can be pasted on walls. Hence, the teacher seems to have used all the wall hangers available in the classroom since the bulletin board was full of students' activities carried out with their tutor. There appeared to be a decent amount of rapport between the teacher and students, as most of them stood up to greet her once she entered the classroom.
- Students got actively engaged with the lesson as soon as a brain break was played. During this break, they modeled their breathing, following the lead of an animated fish. There were brief disruptions due to behavioral situations before starting the class, but students could calm down after addressing the problem with the teacher.
- Once prayers concluded, the lesson began with a greeting and students singing along to an ABC Elmo song to set the mood for Phonics & Reading class. It was then followed by AMCO's morning routine, where the teacher chose a student to act like the teacher and assigned their

classmates to complete the classroom calendar. Students were eager to participate in the activity, as they raised their hands and continuously said "me." Students took charge of the class and asked, "How's the weather today?" "Today is...", "How's the weather?" "Today is...", etc. It seemed the teacher made it clear that they must complete the whole phrase, as some of them used their hands to draw what appeared to be a rectangle, parting from the center to the sides as a way to remember the whole phrase. There was a child who did not know how to answer correctly, so the entire class was instructed to answer in her place, and once she repeated the answer, she was allowed to take a seat. This approach is consistent with AMCO's focus on student-centered learning, where the teacher provides support and scaffolding rather than direct instruction.

- This lesson's focus was on the letter "D," both capital and small letters, as this researcher observed two A3 format cardboards with said letters. The teacher got once again the students' attention by using some attention-getters such as "T: Scooby-dooie-doo, S: Where are you?!" "T: To infinity!, S: And beyond!" She starts the class once she grabs a mystery box found in one of the classroom lockers and asks students what it is. Some of them answered "mystery box," and the others just looked excited to see what was in her hands. The teacher then grabbed a hunting hat, and a loop found within the box and told students, "We are going on a hunt." Students cheered joyfully, talking among themselves about what they were about to do. It looked like it was not the first time they did this activity. She proceeded to show slides where all of us could see two children, a boy and a girl carrying a lense while looking for something on the ground. She then told the class they would look for letters in the school playground and reinforced the classroom rules. The majority of students answered in their native language, which the teacher ignored and modeled what she meant by those rules. She then instructed boys and girls to stand up and go for their loops in their lockers, to which students followed as ordered. Their loops were made of foami paper and some masking tape. They all proceeded to line up and went to the playground. The teacher brought her A3 cardboard with

her and ordered her students to “Look for letter Dd”, to which the students did. It seemed the teacher had hidden them before starting the class. Once they found their letters, they were told to line up and go back to the classroom.

- Once this was done, the teacher set a timer for students to sit down and calm down. The teacher took her cardboards portraying the capital letter and small letter D. She pasted the letters on the board, told students to repeat the name of this new letter, and asked students for names starting with capital D, to which students answered, “Domenica, Diana, Dorian” below the letter she wrote such names. Then she introduced some new words with the initial sound D while using some colorful slides. Students repeated “This is the...” as they repeated those exact words.
- Following this activity, students worked individually in their Skill Set book, tracing the capital and small letter "D," as well as identifying and circling the letter d in the words provided by the book. Students struggled to find the page and asked for help by saying, “Teacher, help me, please.” This took about 5 minutes. They worked on this activity once the teacher gave the instructions to do so and were done in about 2 minutes.
- The teacher used a song called “You Are My Sunshine” as a brain break, getting the students' attention once again. However, they lost focus once they finished the activity and the teacher was grading their work.
- To conclude the class, students were instructed to come to the board and circle the letter D among other letters. They were then instructed to participate in a Twister-like game where they had to identify and jump on new vocabulary (words starting with the letter “D”) as instructed. The teacher then modeled the activity along with another student to reinforce instructions as they looked like they didn’t understand at all. Students could form 2 lines after about 2-3 minutes of discrepancies due to behavioral issues and could focus with the help of some attention-getters after some time. Those who recognized the new words

were provided tickets. It seems those tickets work as incentives to have them speak in English during the teacher's class.

- The class was over after a final group interaction, during which the letter "D" was added to the bulletin board, and the students cleaned up their classrooms.

Concept

- This observation revealed the effectiveness of integrating physical movement into phonics instruction. The active participation in the Twister-like game demonstrated that students are more engaged and likely to retain the phonics concept when it is taught dynamically and interactively.
- The students' enthusiasm and ability to connect the physical activity with the letter "D" reinforce the idea that learning through play is beneficial in early literacy education.
- The success of this lesson suggests that integrating more movement-based activities into phonics instruction could enhance learning outcomes. It also raises questions about how different learners (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic) respond to such activities and how these methods could be adapted for diverse learning needs.
- Still, observations showed that the lesson included only one activity from the book: tracing the letter Dd. No additional pages were found within the book to reinforce how to draw that specific letter, nor did it address that letter later in the unit. That was all to be taught about letter D.
- The students did not exhibit noticeable changes in behavior while note-taking, as they were focused on the activities.

Observation #2

Participant: 1st Grade B 5M 14F

Language: English

Context:

This observation took place in a first-grade classroom (Classroom B) at an elementary school. The focus of this study is to explore how the AMCO methodology aligns with its theoretical foundations and integrates phonics-based instruction. The observation was conducted by a researcher new to the field of educational research, aiming to understand the practical application of AMCO's phonics approach in a real classroom setting. The classroom environment was observed during a phonics lesson, with a particular focus on how various activities and interactive methods, such as the letter hunt and Twister-like game, were used to enhance students' phonemic awareness and letter-sound connections.

Content:

- For first-grade B, this would be their fifth and sixth class hours (10:30-11:10, 11:10-11:40 AM) in their schedule once recess time is over. Students arrived at the classroom about 5 minutes late until they washed their hands and
- First grade B also has its classroom where students receive their respective classes, except music and sports classes, as this researcher was told. The classroom desks are arranged in individual students' desks, rather than in small groups. This setup doesn't truly reflect AMCO's emphasis on cooperative learning and student engagement, as they work individually rather than helping each other when necessary. This researcher noticed no visual aids on the walls aside from an interactive calendar, letters Aa-Bb-Cc, numbers from 1-20, and some classroom rules hanging from some wall hangers, as the other classroom observed. The same reason was provided: no pictures on the walls are allowed. In this class, students greet the teacher but seem much more mature than first-grade B, staying seated at their desks while briefly greeting the teacher, except for some 3-4 students. Those

4 students looked pretty eager to be “the teacher,” as they were asking for the teacher to pick them up for the role.

- Students got engaged with the lesson once the teacher played the “You Are My Sunshine song.” They seemed to truly enjoy the song as they knew the lyrics, articulating the majority of the words in each line. No disturbances were observed during all this time.
- Once prayers concluded, the lesson began with a greeting and students singing along to an ABC song to set the mood for Phonics & Reading class. This song was different from the first class observed, as it involved the name and sound of the letter, along with words beginning with such letters. The majority of the class was involved in the activity, aside from 2-3 students that seemed to get distracted quite easily. It was then followed by AMCO's morning routine, where the teacher chose a student to act like the teacher and assigned their classmates to complete the classroom calendar. Students were eager to participate in the activity, as they raised their hands and continuously shouted “me.” Shouting disturbed some students as they covered their ears in a matter of seconds. Rules of the class were reinforced at that moment. Students once again used their native language to talk about the class rules, it seemed to be a recurring issue now. Students took charge of the class and asked, “How’s the weather today?” “Today is...”, “How’s the weather?” “Today is...”, etc. All of those who participated knew what was being asked, no errors were committed during this time. This approach is consistent with AMCO’s focus on student-centered learning, where the teacher provides support and scaffolding rather than direct instruction.
- This lesson's focus was also on the letter "D," both capital and small letters. It seems the teacher is giving the same class to all 1st graders. She starts the class by setting the mystery box she brought with her on the teacher's table. Students seem eager to figure out what’s inside it, standing up and trying to take a peek at what the teacher has brought with her this time. The teacher said something of the sort “sit down, 1-2-3...”. They make a run for it and take a seat while asking whether “Mr. Beaver, or Mr. Bunny” are inside the box, it seems those are some

school mascots provided by AMCO, according to what I was informed. The teacher instructs them to say "Open, please" and proceeds to grab the hunting hat, and a loop found within the box just like with the other students from first grade A. The teacher proceeds to say, "Today we are going on a hunt." Students showed their excitement by looking around the classroom at their closest friends. She proceeded to show slides where all of us could see two children carrying a lens and looking for something on the ground. She then told the class they would look for letters hidden in the school's front yard. But before that, she reinforced the classroom rules. The majority of students answered in their native language, to which the teacher just told them, "English please or no ticket today". She then modeled what she meant by those rules. Next, the teacher instructed boys and girls to stand up and go for their loops in their lockers, to which students followed as ordered, once again those 3 students that tended to get distracted quite easily didn't follow their classmates' actions and moved only when the teacher went to their desks and told them what to do once again. Their loops were made of foami paper and some masking tape, just as those observed in first grade A. They all proceeded to line up and went to the school's front yard. The teacher brought her A3 cardboard with her and ordered her students to "Look for letter Dd". While pointing to that letter, students did as told. The teacher had them before starting the class, as this researcher saw her going to the front yard before recess time was over. Once they found their letters, they were told to line up and go back to the classroom.

- Once this was done, the teacher set a timer for students to sit down and calm down while playing relaxing music without lyrics. While they were lying down on their desks, the teacher took her cardboards portraying the capital letter and small letter D. She pasted the letters on the board, told students to be ready, and made them repeat the name of this new letter as well as their sound. She asked students for names starting with capital D, to which students answered, ""Miss Diana! "Miss Domenika! "daddy!". The teacher made the respective corrections, but below the letter she wrote such names. Then she introduced some new words

with the initial sound D while using some colorful slides. Students repeated “This is the dog,” “ This is the door,” and “This is the desk.”.

- Following this activity, students were instructed to go pick their books and work individually in their Skill Set book, tracing the capital and small letter "D," as well as identifying and circling the letter d in the words provided by the book. Some students struggled to find the page and asked for help by saying, “Teacher, help me, please.” This took about 3 minutes. They worked on this activity once the teacher gave the instructions to do so and were done in about 1 minute. The teacher graded their activity and sent them to put their books in their lockers. The teacher used a brain breaker to breathe in and out.
- To conclude the class, students were instructed to come to the board and circle the letter D among other letters. They were then instructed to participate in a Twister-like game where they had to identify and jump on new vocabulary (words starting with the letter D) as instructed. The teacher then modeled the activity along with another student to reinforce instructions. Students formed 2 lines after about 2-3 minutes and could focus with the help of some attention-getters after some time. Those who recalled the vocabulary taught during the lesson were provided tickets; they put them in their pencil case as instructed after a while since they took their time to count how many tickets they had (reinforcing identifying quantity).
- The class was over after a final group interaction, during which the letter "D" was added to the bulletin board, and the students cleaned up their classrooms.

Concept

- The observation shows that using fun and varied activities in phonics lessons works well, following AMCO’s student-focused approach. Activities like the letter hunt and a Twister-like game kept students engaged and helped them remember the letter "D." This suggests that learning through movement can improve focus and memory. Interactive tools, such as the mystery box and colorful slides, addressed different learning styles and kept students interested. However, the lesson's

focus on the letter "D" was limited, pointing to a need for more resources or activities to support further learning. Even though some students got distracted, clear rules and attention-getters helped keep the class on track. Overall, using a mix of sensory and interactive methods seems to boost engagement and learning, suggesting that adding varied teaching strategies and extra materials could enhance future lessons.

- Nevertheless, the observation suggested that there was only a single activity from the book addressing letter Dd, namely tracing the letter. No supplementary pages existed in the book as well that would deepen the understanding of the Dd practice, nor was letter Dd addressed in the subsequent units.
- The note-taking process was not revealed as a precise factor that resulted in the modification of the students' behavior, because they were too busy concentrating on the activities being developed.

Observation #3

Participant: 1st Grade C 7M 14F

Language: English

Content:

This observation took place in a first-grade classroom (Classroom C) at an elementary school. The focus of this study is to explore how the AMCO methodology aligns with its theoretical foundations and integrates phonics-based instruction. The observation was conducted by a researcher new to the field of educational research, aiming to understand the practical application of AMCO's phonics approach in a real classroom setting. The classroom environment was observed during a phonics lesson, with a particular focus on how various activities and interactive methods, such as the letter hunt and Twister-like game, were used to enhance students' phonemic awareness and letter-sound connections.

Context:

- For first-grade C, this would be their seventh and eighth class hours (11:40-12:10, 12:10-12:50 AM), in other words, their last classes. This

researcher was told those students who use the school bus to get home leave earlier than expected, about 12:30 PM, therefore, classes end 5 minutes before 12:30 PM for them to get ready to leave. In this class, there are about 6 students who use the school bus.

- First grade C also has its own classroom where students receive their respective classes, except music and sports classes. The classroom desks are arranged in a U-shaped layout rather than in small groups. This setup also reflects AMCO's emphasis on cooperative learning and student engagement, as they work helping each other when necessary, allowing students to work in pairs, for instance. This researcher noticed no visual aids on the walls aside from an interactive calendar, letters Aa-Bb-Cc, numbers from 1-20, and some classroom rules hanging from some wall hangers, as the other classrooms observed. The same reason was provided: no pictures on the walls are allowed. Visual aids are key in the Amco approach. In this class, students greet the teacher by standing up and running toward her to hug her. From those who stood up and hugged her, about 3-4 kept on asking who the "the teacher" would be in today's class. About 6 students were playing and running around the classroom. All this at the same time while the teacher was trying to reach the teacher's table to set down her materials.
- It took a while to have them sit down. There were about 3 children who kept touching and attempting to open the magic box, so the teacher had to put it up in the lockers. The teacher attempted to play the "You Are My Sunshine Song" but it wasn't as effective as with other first-grader courses. So she changed her strategy and put a brain-break activity to get students' attention as the situation didn't improve. The teacher played a hand exercise warm up to 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star', where students had to follow the rhythm while moving their hands. This activity finally got them engaged with the class and allowed everyone to stay in their place. Once it was over, the teacher went to the board and pointed at the school rules. She asked them to tell her the meaning of each rule, to what students answered in their native language, so the teacher modeled each one and made students repeat the classroom rules after

her. Behavioral situations are present in this classroom, and following instructions seems to be a challenge for them. Special Educational Needs (SEN) are present in the classroom, one child has a specialist who sits behind her in class, but the child attends classes and does not disrupt the flow of the class.

- Time was running, and the angelus was prayed at noon by the whole school. Most of the students prayed along with their classmates, except for 4-5 students who had the teacher model praying.
- The lesson began with a greeting and students singing along to an ABC Elmo song to set the mood for Phonics & Reading class. The majority of the class was involved in singing, aside from 2-3 students, one who this researcher noticed could not stay in his place and another who was disrupting the class by shouting out of nowhere. The teacher let them be. There was no time for the school calendar as students were told.
- This lesson's focus was also on the letter "D," both capital and small letters. It seems the teacher was giving the same class to all 1st graders. She started the class by setting up the mystery box she brought with her to the teacher's table. Once again, some students seemed eager to figure out what's inside it, standing up and trying to take a peek at what the teacher had brought with her this time. The teacher sent them to sit down in a strict tone. The teacher instructed them to say "Open, please" and proceeded to grab the hunting hat, and a loop found within the box just like with the other students from first grade. The teacher proceeds to say, "Today we are going on a hunt." She proceeded to show slides where all of us could see two children carrying a lens and looking for something on the ground. That's when students showed their excitement. She then told the class they would look for letters hidden in the school playground. But before that, she reinforced the classroom rules. Next, the teacher instructed boys and girls to stand up and go for their loops in their lockers, to which students followed as ordered. They all proceeded to line up and went to the school playground. The tutor of the class joined the activity to make sure they followed instructions. The teacher brought her A3 cardboard with her and made students side down against the wall. She ordered

her students to “close your eyes, no peeking”. Students did as told. Once she was finished hiding the letters, she instructed them to open their eyes and said, “Ready, set go!” “Look for letter Dd”, While pointing at that letter, students did as told. Once they found their letters, the teacher used attention-getters to make them focus on her, they were told to line up and go back to the classroom.

- Once this was done, the teacher set a timer for students to sit down and calm down while playing relaxing music without lyrics. While they were lying down on their desks, the teacher took her cardboards portraying capital letter and small letter D. She pasted the letters on the board, told students to be ready, and made them repeat the name of this new letter as well as their sound. She asked students for names starting with capital D, to which students answered, “Dylan, Domenica, Delgado!”, and below the letter she wrote such names. Then she introduced some new words with the initial sound D while using some colorful slides. Students repeated “This is the dog,” “This is the door,” and “This is the desk.”. She used some flashcards she’d brought in her purse to see whether they recalled the vocabulary. Those who did were provided tickets.
- Following this activity, students were instructed to go pick their books and work individually in their Skill Set book, tracing the capital and small letter "D," as well as identifying and circling the letter d in the words provided by the book. Some students struggled to find the page and asked for help by saying, “Teacher, help me, please.” They worked on this activity once the teacher gave the instructions to do so and were done in about 2-3 minutes. The teacher graded their activity and sent them to put their books in their lockers. The teacher used a brain breaker to breathe in and out.
- Time was over, so some students didn’t finish the activity, but the teacher didn’t send the book home. She told them “we’ll finish next class”. As this researcher was told, AMCO teachers are instructed not to send the books home. The students whose parents would pick them up at school were instructed to clean up the classroom and put their pencil cases in the lockers.

Concept

- The observation reveals that integrating interactive and engaging activities into phonics lessons, as demonstrated by AMCO's methodology, significantly benefits first-grade students' phonemic awareness. Activities such as the letter hunt effectively captured students' attention and reinforced their understanding of the letter "D," suggesting that movement and play can enhance focus and memory. The use of interactive tools like the mystery box and colorful slides also supported various learning styles, keeping students interested and engaged.
- Yet, the lesson's limited focus on the letter "D," which was developing just one task from the Skill Set book, alerts the existence of an empty slot for stimulation and appeals to the idea the necessity to give additional materials or include new exercises to make learning more sound. In spite of a few small barriers in the learning classroom environment, students who get off task and the need to use behavioral reminders, the inclusion of sensory and interactive tools was a perfect method to maintain the students' participation.
- To sum up, the data collected reach the conclusion that a combination of sensory and interactive activities is quite effective in increasing students' engagement and learning outcomes. To the upcoming classes, the inclusion of more activities that can complement the allotted resources would be, thus, a wise way to reinforce phonics skills

APPENDIX 2

Standardized phonemic awareness tests

Adapted phonics assessment test for first-grade students.

Test# 1:

Name: _____

Date: Tuesday, August 6th, 2024 Course: 1th

Phonics Assessment

1- Listen and circle the correct capital letter.

T	H	U	Y	A	W	G
D	N	Z	B	P	X	K
C	L	Q	V	M	I	E
R	F	S	J	O		

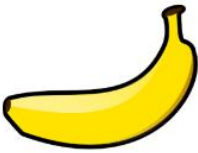
2- Listen and color the correct small letter.

e	q	p	s	t	w	b
a	x	l	j	i	d	z
v	u	r	q	f	g	c
h	m	o	n	k		




3- Which 2 pictures rhyme? Circle them.



4- Say the picture in the left. Then, circle the picture with the same initial sound.

1				
2				

5- Circle the correct initial sound. Color the pictures.

<p>d</p> <p>e</p> <p>c</p>		<p>c</p> <p>b</p> <p>a</p>		<p>b</p> <p>a</p> <p>c</p>	
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Test# 2:

Name: _____

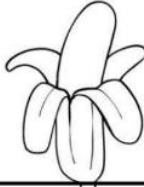

Date: *Thursday, August 8th, 2024* Course: *1A* Subject: Reading & Phonics

Phonics Assessment

1- Write the ending sound of each word.

1)		bo _____	8)		ha _____	<p>m</p> <p>s</p> <p>t</p>
----	---	----------	----	--	----------	----------------------------

2- Circle how many syllables the word has. Color the pictures.

banana	cat
	
1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4

3- Look at the picture and say the word. Color the sounds you hear. Write the word.





m e t
l o m

s oo t
m a n

4- Look at each picture. Break the word up so the teacher can hear each sound in order.



5- Build the new word.

	
<input type="text"/> c <input type="text"/> a <input type="text"/> t	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>

APPENDIX 3

Structured interviews

Adapted structured interviews for two elementary English teachers.

Interviewer: Good afternoon. We would like to ask some questions about phonics instruction for our research project at Universidad Católica Santiago de Guayaquil.

Interviewer: What is your definition of phonics, and how does it align with the AMCO approach?

Response:

Interviewer: How do you incorporate the importance of phonics for English instruction in your AMCO-based lessons?

Response:

Interviewer: Can you provide specific examples of how phonics helps students read and spell new words within the AMCO framework?

Response:

Interviewer: What sources or materials from the AMCO program do you find most effective for teaching phonics, and why?

Response:

Interviewer: How do you assess students' progress in phonics within the AMCO approach, and what tools or methods do you use?

Response:

Interviewer: Do you feel the need to include additional materials or activities to complement phonics instruction within the AMCO program, and if so, what would you suggest?

Response:

APPENDIX 4

Interview script

Script for a structured interview with two elementary English teachers at Santo Domingo de Guzmán School.

Interview #1

Interviewer: Good afternoon. We would like to ask some questions about phonics instruction for our research project at Universidad Católica Santiago de Guayaquil.

Interviewer: What is your definition of phonics, and how does it align with the AMCO approach?

Interviewee 1: Phonics is what allows our students to relate the letters or symbols as you would like to refer to them (grapheme) and the sound they produce (phoneme). I mean, when our students say the sound /b/ they are learning a phoneme (but they don't know what the word "phoneme" means, of course), but when they write the letter "b" it is a grapheme. All so that students can decode when they are ready to do so, and finally read with fluency. For this is essential for letter-sound relationships to be taught in a logical sequence, young learners need continuous exposure, as well as activities that reinforce these connections through repetition, practice, and contextual application in reading and writing tasks. It's also important to use multisensory activities in classes, such as visuals, sounds, and hands-on tasks, to cater to different learning styles and solidify these connections. Of course, this is the traditional way, when it comes to AMCO's approach, while they do teach phonics, their focus is not on in-depth phonics instruction. Instead, it emphasizes natural acquisition within an integrated program. This means that phonics is taught as part of a broader context, where the goal is for students to naturally acquire language skills through immersive and contextual learning experiences.

Interviewer: How do you incorporate the importance of phonics for English instruction in your AMCO-based lessons?

Interviewee 1: We try to follow the lesson plans provided by AMCO, as it is a quick program where we must cover 10 units in the whole school year, so whenever possible we use at least 2 hours of Reading & Phonics classes at the week to cover AMCO phonics content, the Pronunciation Lab, which would be listening and watching a video story introducing some of the new vocabulary of the unit to cover (6 words per week), discriminate familiar sounds, identify words that rhyme, listening and repeating a song, rhyme, or poem, as well as identify small and capital letters.

Interviewer: Can you provide specific examples of how phonics helps students read and spell new words within the AMCO framework?

Interviewee 1: As they are first graders, our young learners are beginning to read one-syllable words in their native language, as they already understand the letter-sound relationship of all vowels and certain consonants being m, p, l, s (except from one child that already reads fluently). As the AMCO program introduces the ABC letters in order, it's still not possible for us to make students identify what a syllable is (we are currently in the letter e since letters began to appear in the book content from unit 2 and forward) nor seek for higher expectations for the time being until we cover them. Since the activities found within the book emphasize listening, and enhancing that specific skill, students complete the activities without putting much work into them.

Interviewer: What sources or materials from the AMCO program do you find most effective for teaching phonics, and why?

Interviewee 1: Maybe, from all the content found within the Pronunciation Lab Section of the book, I'd say the rhyming activities, where students sing rhymes and identify words that sound alike. This as it enhances their listening skills, which need to be put into practice for them to master identifying sounds and relate them to their letters (symbols)

Interviewer: How do you assess students' progress in phonics within the AMCO approach, and what tools or methods do you use?

Interviewee 1: Both formative and summative. I took daily oral formative assessments (I came up with additional materials) to see the effectiveness of students not writing their ABC letters, just recognizing the words that start with it, since there are no activities as such in the textbook, where I could tell some students struggled, and others were great listeners. Then I came to realize that students are still working on identifying their ABC letters with their sound when they see it in paper form. Summative as we are required to by educational institutions.

Interviewer: Do you feel the need to include additional materials or activities to complement phonics instruction within the AMCO program, and if so, what would you suggest?

Interviewee 1: Although Amco provides great activities to practice listening skills, such as identifying rhyming words and identifying sounds, I would personally say that there is a need to have more ABC content within the book aside from just one page where students get to see one letter move on to other completely different activities. As well as other interactive and age-appropriate activities aside from just coloring. Activities where students can enhance their fine motor skills, as their gross motor skills are already being enhanced throughout the class. A booklet to take home on a daily basis for students to practice would be nice.

Interview #2

Interviewer: Good afternoon. We would like to ask some questions about phonics instruction for our research project at Universidad Católica Santiago de Guayaquil.

