



TEACHERS & WRITERS COLLABORATIVE
NEWSLETTER

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Teachers & Writers Collaborative
Newsletter
Volume 3

January 1971
Issue 4

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers and Writers Collaborative brings together writers, teachers, and students for the purpose of creating a curriculum which is relevant to the lives of children today and which can therefore make the study of language a living process. We believe that the writer can assist teachers in encouraging children to create their own literature from their own language, experience and imagination. Our belief in this new approach to the teaching of language rests on several assumptions:

- a) Children who are allowed to develop their own language naturally, without the imposition of artificial standards of grading, usage, and without arbitrary limits on subject matter, are encouraged to expand the boundaries of their own language usage;
- b) Grammatical and spelling skills develop as a result of an attachment to language and literature, not vice versa. The attempt to teach skills before they are proved to have relevance or relation to the child's interests and needs has been one of the primary causes of the stifling of children's interest in language;
- c) Children who write their own literature and who read the productions of other children are more likely to view all literature as an effort to deal with one's experience in creative ways, whatever that experience may consist of.

Specifically, Teachers and Writers Collaborative places professional writers in classrooms to work on a regular basis with teachers who are interested in opening their children to new ways of using language. The writers maintain detailed diaries of their work with teachers and children, and these diaries, along with the works of the students, become the raw materials for the project's publications --newsletters, curriculum materials, anthologies. We particularly hope that other teachers may find in our materials some ideas about changing their classroom work. Toward that same end we have conducted formal and informal workshops for teachers since the inception of the program.



Support from the National Endowment for the Humanities has enabled us to continue through January 1971. For the coming year, we will be supported by a generous grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. We thank Poets and Writers for a small grant which helped finance the work of two of our writers this fall.



SUBSCRIPTION RATE: \$3.00 for four issues. Make checks payable to Teachers and Writers Collaborative and send to:

Teachers and Writers Collaborative
Pratt Center for Community Improvement
244 Vanderbilt Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11205

TECHNIQUES

LETTER TO A RECALCITRANT WRITER

We don't ask for longer diaries just to fill the Newsletter, but because, at their best, the diaries say something about what we feel should be happening in the schools. They are, first of all, diaries - not lesson plans, curriculum outlines, teachers' guides, etc. - but diaries which are by nature highly personal and therefore fallible accounts of classroom activities. Recently, we've received some alarming reports from teachers who say they've read Kenneth Koch's Wishes, Lies, and Dreams. "What a marvellous book," they begin, "I'm using it every day. Yesterday I did wishes, today lies, tomorrow dreams." What surer way to destroy the inventive, spontaneous teaching techniques which Kenneth brought to the kids at P.S. 61? Granted, there may be little hope for teachers who willingly read every new word about teaching in the same way that they read their manuals for the Dick and Jane readers. But I'm convinced there are other teachers who use materials this way solely because of professional pressures to do so - teachers we might be able to reach. I guess I could summarize my ideas about editing the Newsletter by saying that I want to include as many obstacles (creative obstacles, I hope) to this kind of literal interpretation as possible.

What are the obstacles? One of Ron Padgett's diaries which we quoted in a recent Newsletter, began: "The night before, at Julian's Billiard Academy, as I leaned over the table, I had a terrific idea..." Some of our readers may find this completely irrelevant. I don't, because I think it suggests that the best writing ideas may well be inspired by some private, apparently unrelated experience, and that teachers must examine their own private lives for similar experiences. All of this might be classified as how, and why a particular idea strikes you as worth trying.

Another obstacle is how those ideas are altered or distorted during the course of presenting them in the classroom. Another Padgett diary comes to mind, the "Outer Space Mothers' Day Card." Here the assignment started badly, until Ron heard, "or thought he heard," one of the children mention a robot. (Ron's doubt about the origin of the robot seems to me almost as important as his willingness to change the assignment.) Immediately the class started writing an astonishing greeting from robot son to robot mother.

Most important are the children themselves. Obstacles? Well, certainly in the sense that they can destroy the most meticulous assignment. And any diary that is full of observations and reactions to individual children is difficult to make into a lesson plan.

Richard Murphy

Ye Olde Malt Shoppe

(FROM THE DIARIES OF PHILLIP LOPATE,
EAST HARLEM YOUTH SERVICES)

"We had a charming morning of surprises, totally unplanned, the kind George Dennison says is the fruit of free schools. Caspar had his guitar, and we began singing new rock songs, working our way backward to 1955. There were a number of superb voices, and it was a joy to listen to Marvin and Willie running down every soul nuance in 'Midnight Hour' or 'You Really Got a Hold on Me', while the rest of us rapped the table in lieu of a conga. I sang fearlessly in my best bar mitzvah voice. It was most exciting when they came to a portion without words and improvised shouts and responses. Never unmindful of my professional role, I tried to get them to write our own songs. Someone suggested a '50s white song 'that would take place in a malt shop'. 'But none of us has ever been in a malt shop,' someone objected. 'That's the joke of it,' said the first. We didn't get very far. Stuff like:

"I looked at her eyes over a banana split
I asked her darlin' please gimme a fix
Then our hands touched lightly over the whipped cream
And I knew that she was my own true dream

In Mexico City where the girls are so pretty
We sat in our room
Looking at the moon
She came in through the bathroom window
And I just let it flow.

"The real creativity had already found an outlet in the singing, which burst through the quiet of the agency and held several participants around the guitar even during their lunch hour."

Metaphors

(FROM THE DIARIES OF ART BERGER, P. S. 76, I. S. 72, QUEENS)

"My fourth grade class asked me to read Nowhere Man (a Beatles' tune) again and it worked just as well as last week. Staying in that track I pursued the theme of people, identity, and knowing one another:

Coo coo ca choo Mrs. Robinson
woo woo woo

a Simon and Garfunkel lyric and then another Beatle song:

Oh, look at all the lonely people
(Eleanor Rigby)

this held their attention

And Jake hates all the girls
(e.e. cummings)

sustained the spell, but--somehow or other Bob Dylan's Subterranean Homesick Blues flopped and I lost some of the class with several girls turning to cutouts.

"Blackberry Sweet by Dudley Randall out of Major's New Black Poetry brought things back together again:

Black girl...
 sweet as blackberries
...magic as a rising bird

giving me a chance to talk with the kids about how to talk about people so that they come alive in words. In simple terms we went into the difference between abstract and concrete words --the essence of imagery.

"The verbal participation fooled me into believing that they were ready to write and I put paper into their hands and asked them to describe one another in words that you could taste, smell, see or feel...and nothing happened...at least on paper.

"Then Nicky called out:

"Well, Robert is like pretzels, a salty boy."

"That started off a barrage of descriptive imagery about the class --but orally--I saw no out but to put it on the blackboard and together we were producing a collective poem about the class.

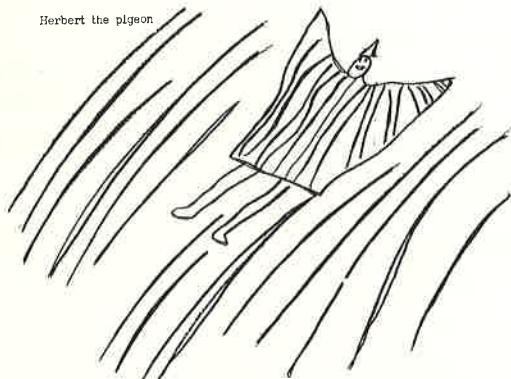
"We were going strong when the bell rang, and we agreed to finish it next time. During my next visit we finished the 'Meet the Class Poem', and worked together until everyone had a line. The spirit and involvement was high and most of the class was huddled around me. To keep it that way, I whipped out the harp which happened to be in my pocket and blew a few chords, and then bent some bars from Hey Lolly Lolly into a tune that fit their poem. Carrying this tune I sang the poem, pausing to blow a chorus to Hey Lolly Lolly after every four lines which the entire class joined in with full voice and clapping. I felt like Captain Kangaroo but it was fun.

MEET THE CLASS

Robert is like pretzels, a salty boy
Nancy is candy, because she is sweet
Veronica is like bubble gum,
 she is so sticky
Elaine is princess pretty
David is lemon, so sour
Lawrence is a Mexican bean, he jumps
James is water, all wet
Donna is red and always mad
Teresa is a potato chip, she crackles
Joanna the banana
Leonard is a white cracker
Dennis has four eyes and sees everything
Herbie the pigeon, he flies
Regina is twig, that wiggles
Diego upside down is all right
and Domenico is a backward rider
Sean is a bug, a love bug
Karen has fish lips
 and Johns Store shoes
 on sale for ten cents
Maida is as loud as a mouse
Darlene is everything, everyday
George is a watermelon, seedy
Kenny is a tiger, wild.

"Evaluating what was happening in terms of the volume of writing I was used to in grades 6-8 was unnerving. Could I get to these fourth graders? And after getting to them--could I evoke writing? These questions filled my head. But I resolved to take it slow--not push.

"Now once more I tried to transform this oral energy into writing. I told them that each line in the poem could be a comic book character. Some of the comic characterizations from my previous work at I.S. 8 in Queens stood me in good stead. Like Mr. Hip, The Blips, and Capt. Soul Power and Brown Sugar excited these kids. I had construction paper on their tables and with no coaxing at all many of them were earnestly working to put their line from the poem into a comic strip of their own making. I left while they were still working. A few completed ones convinced me that I was on a good track. Next week should have a pile of finished work.



"Stepping from a fourth grade into a sixth grade was like changing from a local to an express. One of the fourth grade teachers with whom I work knew this and was curious as to whether my style would show an awareness of change. That is why he asked if it would be all right if he came in to observe. I was glad that he was concerned and welcomed him.

"It wasn't long before I realized that I was using terms like image and metaphor in this class where I had been talking about making word pictures to the other class.

"The notes the sixth grade teacher took for me, short as they are, show the considerable ground we covered from my introduction to the writing assignment.

