

History of Letterland



Letterland was created by Lyn Wendon in the late 1960's as a way to help students who struggled with learning to read. Lyn worked with special education students who had difficulty retaining letter-sound correspondences. She found that her students responded well to an Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching phonics that incorporated creative visual cues and simple stories that were easy to remember. Lyn eventually created a land where letters lived filled with engaging characters. Here's how Lyn explains it:

"Plain black letters have no faces. They cannot make eye-contact with children, or speak to them. So, as I struggled to teach phonics facts to 5 to 8 year olds, I found myself creating humanlike characters within the abstract of alphabet shapes. Suddenly an interpersonal element entered into the teaching equation, attracting spontaneous involvement from the students. I discovered I had tapped into a wide range of attention-holding strategies that helped make teaching reading more effective – and more like play in a language-rich setting. I didn't expect it to have so much teaching power, or the global appeal it now receives from children worldwide."

Lyn never set out to create a phonics program, she just wanted to find a way to help her students. As other teachers learned of her success, interest grew in her approach and Letterland spread by word of mouth.

In 1980, Lyn started producing and selling Letterland materials in her own home. By 1985, as it became apparent that her materials suited not only children with learning difficulties, but could also be used as a mainstream model for all students and for teaching English as an additional language, she and her husband John, broadened the scope of Letterland resources, including the addition of PreKindergarten materials. Letterland continues as a Wendon family business, now headed by her son Mark. Letterland is used in 111 countries where reading English is taught including the U.K., Canada, South Africa, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, India, Jordan, Lebanon and China.

Letterland in the United States

The U.S. product version of Letterland was launched in 2008. Since 2008, Letterland has been adopted as a core phonics program in NC, TX, NJ, MO, FL, and VA to name a few states. Currently, Letterland is working with over 80% of all districts in NC, including Wake County Schools, the 14th largest school system in America. Letterland is now in over 44 states because of teachers, administrators, and parents spreading the news that Letterland works!

Letterland is engaging, multi-sensory, developmentally appropriate, and research-based. There is something quite remarkable that happens when children are exposed to the program. U.S. teachers see the difference the program makes in the progress their students are making, and especially in the level of student engagement

and motivation. As a result, teachers and administrators often “bring” Letterland with them when they go to a new district.

Lyn Wendon’s Biography

Lyn Wendon, the creator of Letterland, was born in her grandmother's international school in Florence, Italy. Lyn grew up in the USA and went to school in New Canaan and Greenwich, Connecticut. She later gained a BA from Wellesley College. She moved to the UK in 1955 and Lyn received a diploma in Experimental Educational Psychology at the Cambridge Institute of Education. She then worked in primary schools and various independent schools as a peripatetic special needs teacher, combining that with raising three small children and inventing the phonics system that grew into Letterland. Some 45 years after the creation of the original Letterland characters, Lyn is a consultant to the business and plays an active part in making Letterland the worldwide success it is today.

