

Comparing Branson's *First Book in Composition, Applying the Principles of Grammar to  
the Art of Composing* and Lander's *The Verbal Primer*

by

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Branson's *First Book in Composition, Applying the Principles of Grammar to the Art of Composing*, published in 1863, and Lander's *The Verbal Primer*, published in 1865, are designed to teach language and reading skills. *Branson's* is designed for older students and includes lessons on parts of speech, punctuation, and composition. *Lander's* is designed for "young children," and provides reading practice for beginning students. The focus of this guided study is based on excerpts from the books related to slavery and cotton. The excerpts can be found on this site, as well as links to digital copies of the books and Word document transcriptions of the entire books for easy data mining.

### **Audience Considerations**

*Branson's* is designed for older students and *Lander's* is designed for "young children."

Guiding Questions: How is inequality demonstrated in each text? How do these demonstrations of inequality differ among each book? How do Lander and Branson cater to their targeted audiences? Are there modern texts that seem to teach inequality – considering modern schoolbooks, TV shows, mass media, social media, etc.? If so, how do those texts cater to their targeted audiences?

### **Historical Considerations and Comparisons**

*Branson's* was written in 1863 and *Lander's* in 1865. The Civil War began in 1861 and ended in 1865.

Guiding Questions: How might the year *Lander's* was published affect the tone of the book, which came near the close of the war? How is inequality demonstrated in each of these texts? Are there any differences between the texts that may indicate the authors' attitudes toward the war? Inequality? The cotton business?

Consider the conversations surrounding slaves and African Americans in *Branson's* and slavery and the cotton business in *Lander's*. Compare the authors' attitudes toward the Civil War.

Guiding Question: How might the publish dates have influenced these differences between these books?

### **Tying these Texts to the 21st Century**

In Aziz Ansari's Netflix original *Master of None*, Ansari's character, an actor named Dev, is denied several roles because he refuses to do an Indian accent. In one scene of the episode "Indians on TV," Dev's friend Ravi accuses him of being an "Uncle Taj" when he refuses to leak a racist email that was accidentally sent to him by a casting committee.

Guiding Questions: What does Ravi mean when he calls Dev an "Uncle Taj"? How is the term "Uncle Taj" related to the term "Uncle Tom"?

Consider how the term "Uncle Tom" is still in use 150 years after it was introduced to children of the Confederacy. Consider also how the term has taken on adjustments, such as Uncle Taj, to address Indians and Indian Americans.

Guiding Question: What can be said about the evolution of inequality from this modern use of the term "Uncle Tom"?

Consider the rhetorical strategies (pathos, ethos, logos, and kairos) used in *Lander's* and *Master of None*.

Guiding Questions: What rhetorical strategies are at play in each of these texts? How do those rhetorical strategies differ? How do the rhetorical strategies represent their respective historical periods? In what ways are these texts both part of the same conversation?

\*This document is designed to guide the comparison of Branson's *First Book in Composition, Applying the Principles of Grammar to the Art of Composing* and Lander's *The Verbal Primer*. For the general study of these books, and for further considerations for comparison, explore "Confederate Schoolbooks as Rhetorical Study and Other Analytical Studies," available on this website.

## Works Cited

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