6th grade
Mr. Berger He's a
 --Treasure Hunter
 --Pied Piper
 --Local Poet
 --Smuggler
I Am a Metaphor
 --Rock
 --Bridge Feeling
 --Fox Senses
 soul
 Communicate--DIG
 Anything without a beat is dead.

They knew that the treasure I was hunting was somehow in them and that as Pied Piper I was trying to get them to follow me. And what contraband could the local poet be smuggling into the school but poetry?

"We were able to get into the difference between concrete and abstract language from the discussion that came out of a comparison of two words Dig and Communicate. We proceeded to discuss the Simon and Garfunkel song I Am a Rock, I Am an Island in terms of metaphor and to dig the metaphorical magic in The Doors' She's a 20th Century Fox. Finally we got into some more talk on the subject of identity evoked by using the Beatles Nowhere Man.

"The response to my request for writing on the theme of I AM A METAPHOR reflected much of the verbalization. Here are some of the sixth graders works:"

I am a cloud because I really
don't know what I am. A cloud
is something that wanders
from place to place.

Arlene Rosen

I am a flower
all alone in the meadow.
But I not afraid out there.
I feel free as a bird.
Every day I set in a cool breeze.

John

I am a record player. I sit around all day
and play soul records. When they put them old rotten
records on me I get sick. When they put soul records
on me I feel better. When will I get broken? That'll
be the day when soul records are no more.

Laurie Williamson

I Am a Mouth

I am a mouth because I always talk, and
I'm in the action. I speak when I want because
I am free. That when the action is in me.

Seth Wald

I am a plant
I grow fast, fast, fast
I am free very free.

Mark Lindenbaum

I am a house because people
walk into me what I mean
people easily get their feel-
ing into me.

Robert Drier



Minimum Stimulus

(FROM THE DIARIES OF RON PADGETT, P.S. 61, MANHATTAN)

Many of the children at P.S. 61 have worked with a visiting poet for three years - longer than any other group of children in the history of the program. Kenneth Koch began teaching in this school in 1968 and Ron Padgett began soon afterward. Mr. Padgett's "Minimum Stimulus" is really a non-assignment; the children were allowed to write whatever they wished, or not to write at all. We feel the idea is important because it stands, by the writer's own testimony, as one of the few informal evaluations of our program. Many teachers will recognize immediately how hopeless this non-assignment would be with a group of children who had not already been given a rich and varied background of writing experiences. In contrast, the children in Mr. Padgett's classes produced some astonishing work. Mr. Padgett's diary begins:

"To test the effect of myself on the kids, I decided to give a minimum stimulus assignment: it consists of asking each teacher to give the kids the usual amount of time to write, and to tell them to write anything they wanted, or, conversely, nothing at all. The teacher was cautioned against giving ideas or encouragement.

"The responses are not surprising: the good classes did well, responding with numbers and quality, whereas my one dispirited class gave a quite meager response. You shouldn't have asked me to tell them that they didn't have to do it, the teacher in that class advised me the next day, missing the whole point...."

The Knock At the Door

One night about 10 o'clock the snow was falling and the roof tops covered with snow and I was watching eangelberthumberdink and all of a sudden a knock on the door I wondered who it could be then I said well if I want to find out I should open the door so I did and when I did to my surprise was the ugliest thing (or whatever) I ever saw well I thought quick I shut the door and ran under the bed just under the bed just looking at the door and it started to open. The door started to squeek and then all of a sudden a bulletin interrupted the show and said Wild animal escaped from the zoo and then he said if you play dead he won't hurt you he will leave you and go away and then he repeated it play dead. So when it was in the other room she came out from under the bed and lay on the floor and played dead and when he came out from the room he saw her and then smelled her and went away and when he did she got up and tacked the door and shut the door and to her luck the eangelburthumperdink show was over.

Maria

A Stupid Looking Face

Have you ever seen a stupid looking face. But if you haven't I'm going to tell you a story about a stupid boy that I'm going to make up. And I'm going to draw a picture of him. There was once a stupid looking boy he had red eye balls. He had spagetti sticking out of his ears. He had flowers, rice, beans, pencils, shoes, juice coming out of his mouth. He's an awful kid. He looks at you like if he was going to eat you. Then every time he stares at you he lifts his hands and when you look at his hands his veins show and they pop up. WOULD YOU GET SCARED IF THAT BOY CAME NEAR YOU? I WOULD WOULD YOU

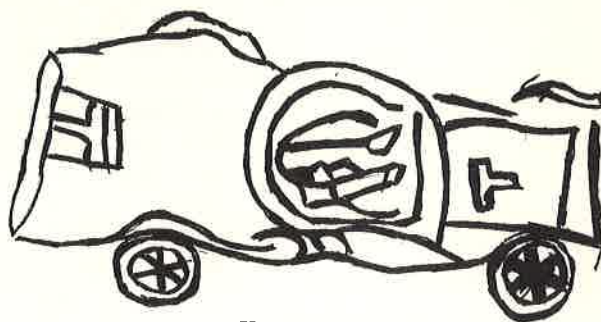
Answer - Mr. Padgett please!

Debbie Arce

The Hot Rod Race

The drivers are Mario Andretti and his Ferrari car and Hector Figueroa in his T car. Brom! Brom! Bro-o-o-m and there they go! It's Mario in the lead Hector is gaining, and Hector is in the front! Here Hector! Here comes Hector and the winner is Hector! Hurray!!! clap!clap!clap! And Hector won the Hot Rod Race! The crowd is bursting with cheer!

Hector Figueroa



Hector's car

Junk

One day I had oatmeal for breakfast, a glass of milk and toast. When I was going to put my spoon in the oatmeal, I looked up at the ceiling and saw a cockroach. It was dying. When I took my spoonful of oatmeal and was about to put it in my mouth, ough! The cockroach fell in my spoonful of oatmeal. Junk.

So, it didn't pain me so. Then I grabbed my glass of milk. Oh no! A fly dropped all busted up in my milk! JUNK!

I still had my toast to eat. I grabbed the toast. When I was about to bite it my bird made shit on it.

Anything

Anything is just any old thing just any old anything the meaning of anything is any thing, thing of any kind, at all. anything is spelled A-N-Y-T-H-I-N-G It's about a third grade word. It's hard to write about anything so I'm writing about anything. Anything is..... Well anything is just anything. I wonder how many times I've used anything in this story but I tell you I'm sick of anything.

Jose Lopez

Eliza Bailey

The Buttercup Tree

One afternoon my mother and I were going to the country we pack up our clothes and we went. When we got there the sun was shining right across the sky I told my mother if I can take a walk when I went along I saw the sun was shining at a beautiful Buttercup tree it was the most beautiful tree I ever saw. When I touched a Buttercup it fall and opened all by itself then when it cracked all the way open I saw ten little elves two were playing football three were learning math five were cooking dinner so I ran to my mother and when I came back I saw an elf playing all alone I told him what his name was and told me his name was Butterela it dance and knew how to count and play hide 'n 'seek it was the most adorable little thing I ever saw there were really eleven of them but he ran away from home 169 years ago and when he ran away it was 10 years old and when he told me how old he was he was only 11 years of age he told me never to tell his mother so he went home and live peacefully and I close the Buttercup.

Mayra

The Day I Was Born

I was born on July 7, 1959. Boy I wished I was there but I couldn't because I was busy. I am the smallest so that means my brother and sister saw me when I was born. I wonder if people admired me? My parents tell me that I was a pest and my hobby was eating soap. I could just imagine me just sitting there with a bar of soap in my mouth boy I don't know how I could stand it. I must have been a little stupid. But now I'm 10 1/2 years old and we say older but not wiser. I don't understand what that means.

Jeannie

By the Shore

One morning very early I went out to the shore and all I could see was mountains and rocks and fog going all the way to the end of the shore and sometimes I wonder what's at the end of that shore is there a place I've never seen like Some Place called paradise island then suddenly I woke up and there wasn't anything beautiful it was just a dream what sad thought that there wasn't a thing called paradise island and all that was there were a shore and a house and a bunch of sea gulls flying through the sky but just then I had the thought this little house and shore and sea gulls has its own beauty.

Vivien Tufts

Enter Superglasses

(FROM THE DIARIES OF DICK GALLUP, P.S. 20, MANHATTAN)

"I seized upon the opportunity to spend a longer period of time with my combined 5th and 6th grade class, where I began a play. We decided on a cast of characters, a setting and a time and wrote most of a scene.

"Writing plays with a class is very slow work. I must be sure that everyone is understanding each bit of action or dialogue before going on to something else. Also, there is the problem of getting them to agree that such and such is a good idea. It is also necessary to recapitulate just what has happened, which characters are present, who is doing what, sitting where, etc.

"Nevertheless, playwrighting is a great exercise for the class and it is worth all the trouble. In the past I have tried to get an entire play written in one class period. This present attempt will be more sustained. I am going to visit the class again this Friday to continue the scene to its end. Then I will see if I want them to go on and write some more scenes.

"Today I spent the last few minutes of my two class periods with the class, having them act out what we have written thus far. Hopefully this will fix it in their minds for retrieval next session. Or at least keep the excitement level up.

* * *

"Continued writing the play. First I went back over what we have done to this point.

"The mechanics of the writing process are pretty elementary. I simply ask what happens next. One rule is that they must tell me a simple bit of action or a piece of dialogue. There is a tendency for the

kids to try to give about three scenes worth of action in one idea and it is actually quite difficult to convince them that I want them to think only in terms of what will actually happen next. This is one reason I have to continuously go over what is occurring in the play. How many characters are on the stage? Where are they? What are they doing? (Even the characters who are doing nothing in particular.)

"We got a certain amount of work done, about doubling the length of the scene, and I had them act it out again. The children certainly enjoy acting out their drama."