Interviewer: What is your definition of phonics, and how does it align with the AMCO approach?

Interviewee 2: Well, I would define it as a method of teaching reading and spelling; it's meant to teach the relationship between letters and sounds. It's a way to help our students understand how to decode words by recognizing letter-sound correspondences. As it is our first year working with this method, I would say that the AMCO approach intends to form the foundational skills needed for literacy in an integrated way, not necessarily as a separate subject.

Interviewer: How do you incorporate the importance of phonics for English instruction in your AMCO-based lessons?

Interviewee 2: This approach is holistic; phonics instruction is not isolated but rather connected to language use. So, it helps students to naturally acquire phonics skills. We follow the lesson plans provided by Amco, modifying from time to time some of the activities found within the book as we consider it necessary. For example, when there are texts too long for our students to work with or there are no other activities to carry out aside from following the reading.

Interviewer: Can you provide specific examples of how phonics helps students read and spell new words within the AMCO framework?

Interviewee 2: For instance, if we teach a new word like "cat" to students, they can first hear the same word in a story, which makes their emotional connection to the word. After that, we get children to break the word into sounds: /k/, /a/, /t/. At the end, they group similar words (Family words) like "bat," "hat," and "rat" to see patterns using a simple chart. Therewith, the word becomes easy for them not only to read but also to write if they grasp how the sounds are arranged correctly.

Interviewer: What sources or materials from the AMCO program do you find most effective for teaching phonics, and why?

Interviewee 2: For phonics as a whole, I would say the second-grade interactive digital resources provided by the platform. Pre-structured activities online students can complete in a period set by the teacher, activities we can modify from time to time.

Interviewer: How do you assess students' progress in phonics within the AMCO approach, and what tools or methods do you use?

Interviewee 2: Assessment in the AMCO approach is both formative and summative. I use ongoing observation during class activities, checking for students' ability to decode and encode words in real time. Not only that but phonics assessments such as word-reading tests and spelling quizzes are also used to check their learning process weekly, which means extra activities I create to measure my students' progress. Portfolio-based assessments where students' work overtime is collected also provide insight into their development, highlighting their growth and areas needing improvement.

Interviewer: Do you feel the need to include additional materials or activities to complement phonics instruction within the AMCO program, and if so, what would you suggest?

Interviewee 2: While AMCO provides comprehensive resources, from time to time I tend to compose personalized phonics activities that positively reinforce the vocabulary covered. I also devise games and repetition exercises as a means of keeping the children interested, which is especially important for the younger ones since the material in the 2nd grade book is quite lengthy. Moreover, children can have storytelling sessions during which they create their own stories using their phonic skills. These activities not only reinforce reading through phonic skills but also support the development of creativity, critical thinking, and cooperation, which are the guiding principles in the AMCO approach. Though the book has various activities to improve students listening skills, it would be more appropriate for this addition if there is another worksheet they could use at home to practice AMCO's content.

Permission for the application of unstructured observations in class



FAH-PINE-009-2024

Lunes, 30 de julio del 2024

Madre
Martha Vásquez López.
Rectora
Unidad Educativa Santo Domingo de Guzmán
En su despacho.

Reciba un cordial saludo. Por el presente solicito a usted muy comedidamente y salvo su mejor criterio, se permita a las Srtas. Domenika Gabriela Flores Rengifo con C.I.#0923036305 y Ana Paula Larreátegui Castro con C.I. #0925252306, estudiantes del 8vo ciclo de la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros – inglés, de la Facultad de Artes y Humanidades de la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil, realizar observaciones áulicas que les permita recolectar información para elaborar su Trabajo de Integración Curricular (Proyecto de titulación).

Las Srtas. Flores y Larreátegui estarían realizando dicha actividad en la clase de inglés que reciben los estudiantes, durante los meses de julio y agosto del presente.

De antemano agradezco la atención brindada.

Atentamente,


Lcdo. Stanley González Ubilla, M.Ed.
Director

Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros – inglés
stanley.gonzalez@cu.ucsg.edu.ec



Aprobado
Martha Vásquez López

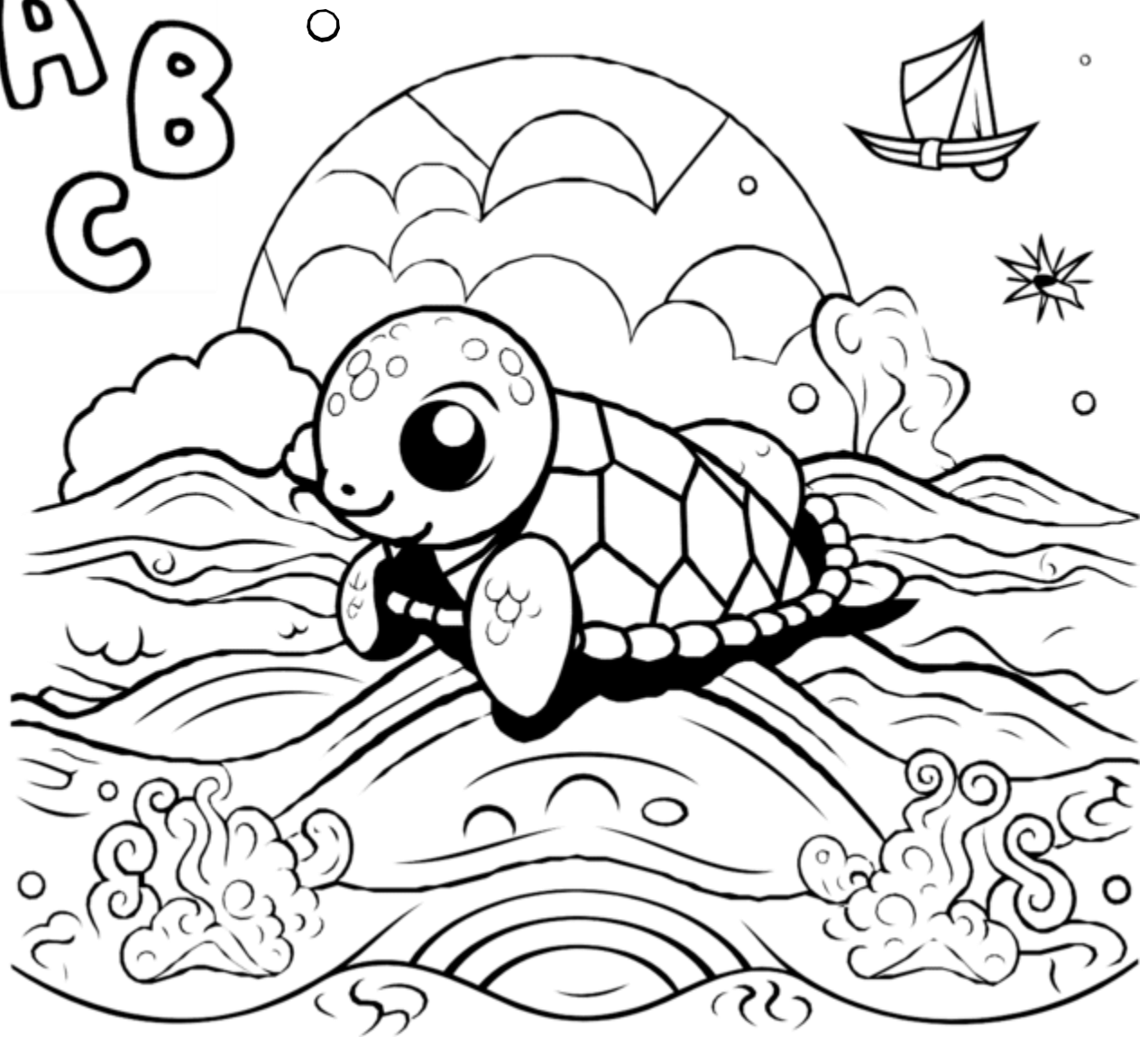


BOOKLET

PHONICS | 1ST GRADE

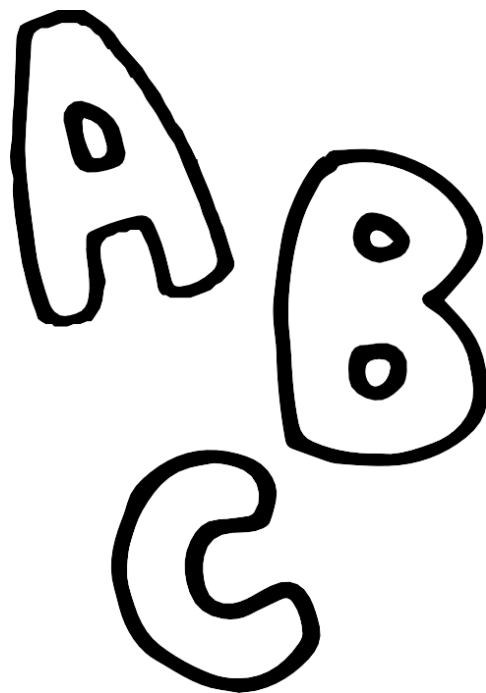
This book belongs to: _____

A B C



GREETINGS!

Welcome to the Phonics Booklet! This resource is designed to complement your phonics classes by providing additional practice and reinforcement activities. The booklet is structured to complement letter recognition, enhancing your students' understanding of phonics through targeted exercises. This guide will help you navigate the booklet and effectively integrate it into your teaching routine.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET?

Structure

Each activity is designed to be completed within 5 minutes. Every letter has an introduction and practice activities. Incorporate these elements into each class to ensure consistency or send this booklet home to provide reinforcement!

Teaching tips

- Start each activity with a fun warm-up, such as singing a song or playing a game that relates to the phonics topic of the day to transition to this five minute activities once you've finished working with the AMCOs book.

- Conclude each lesson with a quick assessment to check for understanding. This could be a simple quiz, a drawing activity, among others.
- Encourage daily revision to reinforce what was learned in previous lessons. This could be a quick recap or a fun game that revisits past topics.
- Encourage parents to practice phonics at home even if the activities were completed during class.

Adaptation

Feel free to adapt the lessons to fit the needs of your classroom. Use it as you consider necessary!

SCOPE & SEQUENCE

UNIT 1: ALPHABET - SHORT VOWEL SOUND	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES
1. Learn my ABC	Familiarize students with the alphabet.	Alphabet recognition, coloring the correct letter, tracing.
2. Short 'a'	Introduce the short 'a' sound.	Sound identification, letter practice (tracing and writing), word matching, and initial letter words.
3. Short 'e'	Focus on the short 'e' sound.	Sound identification, letter practice (tracing and writing), word matching, and initial letter words
4. Short 'o'	Learn the short 'o' sound.	Sound recognition, word puzzle, letter practice (tracing and writing), word matching, and initial letter words

5. Short 'u'	Introduce the short 'u' sound.	Sound identification, letter practice (tracing and writing), word matching, and initial letter words.
UNIT 2: CONSONANT SOUNDS	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES
1. m, d, f, g	Introduce the consonant sounds for 'm,' 'd,' 'f,' and 'g.'	Sound matching, initial sound identification.
2. b, t, s, w	Focus on the consonant sounds for 'b,' 't,' 's,' and 'w.'	Sound matching, initial sound identification.
3. k, j, p, n	Teach the consonant sounds for 'k,' 'j,' 'p,' and 'n.'	Sound matching, initial sound identification.
4. c, h, l, r	Learn the consonant sounds for 'c,' 'h,' 'l,' and 'r.'	Sound matching, initial sound identification.

5. v, y, z, qu, x	Introduce the sounds for 'v,' 'y,' 'z,' 'qu,' and 'x.'	Sound matching, initial sound identification.
UNIT 3: CONSONANT BLENS & DIAGRAPHS	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES
1. ch	Teach the 'ch' digraph sound.	Sound matching, initial sound identification, color and tracing.
2. sh	Introduce the 'sh' digraph.	Sound matching activities, letter formation practice, initial letter sound.
3. ck	Focus on the 'ck' blend.	Sound discrimination, word matching, initial letter sound.
4. th	Teach the 'th' sound	Sound discrimination, and writing practice.

INDEX

Unit 1

Lesson 1: Learn my ABC	1-4
Lesson 2: Short a	5-8
Lesson 3: Short e	9-11
Lesson 4: Short i	12-15
Lesson 5: Short o	16-23
Lesson 6: Short u	19-23

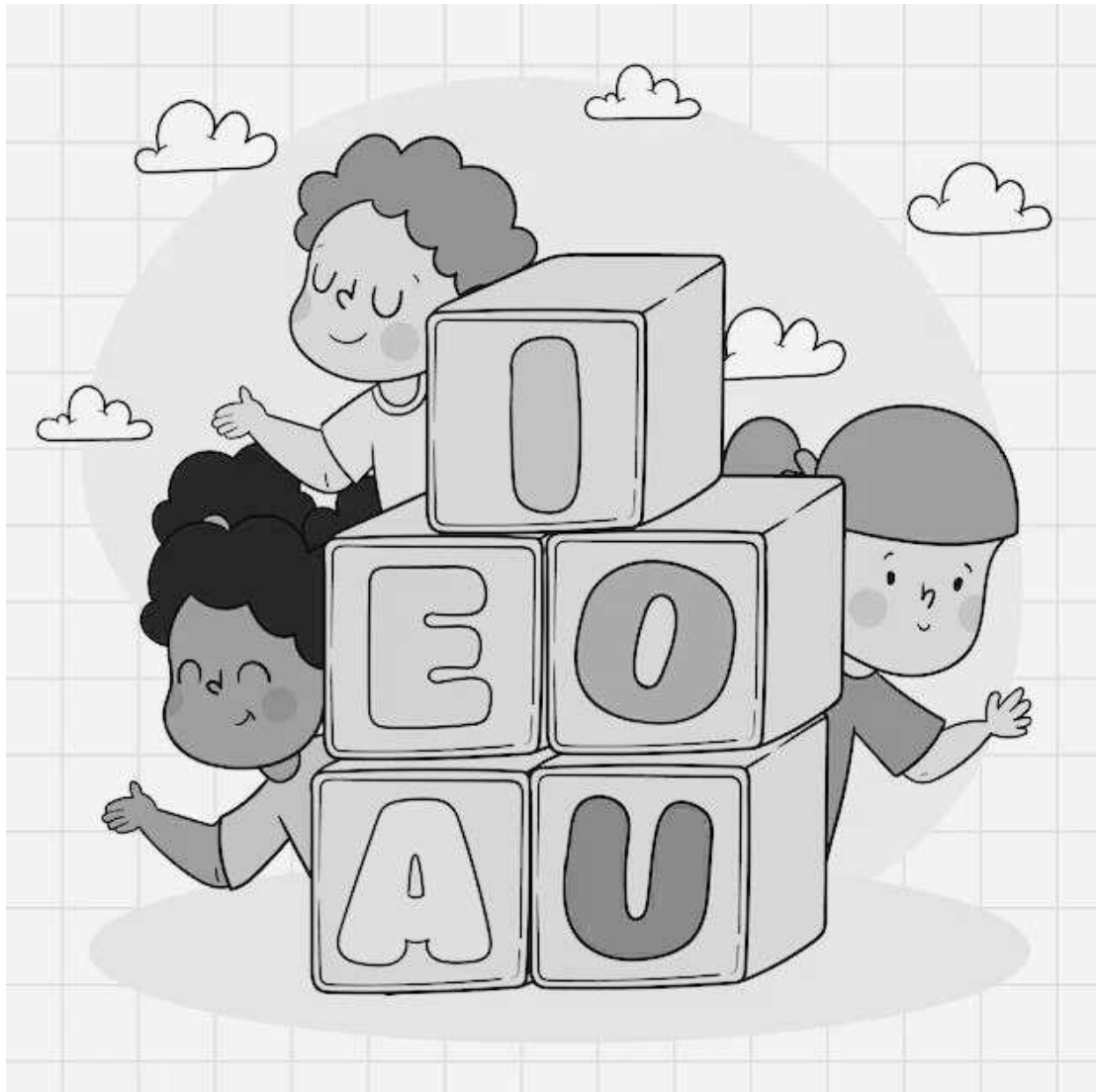
Unit 2

Lesson 1: m,d,f,g	24-27
Lesson 2: b,t,s,w	28-30
Lesson 3: k,n,p,l	31-33
Lesson 4: c,h,l,r	34-38
Lesson 5: y,v,z,q,u,x	39-43

Unit 3

Lesson 1: ch	44-45
Lesson 2: sh	46-47
Lesson 3: ck	48-49
Lesson 4: th	50-53

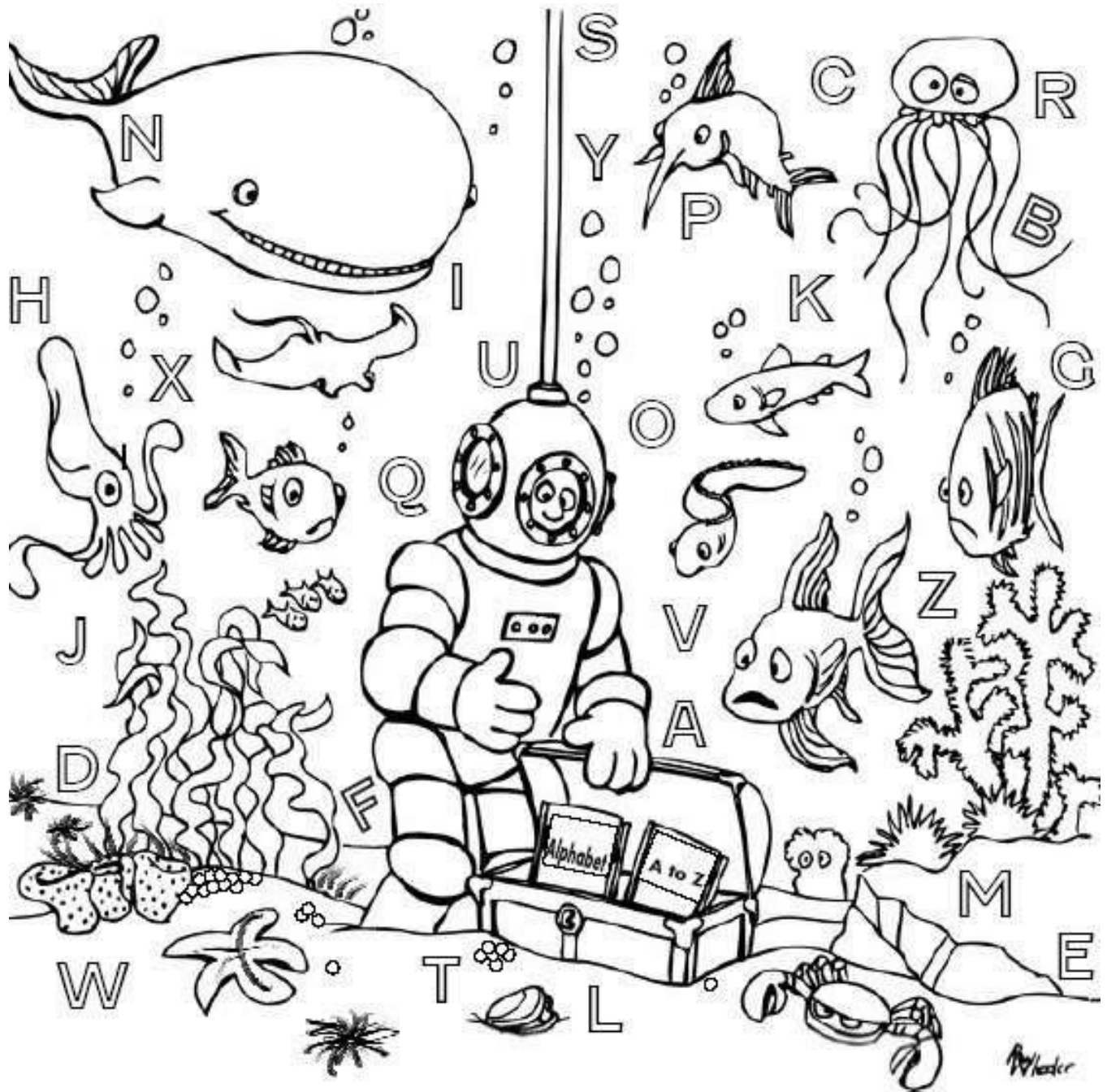
UNIT 1:



Direction: Color the letters of the alphabet



Direction: Look for the letters of the alphabet and color them. Happy hunting!



Direction: Color accordingly.

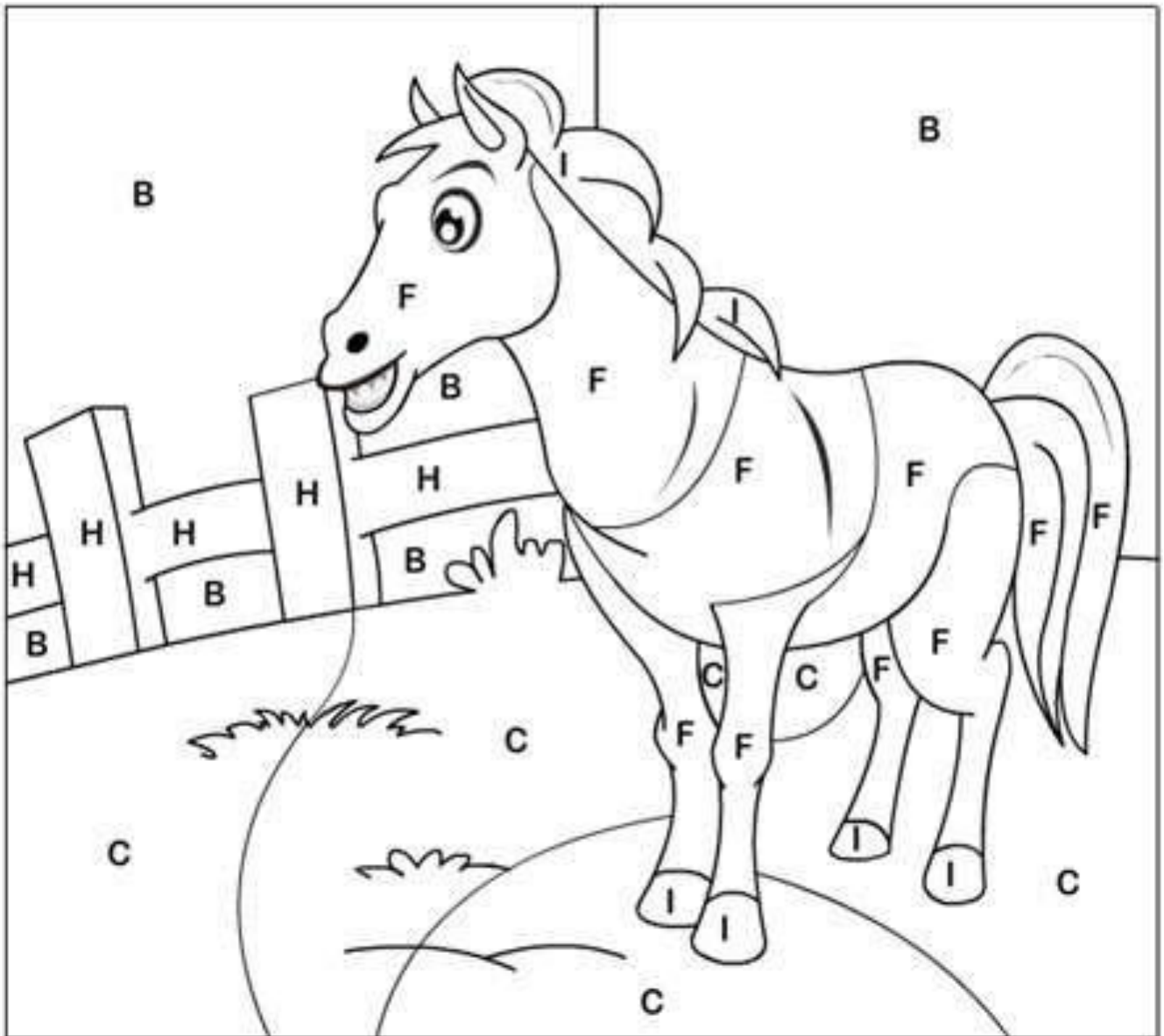
B blue

F orange

H brown

C green

I black



Direction: Trace the capital and small letter.

