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Chapter 16: Teaching Sight-Singing Skills  
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Discussion Question Number 5

Who was Lowell Mason, and what was his position on teaching kids to sight-read?

Lowell Mason founded the Boston Academy of Music in 1832. He was a famous instructor in the singing school movement before establishing a private academy. He was considered a great musician, accomplished composer, conductor, and pedagogue. He had the belief that all children could learn to sing with proper instruction. This attitude gave him the opportunity to become Boston's first public school music teacher. He published books such as his *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music, for Instruction in the Elements of Vocal Music, on the System of Pestalozzi* in 1834. This book set the standard in music pedagogy for a hundred years. He believed in the "rote to note" process. He thought children should first sing easy songs learned by rote before adding visual notation. He believed strongly in sight-singing. Mason believed in the idea of "rote before note" much like Pestalozzi's principle of sound before sight. He thought greatly of the fact that all children can and should learn to sing, and especially sight-read. He taught many children to sing and trained many music educators in his way of teaching. These pupils went on to have successful music programs of their own. Mason's efforts to promote sight-singing lasted for a hundred years, and it became a central objective of the music curriculum as well as developing the singing voice. He continues to be an inspiration to music educators everywhere and many educators still use his ideas and ways of teaching in their own classrooms.