PLAY

Scene: The Playboy Club
Place: On top of the Empire State Building
Time: Midnight

(Set-- Stage left is a bar with stools. There are also a few tables. Otherwise, the stage is set up to be a nightclub.)

At the rise of the curtain we see a bartender behind the bar and two men (bums) sitting on the stools.

BARTENDER: The weather is terrible. I wonder if it will rain, tomorrow. That's the day I mow the lawn. I hope it rains. Not the day after that because I have to take out a beautiful chick of mine. Hope my wife doesn't find out. That old battle-axe would murder me. I'll just cross my fingers.

Enter Playboy Bunny

OTIS: Baby light my Fire!
FREDDY: Mine too!

Bunny slaps their faces

POLICEMAN: (Entering) Uh-uh. This one is mine.

Enter Waitress

FREDDY: (To Otis) Here comes another one. Let him have her.

Enter Old Lady

OLD LADY:

In my days I was the prettiest girl on the block. Back in 22's I dazzled everyone! Many men committed suicide over me. Those were the good old days. I gave them too much too soon. Now I am an old crab, they take one look at me and faint. (She sighs)
Ugh! (He faints)

OTIS:

Enter Mischivous Boy. He squirts Otis with a watergun and grabs the bunny's tail as he leaves. (Exit Boy)

Playboy Bunny slaps Policeman

Enter Superglasses

SUPERGLASSES:

I want a toy! (cries.)

POLICEMAN:

Grow up! (He shoves Superglasses into a chair.)

SUPERGLASSES:

Glasses don't grow.

POLICEMAN:

Stretch them!

SUPERGLASSES:

They break. (Weeps)

Enter Bus Driver

BUS DRIVER:

How about a drink?

BARTENDER:

How many shots?

BUS DRIVER:

One.

Policeman shoots Bus Driver

PLAYBOY BUNNY:

Hey! That was my father!

BARTENDER:

You killed my best customer!

POLICEMAN:

He asked for one shot. I got carried away.

BARTENDER:

That was bloody murder.

PLAYBOY BUNNY:

Bye Pops.

BUS DRIVER:

(Gets up) I needed that.

SUPERGLASSES:

Now can I have my toy?

Bartender gives him a toy.

CURTAIN

On My Block

(FROM THE DIARIES OF DICK LOURIE AT FORDHAM UNIVERSITY AND THE CLASSROOM WORK OF BARRY RADER, P.S. 76, QUEENS.)

Dick Lourie is a poet and musician who has worked in the Clinton Program (an experimental junior high school in Manhattan modeled on the Philadelphia Parkway Program) and at P.S. 54 in the Bronx. Barry Rader is a teacher at P.S. 76 in Queens. Last semester he enrolled in a course for teachers conducted by Teachers and Writers Collaborative at Fordham University. Mr. Lourie was one of the writers who visited the class, where he had the teachers try their hand at a collaborative poem. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Rader tried a variation of the same assignment in his own fourth grade class.

(Dick Lourie)

"I felt that the teachers in the Fordham course had to be shown that they could write, and that by analogy so could their students. Mostly I wanted to demonstrate that they could turn out work that was interesting and real and feeling.

"I told the teachers we'd proceed exactly as if I were doing a creative writing session and they were the students. I asked each person to complete on a piece of paper and then hand to me, anonymously, the following two sentences:

'Where I live...'

'Last night I dreamed...'

"Then we read some of them aloud, in random sequence, to form a 10 line poem (lines one and two from the same person, lines three and four from another person, etc.; each completed sentence treated as one line of the poem). We talked about the effects of the random grouping, then re-ordered the lines and talked about them.

"A few of the teachers asked if we'd really made a poem. By reading some of the examples again, I believe I was able to show them that we had. This is perhaps what impressed them most - that almost by accident poems could happen, and that strange and revealing configurations could occur.

Below are some examples of the work produced in Barry Rader's class:

Last Night I Dreamed

Last night I dreamed I got kicked in
the butt!
Last night I dreamed I saw a big ghost
And that a big monster jumped into
bed with me.
Last night I dreamed that I was dead
and that I became a devil.
Last night I dreamed that someone loved
me with all their might.
Last night I dreamed that there were
angels, all around on top of the class,
and everyone, even the teacher, tried
to get one.

Last Night I Dreamed

Last night I dreamed that I was a hippy
in the circus and everyone laughed at me.
Last night I dreamed that I was a pro ball-
player.
Last night I dreamed that I had all the
money in the world
and everyone had to listen to me
and I owned all the buildings and houses
and I was so happy that
I couldn't even laugh.

Last Night I Dreamed

Last night I dreamed that I was
going to get a dog.
Last night I dreamed that I was
being beat up.
Last night I dreamed that I had a girl.
Last night I dreamed I had a friend.
Last night I dreamed that someone
was running after me in the night.
Last night I dreamed that I lived
in a house that could not die.
Last night I couldn't dream, because
I couldn't sleep.
I had to feed my baby sister.

On My Block

On my block there is nothing much.
On my block there are a lot of kids
that ride bikes.
I have a lot of friends and my dog.
On my block I play catch against the wall.
On my block I had a fight.
There are some people around my way that,
that make me sick.
On my block we have 6 people that are
on dope.
Nothing much happens on my block.



Imaginary Worlds

(FROM THE DIARIES OF RICHARD MURPHY, I.S. 70, MANHATTAN)

"I hope this is just the beginning of a sustained project on imaginary worlds. I want to see how far children can go toward creating their own Utopias and Distopias. My general strategy is relatively simple: I'm guessing that the concept of Utopia is likely to be overwhelming, that it should be purged from my classroom vocabulary and occur only in these diaries. In my reading of Utopian literature, I've tried to find themes, common to all Utopias, which are powerful and emotional enough to be presented in isolation. My list includes things like: traveling to Utopia, the artist in Utopia, education, religion, distribution of population, sexual mores and so on, and for each topic I have tried to find a suitable literary example which I hope will encourage the students to write. I want the children to write on one topic at a time and then, if this goes well, to begin to integrate the separate pieces into a single work. I have no idea if I can sustain the project. Even in preparing for it, I came to realize that I tire easily of Utopian literature, that I need a break from it. And children may too. So much of our work in Teachers and Writers, however, is of a one-shot variety. Each visit by a writer calls for a new assignment, a new mood, idea, subject, etc. In large part this is due to the classroom schedules to which our writers must adapt. But the fact remains that we have done very little to encourage children to sustain and enlarge upon an original idea. The imaginary world theme seems to me an excellent vehicle for encouraging larger works, for the number of individual topics within it is infinite, yet all are interrelated.

"First session - sixth grade, Geography.

"Like the old story about getting married - I have the horrible premonition that I will simply run out of things to say. I've asked for

a record player which is nowhere visible in the room and this increases my anxiety. Miss Kintisch sits at her desk. She has told the kids only that I would be coming in to do something special. (I preferred an open-ended introduction to something which might define the work too narrowly, but now I wonder if I can live up to this introduction.) The class quiets down on its own, then the record player appears. I ask the kids to form a circle around it. Suddenly there is a tremendous banging of chairs and tables...I'm sinking. But once again the kids quiet down without a word from me or Miss Kintisch.

"I introduce myself, careful to point out that I am not a teacher (more for my sake than theirs?) that I am interested in children's writing, etc. I say that I'll be coming in once a week, and that what we'll be doing isn't very close to geography (some sighs of relief at this), but is close to something I had observed the class doing last week. They had been working on map reading, and the homework assignment was to make up their own continent, complete with legend describing population, climate, etc. - a nice assignment, and one that I might like to go back to with specific reference to their own Utopian writing. From there I introduce the idea of writing about an imaginary world. I say that today we just want to talk and write about ways to get there. Later we will discuss the people we meet, how they live, etc.

"I point out that a lot of people have written about imaginary worlds, and that until about a hundred years ago the way they usually got there was by boat. There would be a storm, they would get lost, and suddenly find themselves in a place no one had ever discovered before. I say that today we have many different ways of traveling to such a place, and ask the kids for ideas. They respond immediately and with enthusiasm: submarine, spaceship, airplane, you could get hijacked. Then I ask if there are ways of traveling without gadgets - 'swim'. But what about traveling in your own head - 'dreams, imagination'. You could also travel into the future, one kid says. Great! Does he know a book called The Time Machine? He does. I say that I had planned to read a few pages from it today. We turn out the lights and turn on the record player - Eliot Carter's Double Concerto which I describe as imaginary world music - too bad for Carter.

I read from the opening pages of Wells' book: the marvelous description of the time traveler's solo flight bumping into the future, with the rapid changes of night and day 'like the flapping of wings'. Then I ask the kids to return to their desks to write about their own way of traveling to an imaginary place.

"The music continues. But some of the kids want the lights back on. We compromise and turn them half on. There is once again a lot of crashing and banging of chairs but, to my surprise, nearly all the kids get out paper and begin writing. I spend the rest of the class circulating, as much as possible, from desk to desk. The sixth graders are very demanding, and there are always four or five hands raised. Sometimes I am asked to clarify the assignment, sometimes for a spelling word (they don't believe me when I tell them in all honesty that my spelling is horrible), sometimes I am asked just to read what they have written. One piece begins 'I have a knapsack on my back, and my wings are being put into place. I don't know where I'm going.' I'm feeling great.

"Toward the end of the class I discover real personal deficiencies in what educators call, I think, classroom management. Some of the kids want to keep working on the assignment, rather than hand it in to me. Their enthusiasm amazes me but I worry that pieces will be lost. I try to collect as many papers as I can in the chaos that follows, but allow a few of the kids to escape with their Utopias stuffed haphazardly in their notebooks. I wonder if I will ever see these.

