



## **ALBUM US EDUCATION OF DEAF STUDENTS SHAPED BY ENGLISH LEARNER** **EXPERT BORN ELSEWHERE**

### **Album Description**

In 1817, American **Thomas Gallaudet** studied at the Royal Institute for the Deaf in Paris, and persuaded his deaf teacher, **Laurent Clerc**, to come from France to help found the **American School for the Deaf** in Hartford, Connecticut. Clerk began learning English on the 55 day ocean voyage to the United States. The story of Clerc's inspiring influence as a language learner and language teacher offers material for lessons on a variety of topics in English Language Arts, History and Social Studies, and Civics -- the greater inclusion of people of all abilities in civic life owes much to the determination of individuals to create opportunities that were missing.

This primary source set places Laurent Clerc's role in developing American Sign Language in context with sources showing an early film of sign language, with links to correspondence with Alexander Graham Bell (an opponent of sign language use). In addition to resources to explore the stigma that has sometimes accompanied use of other languages, there are also teaching notes about historical vocabulary ("deaf and dumb") and exploration of negatively charged words and how to handle them in the classroom and beyond.



LAURENT CLERC

**Teaching Notes:**

This portrait can be paired with the text of the diary it was published with (included in this album), and also with the brief biography,

John Crowley, "Monsieur Laurent Clerc," Disability History Museum,  
<http://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/edu/essay.html?id=39>

**Reference Link:** <https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=644>

Frontispiece engraving of a head and shoulders portrait of Laurent Clerc from the printing of "Diary Of Laurent Clerc's Voyage From France To America In 1816" published by the American School for the Deaf.

## DISABILITY HISTORY MUSEUM LISTING FOR LAURENT CLERC VOYAGE DIARY.PNG



The screenshot shows the Disability History Museum (DHM) website. The header includes the DHM logo and navigation links: about, library (selected), education, exhibits, feature, and blog. Below the header, a breadcrumb trail reads: Collections > Results > Document. A link for 'Next From This Artifact >' is also present. The main content area is titled 'Library Collections: Document: Item Description'. It features an excerpt from the 'Diary Of Laurent Clerc's Voyage From France To America In 1816', which describes M. Gallaudet's suggestion to write a journal. A 'Read Full Text' link is provided. On the left, a sidebar contains a 'Library Overview' section with links to 'Browse Collections', 'Results', 'Item Description' (selected), 'Full Text', 'Search Collections', 'Permissions', and 'FAQ'. Below this is a 'Reference Tools' section with links to 'Browse Topic List', 'Search Keyword List', and 'Sources'. At the bottom, a 'Document Information' table lists the title, creator (Laurent Clerc), date (1816), and format (Ephemera).

**Library Collections: Document: Item Description**

**Excerpt from:**  
**Diary Of Laurent Clerc's Voyage From France To America In 1816**  
 After breakfast, M. Gallaudet desiring to encourage me to learn good English, suggested to me the thought of writing this journal, and it is in consequence of his advice that I do it....

[Read Full Text](#)

**Document Information**

Title:	<b>Diary Of Laurent Clerc's Voyage From France To America In 1816</b>
Creator:	Laurent Clerc (author)
Date:	1816
Format:	Ephemera

**Reference Link:** <https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/catcard.html?id=687>

The Disability History Museum, an online archive, has the full text of the diary (which used to be offered in facimile by the American School for the Deaf -- might be worth a search) as well as this excerpt: <https://www.disabilitymuseum.org/dhm/lib/detail.html?id=687>



### Teaching Notes:

The original name was not American School for the Deaf, but the American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb.