Aa Bb Cc Dd

Ee Ff Gg Hh

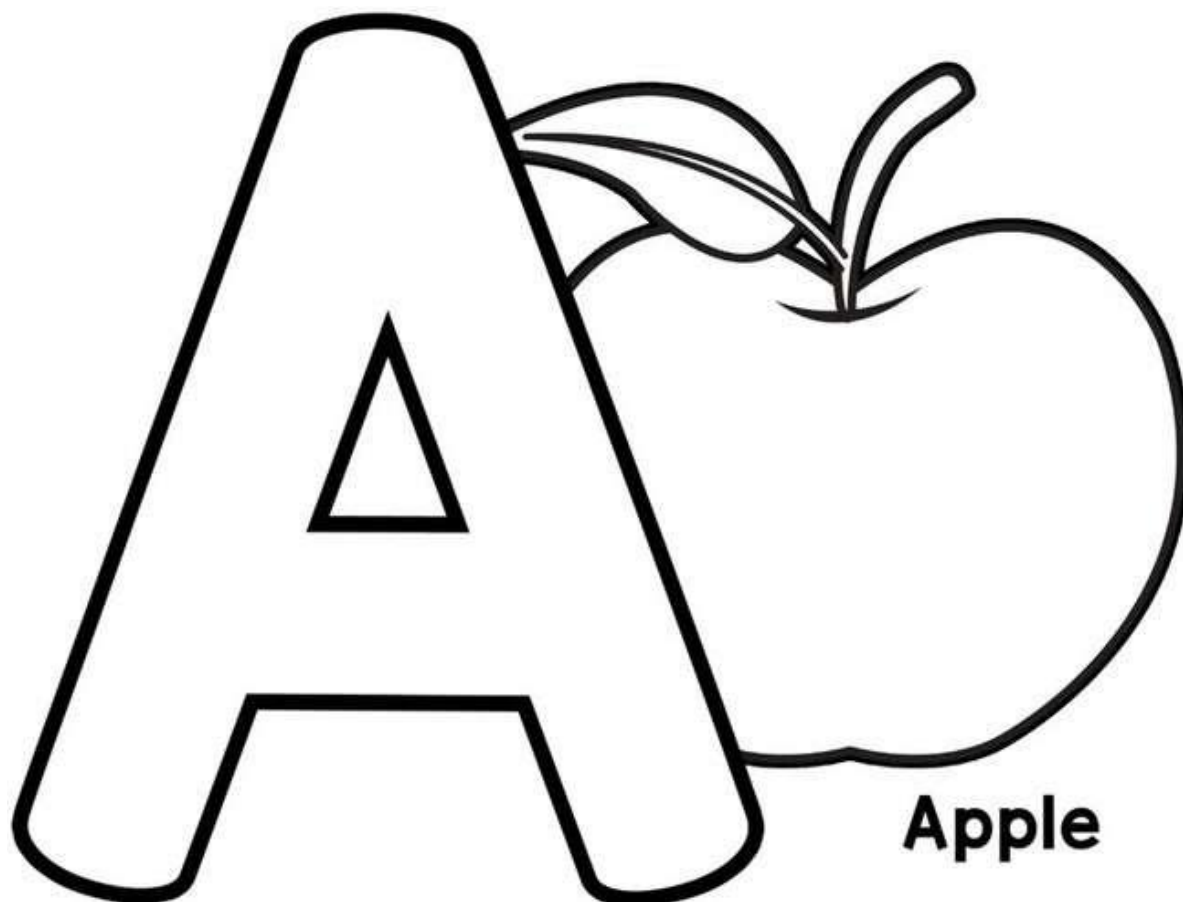
Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm

Nn Oo Pp Qq

Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv

Ww Xx Yy Zz

Direction: Color the letter A.



Direction: Match the letter **A** with **a**.

A

a
u
e

Direction: Circle the pattern **Aa**.

Aa

Ma

Aa

An

Am

Aa

Aa

Ar

Aa

Aa

As

Aa

Ra

Aa

As

Aa

Aa

Sa

Na

Aa

Aa

Aa

Na

Aa

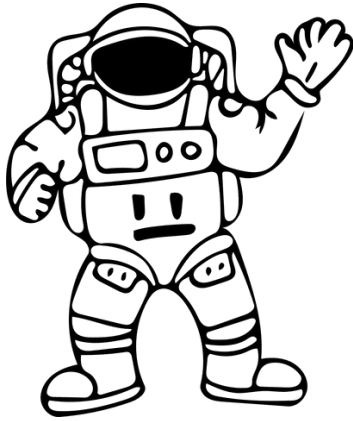
Aa

Pa

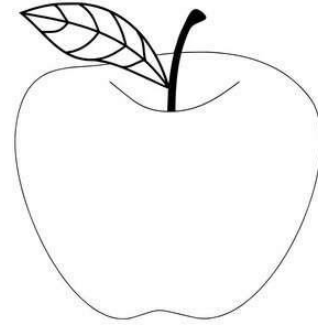
Aa

Aa

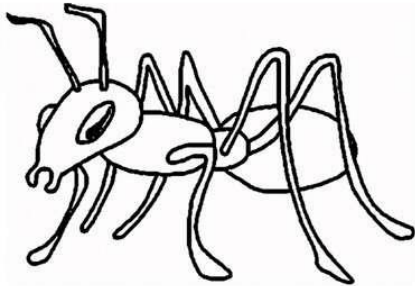
Direction: Circle and color the items that start with the A sound.



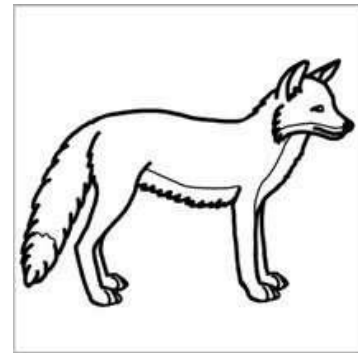
Astronaut



Apple



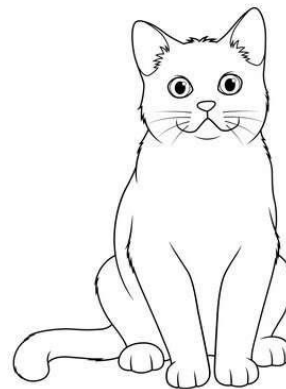
Ant



Fox

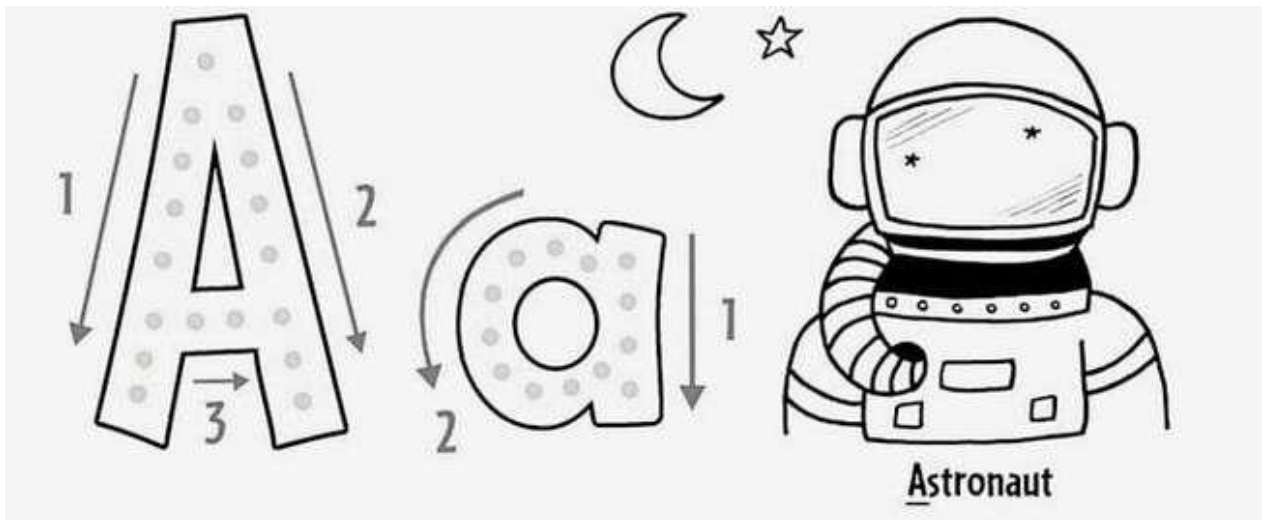


Ambulance

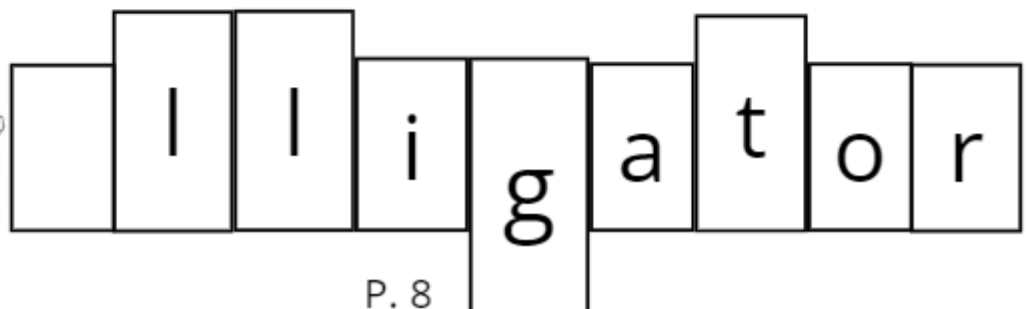
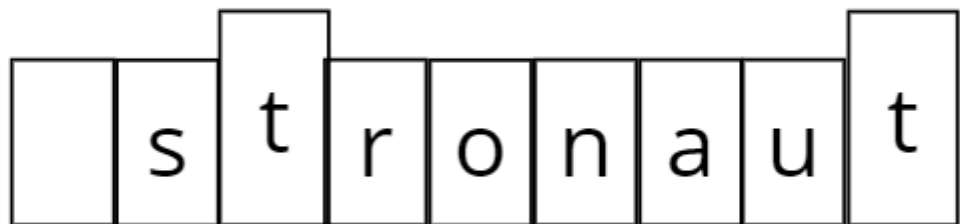
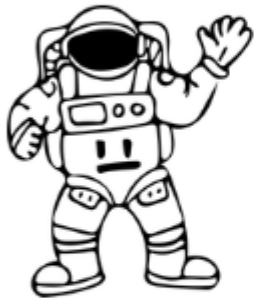
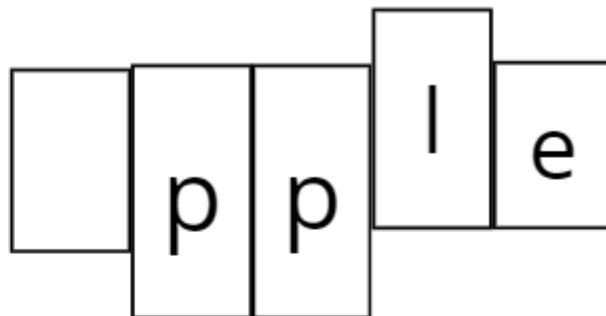


Cat

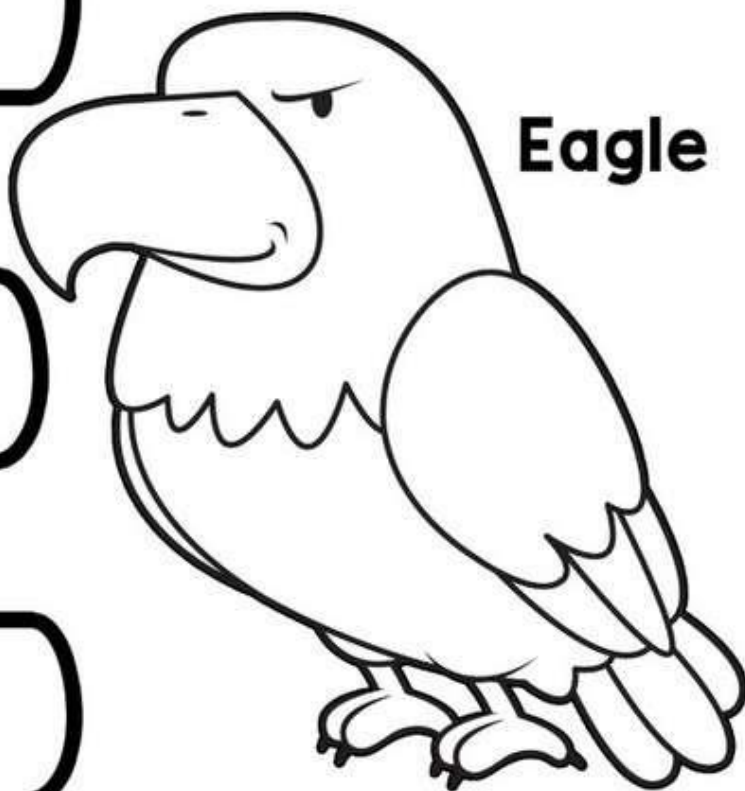
Direction: Follow the dots and trace letter A.



Direction: Say the name of each picture. Write the beginning letter to complete the word.

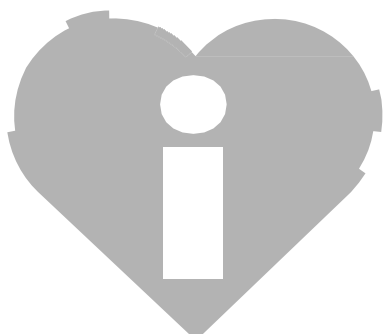


Direction: Color the letter E.

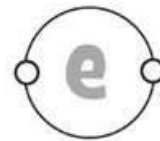
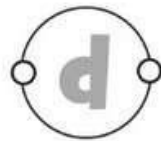
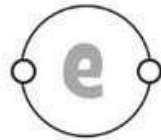
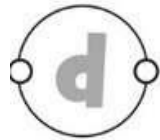
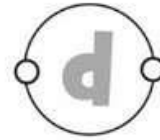
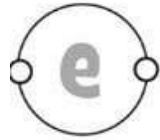
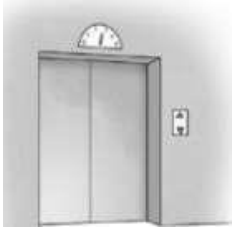


Eagle

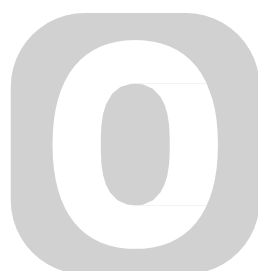
Direction: Color the e's red.



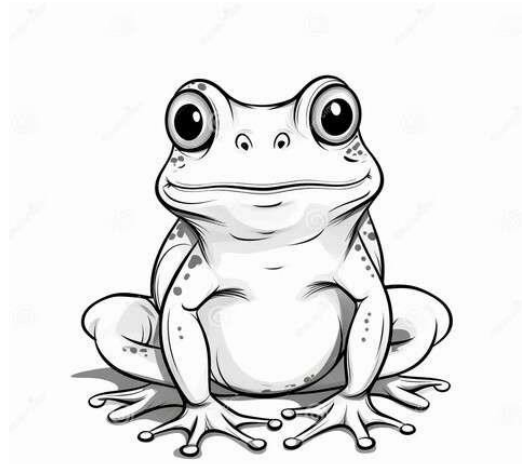
Direction: Connect the e's. Color them red.



Direction: Color the lowercase letter that matches the uppercase E.



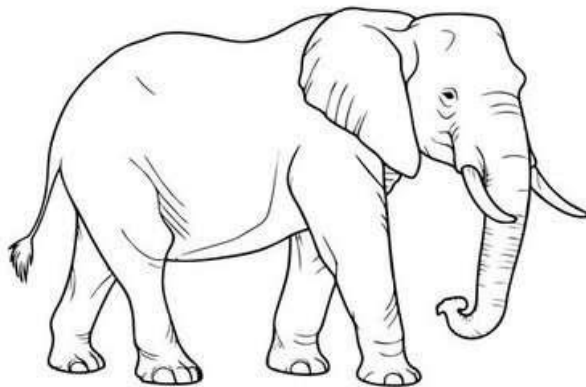
Direction: Circle and color the items that start with the E sound.



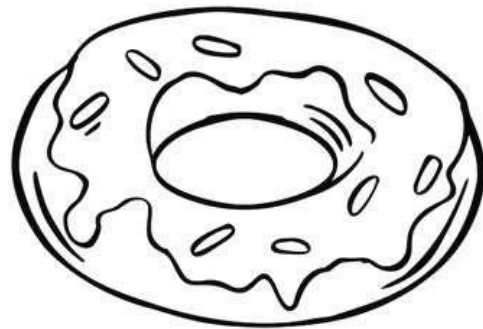
Frog



Egg



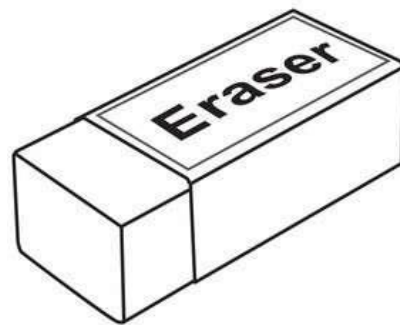
Elephant



Donut

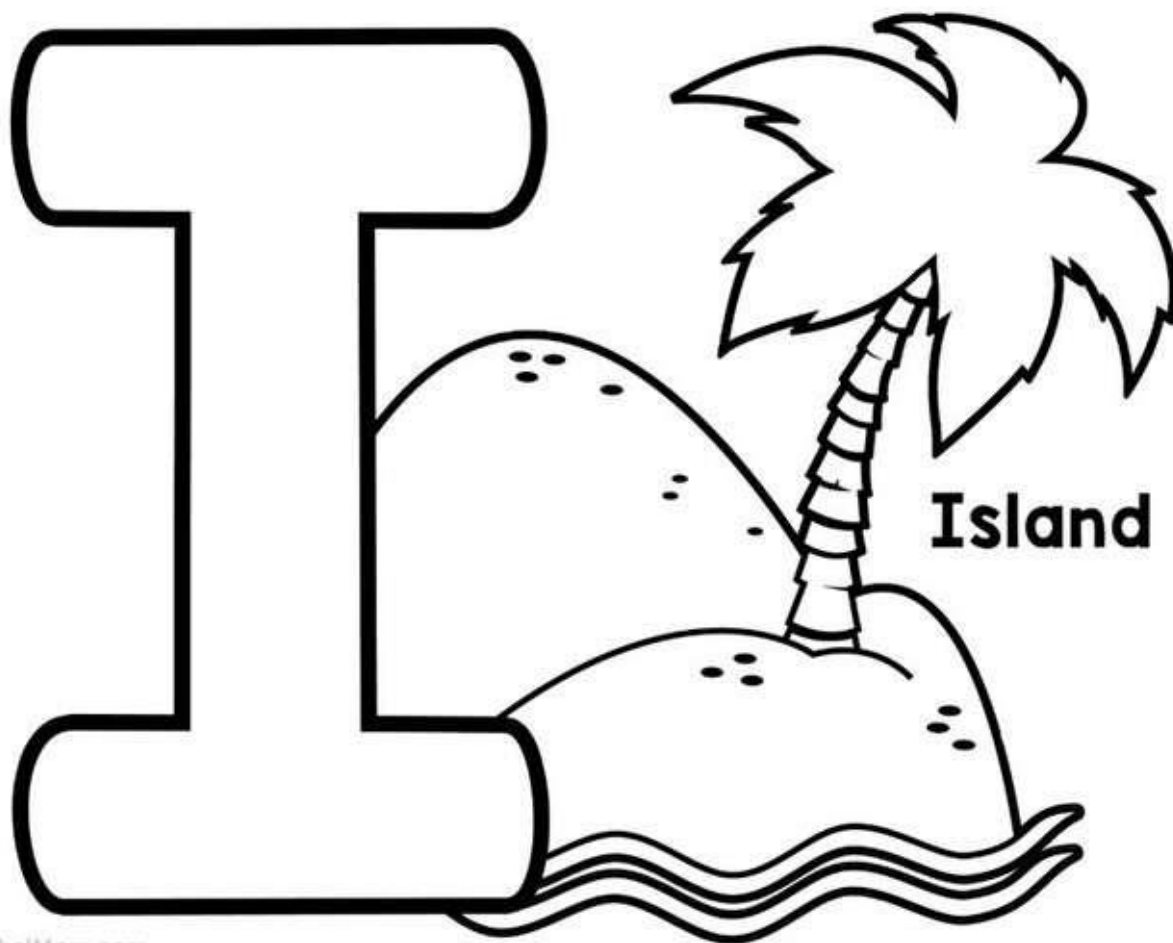


Flower



Eraser

Direction: Color the letter I.




Direction: Circle the i's yellow.

i h i g h i g h i g

i h i i g i g h i i

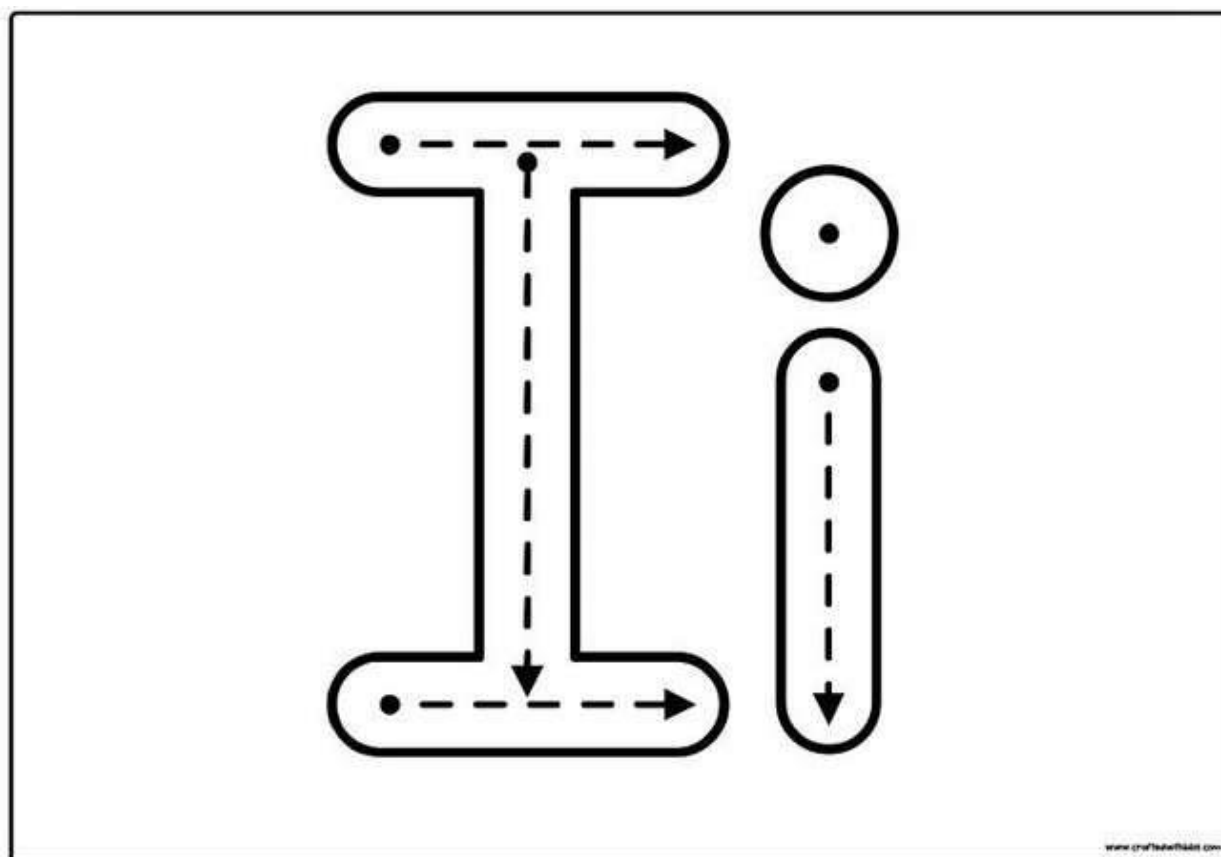
g h g h g i i g i h



Direction: Color the i's yellow.



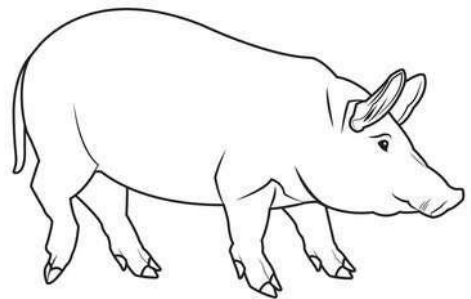
Direction: Trace the uppercase and lowercase letter.



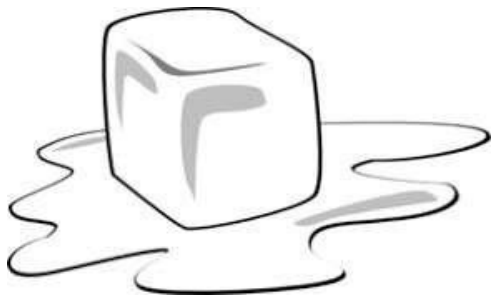
Direction: Draw a line from the circle to the images that begin with the letter I.



