



Name: _____

Date: _____

How Lisa Learns to Talk

Most children learn words by hearing how they sound. A small girl hears her father say, "Say daddy." The child listens and after a while tries to say daddy herself. She hears her father say the word and hears herself say the word. That is the way that almost all children learn the words they say - by hearing them first, but some children cannot learn to talk this way. They are children who cannot hear. One such child is Lisa. Lisa can hear just a little with a hearing aid. She will never be able to hear as well as other people. There are special schools, though, to help children who cannot hear to learn about words and talking. Lisa goes to such a school.

Lisa learns many things at the school that most children do not know. Lips move in a different way for many words we say - not all, but many. If you watch carefully, you can tell what the word is by the way the lips move. We call this lipreading. Lisa is learning about lipreading and the way to do it. She watches the lips and face of the person who is talking. She tries to understand what the person is saying from the way the person's lips move. Lisa is learning to see what people say.

To use eyes for ears is a very hard thing to do. Many words look the same on the lips. It is hard to tell them apart. Many people do not talk carefully. It is hard to see what they are saying, and there are many words that Lisa cannot lip-read because she does not know what they mean. Lisa is very good at lipreading. When she grows up, she will be able to lip-read many of the words that you are able to hear. Lisa must also learn to talk. When people talk to her, she must be able to answer them. This is very hard to do when you can't hear how words sound, but Lisa learned that you can feel words.

When you say a word out loud, it makes a funny little tingle in your nose or throat. We call this vibration. Try to see for yourself. Put your hands on your throat and say go. Feel the tingle it makes. Say summer and feel the tingle on the side of your nose. Different words make different tingles in different places. When Lisa is learning to say a word, she puts her hands on her teacher's throat or nose. When the teacher says a word, Lisa feels the tingles it makes. Then she tries to get the same tingles herself when she says the word.

Lisa also has to watch her teacher's face and mouth and lips. She has to see how the word looks when her teacher says it. She also listens with her hearing aid to hear as much as she can. Finally, she puts all these things together and tries to say the word herself. She says it over and over again until the teacher tells her she is saying it right. Lisa can't hear herself very well, so the teacher must tell her when she is saying it right.

This is a very hard way to learn to talk. Not all deaf children are able to do it. Even when Lisa talks, it does not sound the same as when a hearing person talks. Sometimes it is hard to understand what Lisa says, but Lisa's speech will get better all the time. When it gets to be very good, everyone will be able to understand her.