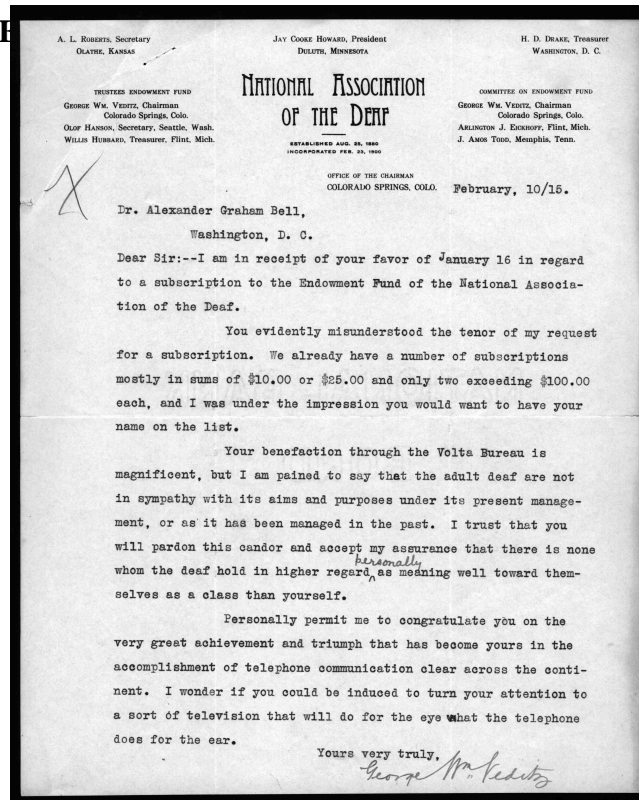
This 1881 source gives an opportunity, and in fact demands, a discussion of how words change their meaning across time, and how words that have a demeaning connotation, whether they had it originally or not, must be used in carefully prescribed ways when studying history.

Questions: what is the meaning of "dumb"? what is the meaning of the word used more commonly today, "mute"? Do you think "mute" is a neutral word? Do you think "dumb" was once a neutral word? How could you find out more?

Is casual use of the word "dumb" consistent with how we talk to one another at school, in and out of the classroom? What should the rule be?

**Reference Link:** <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004670330/>

## LETTER FROM GEORGE VEDITZ TO ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL, FEBRUARY 10, 1915



### Teaching Notes:

Teaching ideas are provided by  [Wendy Harris](#) :

"As the president of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) in 1909, Veditz wrote a [letter](#) to Alexander Graham Bell explicitly referencing wanting to convince him to change his approach to Deaf people (Bell supported oral methods at the exclusion of sign language). By 1915, Veditz was the Chairman of NAD's Endowment Fund Committee and, in that role, [asked](#) Alexander Graham Bell for a donation for the Fund. He followed up with [another letter](#) mentioning the opinion many Deaf adults held of Bell. An analysis of these three letters could focus on the author's purpose and what literary tools he used to achieve it. We don't have access to Bell's responses through the Library. Using the second letter about the endowment from Veditz to Bell, students could work to infer Bell's response to the first letter. If Veditz knew Bell opposed many things the NAD was fighting for, why might he engage him through these letters? "

Further notes by  [Alison Noyes](#) :

This is the third in the series of three letters that George Veditz wrote to Alexander Graham Bell, described above by Wendy Harris (for more, see <http://emergingamerica.org/blog/what-exactly-is-disability>).

This letter is accessible for several reasons. It is typed, which makes it easier for students to read. It ends by reminding the reader of the unique historical moment when, for the first time, telephone service was connected across the country and Veditz wonders if the inventor of a device for distant sound (tele - phone) could invent a device for distant vision (tele - vision) which could be used by people who are deaf (this is decades before television was invented). It also is a bit provocative (though this requires a bit more



background knowledge): Veditz suggests in his letter that the "subscription" contribution Bell sent was embarrassingly small, and indicates that the inventor should be a bigger donor. It says that the Volta Bureau, an organization begun and funded by Bell that was closely aligned with the American Association for the Promotion of the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf, has aims and purposes not supported by deaf adults.

In the 1909 [letter](#), which is a manuscript, Veditz writes to Bell, "I regret sincerely your ability to join our Congress next summer. We should have liked to convince you – pardon the expression – of the "error of your ways," and bring you into concord with the aims of the vast majority of the deaf."

Paired with the 1913 film of George Veditz giving a public talk in American Sign Language, this offers an opportunity to discuss history of stigma attached to teaching languages other than spoken English in the United States. Why were the teachers of Oral English to deaf children opposed to also teaching them Sign Language? Is this at all related to opposition to bilingual education that was a powerful political movement in previous decades? What questions do students have?

**Reference Link:** <http://www.loc.gov/resource/magbell.16910212>

Contributor Names: Bell, Alexander Graham  
Veditz, George W.