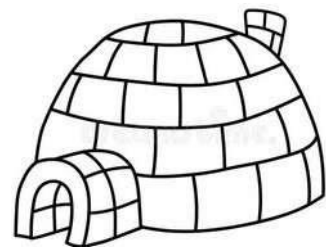
Butterfly



Pig

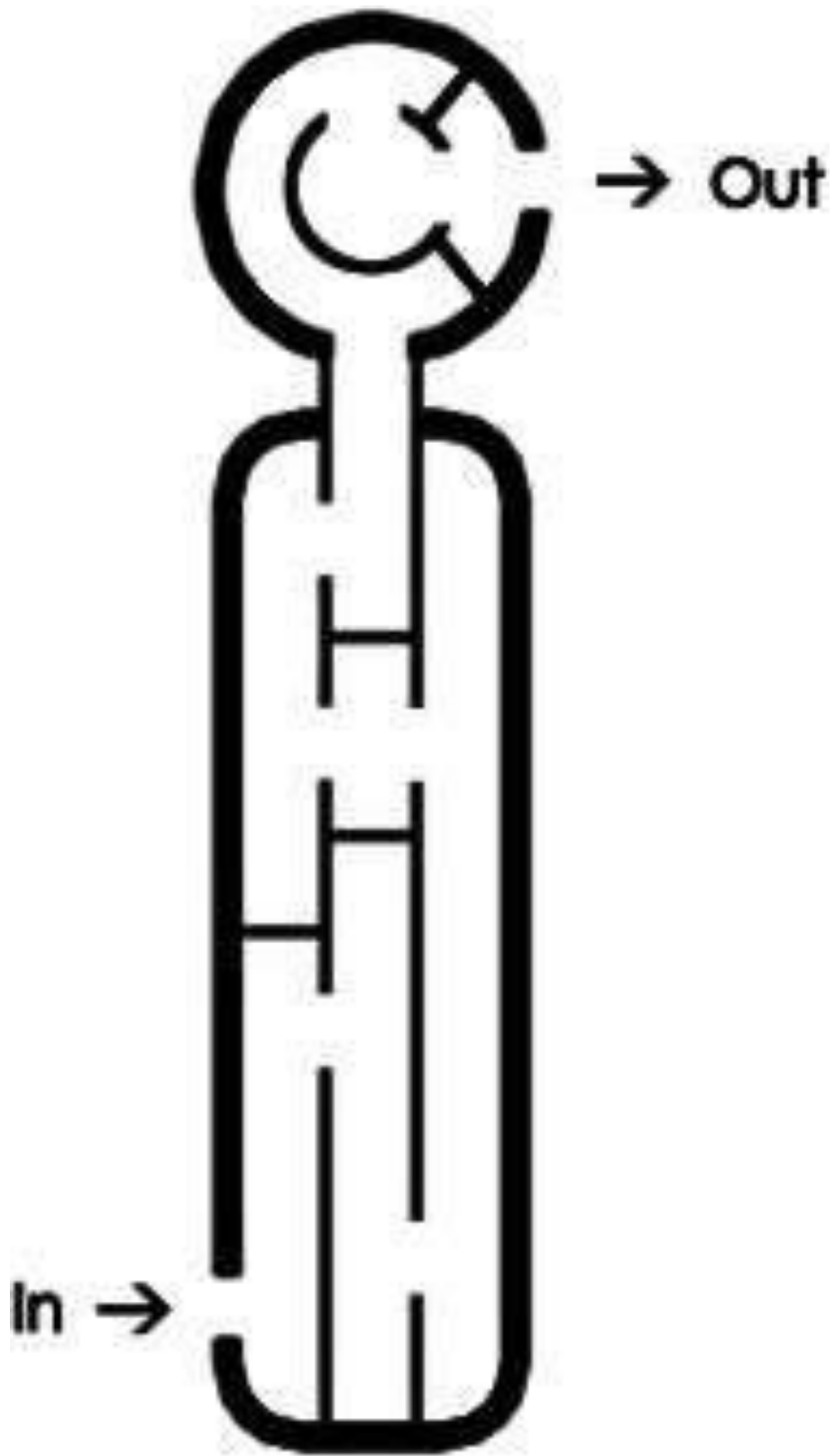


Ice



Igloo

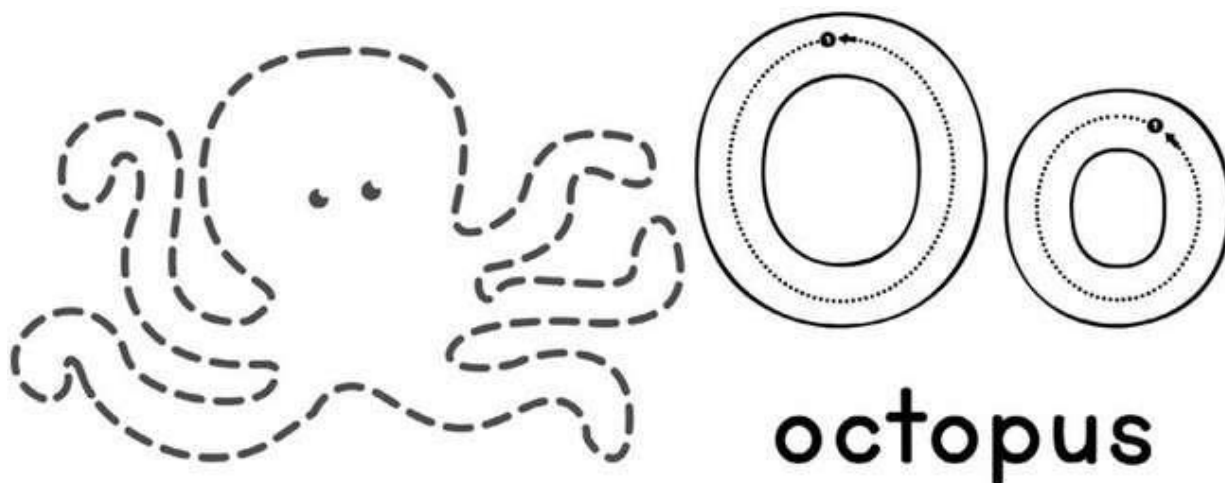
Direction: Find the way out of the letter I maze.



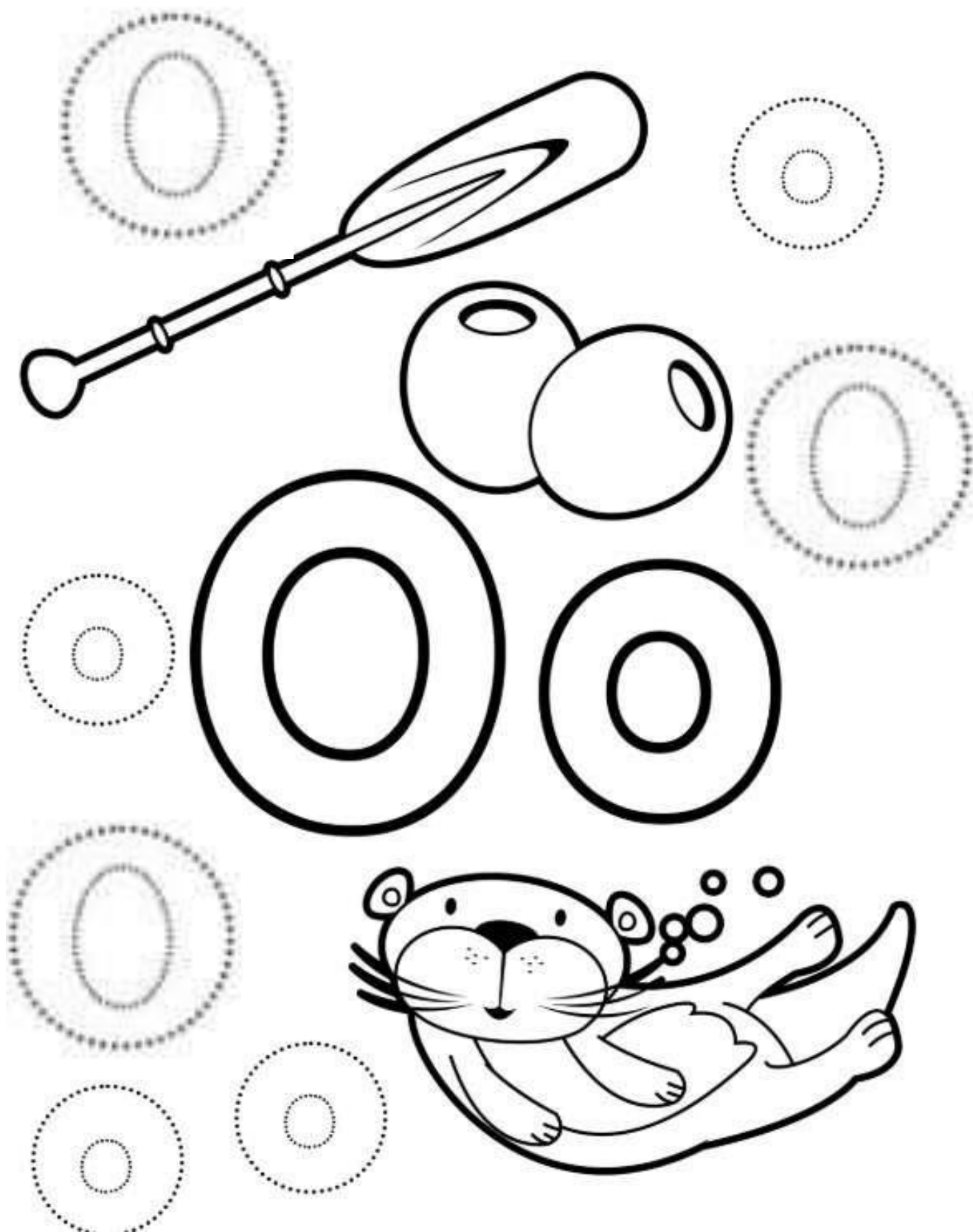
Direction: Color the letter o.



Direction: Trace the uppercase and lowercase letters.



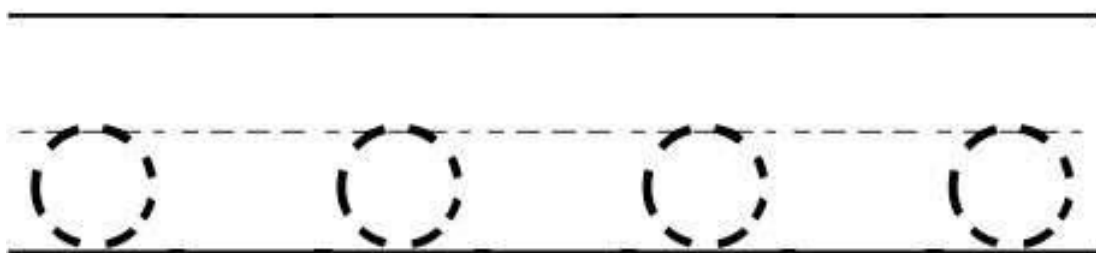
Direction: Color all the lowercase letters.



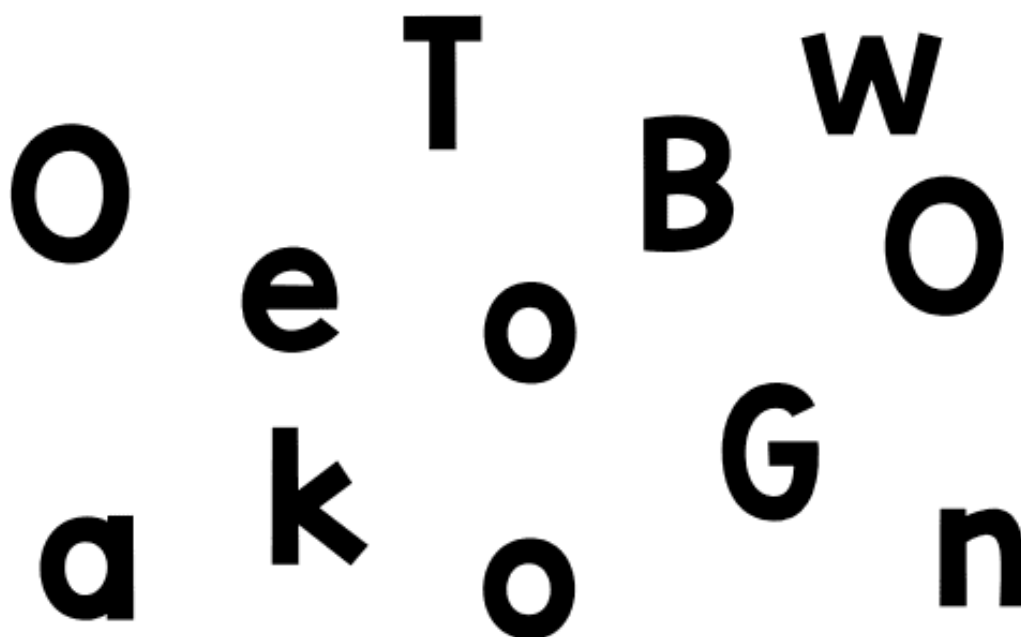
Direction: Follow the shape to write the letter O.



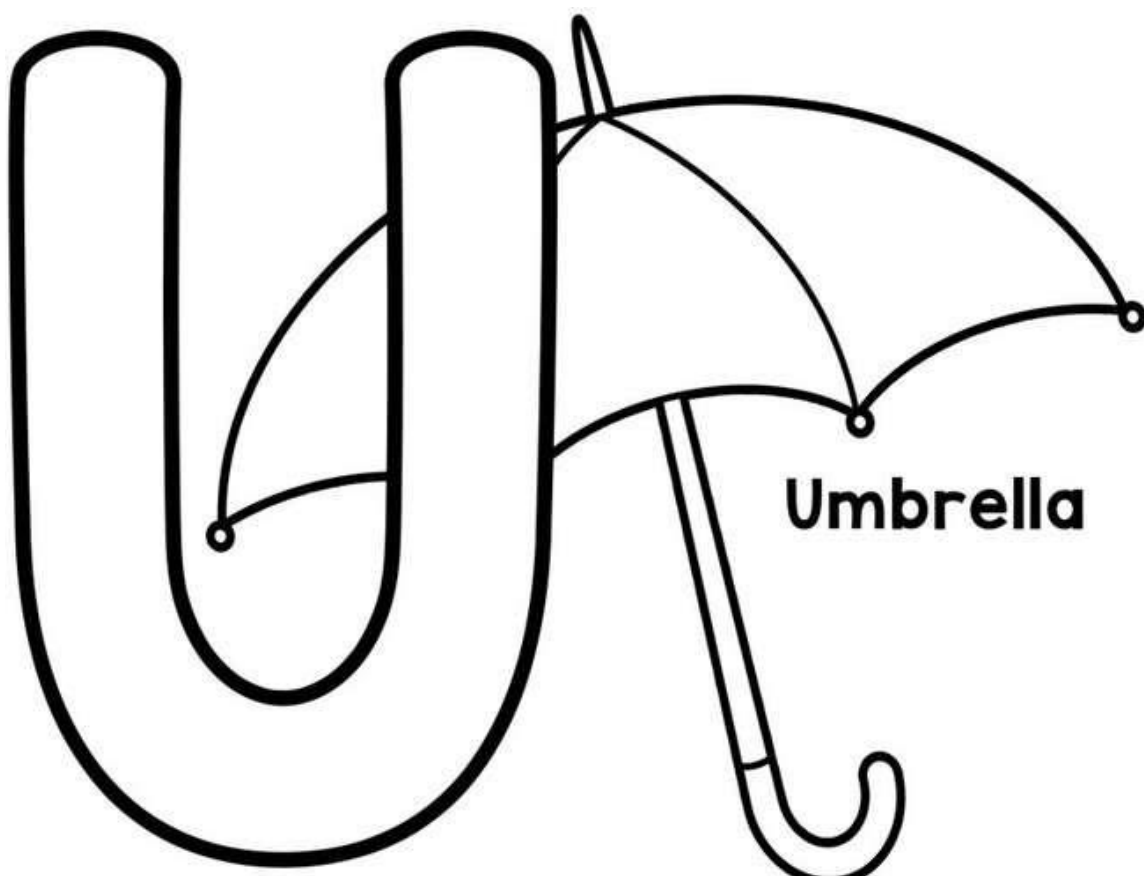
owl



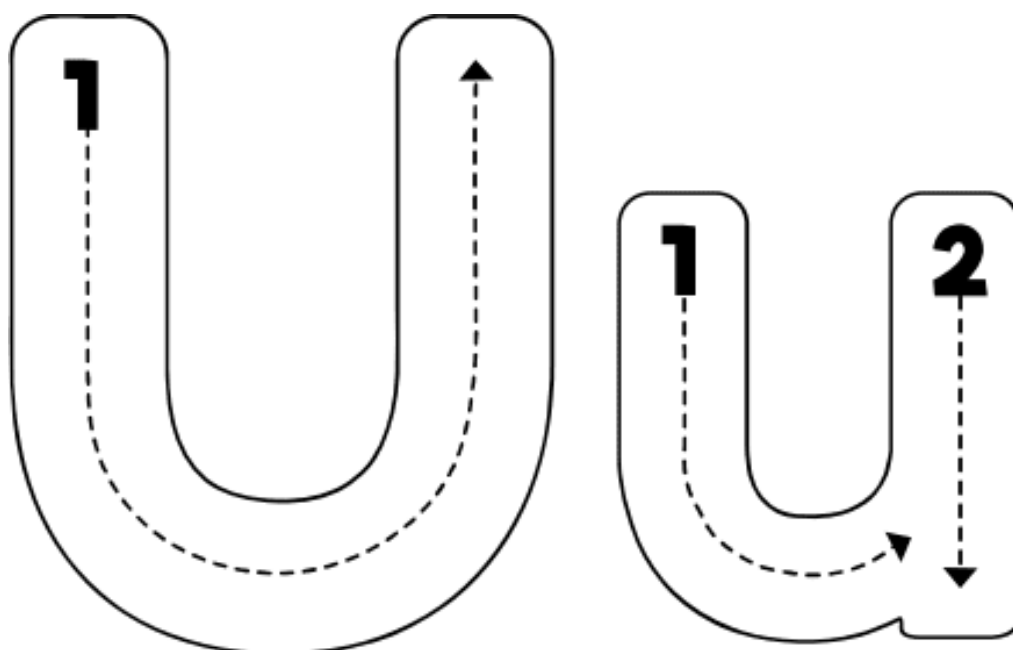
Direction: Circle the letter O.



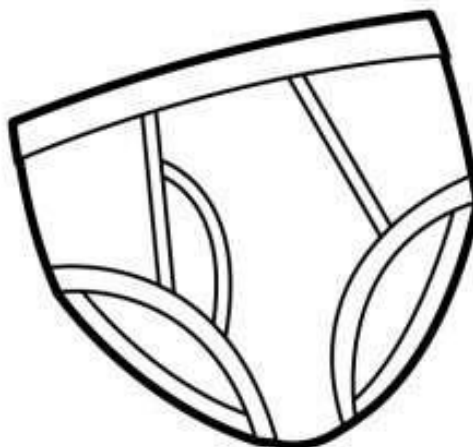
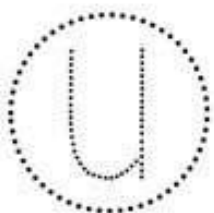
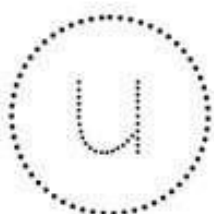
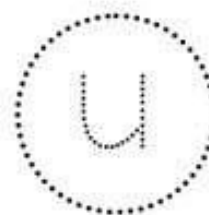
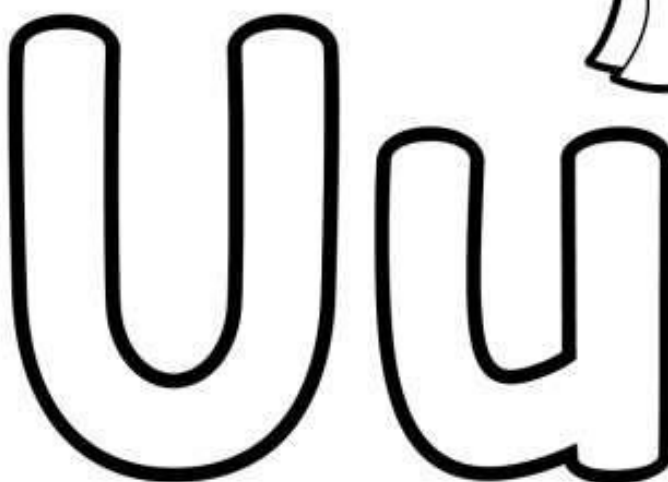
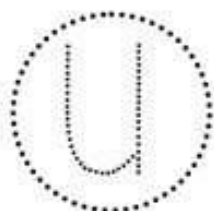
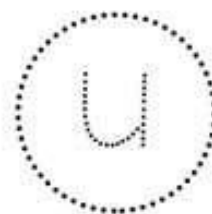
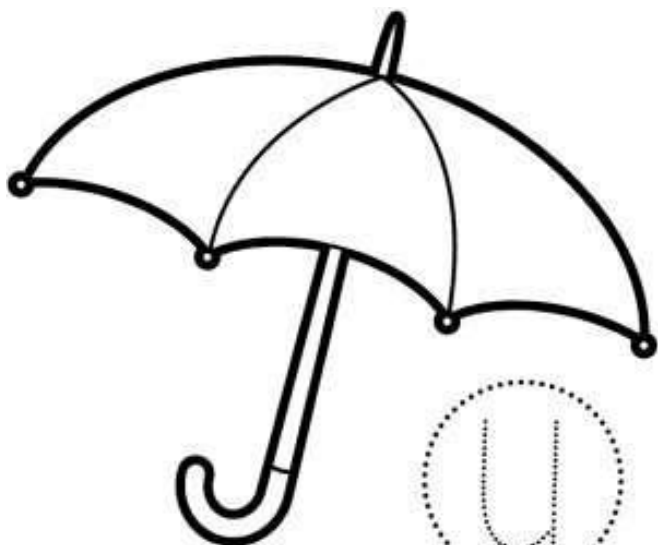
Direction: Color the letter U.



Direction: Trace the letter U.



Direction: Color the lowercase letters.



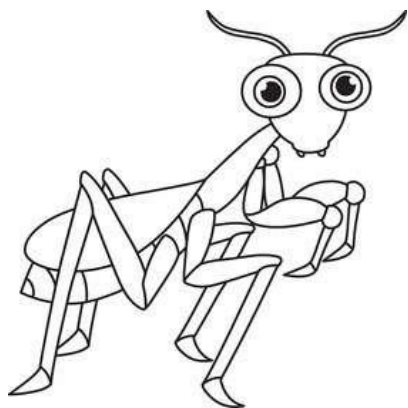
Direction: Circle and color the items that start with the U sound.



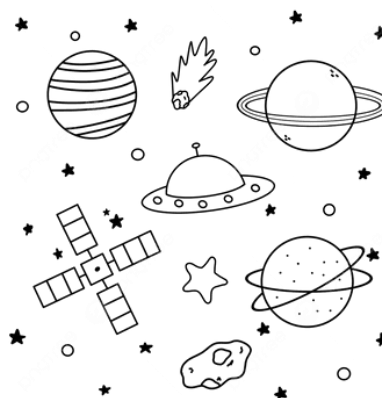
Uniform



Arm



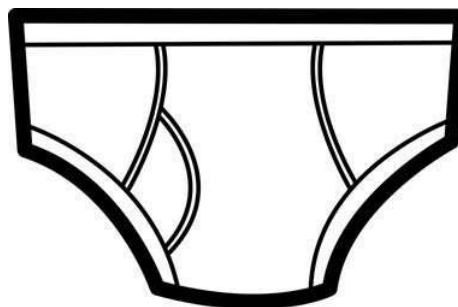
Ant



Universe

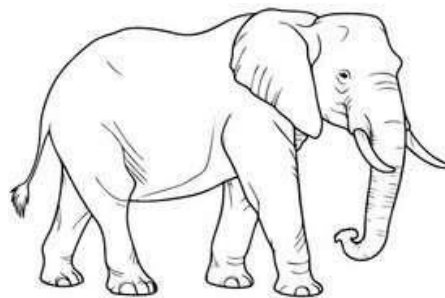
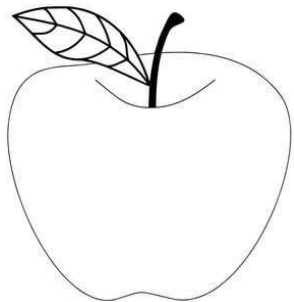


Umbrella

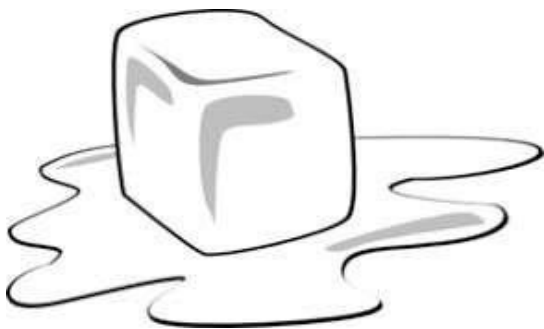


Under

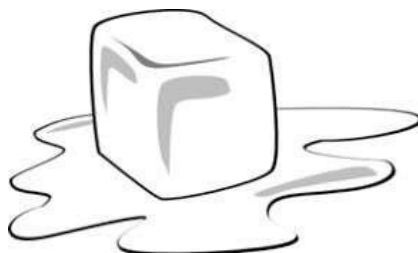
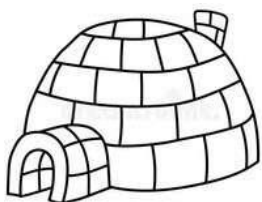
Direction: Circle the word with A as the first sound.



Direction: Circle the word with U as the first sound.