"Eighth Grade - Social Studies

"After my session with the sixth graders, Miss Kintisch suggested that some movement away from a fairy tale, enchanted wonderland type of presentation might be more appropriate for her eighth grade class. This strikes me as exactly what is needed, but I'm not certain I can achieve it. I don't want to make the idea of imaginary worlds too intellectual, at least in these early sessions. Also, I want to retain all the elements of the previous presentation, the discussion of ways to get to an imaginary place, the reading of The Time Machine. Finally, I decide there is a good chance that some of the eighth graders already know The Time Machine, since at least one sixth grader did, and that some discussion of why the book was written might be appropriate.

"I begin by introducing myself as before (not a teacher) and asking the group to form a circle. They do so much more efficiently than the sixth graders, so quickly in fact that I am left looking in from the outside, and there is no way in! None of the open classroom experts ever warned me that this would happen. Finally, I squeeze through a couple of desks, to the great amusement of the kids, and we are off on a discussion of travelling to imaginary places. It is basically the same discussion (the only exception being that these kids are fully aware of the possibilities of using drugs for such purposes) but the atmosphere is quite different. The eighth graders are wiser, they've learned not to trust outsiders, not to give completely of themselves as the sixth graders seem to - and the discussion is a little reserved as they rattle off the many ways of traveling to imaginary places.

"They are on to the idea of time travel quickly, and I use this to introduce the fact that I'm going to read from The Time Machine. But first I ask how many have actually read the book or seen the movie. I still don't know the answer for this, since it appears there are numerous variations upon the original theme. And some of the kids are already reeling off, for instance, the plot to the recent Star Trek show. We run through a few such plots, then I begin the discussion of Wells.

"I mention that when the time traveller begins his trip, he is very excited about being the first man to look into a future in which men will have vastly improved their condition. He expects the future to be perfectly marvelous. Instead, he finds a very frightening world - the decayed English upper class and the underground workers. Then I use a metaphor which I had thought of the night before, but which worries me because I think it may be too difficult. I say that writing about an imaginary world is like holding a trick mirror before society. Everything is distorted but it is still you in front of that mirror. A newspaper reporter, writing at the same time as Wells, might have said 'conditions among the working class in England are terrible, while the upper classes get richer and lazier.' That would be like a regular mirror. But the imaginary world mirror distorts as it shows us the upper class - pale, deadly white, childlike, defenseless. I can't be sure, but I have the feeling that the kids are still with me. In any case, we've come a long way from fairy tales.

"I read from The Time Machine as before, then ask the kids to begin writing. Most of them do, though there are a few whom I have failed to reach at all. The atmosphere in this class is so different that I suddenly feel a sense of enormous failure. And there is nothing to do. The eighth graders don't ask questions or raise their hands. So I circulate on my own, which is much harder, trying to encourage those who are not writing. When the class is over, I am surprised by the number of pieces that are turned in.

"Here are some of the sixth grade pieces: "

As the last bit of orange turned blue
in the sky I set out.

I walked till I met the water
I leaped to where I left my boat
and as the first morning breeze
came the boat sailed away
carrrying me for far away.

We sailed days & days
until we reached the rainbow
sky. The color lifted us up
up up...

Till we came upon a city
made of GOLD AND SILVER.

The city twinkled as the
sun set fell. My boat nested
in the harbor as I went on
the shore.

I walked down the streets
and every thing was made
from gold. I went over to the
Inn and the Keeper let me in.
He gave me a golden key
to my golden room.

As I reach my room and there
I find that everything was silver
even my bed!

I slept that night and
in the morning my body was all
bronze.

I took a swim that afternoon
but when I came out of the pool my
body was all gold so I went home
across the sea.

And I got home just in
time to hear my mother tell
me to get up & get dressed for
breakfast.

Ann Turner

I pulled the lever 500,000
1,000,000 M.P.S. in my super
duzer I reached to the edge of the
universe and then nothing. Every-
thing blanked out. Stopped. but I
could still move yet there was
nothing except a gray film around
my duzer. I saw everything stop
including the light from my con-
trol panel. they stopped dead in
the air and turned solid. I was
the first human to feel something
besides light's heat. Then I
decided to take a space walk
through the gray film to find
out what happened to my ship so
I went out and found the gray
film only on my ship everything
else was a psychedelic state of
suspended animation so I figured
out that it was because the uni-
verse weren't balanced.
(Unfinished)

Randy Besman

The Doll

It was a Sunday evening at about 8:32 when my Uncle came to visit me, he was an older man about 73 (I am 30) with white hair, he was bent over, kind of a hunch back without the bump on his back. He was short and very thin. He has given me a doll, right now I am looking at the doll. It's not an ordinary type of thing, it's rather mysterious. It's very old, wearing a long dress. Part of the doll's hair was tied up, most of it was hanging down the sides of its face. I've thought of a name for it, Rachel.

My Uncle has gone home now so I am taking my doll into my room with me.

Now it is much later in the evening and I have propped my doll up in the corner of my room on my bed table (which is next to my bed). I take a last look at Rachel and go to sleep with a vision of her in my head.

(continued on next page)

Strange things began happening when I was falling asleep, at first flashes of bright red, blue, white, yellow, purple, crimson, scarlet and green. Then I began to see the whole day over again in slow motion, but everytime I saw myself I was holding the doll! Then things got blurred and got bigger, then they would stare at me, even the me in the dream would stare at me, but the doll, I didn't have the doll earlier in the day.

In the dream Rachel seemed life-like, it would look at me when I asked myself something, as if it were telling me something. About ten minutes before my Uncle came (in the dream) I woke up.

Strange enough, I wasn't in my room any more. Even stranger enough I was in my bed and right next to me was my night table. With the doll on it. It was sitting there, staring at me, and it wasn't in the same position I put it in, but so I wouldn't scare myself I told myself it was from tossing and turning during the dream.

I looked around to see where I was. I had been looking around for quite some time now and had been, and started crying. (I can't help it if that's the type of person I am.) I had finally figured out where I am.

There are lots of round basketball type things (only bigger) and the background is such a deep blue it's almost black.

Right now I'm floating helplessly in outer space with that doll I named Rachel, my bed, and my doom.

The End

Victoria Larkin

Two of the eighth grade "Utopias" follow:

Year: 100, 196

It all started one day when I was swimming in the ocean at miami beach and then I got deeper and deeper, I could feel the pressure suddenly I felt myself out of air. then I saw a wide eyed man he was in a air tight cave I swam over there for he had power over me, we got in and all of a sudden I could breath again he said would you like to see the future? I was furious and I said yes and in this air tight cave under water he pulled out a store and we walked through the first thing I saw was my grave "Fred Zydel" Born 1957 died 2031 then I glanced over to my left and saw another grave but this one read Cecilia Cladone Born 2007 died 2109 this really got me because I saw that we were possible more than 250 years in the future then I walked out of the grave yard and the sign which was a source of ultra violet gamma rays that were made from a completely different source of energy that was every discovered read "5000" year old graveyard" Fell:2200 then I asked someone whats the date, he replied 7221 the man was 2 feet tall he had no pinky No little toe a big chin and a gigantic brain the man looked at me and was startled, he said

(continued on next page)

you belong in a museum you went extinct except about 600,00 in 1985 when your primitive energy usage polluted the world he also said the ones who lived through it decided to start from scratch You were called: EARLY Human Physical power. which means you still needed your muscles to do work. then I noticed that all along he wasn't walking his feet wasn't moving his lips when he was talking or when he was walking his feet wasn't moving he brang me to his city, then I wondered where did that man go? Well I didn't worry about it when I was in the city there was no matter no solids liquids or gasses. Just colors and they look like buildings and you can walk in and walk out it's like looking at a ultra violet picture. the people there did not litter but were very kind then I felt myself walking and walking but I did not want to walk this way I was pulled! then I read a sign on a door "museum of physical history" I was walking in I did not want to a line of about 600 men watched me and I walked straight on a stand and remained there ever since.

Fred Zydel

One day I decided I was going to get away, away from the bad in the world. Maybe if I found a new place and could bring all the good people in the world there, So:

Friday morning Dec. 26, 1970 I took my bike (which I got for Christmas) and went to call for my two friends Judy and Danny. I had told them about it the night before. So we all set off on our bikes to the end of the hudson river. We knew it was deserted there and we figured maybe we could find the gate to another world.

We decided we would go down to the bottom of the river but if we didn't find the gate we would drown you see if you found the gate you could breathe because it had an air lock in it and the new world would have plenty of air. So we rode our bikes into the water and started peddling very fast. Once Judy, that's my girlfriend got caught in some seaweed and Danny & I had to pull her out. We had gone down very deep after an hour and were beginning to lose our air. Then Danny spotted a huge, silver gate. We knew this had to be it. We opened the gate and all of a sudden our air came back and we could breathe again. This world we saw was beautiful it was full of trees and grass and so it seemed beautiful people. The people were of all races and colors. But different from our world were nice to each other. As we came in they immediately offered food and places to rest and enjoy the beauty of the place. As we walked through (we left our bikes at the gate) we saw stores and schools like our world but everything was warm and beautiful. We then decided that we were going to get the good people from our world and bring them here. We hopped on our bikes and took a breath of air and went back up. We took all our friends and brought them to the river. We went down but had to come up again 'cause we couldn't find the gate. We may never find it again but we will still keep on trying. Who knows what will happen?

Lisa Methfissal

Working independently, Miguel Ortiz also gave an imaginary world assignment to his sixth graders at P.S. 54 in the South Bronx. Mr. Ortiz' diary begins:

"I asked the class to make up stories about imaginary places. Places to which one gets by means of magic. They all knew the Wizard of Oz so we talked about that as an example. We also discussed Alice in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass, The Time Machine, etc. I also asked them to describe plants and animals that might be found in an imaginary place and got some interesting drawings as a result."

Below are two examples of the imaginary places discovered in Mr. Ortiz's class. The second, "What I Went Through?" incorporates many of the elements of Alice in Wonderland, yet seems to us a very fresh and imaginative re-telling.