Created / Published: February 10, 1915

Subject Headings: - Volta Bureau (U.S.)

- Associations, institutions, etc.--Deaf

- Correspondence

Genre: Correspondence

Repository: Manuscript Division

Digital Id: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/magbell.16910212>



[TEACHING A DEAF-MUTE TO TALK. TRAINING SCHOOL FOR DEAF MUTES. SEE 4843-



**Reference Link:** <http://www.loc.gov/item/2018678485/>

Contributor Names: Hine, Lewis Wickes, 1874-1940, photographer

Created / Published: 1917 April.

Subject Headings: - Girls

- Women
- School children
- Teachers
- Deaf persons
- Mute persons
- Schools
- Speech therapy
- Special education
- United States--Oklahoma--Sulphur

Genre: Photographic prints

Notes: - In album: Miscellaneous.

- Title from NCLC caption card for Hine no. 4845.

- Hine no. 4846.

- Credit line: National Child Labor Committee collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

- General information about the National Child Labor Committee collection is available at:

<https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.nclc>

- Forms part of: National Child Labor Committee collection.



Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA  
<https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>  
Digital Id: nclc 05255 <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/nclc.05255>



**DEAF & DUMB CHILDREN OF ST. RITA'S SCHOOL, CINCINNATI, SINGING STAR**



**Reference Link:** <http://www.loc.gov/item/2016826637/>

Contributor Names: Schmidt, J. R., photographer

Created / Published: [1918]

Subject Headings: - Deaf persons

- Sign language
- School children
- Flags--American

Genre: Glass negatives

Photographic prints--Reproductions

Notes: - Title from unverified data provided by the National Photo Company on the negative or negative sleeve, where the school name appeared to be written as "St. Rica's."

- Alternate title, photographer, and date information comes from a copy of the photo at the National Archives and Records Agency, 165-WW-77E-3.

- Gift; Herbert A. French; 1947.

- General information about the National Photo Company collection is available at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.npc>

- This glass negative might show streaks and other blemishes resulting from a natural deterioration in the original coatings.

- Temp. note: Batch seven.

Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

LAURENT CLERC - A

HE NEW WORLD.JPG



### Teaching Notes:

This secondary source essay from Gallaudet University offers a more detailed biography of Laurent Clerc (whose full name was Louis Laurent Marie Clerc). It features multiple primary source illustrations, including portraits of Clerc's teachers, of Clerc at different ages, and photographs of gifts presented to Clerc.

Of particular interest to students attentive to Clerc's origins as a native speaker of French is this passage:

### Clerc and the American Sign Language

Clerc's mode of instruction was French signs. His students learned those signs for their studies. However, for their own use, they also borrowed or altered some of those signs and blended them with their own native sign language. As the Hartford students and teachers widely spread Clerc's teachings in his original and in their modified signs, deaf communication acquired an identifiable form. This evolved into the American Sign Language, used in education and assimilated into the personal lives of America's deaf population and its culture. Consequently, about two-thirds of today's ASL signs have French origins.

**Reference Link:** <https://www3.gallaudet.edu/clerc-center/info-to-go/deaf-culture/laurent-clerc.html>



## **WHAT EXACTLY IS A DISABILITY? BY WENDY HARRIS**



### Teaching Notes:

George Veditz, who became deaf at age 8, grew up speaking English and German in Baltimore Maryland as the son of immigrant parents. ([More about his life is here.](#))

In 1913, Veditz gave a speech on the importance of the preservation of sign language, which was the first time sign language was filmed. You can see it in the Library of Congress recording linked here. (Translation for signing-impaired: <https://culturasurda.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/preservation-of-sign-language.pdf>.)

He was a life-long advocate for deaf people, campaigning for their rights to use sign language and to remove barriers to employment, successfully getting US President Theodore Roosevelt to reverse a ban on deaf people taking the Civil Service exam required to get a US government job, and getting Taft to issue an order that managers identify jobs deaf people could fill. Veditz was also a master chess player (he met his wife over a game of chess).

**Reference Link:** <https://www.loc.gov/item/mbrs01815816/>



**Teaching Notes:**

Such a nice collection!