Direction: Which two words start with the same letter? Circle.



Direction: Which two words start with the same letter? Circle.



Direction: Which letter does the word start with? Circle.

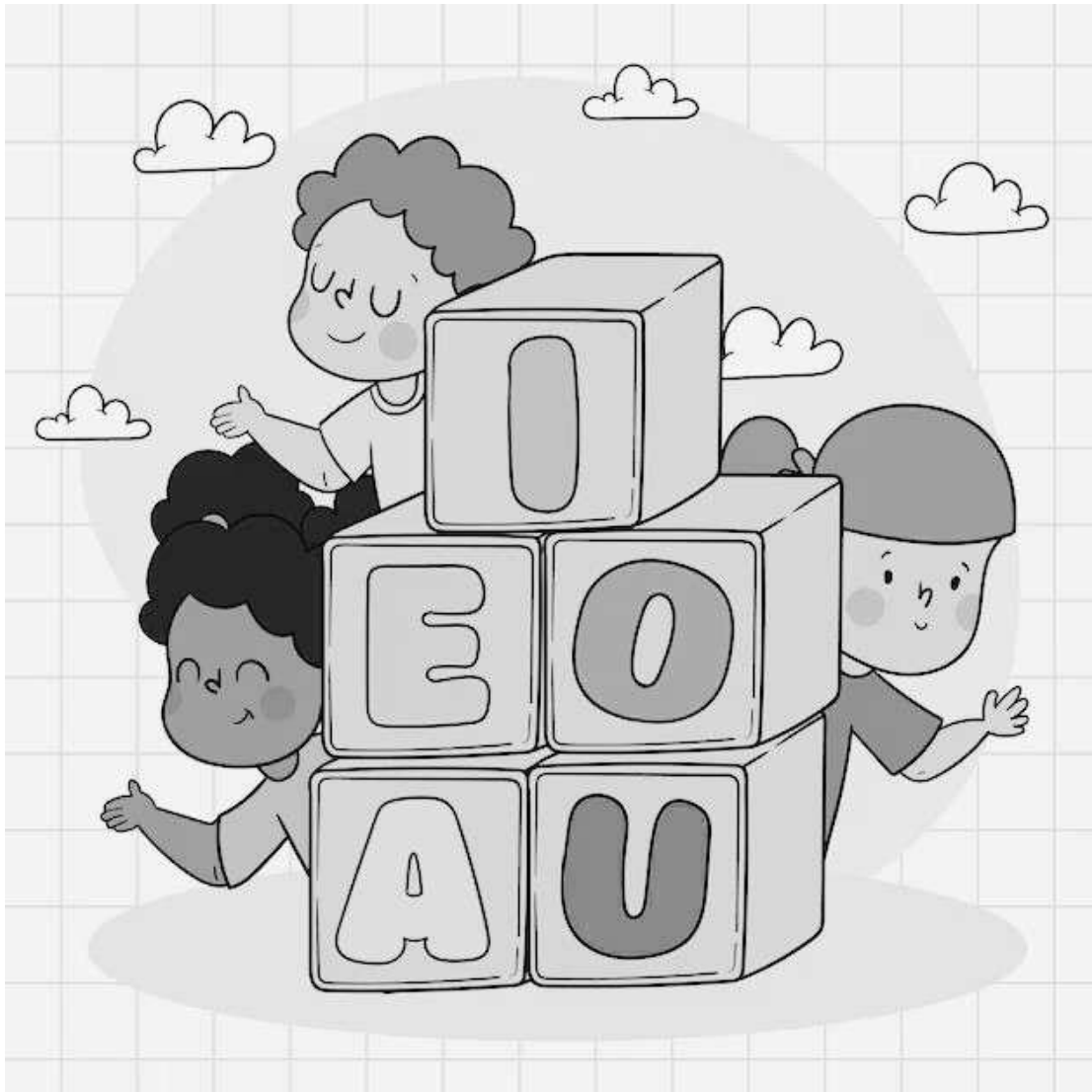


A

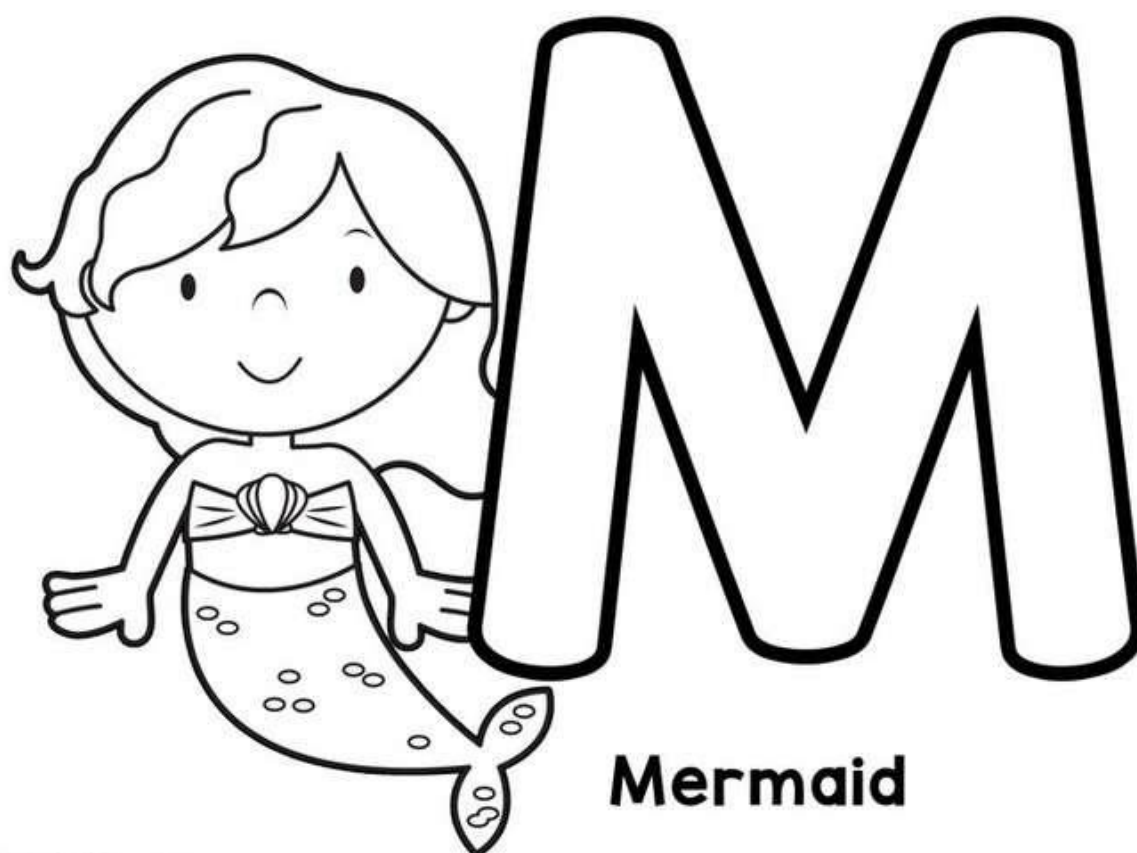
E

U

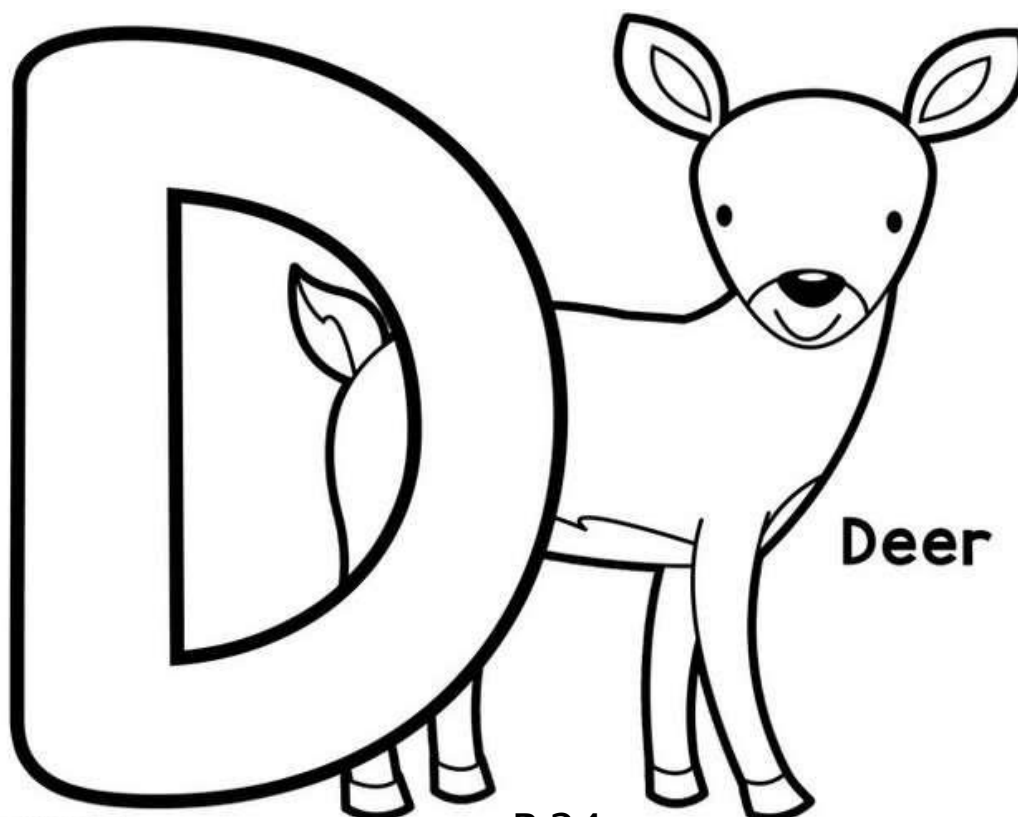
UNIT 2:



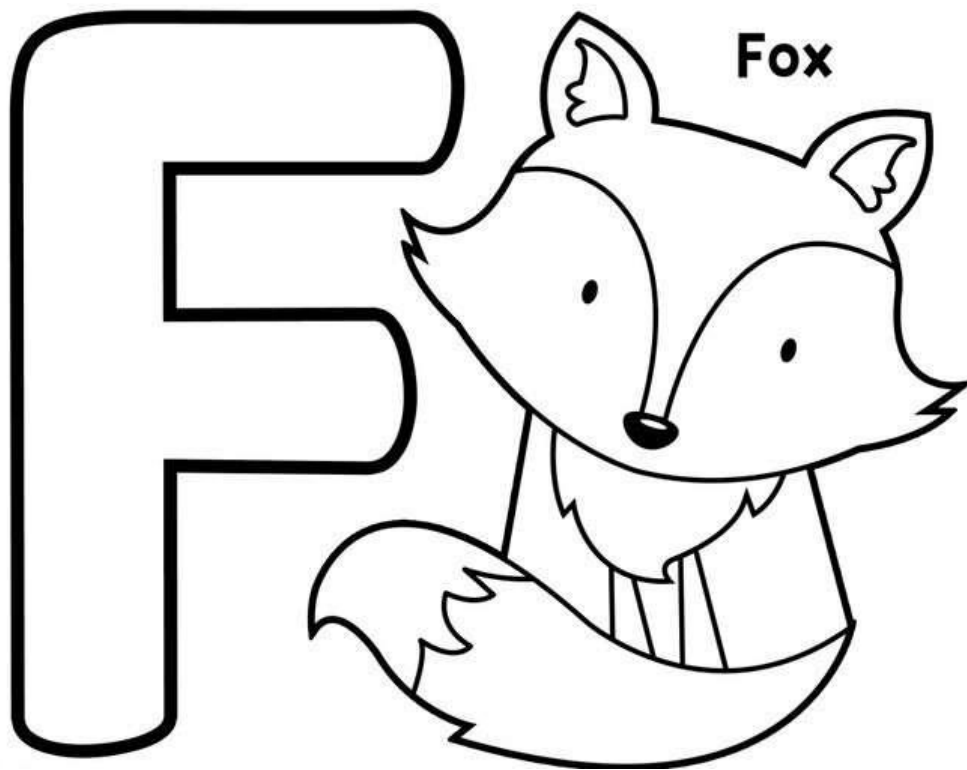
Direction: Color the letter M.



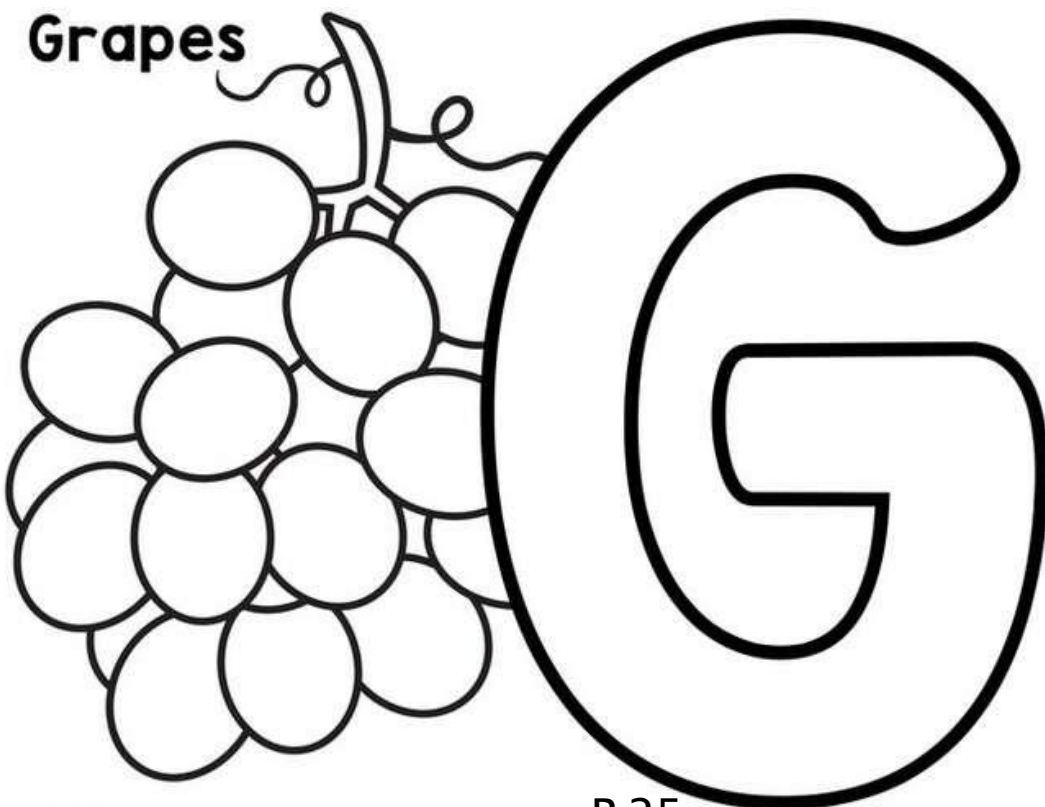
Direction: Color the letter D.



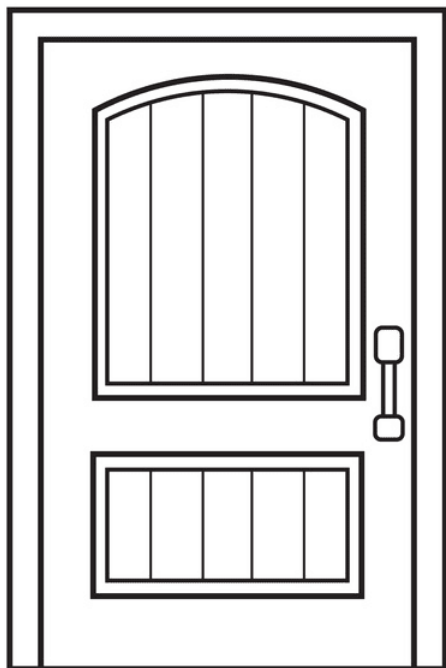
Direction: Color the letter F.



Direction: Color the letter G.



Direction: Listen to the teacher and circle the beginning sound.

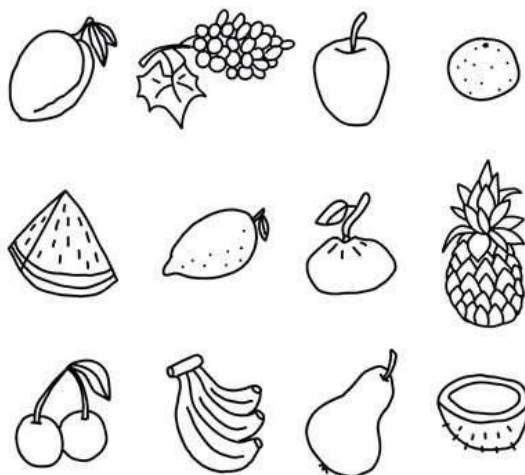


M

G

D

Direction: Listen to the teacher and circle the beginning sound.

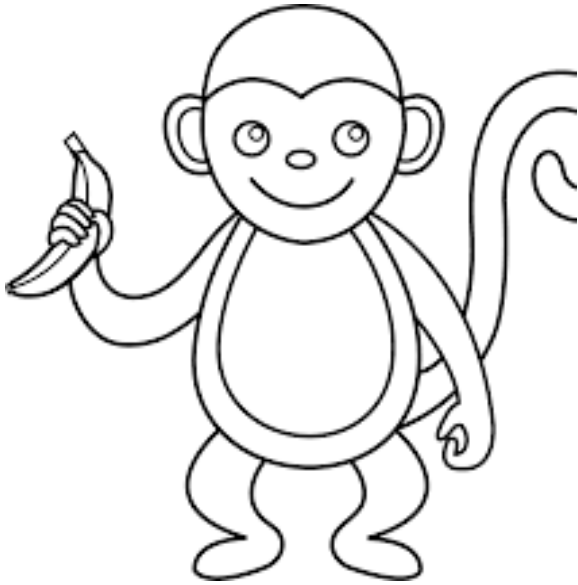


G

F

M

Direction: Listen to the teacher and circle the beginning sound.

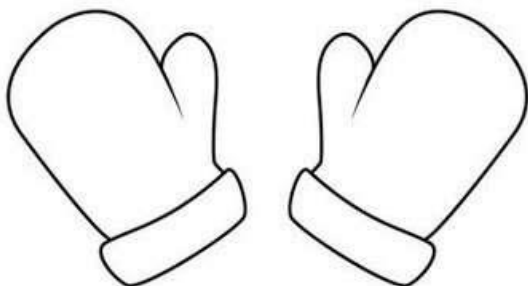


M

F

D

Direction: Listen to the teacher and circle the beginning sound.

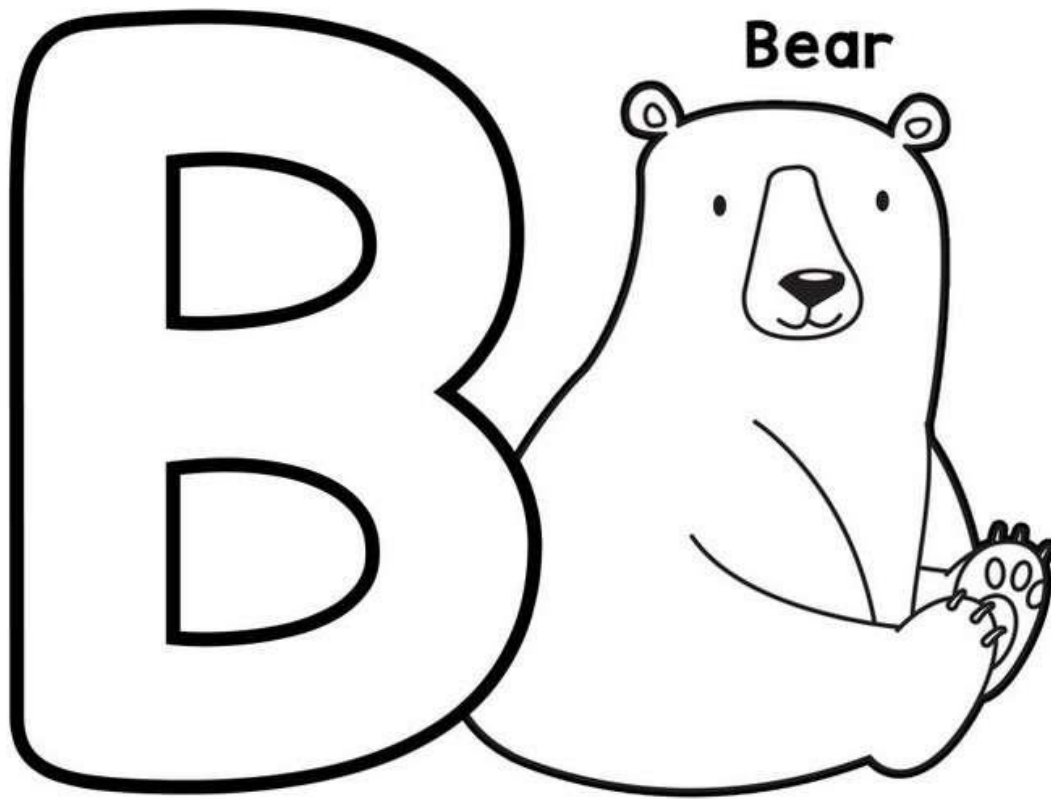


D

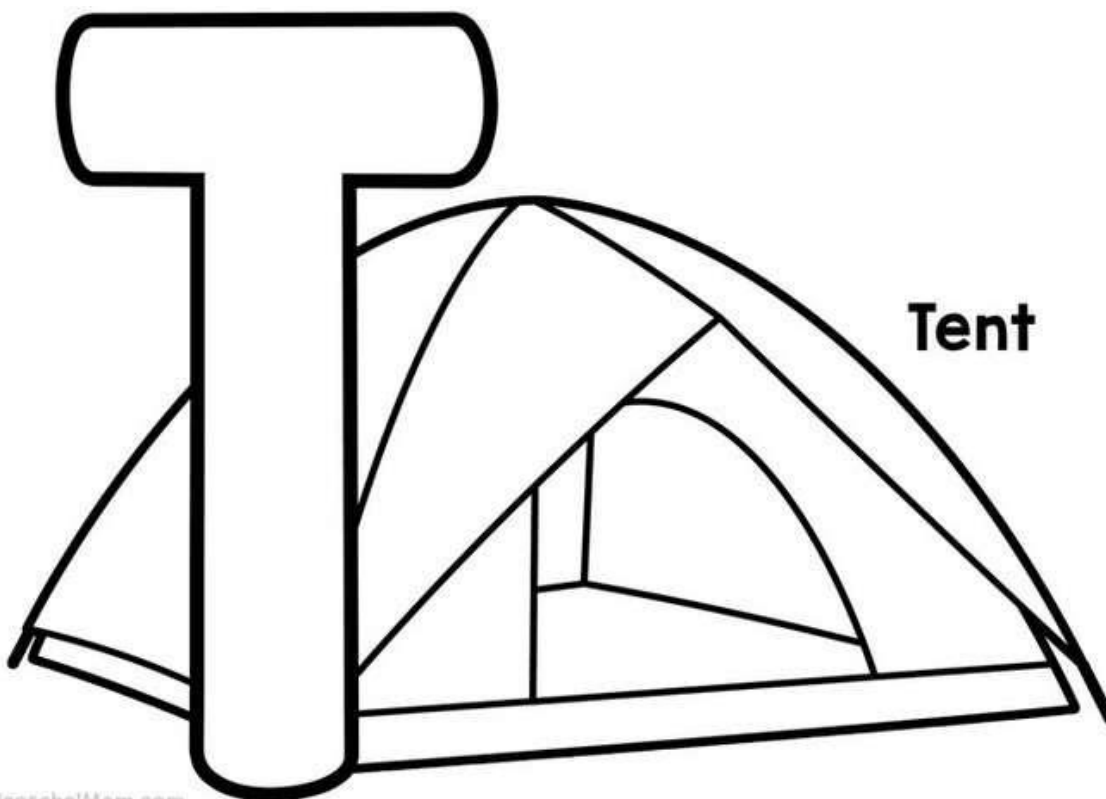
M

G

Direction: Color the letter B.