Terror in the Year 5000

Once upon a time a man was about to commence upon a scientific experiment. He was building a time machine that would send him 5,000 years into the future. The time 500 hours before he would enter into the future, it was time he went in and pulled the lever and went into the future where he found himself in a world where everything was automatic. Levitation had been discovered and new weapons were made. People were staring at him and he was arrested because of the way he was dressed. He was in a strange jail with buttons on the wall, he pushed one and immediately he was out and he looked at the time watch and it was exactly 2 minutes before he returned. He opened the door which led to a forest and a creature 60 feet high was behind him. He jumped out of its way and it went down a cliff but the fall of the beast was so fierce that the world shook. He laughed. Then all around him were interplanetary creatures of all kinds. He was terrified. Then all of a sudden, a creature 5,000 feet high ate the animal. The man was feeling terrified and funny he was disappearing. He was back in 1970. He destroyed his machine and began building a huge teleporter. Which would someday be very useful to the world in the year 5,000 of the galaxy. He was going to leave it in a house of brick and he always remembered his adventure in terror of the year - 5,000.

End

Francisco E. Alvarez

What I Went Through?

One day my mother told me to clean up my room. As I was cleaning the dresser, suddenly my hand just fell in. I was amazed. Then I tried my whole body. Then I was on my way down some place. When I woke up I saw this talking insect. He was mad at some one. My eyes couldn't believe what I was seeing.

So he looked like he was mad at me, so I started to walk on this strange path. Then I saw a kingdom, well, it looked like a kingdom. So I started to run as fast as I could, but when I got there, it just disappeared into thin air. Then I started to walk again so I saw this rabbit. It was like he was late for something and he was fussing a lot. Then he started to walk towards some kind of palace. Then I started to run after him without him seeing me. He and I went through this glass then I rushed with him. I was spotted by one of the soldier cards. Then I had to fight the cards. They had swords, too. I was near one, so I held it up and started to fight. I had won. Then a cheese king came out. Then a banana queen came out, too. The king said, "What a good fight." Then he said, "How about being my guard." I said, "No." He said, "If you don't be my guard, I will throw you in the dungeon." I still said no. So he told his guard to put me in the dungeon to think about it. So I found a loose bar and took it out. I started to run and run. I got away from the outside guards I had and bar in my hand to find the place I fell in so I dig and dig, but no use. I saw the guard then. All of a sudden this fairy godfather. Then I said, "Please let me go back." The fairy said, "All right, if you promise not to come back here."

The End

Paul Latten

Mystery Faces

(FROM THE DIARIES OF RON PADGETT, P.S. 61, MANHATTAN)

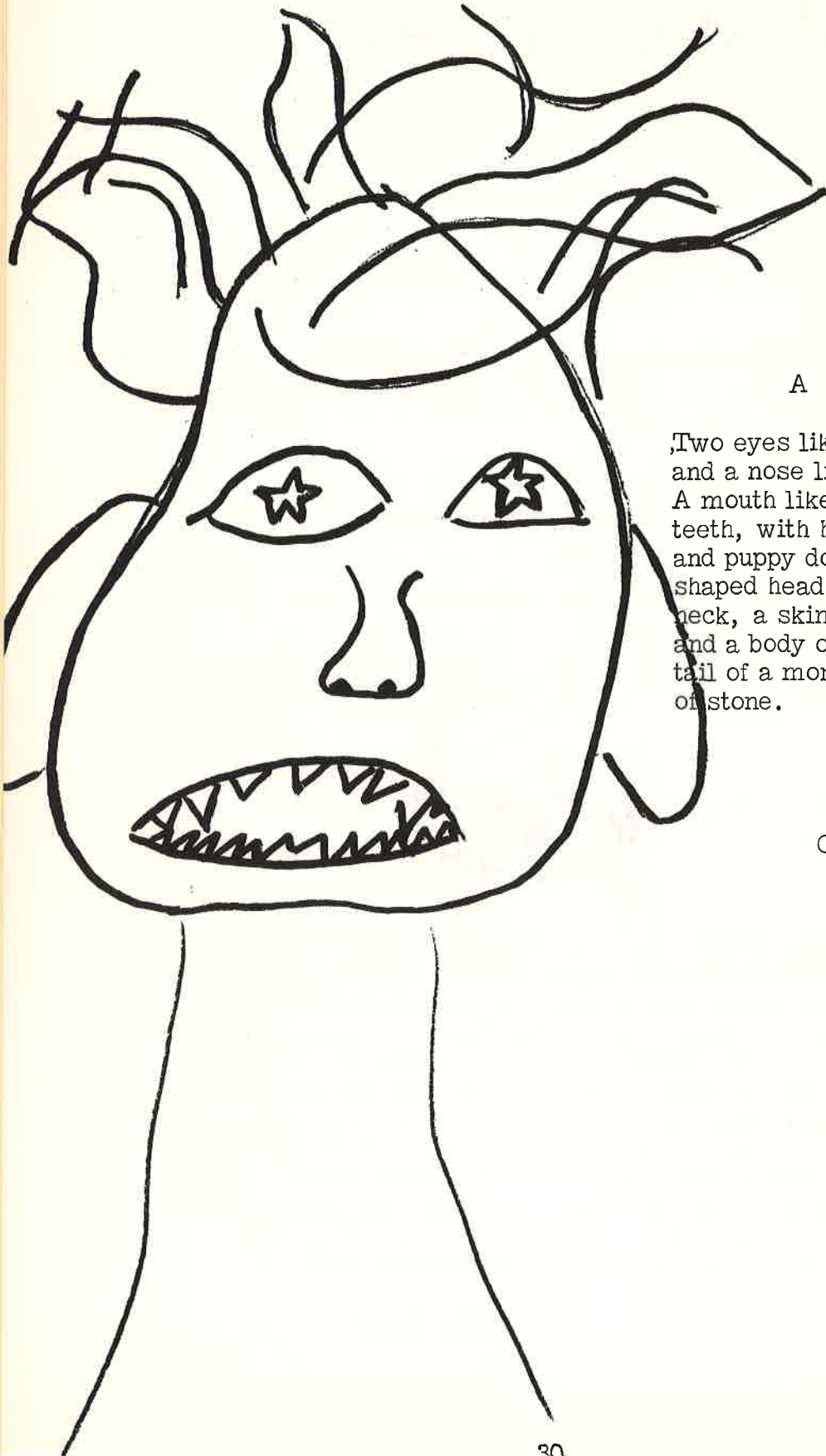
"Write a poem describing a face. Example: it has two eyes, a nose, mouth and ears. But to add one weird detail: I draw a face on the board and then have a flower growing out of one ear. It looks very funny."

This Holey, Stringy, Bang-Bang Creature



Well, there's this thing that looks sort o' like an egg. It's got these other things, two of 'em, but smaller, also shaped like an egg. On this thing there's some sort of thready stuff. Then there's a hump with two holes in it. There's a line in between the two holes. In both of these holes there's a thing that goes bang!! bang! Right below the holey lump with two things that go bang!! bang! there's two pink, thick curved lines. In between there are these hard white things. Above the two little things that are shaped like an egg there's some curvy hair. I wonder what this holey, egg-shaped, pink, stringy, lumpy creature is?

Eliza Bailey



A ?

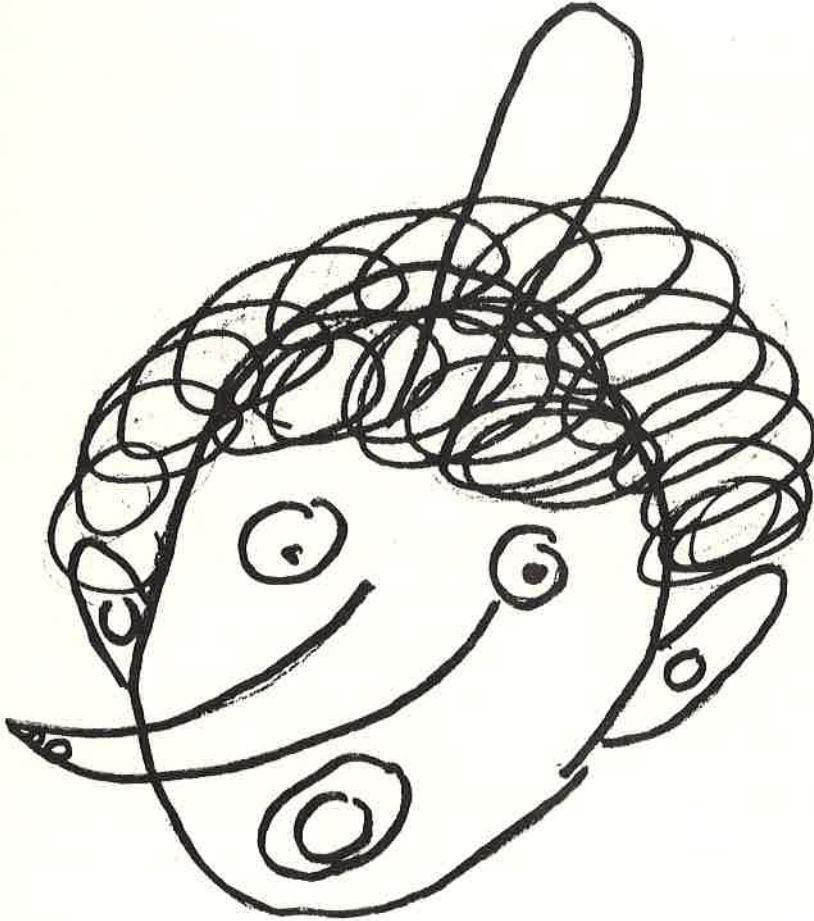
,Two eyes like galaxy within
and a nose like a man's nose.
A mouth like a man with wolf's
teeth, with hair like worms
and puppy dog ears and egg-
shaped head and a 10 ft. long
neck, a skin like baby skin,
and a body of a fish, and a
tail of a monkey, and feet
of stone.

