

Now, you may ask - What must be DONE? Really - really, think about it!

The Educational Testing Service reports in its analysis of its 1993 National Adult Literacy Survey that:

1. Forty-two million Americans over the age of sixteen can't read. Some of this group can write their names on Social Security cards and fill in height, weight, and birth spaces on application forms.
2. Fifty million can recognize printed words on a fourth- and fifth-grade level. They cannot write simple messages or letters.
3. Fifty-five to sixty million are limited to sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade reading. A majority of this group could not figure out the price per ounce of peanut butter in a 20-ounce jar costing \$1.99 when told they could round the answer off to a whole number.
4. Thirty million have ninth- and tenth-grade reading proficiency. This group (and all preceding) cannot understand a simplified written explanation of the procedures used by attorneys and judges in selecting juries.
5. About 3.5 percent of the 26,000-member sample demonstrated literacy skills adequate to do traditional college study, a level 30 percent of all U.S. high school students reached in 1940, and which 30 percent of secondary students in other developed countries can reach today. This last fact alone should warn you how misleading comparisons drawn from international student competitions really are, since the samples each country sends are small elite ones, unrepresentative of the entire student population. But behind the bogus superiority a real one is concealed.
6. Ninety-six and a half percent of the American population is mediocre to illiterate where deciphering print is concerned. This is no commentary on their intelligence, but without ability to take in primary information from print and to interpret it they are at the mercy of commentators who tell them what things mean. A working definition of immaturity might include an excessive need for other people to interpret information for us.

Compare that with:

*As recently as 1920, less than a third of American children were subjected to mis-education in government schools for more than a few years. Unfortunately, this didn't last. Compulsory attendance requirements and tax extractions causing unsuspecting parents to favor the government schools they were being made to pay for whether they used them or not steadily increased. According to U.S. Army inductee testing data, by 1952, only 81% of the adult American population could read at a nominal fourth-grade level; by 1973, the percentage had dropped to 73%.

(Army statistics and summary of the NALS analysis as presented by John Taylor Gatto in, The Underground History of American Education, <http://www.johntaylorgatto.com/underground/>)