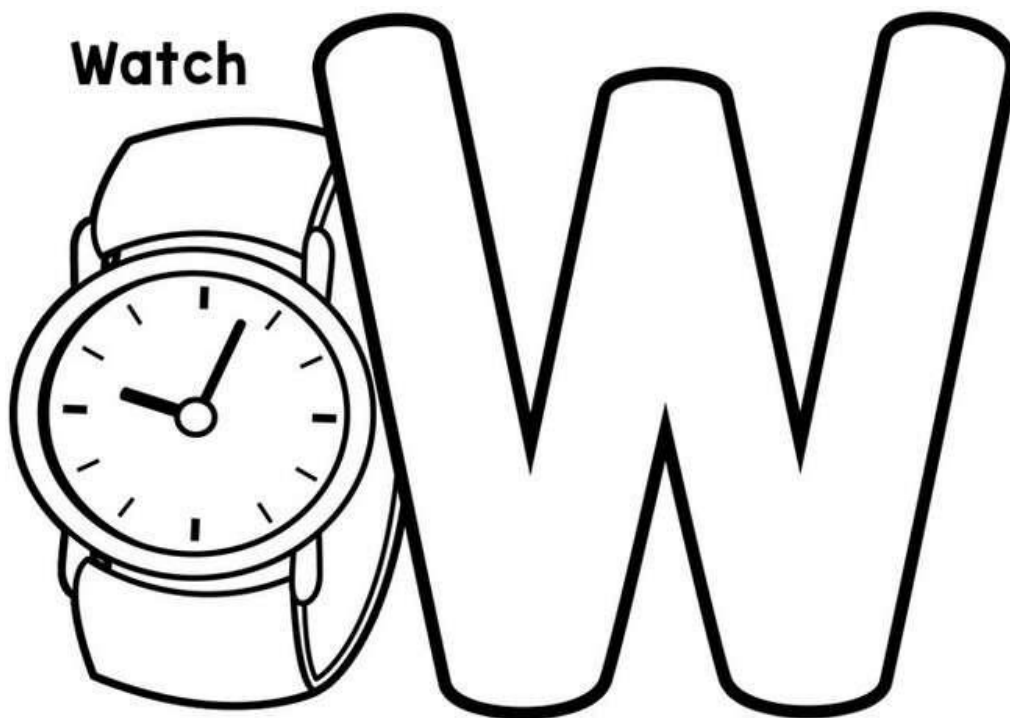
Direction: Color the letter T.



Direction: Color the letter S.

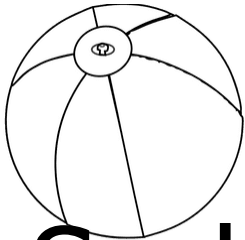


Direction: Color the letter W.



Direction: Match the words that have the same initial sound.

Ball



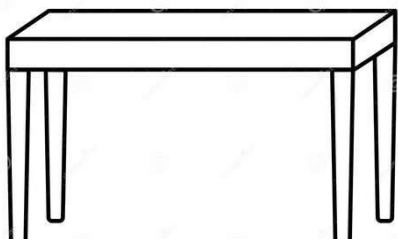
Sock



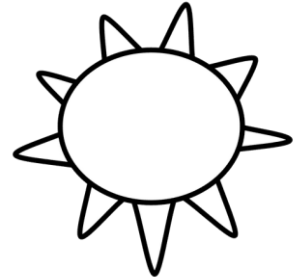
Wig



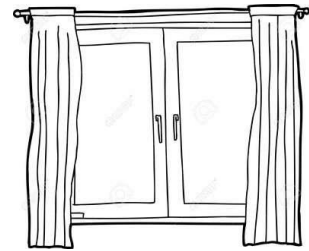
Table



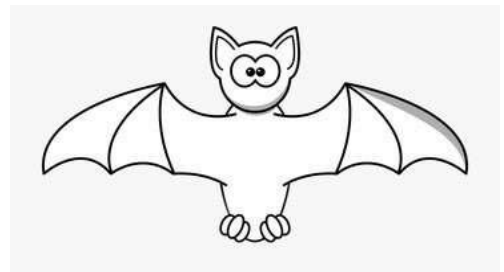
Sun



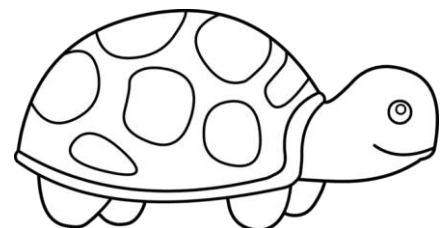
Window



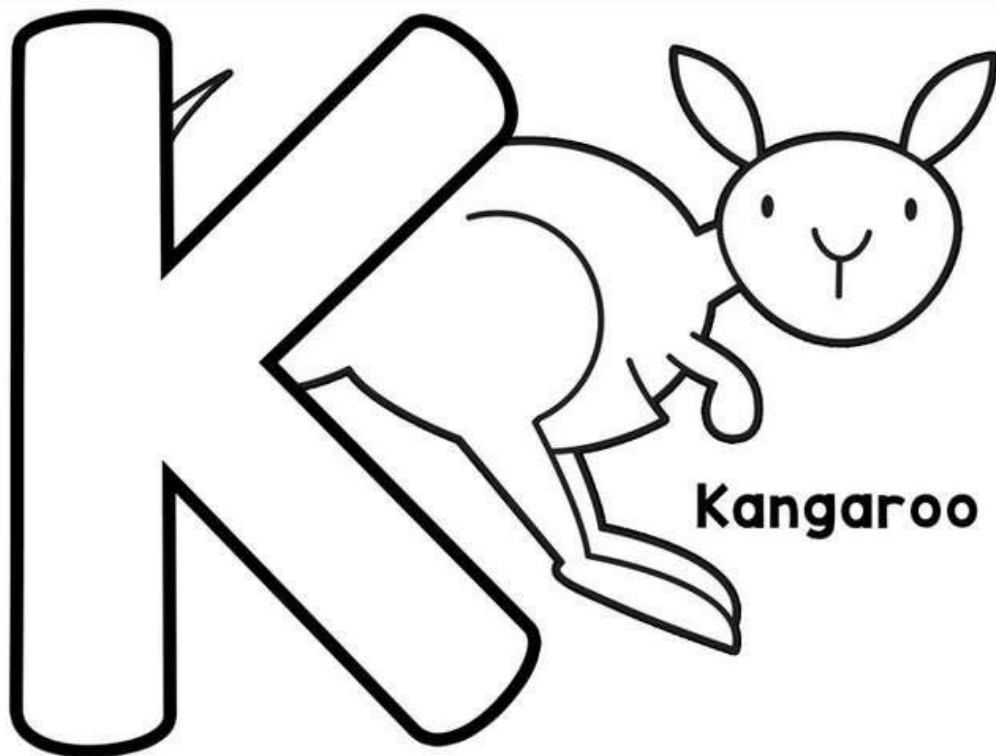
Bat



Turtle

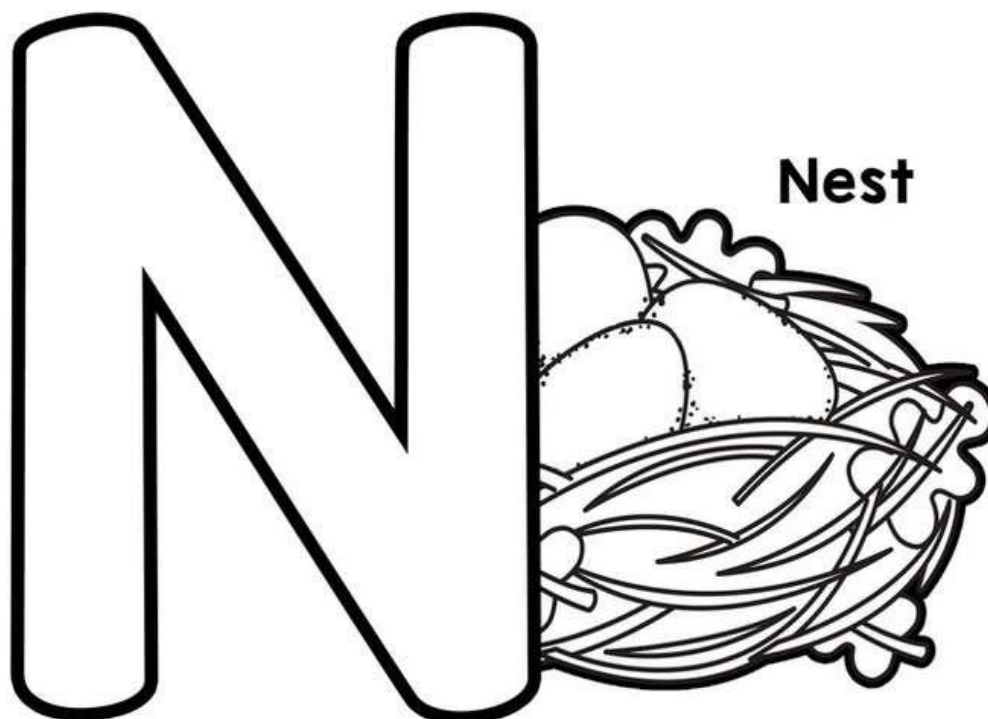


Direction: Color the letter K.



Kangaroo

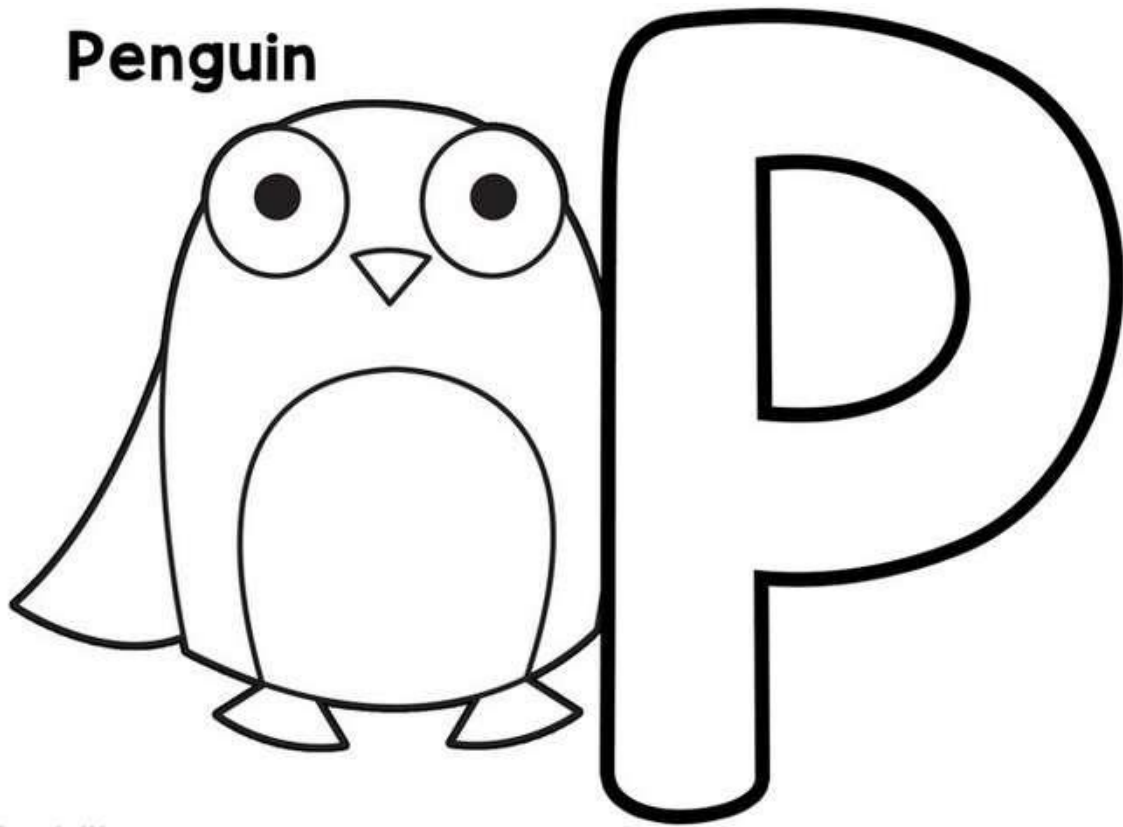
Direction: Color the letter N.



Nest

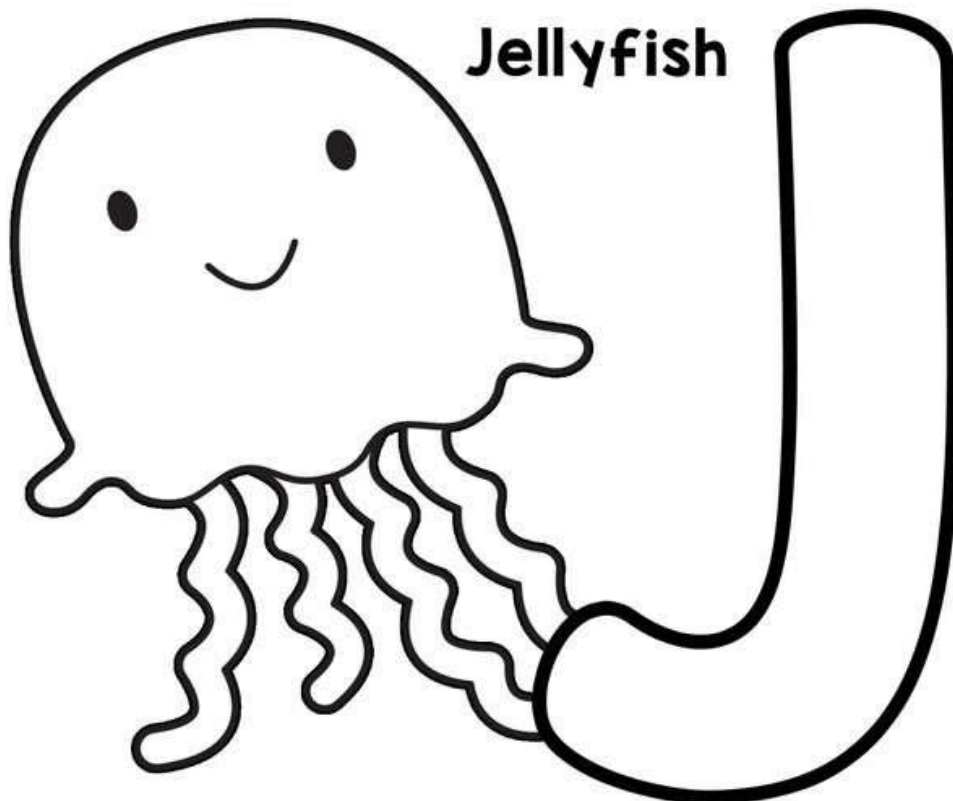
Direction: Color the letter P.

Penguin

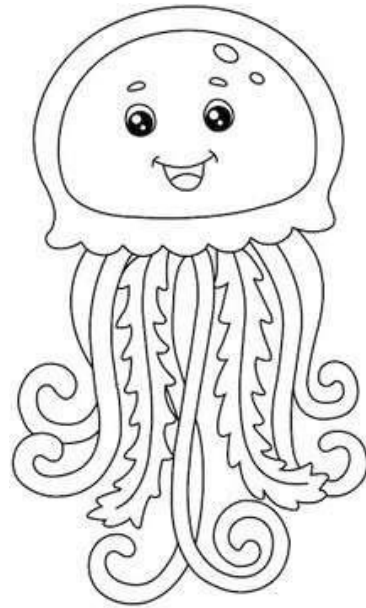


Direction: Color the letter J.

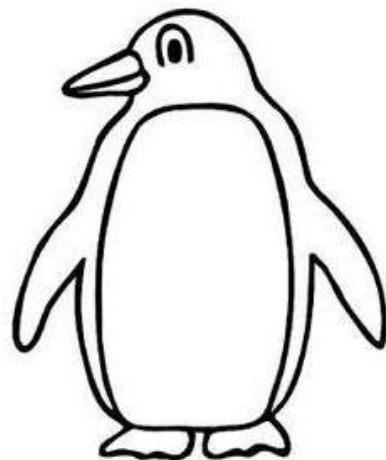
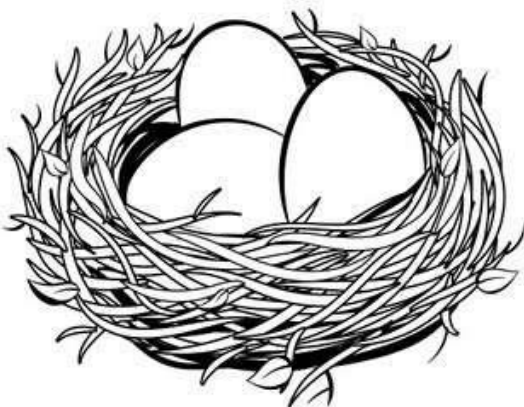
Jellyfish



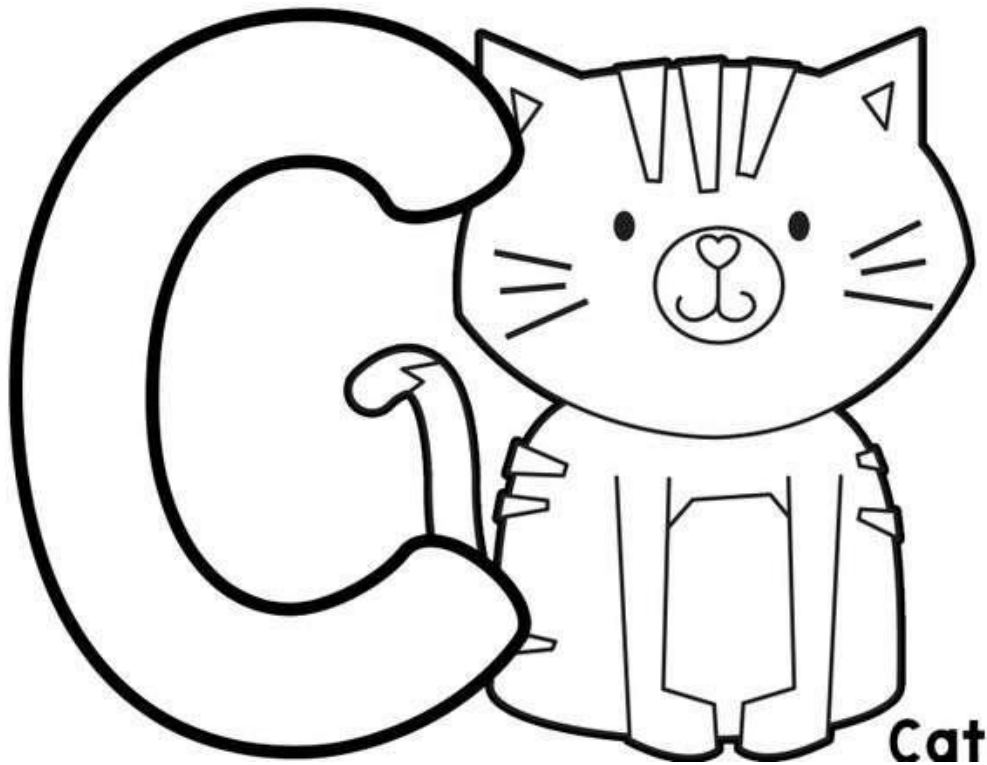
Direction: Color the picture of the word that starts with K.



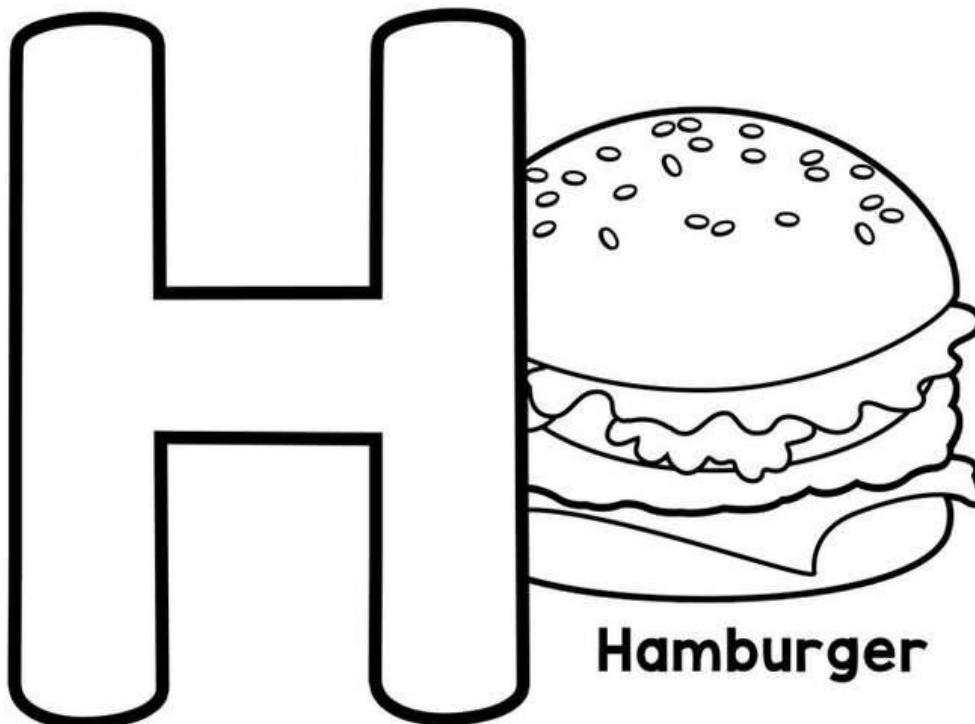
Direction: Color the picture of the word that starts with P.



Direction: Color the letter C.

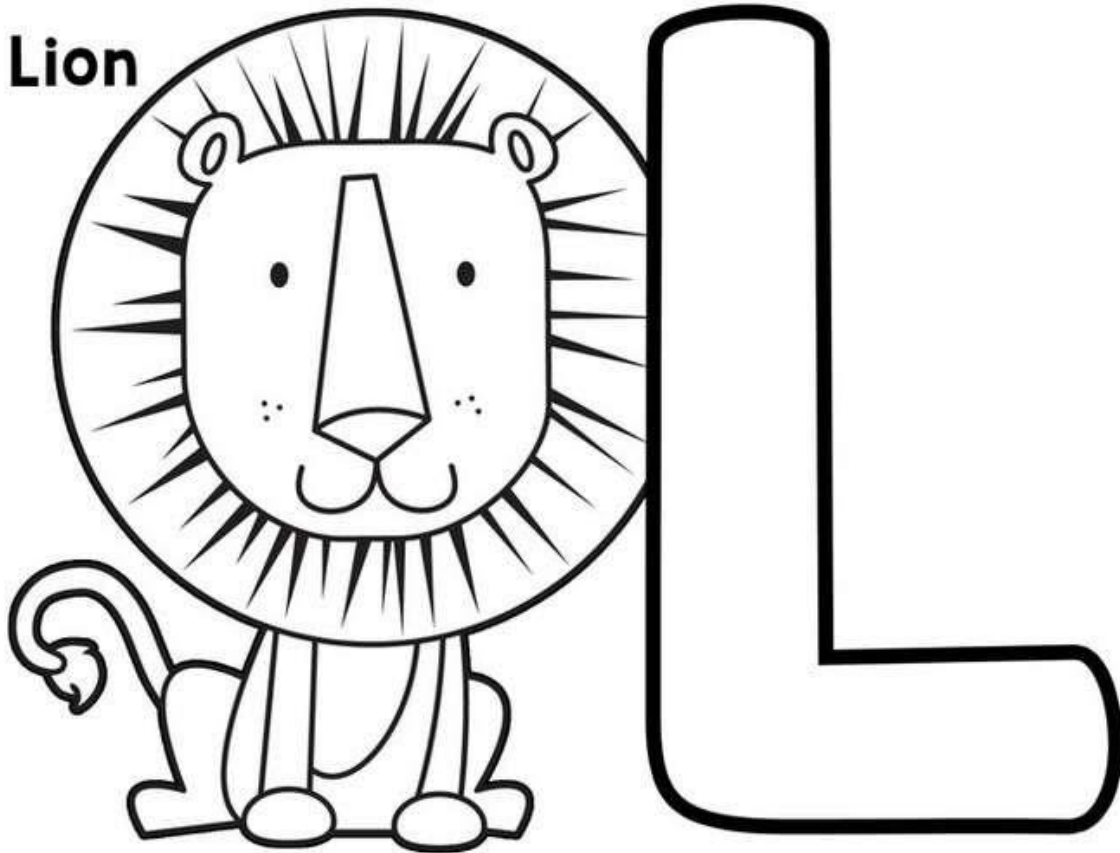


Direction: Color the letter H.



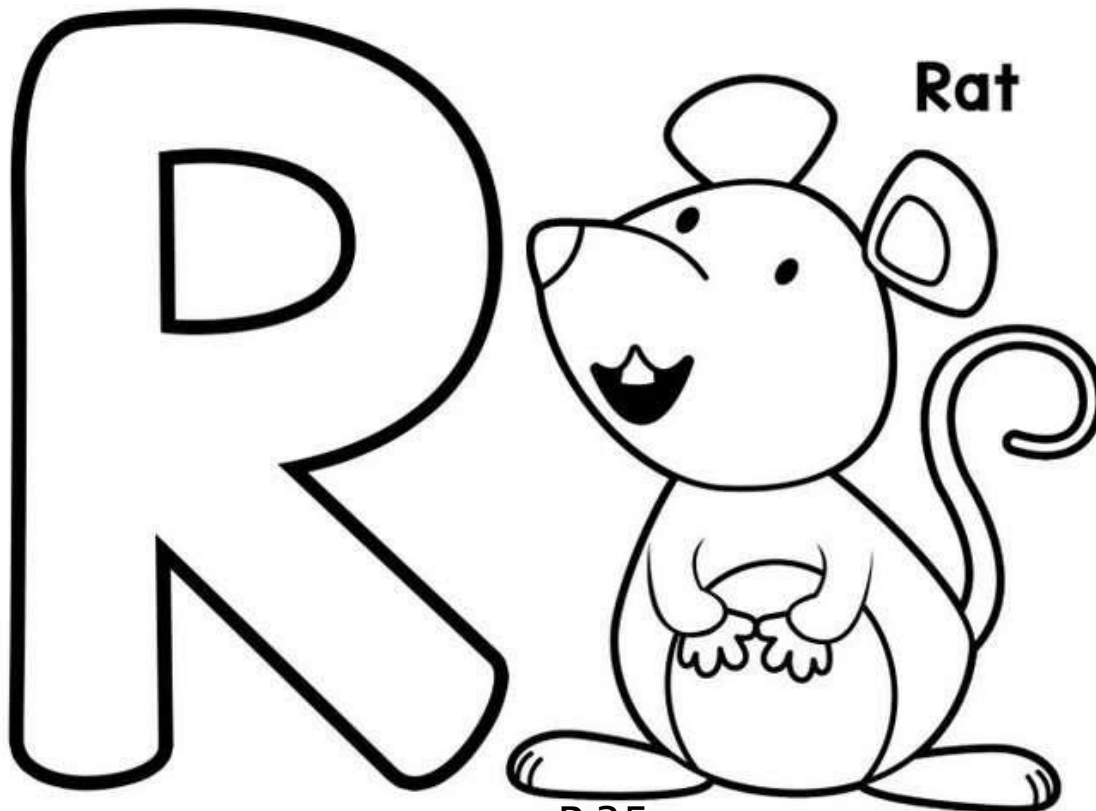
Direction: Color the letter L.