Guy Peters

"Things or Thing"

It is a round shape. It has a lot of hair on it. It has two things that stare at you. Something big sticking out of it with two holes at the tip. It has a big circle and another circle in it, and is like a recording, but you can't shut it up, and then there's something sticking out of the circle on both ends. It's a half of the circle it has another little hole in it and that's what I am thinking of. He has a unicorn horn sticking out from the middle of his head.

Maria



Word Rummy

(FROM THE DIARIES OF PHILLIP LOPATE,
EAST HARLEM YOUTH SERVICES)

"In mid-morning I brought in several packs of drill cards and announced that we were playing word rummy. It was the first time I'd ever tried playing such a thing, having seen it once in a book of suggestions, and wasn't sure what the sets should be: rhyme words, same prefixes or roots. I wanted to do nouns and verbs, to clinch a grammar lesson of recent days, but the words were on the baby verb and preposition level, while another pack contained nothing but nouns with pictures. It didn't seem to matter because the act of holding cards in our hands during school hours was satisfaction enough. The rules kept changing, someone proposed that sentence ideas could be sets, or just two of a kind. The new helper, Linda, a beautiful zaftig black girl in a dashiki, kibbitzed from the side and gave advice to both Pam and Tony. Much joking about card sharks, gaining unfair advantage, etc.-- all normal within a game that was steadily making less and less sense! By some happy accident we had been discarding cards openly in a row instead of one on top of another, and everyone was quick to see patterns and stories (hot - again). Finally Pam made a sweep up of all the cards from the one she needed to complete her set, thus audaciously jumping from gin rummy to Old Maid. Now all the cards were face up on the large wood table and Pam and Linda began to see sentences and connections. Naturally, instead of forcing them to stick to the game, I encouraged them. Soon we were all swooping around the 200 cards to find appropriate word links. A table full of poems. Some were simplicity itself:

"children
grow
ask
them

"Others more complicated:

"two cat feet make very warm ball together

"Or surreal:

"windows can open beds

"Meanwhile Kenneth the tough guy had taken a corner of the table with the noun pack and was putting together the loveliest combination s:

"squirrel cake
money hair cap
monkey milk

rain door (isn't that pretty, from raindeer?)
girl's pig face

"And Pam had discovered how to make actual words from two picture cards:

"corn flower
dog wood

"I explained to them the Chinese ideograph, words made of collections of images. They were perfectly happy playing with words for an hour and wanted to do it again in the afternoon. I can't think of a better way to introduce poetic imagery and grammar at the same time."

Mr. Lopate's students also developed some longer pieces using the "Word Rummy" technique. Here they were not confined to the word-cards alone, but picked one word at random, then wrote their own sentence for the word.

My Seven Hungry Wives

I wish I lived in the center of the earth. Seven gray moles would be my wives. My seven wives would be very far from beautiful, but we would travel all through the earth together. All seven of my wives once won the Miss Ugly Center of the Earth contest. They sleep upside down like bats at night. When they're hungry their long bumpy tongues hang out. Their eyes start to salivate camel snot. Most times our dinner is monkey vomit. We would select pretty eagle eye ball and boil them in rat tail gravy. Sometimes drinking our alligator teeth juice cuts our tongues. If you care for any stop by any time.

Ruben Keene

These Wonderful Eyes

I found eight baby mice in my drawer. I decided to buy food for the mice. They jumped upon the cheese. They pulled the cheese down and started digging into it.

The next day I got up and they were gone. I tell you, they got on my nerves. I want you to bring me a pound of hands. Don't forget to cut off the nails. The hands have been rough, they forgot to use Ponds. I think we should put some gravy over the knuckles. I opened up the refrigerator door and one hand jumped on me. Now I keep my eyeballs in a black cage. Well I think that I'll cook the eyeballs for dessert.

The dessert began to grow on me. I don't know what I did to dessert this. They were so kind and sweet. When I got to the end of dessert it was so hot that my saliva began to boil. Every person should try these wonderful eyes.

Isabel Torres

Flower Gardens

(FROM THE DIARIES OF RON PADGETT, P.S. 61, MANHATTAN)

"Since I must leave town in a few days and can't get over to the school, I'm giving a final assignment by mail and hoping the teachers will give it to their classes. I wrote each teacher a brief letter explaining the 'assignment' which is as follows:

"Write a list of the names of flowers on the blackboard (I provided such a list, made from seed catalogs, of the most famous or common flowers) and ask the kids to write anything they wanted but using as many of the names as possible, plus any others they might like to add, either real or imaginary. The idea is to create a host of Flower Garden Poems, a timely idea if nothing else. (I myself have written such a poem with terrific success.)

"List of flowers for garden poem:

Snapdragon	Rose
Daisy	Morning Glory
Geranium	Tulip
Sunflower	Marigold
Pansy	Petunia
Sweet Pea	Bachelor Buttons
Chrysanthemums	Carnations
Tiger Lily	Begonia
Forget-Me-Nots	Buttercups
Phlox	Zinnias
Iris	Anemones
Daffodils	Crocus
Hyacinths	Poppies

and any others, real or imaginary, anyone cares to add.

"You might suggest that this is a good chance to use a lot of colors."

My Flower Garden

My flower garden is beautiful as sunshine,
It has many different kinds of colored flowers,
It has roses that are red, Daisies that are red
and white,
It has sunflowers that look just like the sun
when they're shining right,
When I look at my garden in the morning, I see
beautiful Anemones with colors as yellow
and gold when they're waking up,
As I look at the garden at noon, I can see navy
blue and orange buttercups,
And last but not least in the evening I can see
the Forget-Me-Nots go to sleep reminding
me of something,
When I'm asleep I can hear and see a garden
with Bachelor Buttons and Poppies and
Pansies sing.

Ruben
Class 6-1

Marigold

I see in the garden lots of marigolds.
In the morning it shines like the sunshine.
They look like the glory of heaven.
It has different colors red, yellow, gold.
They are closed like my eyes.
They look happy in the morning.
The marigolds look like the colors of Mr.
Bowman's eyes.
When it is dark they say good night.

Gerardo Irizarry
Class 6-1

My Garden

In my garden I have pretty smelling Daisies,
Marigolds, Petunias, and Roses
I keep them smelling that way by watering
them with my watering hoses
I also grow sunflowers that have perfume
power
My garden contains Zinnias, Tiger Lilies,
and Buttercups
They always get eaten up by my 10
baby pups.
Now I told you about my flowers
and their perfumed powers.

Lenora Calanni
Class 6-1

The Red Roses in My Garden

The roses are red.
The look wet.
They scatter around my garden.
Then they grow their leaves green
and red.
Every day I go to the garden
They look smiling and welcoming
I remember when I found their seeds
in the park.
Then I put the seeds into my garden
Now they grow bigger and bigger
Then they're in full bloom.

San Lum Wong
Class 6-1

Garden Poem

My Garden is full of the sweet scent from Sunflowers
My sunflowers are blooming with bright yellow
My sunflowers get all the sunlight they need through my glass roof
Right next to my Sunflowers are my beautiful Carnations
When my carnations are in full bloom I use them as
I use red and white carnations depending on what color suit I wear
I hate to cut the carnations to wear
I hate to see flowers die
The sweet scent attracts bees to land on my flowers.

Victor Cheng
Class 6-1

My Favorite Flower Bed

In my garden
My favorite border
Has beautiful pink
Gloriosa daisies,
White balloonflowers,
Blue Sugarplum Petunias,
Pink cinquefoil
And Blue Mink Ageratum.

I ordered all the seeds
From Park Seed Company
In Greenwood South Carolina.
Under the ageratum
I planted spring bulbs.
Every spring the most beautiful
Pink daffodils that aren't pink
come up
They are from the Burpee Seed
Company

I ordered the un-pink daffodils
From Burpee Seed Company
They were supposed to be pink
So now I order everything
From Park Seed Company
Whose pink daffodils aren't pink
Aren't pink either,
But I don't mind.

I love my unpink daffodils
And the pink gloriosa daisies
The hybrid blue Sugarplum petunia
The delicate white hybrid cinquefoil
And the Blue Mink Ageratums
And all the other flowers
In the garden of my imagination

All these flowers are real,
and they are in the Park Seed Company's
spring catalog. Burpee Seed Company
is also real and I did order some
"pink daffodils" that weren't pink.

Erin Harold
Class 6-1

The Yew Tree (in my Garden)

If you go into a forest glade next
to a river
You usually see snakes, (that
can turn your liver)
Among these glades that you see
(none are as great as mine)
In one of these is my yew tree
(only the snakes are friendly)
There is a bench around the tree
And since my garden is in a glen,
the view is mighty to see
The Border of my garden is a
fence of Touch-Me-Nots
The interior (much prettier) are
roses with no thorns
And on the yew tree there are
orchids in a lovely myrtle
bloom
The spring in which the stream
does run is clear for you
to drink
The apple smell is there so thick
you cannot think (and don't
want to)
But when Silvershod and Maura
have their feast of Buttercups
And drink up lots of Snapdragon
nectar and feast on
anemone ambrosia
The cow jumps over the moon
And the oliphaunt stomps through
pansy and petunia patch
(saying)
Choo a Choo a Choo Tooth
Munch Munch
Nicey
But ever since I crossed, a
geranium with my Yew tree
I've been bugged ever since
I struck
Yewranium*

*Yuk Yuk Yuk

Jean Morrison
Class 6-1

FAILURES

We still believe that descriptions of teaching "failures" are as enlightening as glowing accounts of success - if not more so. The success stories often slough over subtleties of process and style which don't command attention until they trip a teacher up.

Here are two more "failure" stories from our writers' diaries. Note that in both cases the writers were aiming high, taking the kinds of risks which characterize good teaching but which also guarantee many depressing and disappointing hours in the classroom.

Any teacher who is brave enough to share his failures with the readers of the Newsletter is assured of many sympathetic ears.

