

Buchstabentafeln

ABC-Täfelchen oder Buchstabentafeln, auf denen ein Alphabet stand, waren eine vom 15. bis ins 19. Jahrhundert in diversen Varianten verbreitete Lernhilfe für Kinder. Mit den Buchstabentafeln wurden Kindern zum ersten Mal Texte zur eigenen Verwendung überlassen.

Ursprung und Verbreitung

Bereits lange vor der Erfindung des Buchdrucks waren Handschriften verbreitet, die in Schulen als erstes Lesebuch und zur Andacht verwendet wurden. Es wird angenommen, dass Katechismen für Kinder seit dem 8. oder 9. Jahrhundert existieren. ABC-Täfelchen aus Holz zu Lehrzwecken werden in einer englischen Handschrift des 14. Jahrhunderts erwähnt. Seit dem späten 14. Jahrhundert sind Manuskripte pädagogischen Charakters überliefert, die mit einem christlichen Kreuz und dem Alphabet beginnen und diverse Gebete enthalten. Aus der Zeit um 1400 stammt eine illustrierte Abschrift eines Werks von Sacrobosco, die eine Tafel mit arabischen Ziffern zeigt.

Die meisten Buchstabentafeln bestanden aus Holz und waren mit einem Griff versehen. Manchmal war in den Griff ein Loch gebohrt, um die Tafel mittels einer Schnur an den Gürtel oder über den Arm zu hängen. Im kontinentalen Europa befand sich der Griff oft oben oder an der Seite, in englischsprachigen Ländern unten.



Hornbooks

Hornbooks or battledores, with an alphabet written on them, were a teaching aid for children used commonly in different forms from the 15th to the 19th century. Hornbooks were the first time that children were given texts for their own use.

Origins and spread

Long before the invention of printing, hand-written texts were commonly used in schools as a first reader and for prayer. It is generally assumed that catechisms for children existed from the 8th or 9th century. Wooden hornbooks for teaching are mentioned in an English manuscript from the 14th century. Manuscripts for teaching have been preserved from the late 14th century which start with a Christian cross and the alphabet and include various prayers. An illustrated transcript of a work by Sacrobosco, from around 1400, shows a hornbook with Arabic numerals.

Most hornbooks were made of wood and had a handle. Sometimes a hole was drilled through the handle to hang the hornbook on a cord from one's belt or over one's arm. In continental Europe the handle was often at the top or on the side, and in English-speaking countries at the bottom.



German: ABC-Täfelchen oder Buchstabentafeln. This translation is about hornbooks in general, so the two English names for hornbooks are provided instead. If the text is specifically about German hornbooks, then the German words are left in the text, with a translation.

German: Handschriften. In English, a hand-written text or manuscript. Note: "handwriting" is only the way a person writes.

German: erstes Lesebuch. In English, a "reader" is a book given to children when they are learning to read.

German: an den Gürtel. This text is formal, so "on one's belt", not "on your belt" (more informal).

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Hornbooks were typically made of wood and covered with a thin sheet of transparent horn, but the word is also used in the literature¹ to describe the earlier kind of hornbooks, made of lead. A battledore was a larger kind of hornbook which could also be used as a sports racket or a washing beater; this word does not correspond with the more general German word "Buchstabentafel".

German: sind ... überliefert. Überliefern = (literally) to pass on to a future generation. An average dictionary suggests "hand down, pass on" but in English this means from mother to daughter, etc. I chose "be preserved"; Muret-Sanders² also suggests "has survived" and other translations.

German: Schnur. In English band, braid, cord, lace, string or twine (etc.). A cord is thicker than string, as well as being smoother and more decorative.

¹ Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science: Volume 11 by Allen Kent, Jay E Daily, Harold Lancour

² Muret-Sanders Großwörterbuch Deutsch-Englisch, 2004: ISBN 3-468-02126-7, see also <http://www.langenscheidt.de/deutsch/produkte/wb/ms-gesamt.pdf>