Lion

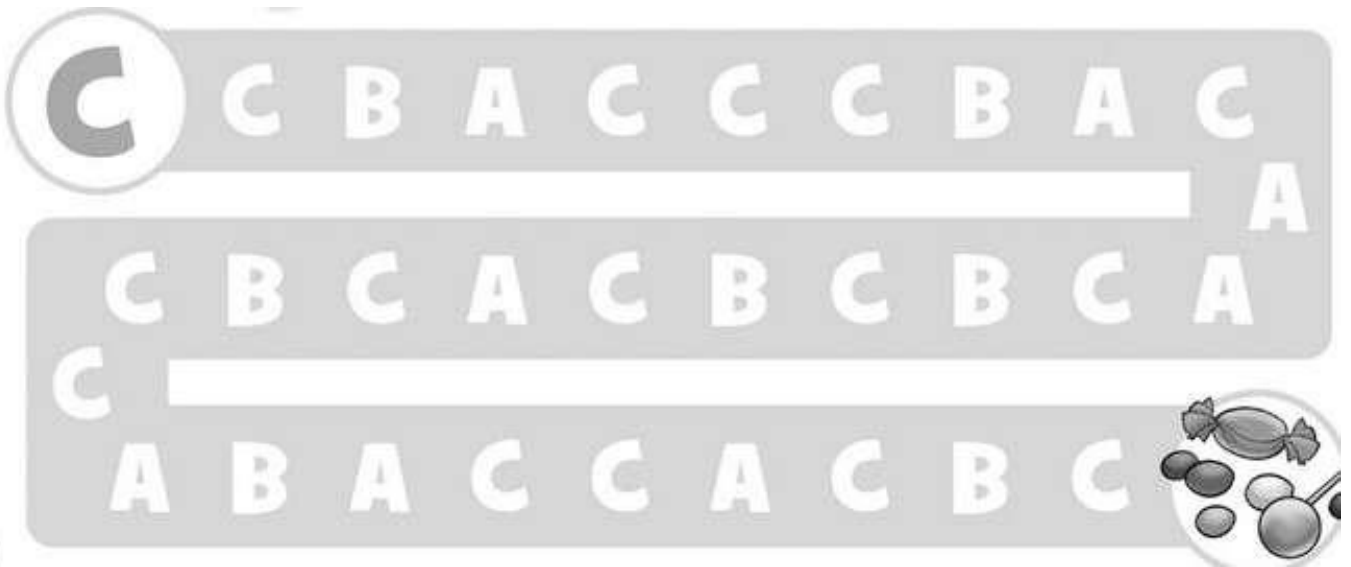


Direction: Color the letter R.

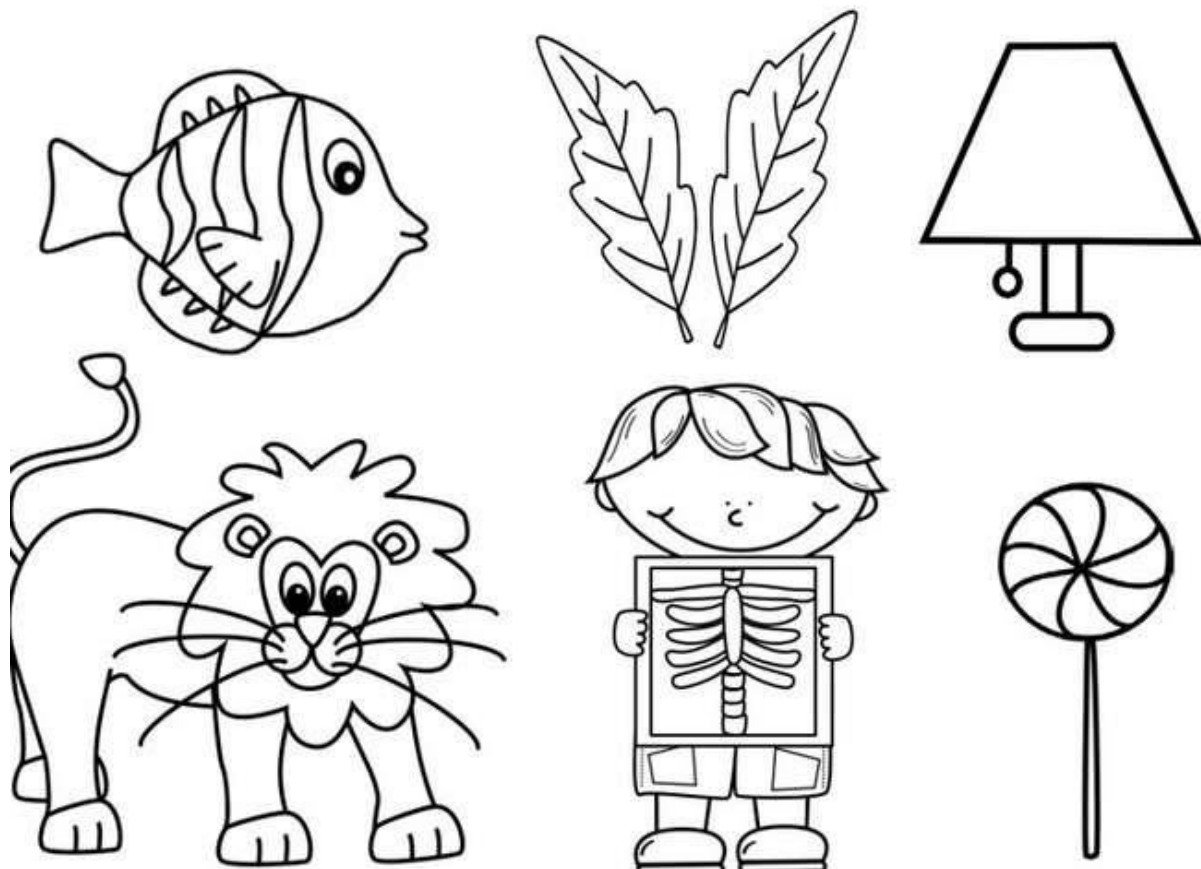
Rat



Direction: Color all the letters C.



Direction: Listen and color the pictures that begin with the L sound.



Direction: Listen and trace the line to the pictures that start with H.



Direction: Color the lowercase letter that matches the uppercase letter on the left.

R

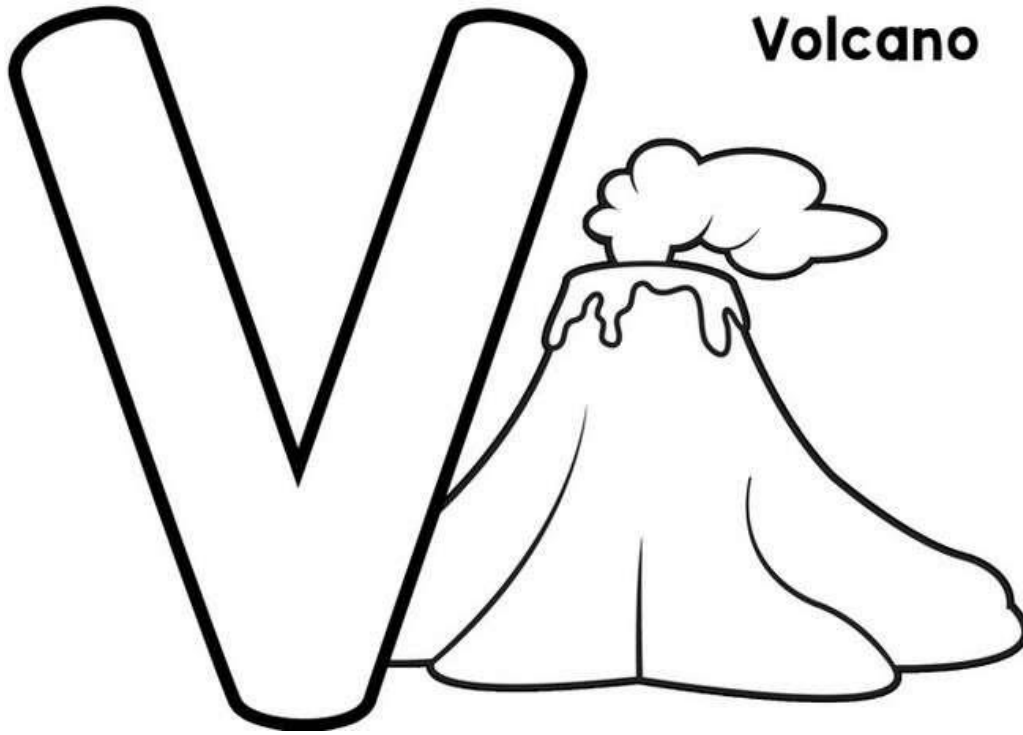
t

r

y

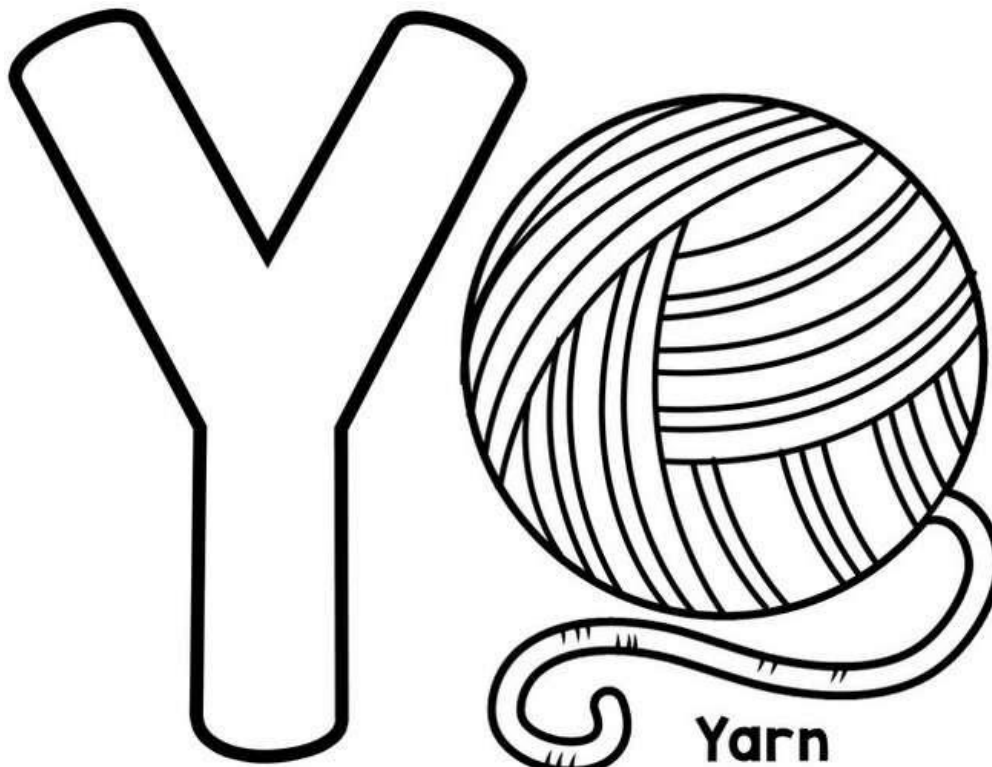
v

Direction: Color the letter V.



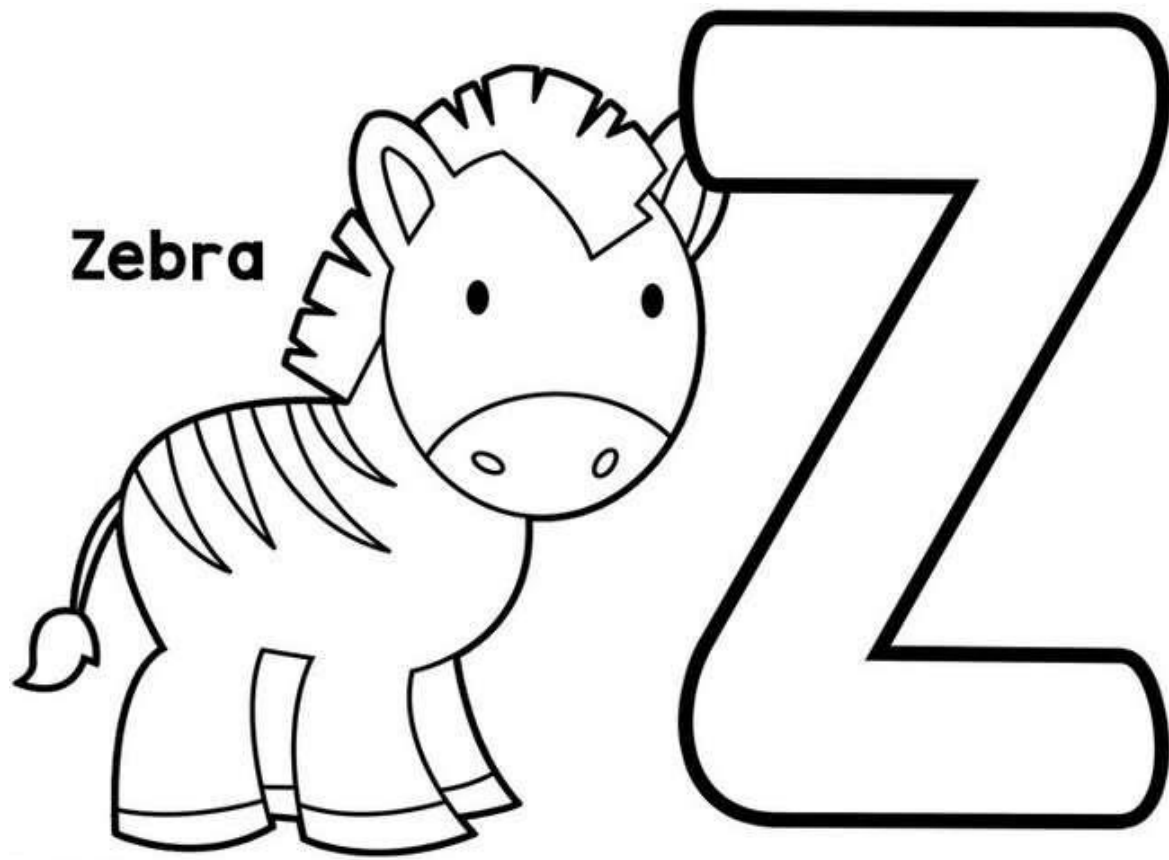
Volcano

Direction: Color the letter Y.



Yarn

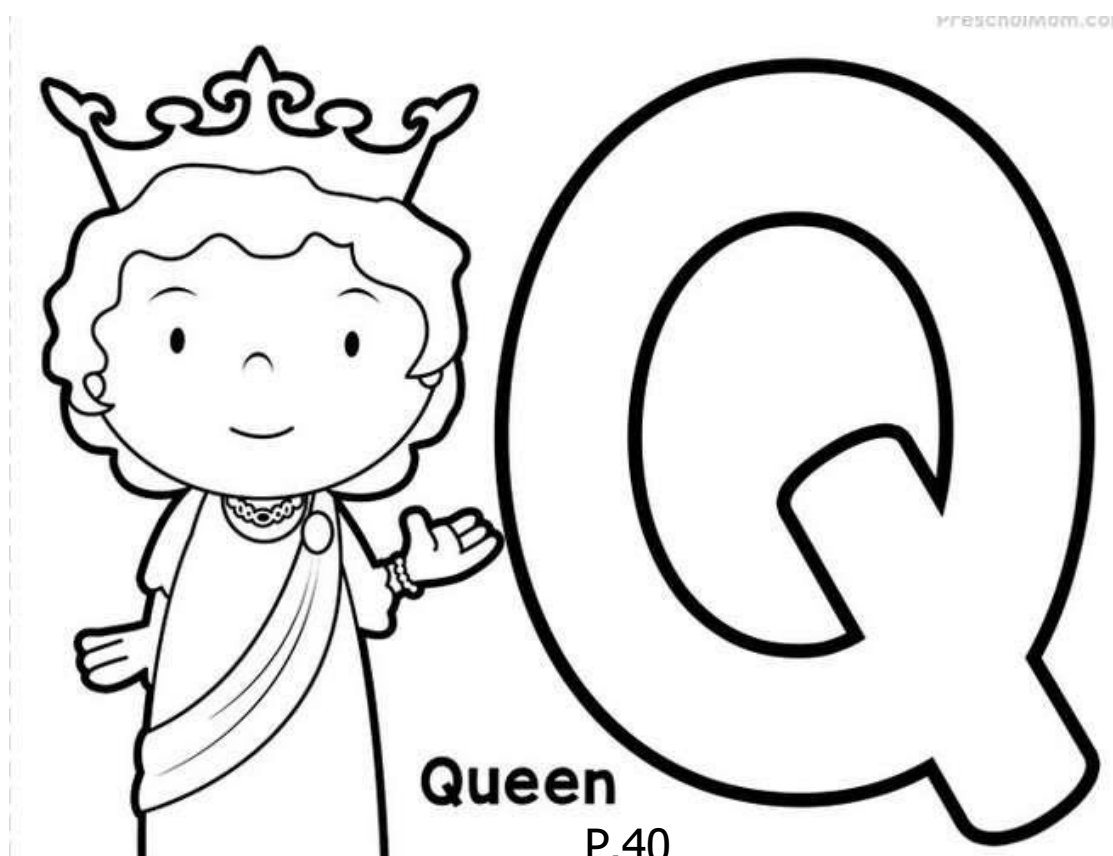
Direction: Color the letter Z



Zebra

DrawnAtMom.com

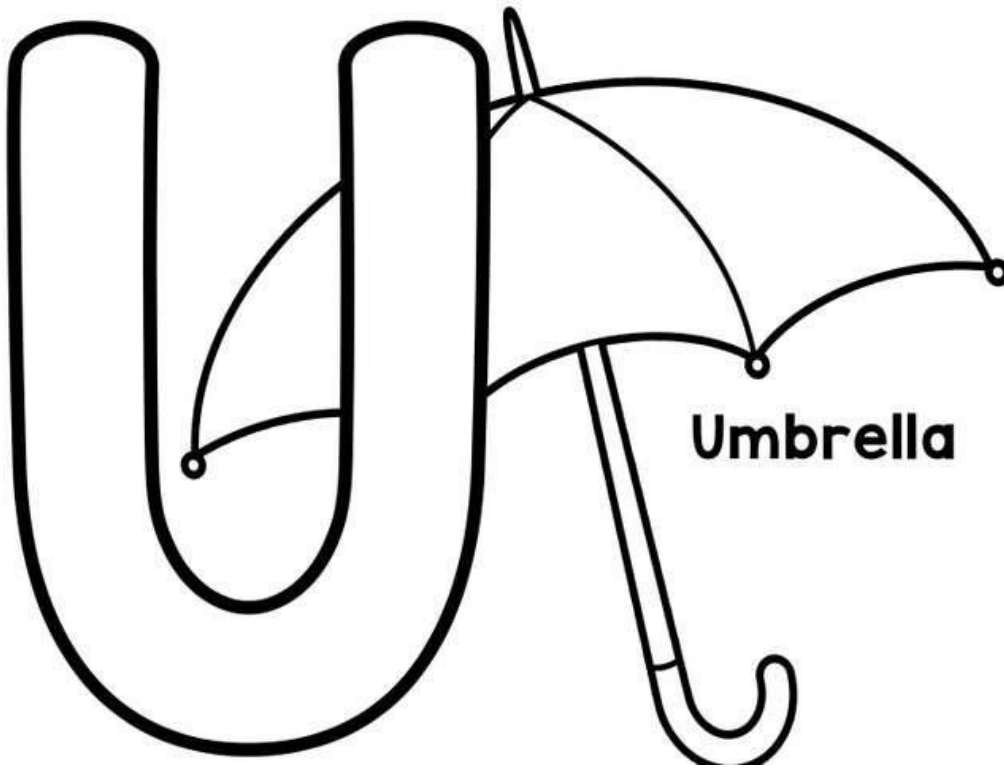
Direction: Color the letter Q



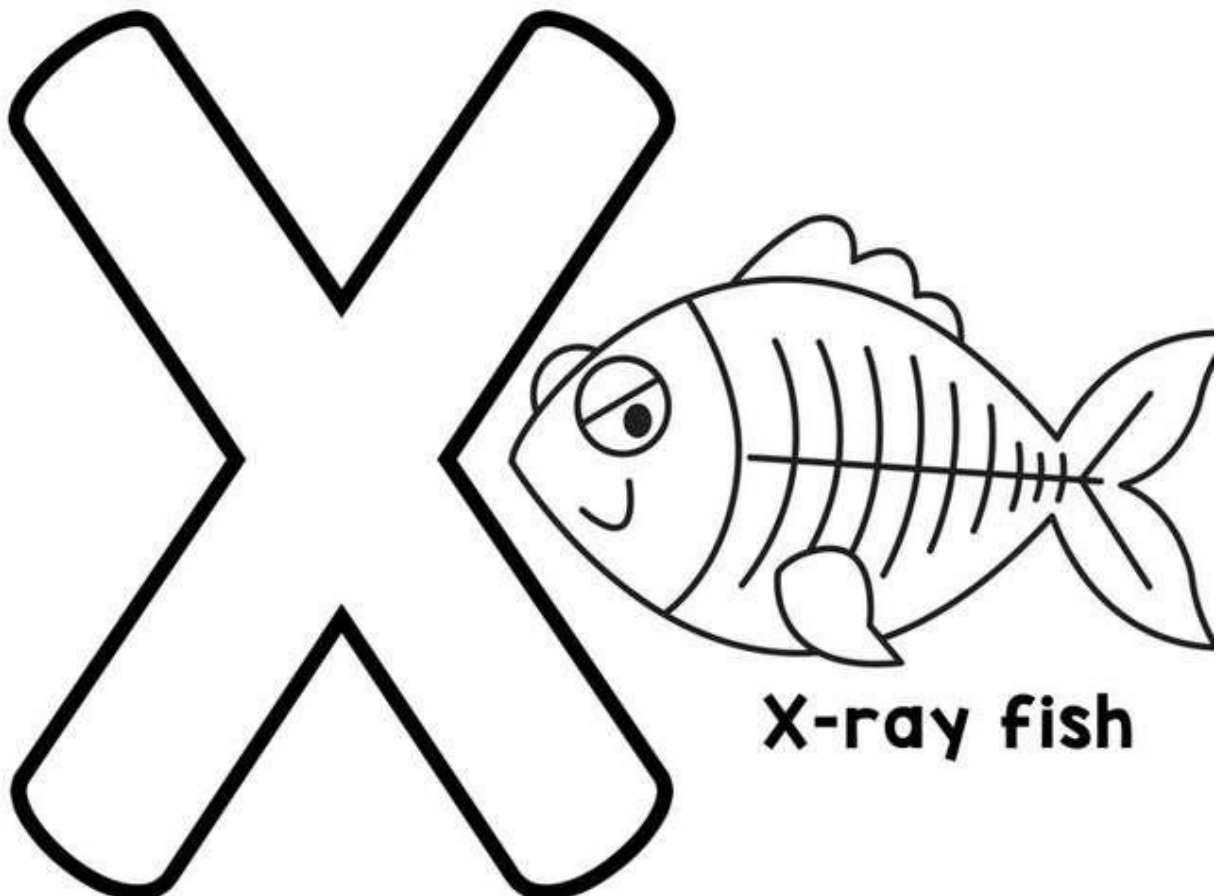
Ypresnoimom.com

Queen

Direction: Color the letter U



Direction: Color the letter X



Direction: Color the lowercase letter that matches the uppercase letter on the left.