Panthers & Lords

(FROM THE DIARIES OF RUBY SAUNDERS, J.H.S. 136
AND MIGUEL ORTIZ, P.S. 54 BRONX)

(Ruby Saunders)

"I arrived at the open door of P.S. 136 at 9:30 AM. Signed in and walked to the third floor to room 318. The class drifted in a few minutes later. We went through warm-up exercises. Shaking your shoulders, head, and arms, then relaxing, stretching out in the chairs and humming. I wrote these words on the board: Revolution, evolution, black, power, Young Lords, Panthers. One boy in the class was asked to come to the board and lead the class in reciting these words. Everyone was asked to think about the words for a few minutes. I asked for poems or thoughts using the words or combinations of the words. Only one girl had to be coached.

"In the eighth grade class the same general things mentioned above were done. Only this class read aloud the written work from the ninth-grade classes. They were impressed.

"Both classes were generally unaware of the Young Lords and the Black Panthers although more students were aware of the Panthers. One black student told a Spanish-speaking student that she should know about the Young Lords because they are Puerto Ricans. They wanted to know how I felt about the two groups. When I told them that I didn't want to influence them by telling them my thoughts on the subject they cooperated and wrote down all that they knew.

"The ninth-graders were not willing to speak-out on the subject at all. They wrote down a little of what they thought only because I told them not to sign their names. One student told me she had never seen words like 'Young Lords' and 'Black Panthers' in school, and that no teacher had ever spoken about the current revolution.

"I was greatly depressed by how much these students didn't know about something that means a great deal to them as Black people."

* * * * *

(Miguel Ortiz)

"I attempted to use the class' knowledge of the Panthers and the Young Lords as a starting point. Disaster!"

The Collaborative's Director, Marv Hoffman, observed the class in which Mr. Ortiz gave the Panthers and Young Lords assignment, and wrote the following notes:

"Miguel's performance was one of those instructive failures. As he said afterwards what was on his mind was the failure of anyone to bring up any questions of race and ethnicity when he went to school. So he started out by asking what the kids knew about the Panthers and the Young Lords. What he got back threw him so off balance that he never recovered the initiative. The kids either knew nothing or knew incredibly distorted things: e.g. Lords hate Black people, or Panthers hold cops hostage. All this came as no surprise to me, having read Ruby Saunders' stuff. But Miguel didn't know where to go from there - whether to lecture on current events or to go on to something else. As it was he had already led the discussion into too much of a current events context which was beginning to assume all the unreality of those information orgies that characterize so much of classroom work.

"I'm sure you can get to questions of race, identity, oppression, etc. from a more concrete level - using the kids' own experiences, for instance. Miguel made one abortive attempt at that by asking the kids to recount experiences in which their race or ethnic background caused them some hurt, but there wasn't any follow-up on this and I'm afraid the kids were left dangling.

"Just one of those inevitable down days."

Here are some samples of the work produced in Miss Saunders' class:

I'm not really interested in the Black Panthers.
All I know is that one of them was on trial for
murder.

I don't know anything about the young Lords or the Black Panthers, but maybe I am say a couple of things about them. Sometimes I think that these two organizations are trying to good and sometimes I think that they are trying to do bad. Theses organizations get me mixed up But pretty soon I'll find out what they're really up to.

Black Panthers

A organization which offices in some major cities. It claims it will fight crime in the streets. But the Black Panthers use crime to rob, steal and murder also. They riot, kill cops, call people pigs. They hate the world they deal with the devil and no one else. They plan to take over the world. It will be a world of hate and dictatorship. They will kill everyone that does do as they say the old will be killed.

Neither failures nor successes are as total as we often tend to portray them. There were a few interesting pieces written in response to this assignment, among them the following.

Around my block there are a lot of Drug Addicts and one day a super of the next building started teaching us karate.

When he finished his lessons the kids went outside and one of them got hit by a car. It so happen that this kid was brother-in-law of a drug addict so all the drug addicts jumped one of the supers so he said he went to the Black Panther information center so that they could clean up the community of drug Addicts.

Black Panthers

1st Voice - What are they
Better yet who are they
What do they want?

2nd Voice - Freedom for all
Black People who live in
Slums That is what they
are and What they want!

Young Lords

1st Voice - Who are these
so called people
who call themselves
The Young Lords
What are they trying to do?

2nd Voice - A group of Spanish
people fighting for
Freedom for other
Spanish people
With the name
Young Lords!

3rd Voice - Right On!

CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

Q. Do you recall the first thing you ever wrote?

A. I'll never forget it. It was in the sixth grade. We had been told to write one of those incredibly boring "What I Did During Christmas Vacation" things. I made up a story about going bobsledding with my brother. The story ended with an accident, losing control of the sled and crashing into a tree, at which point I woke up and found I had been dreaming and had fallen out of bed. The teacher gave me a zero, saying I didn't write what I had really done during vacation. That's when I began my career of hating school.

(-from an interview with novelist Edgar Smith which was published in the New York Times Book Review. Mr. Smith has been on Death Row in a New Jersey prison for the past twelve years awaiting the outcome of a long series of appeals on his case.)



Working with young people is never a smooth, uneventful process. It can be taxing, sometimes even dangerous. This is no less true for the writer than for the regular classroom teacher. From time to time the writers find themselves on the brink of - or in the midst of - physical encounters with their students, with nothing but their instincts to see them through. The ways in which these encounters are handled often set the tone for the future course of the relationship between a writer and his students. For these reasons we have extracted from our diaries the descriptions of three such experiences which appear in this section: "Big and Bad Like Alan Ladd", "Meet Me 'Round the Corner", and "Indian Wrestling". Each situation was handled in a way the writer felt to be appropriate at that moment, in that context. No easy formulas. No guaranteed results.

Big and Bad Like Alan Ladd

(FROM THE DIARIES OF RUBY SAUNDERS, JHS 136, BRONX)

When I arrived at the school, I was greeted by a locked door, an officer of the law, and a 'sign-in' book. I wrote my name in the book. . . getting the feeling that I had just entered a funeral parlor . . . or Baptist Church. . the latter being more like it. . . because of the noise and general chaos. I entered the General Office. . here, I signed-in. . again. I was given a pass by the secretary and directions to the assistant principal's office. His door was locked as were all the classroom doors. The hallways were covered with litter, and small groups of students were cussin' and fussin' in the corners. After coffee and a couple of cigarettes, which I took to be a bribe, the assistant principal ran interference for me. . getting me to my assigned class. By the way, I had to 'sign-in' for him, also. The bell sounded for the fifth period class. I had been told that that sound was the bell. . it sounded like an air-raid warning. Taking a deep breath, I knocked on the locked-door.

The room looked like an oversized wastebasket with windows . . . and disorder prevailed. I heard a small voice saying. . ."I Told you so". Right away, I decided that I had a choice. I could leave. . . or stay. I was brave. I needed the money to pay my rent and for food. . . for my cat, and someone else very dear to me. . . namely, yours truly. So I stayed. There were two other teachers in the room. One was sitting in the window. . it was the safest spot from where I stood, and the other, Mr. X had a strange hold on one child that didn't let you know who was winning. The children were having a good time!

For what seemed to be forever, the noise went on and on. At this point I decided to help out. In my most shocking voice and using the element of surprise I said, "Shut-up!" and "Sit-down". . . loud and mean. It worked. . . So I followed it up with my Bette Davis Special. . . I lowered the boom. . . all the children decided that I meant business. . . and were silent. In that precious silent moment, I said. . ."The next person who says anything will be slapped in the mouth!" From the back of the room came a loud "HUH!". . . which could be interpreted as meaning 'Shit ____'. My bluff had been called. . . somebody bought my wolf-ticket. In the highly dramatic moment that followed, I picked up the pack of notebook paper that was on my desk and walked firmly but slowly to the buyer. I had checked out her size. . . which was small. . . and her attitude. . . which was "Big and bad like Alan Ladd." In between "You ain't slapping me!" and "You ain't my mother!" I hit her dead in the mouth with notebook paper. Shocking the shit out of the teachers, who were doing nothing. . . and the class. After a few "fuck you's" and nearly knocking down Mr. X my little Miss. . . exited stage right. The class was as silent as an empty church. We had a class.

The title (of my first assignment) was "In The Morningtime". Each child listed the people with whom he lives. . .and began writing character descriptions for each person. Overlooking the noise outside the locked door, we discovered. . .that the attention span for the students was very short. . .having never concentrated on anything for any given length of time; and that spelling was impossible. . .for many, many reasons; and that writing skills were generally very poor. . . there were no free-thinkers. They had to be told everything. . .three and four times. . .even the ones who wanted to do the work, lacked understanding. Creative writing. . .a lovely idea: total reorientation was needed in its place. They needed all the basic skills retaught to them. . .They had no tools with which to work.

The end of the class was very similar to the beginning. Chaos prevailed. Mr. X collected the papers and told me the next class was across the hall. I assured the students that I would be back Wednesday. I was flattered by their concern. Using this positive feeling, I walked over to my next class. Talking about repeat performances, - this class was not a class, and very little could be done at the time to make it one. My strangeness and the grapevine report of what I had done were the only two elements that allowed us to get started. I didn't feel like doing battle in this room. I felt that I had embarrassed Mr. X enough.

The bell sounded. The relief that I felt was reflected in the faces of the teachers. We had been saved by the bell! Thank you, Jesus. . . .! The special projects instructor and I walked into the cluttered hall. You've heard of "jumpin' from the frying pan into the fire", haven't you? That's what we did when we walked into the hallway. She had on a short blue skirt and a matching sweater. . .and looked more like a Broadway dancer than a teacher. . .and I was wearing a black mini dress with a silk scarf wrapped around my head. . .what I looked like will soon be revealed. Over the loud, I should say under the loud comments made about her Afro-hairdo, which was beautiful. . .and other comments made about different parts of the body. .ours, you know. . .we talked about the children and the school in general. . ."Like a dog". . .my grandfather says that one. She was still wondering how she got herself involved in the first place, and I was in no position to tell her. I haven't seen her since. As I said before, I had to pay my rent and eat . . .so "I came back!"