(V)

u

c

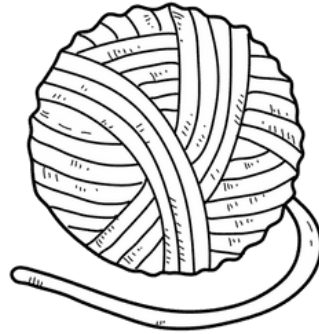
v

n

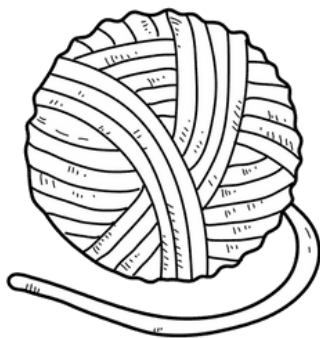
Direction: Color the picture of the word that starts with Q.



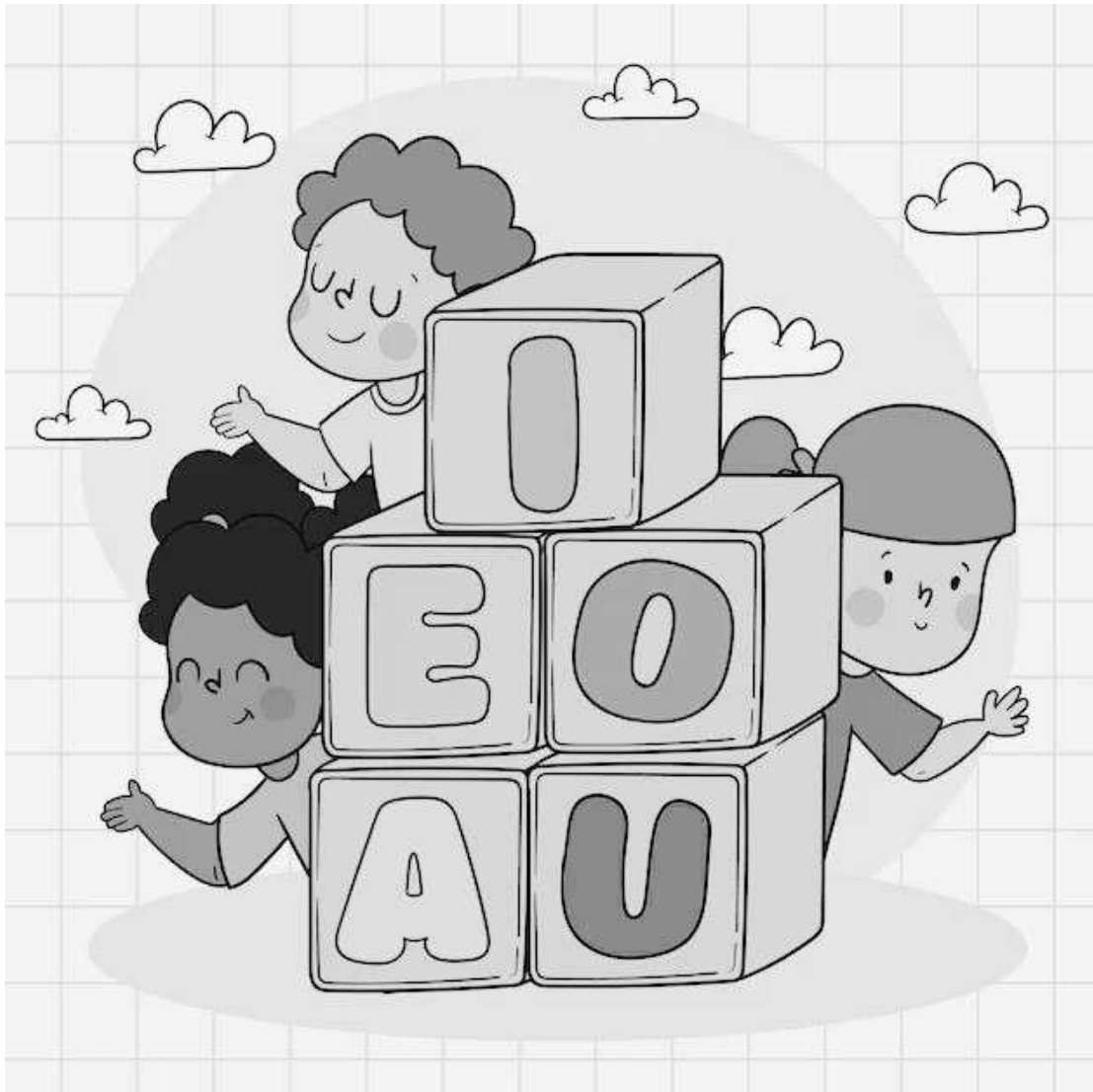
Direction: Color the picture of the word that starts with U



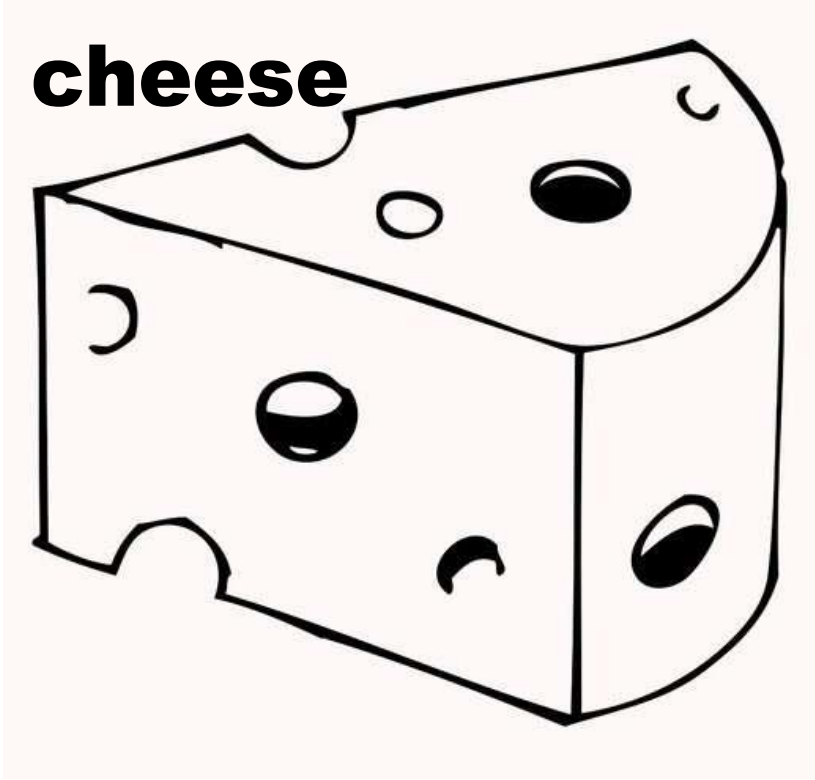
Direction: Color the picture of the word that starts with Y



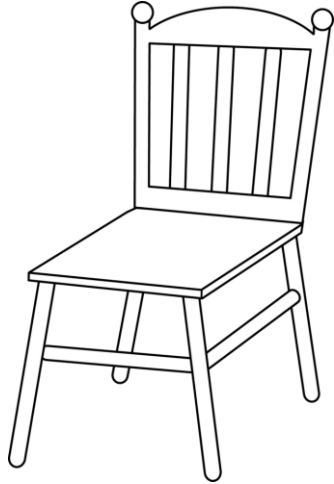
UNIT 3:



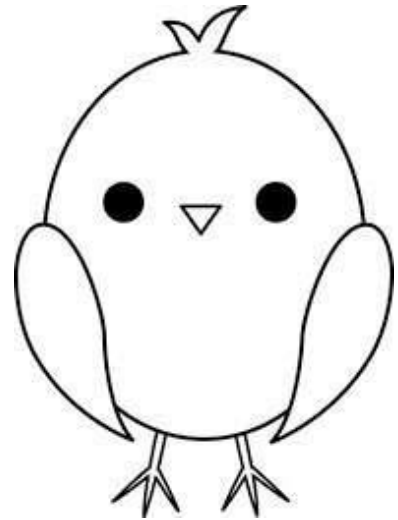
Direction: Color the CH sound.



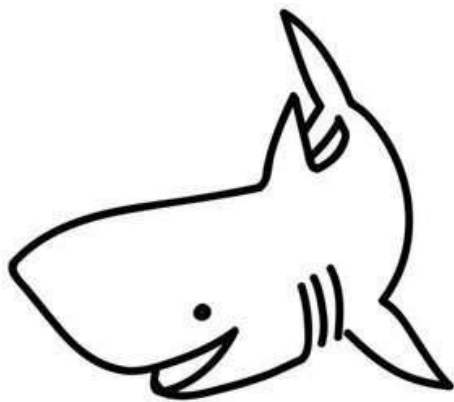
Direction: Draw a line from the circle to the images that begin with the CH sound.



Chair



Chicken



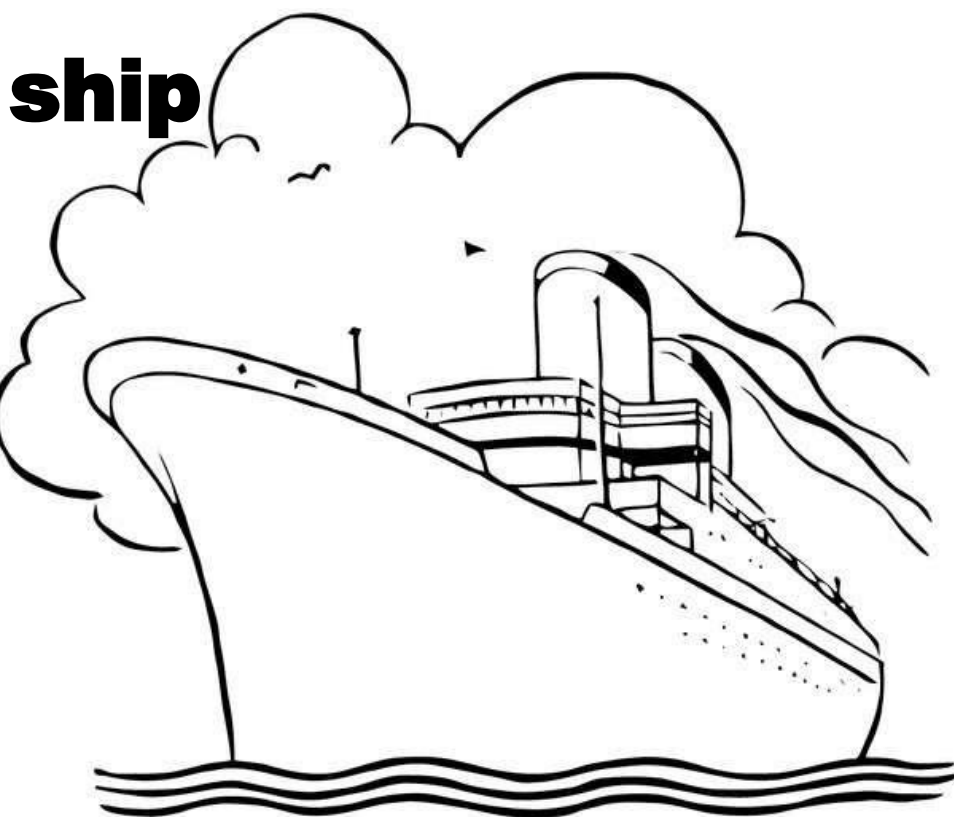
Shark



Shoes

Direction: Color the SH sound.

SH



Direction: Color the words with the SH sound.

Sheep

Chat

Rich

Chip

Cash

Shut

Shark

Much

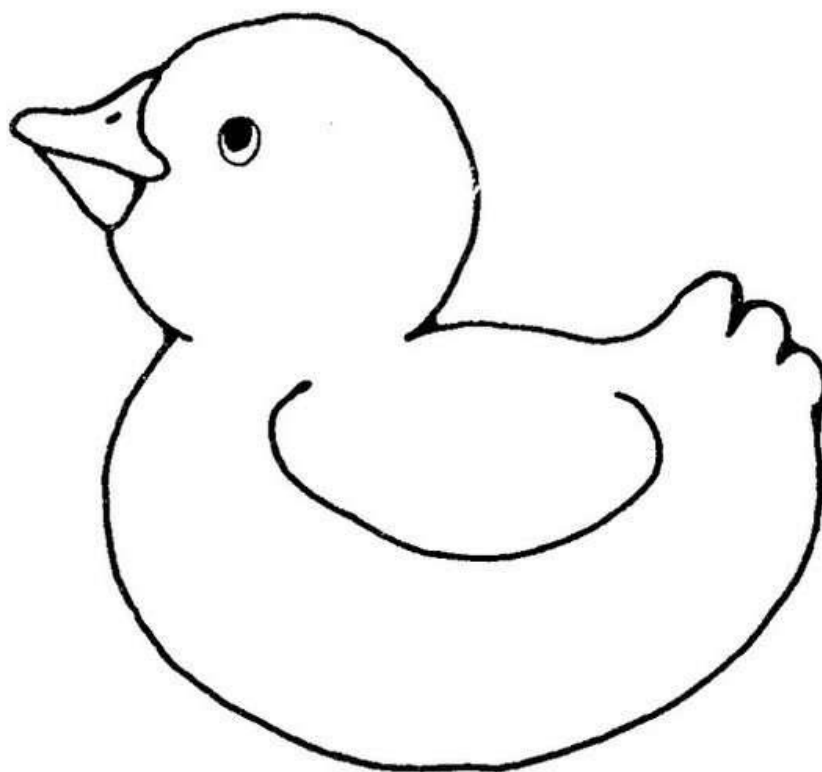
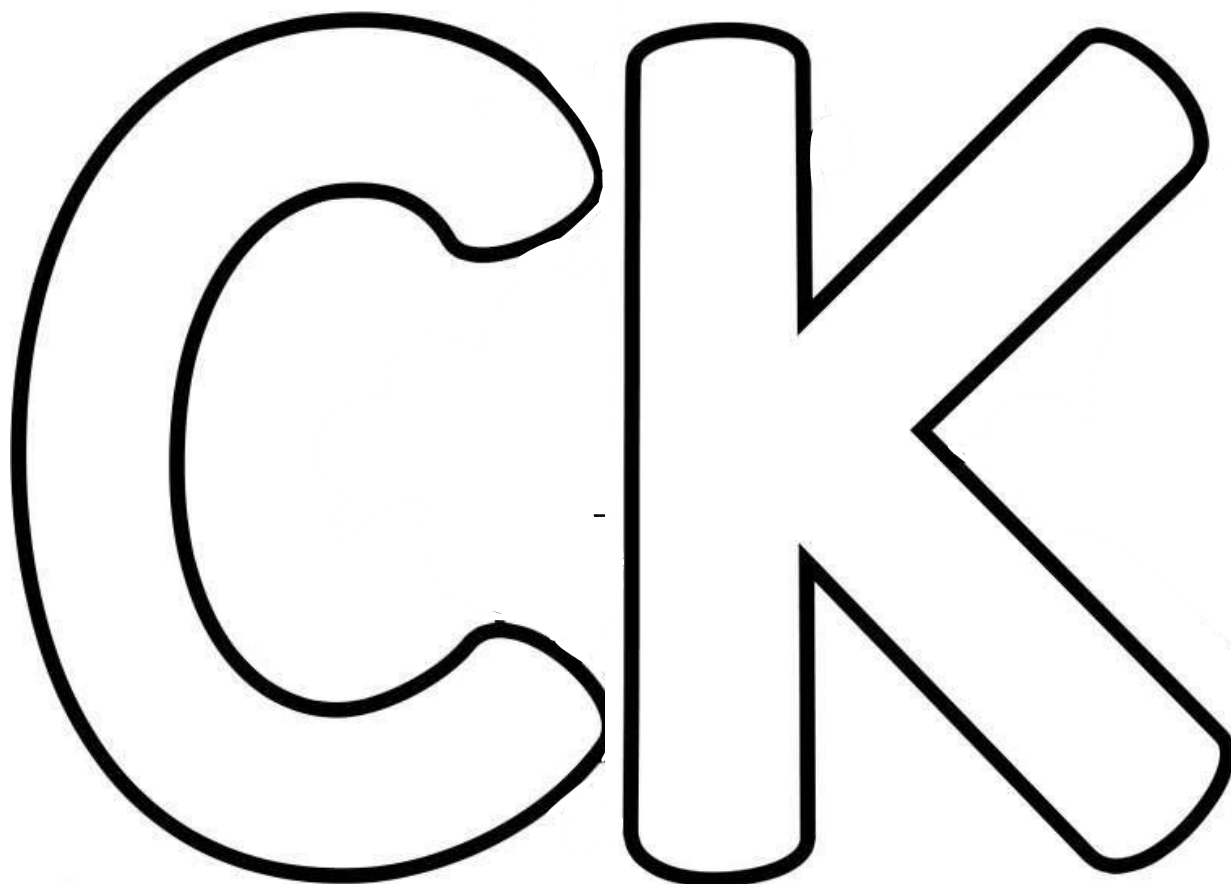
Cheese

Shoes

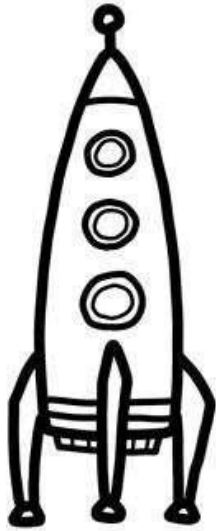
Chicken

Chair

Direction: Color the Ck sound.



Direction: Draw a line from the circle to the images that have the CK sound.



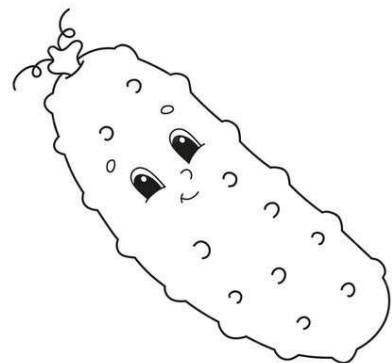
Rocket



Teeth

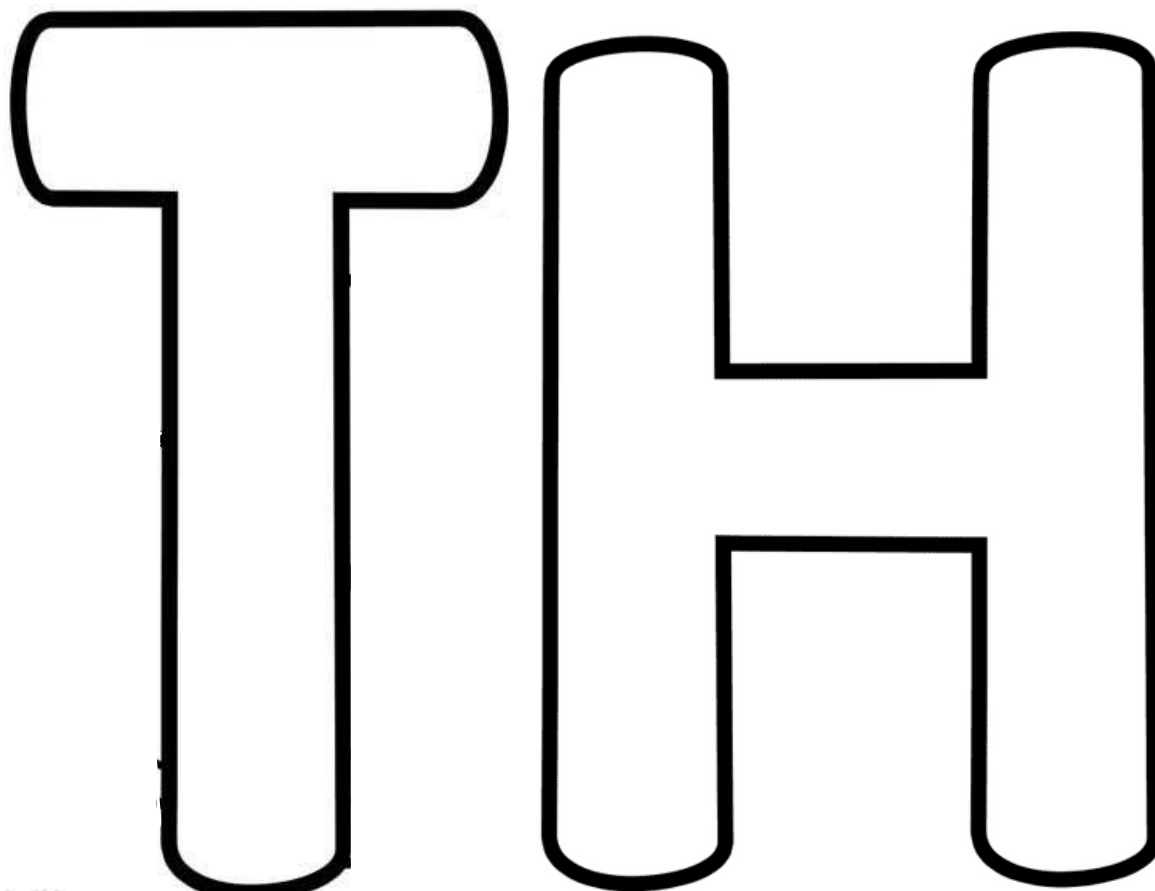


Sock



Pickle

Direction: Color the TH sound.



Direction: Color the words beginning with the TH sound.

Sheep

Chat

Rich

Thunder

Teeth

Shut

Pickle

Think



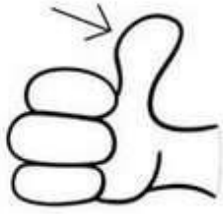


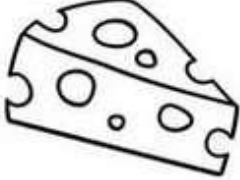
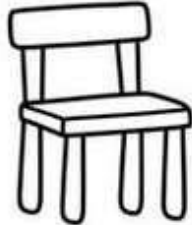



Cheese

Rocket

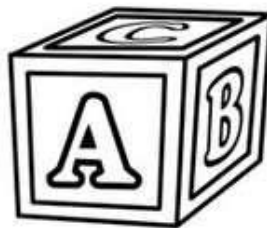
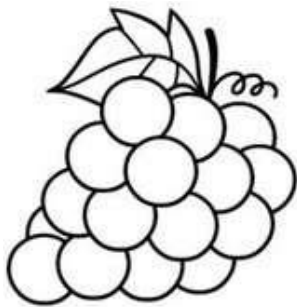
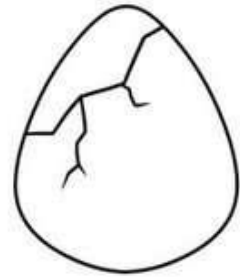
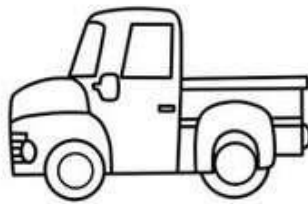
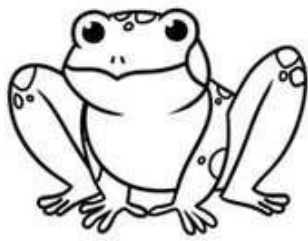
Chicken

Three

Direction: Listen to the teacher and circle the beginning sound of each word.

	<input type="radio"/> ch <input type="radio"/> sh		<input type="radio"/> th <input type="radio"/> ch
	<input type="radio"/> th <input type="radio"/> sh		<input type="radio"/> sh <input type="radio"/> ch
	<input type="radio"/> sh <input type="radio"/> th		<input type="radio"/> ch <input type="radio"/> th
	<input type="radio"/> ch <input type="radio"/> sh		<input type="radio"/> sh <input type="radio"/> th
	<input type="radio"/> sh <input type="radio"/> th		<input type="radio"/> ch <input type="radio"/> sh

Direction: Listen to the teacher and color the words that end with the CK sound.



Note: Made by Ana Larreategui & Domenika Flores, 2024.



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de la República
del Ecuador**



**Plan Nacional
de Ciencia, Tecnología,
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Larreátegui Castro, Ana Paula

C.C: 0925252306



REPOSITORIO NACIONAL EN CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA

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TÍTULO Y SUBTÍTULO:	An Analysis of the Advanced Method Corporation (AMCO) approach to Phonics Instruction in First Grade EFL Education at Santo Domingo De Guzman School		
AUTOR(ES)	Flores Rengifo, Domenika Gabriela, Larreátegui Castro, Ana Paula		
REVISOR(ES)/TUTOR(ES)	Izquierdo Zambrano, Karina Delia		
INSTITUCIÓN:	Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil		
FACULTAD:	Artes y Humanidades		
CARRERA:	Pedagogía de Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros - Inglés		
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RESUMEN/ABSTRACT (150-250 palabras):			
<p>This paper analyzed the Advanced Methods Corporation (AMCO) textbook for EFL and phonics instruction among first-grade students. AMCO is an English program for bilingual education that emphasizes communicative teaching principles and the natural acquisition of the English language. The main objective of this research was to examine the AMCO approach to phonics and early literacy that first-grade students at Santo Domingo De Guzmán School need for second grade. To obtain the results, this research adopted a mixed methods design focused on the following tools: structured interviews with elementary English teachers, adapted phonemic awareness tests, and unstructured classroom observations. Our analysis has shown that the AMCO textbook does not have the necessary phonics material that first-graders need to cover before advancing to second grade. Through this paper, we conclude that there is a need for complementary materials to strengthen phonics instruction at first-grade levels.</p>			
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