I didn't feel at all good about what I had accomplished with my classes...and I especially felt badly about having to hit that child. I hate fighting with children. I'd rather fight with stubborn grown-folk, who won't listen to you...than children. Children you can reason with if you're honest.

The assistant principal, Mr. Flournoy, and I were discussing what could be done and what had been done about the discipline problem in the school. . .when at the door appeared. . .my little Miss. . .and her sister whom she had gone home to get. . .and had worked her sister up to the point where she was ready to beat my brains out. . .she looked like she could do it, too. I recognized my little Miss, right away. . . and told them to come in. . .not knowing what-in-the-Hell was going to happen. I felt strangely alone. . .as the little sister pointed at me and said. . ."There she is! She's the one!" Big sister's voice was saying . . ."You hit my sister?" "Whatcha you doing beating on her?" I could hear that little voice saying. . ."I told you so". I refused to be scared. I said. . ."Yes, I hit your sister. . .I had no other choice. I had no intention of allowing a twelve year old child to drive me out of a classroom." I caught her off guard with my bravery, which was a fleeting thing. Big sister said. . ."You could have called me. . . she done something wrong."

I continued my point. "I had some twenty odd children in that class, I couldn't leave them to call you. Only one person had to leave . . .your sister decided to be that one. I had warned everybody. Little sister, realizing that her sister was losing ground, said. . ."I wasn't doing nothing". I ignored that one. . .in order to make my point. . ."It was either me or your sister. . .somebody had to go. . . Now tell me, what would you have done in my place?" Little sister . . ."all I said was 'HUH!'" I said "that was just like telling me to kiss her ass. (to big sister) What would you do if she told you to kiss her ass?"

Big sister was coming down off of her high. . .and wanted a cigarette. I offered her one of my Kools and some of Mr. Flournoy's coffee. She took the cigarette. . .refused the coffee.

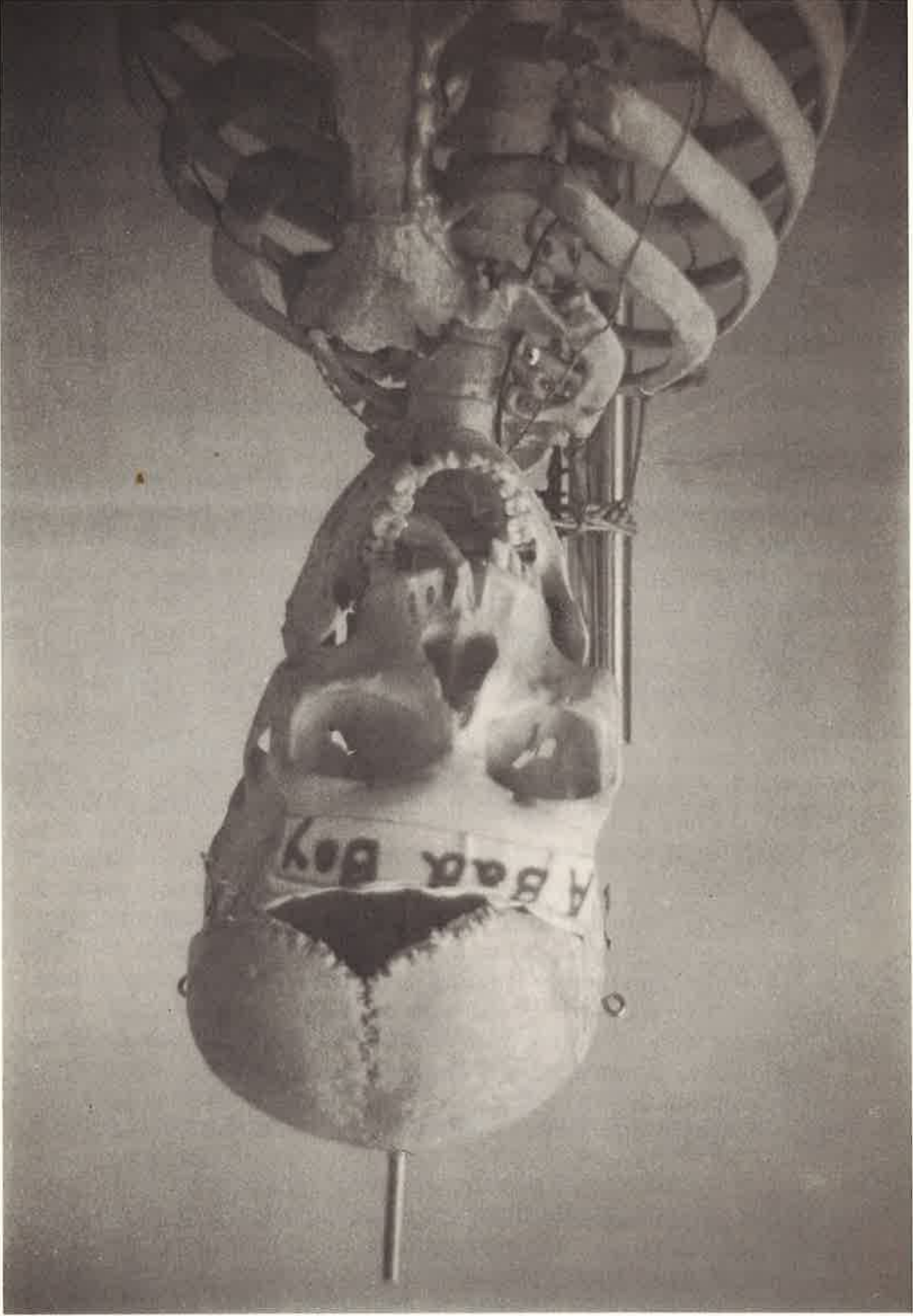
Big sister had decided that I was O.K. . .especially since I had the smokes. . .She took a drag off of her cigarette. Our little Miss. . .was moving from foot to foot. . .keeping her face turned away. . .she didn't want to see her sister destroyed by the weight of mighty words. Big sister mumbled.. "uh hum" . . .Little sister, crushed, ducked her head. Her sister had been defeated by these people. Her sister was the only person she was proud of, because her sister could fight. All the women on the block were scared of her sister. . .Everybody knew that her sister didn't take no stuff. But, . . .here she sat defeated.

I ventured to say. . .
"I had been slapped by my teachers. . .In fact, one teacher, after catching me chewing gum for the hundredth time, slapped the shit out of me. . .the gum too. The last thing I thought about was running home to tell somebody." Big sister smiled. . .before she could get in on the reminiscing. . .Flournoy tock over. "In my day, if you told your mother the teacher had to beat you, you were in for three more beatings."

Everybody laughed. . . Big Sister gave Mr. Flournoy an "AMEN". . . she had lived through that one, too.

We had apologies all around. . . with promises of good behavior from little sister. . . when the door closed on their backs, I flopped into the nearest chair. . . "WHEW!"

(One of the plays produced by Miss Saunders' class, "After School," appears in the anthology section of this issue.)



Meet Me 'Round the Corner

(FROM THE DIARIES OF PHILLIP LOPATE,
EAST HARLEM YOUTH SERVICES)

"Walking to school I kept thinking of horror...Halloween... tales of terror. The mood around the table was leisurely, small talk, reading newspapers. Clay fight enthusiasm. Kenneth Wright and Ray have struck up a friendship interesting to watch. 'I can't stand these goddamn Puerto Ricans, every one of them a homo,' says Kenneth. Ray retorts something bad about niggers. Yet they do everything together. They were running their routine into the ground when I started into a 'discussion' about horror films. I was afraid it would be another of those attempts to launch into a classroom assignment which doesn't sit right with such a small informal group. As I began talking, I had a desperate moment of thinking my words would be swallowed up in a vacuum, and they would listen politely as to a man who talks to himself in a subway. But no, they responded, told me a few things that scared them, only it was still small talk, another conversation threading through the fragmented interactions with no greater or lesser weight. Something more direct was needed: as an example of horrifying writing I read them the poem by Neruda called Solo la Muerte, about flying coffins and spirits. (OH yeah...I had begun the discussion with Halloween. To my astonishment, some of the kids had no idea that it was supposed to be a scarey holiday. They thought it was simply when you asked people for money and had candy corn in school!) Anyway...began reading the poem when, after ten or so lines, Kenneth starts reading in a loud voice the Daily News' round by round description of the Clay fight. This was funny enough, like an Ives composition with two bands marching from opposite sides of town...but I wasn't willing to concede ground. Finally I said, 'Shut up, Kenneth.' He stood up right away. 'Man, you shouldn't tell me never to shut up. You say be quiet. You went too far this time.' He stomps out. I mutter goodbye and continue. By this time no one much wants to relate to horror. Everyone finds math or vocabulary work to do. Five minutes later Kenneth comes back. Sits down, takes out his notebook and writes his own name six times. Very strange. Then with great dignity he crumples the paper and throws it in my lap. Saying 'You tell me shut up once more I'm going to cut you.' It's break time, he goes downstairs, I follow and say, 'You want to tell me something, Kenneth?' He says, 'Yeah, step outside, we'll go around the corner.'

Ray is right by him, laughing nervously at everything he says. I don't think he expected me to take him up on it, but I follow him out the door. 'Meet me round the corner,' he says and hurries off. Though he's been in prison four years for muggings and burglaries, I don't have any fear. I guess that his anger isn't as great as mine, he's worked it off by stomping out the first time. I know he doesn't hate me, in fact, rather likes me. If I'm wrong I get cut.

"I turn the corner and his fist comes at me in a playful jab. Then I tell him what bugged me about his interruption, and say I won't tell him to shut up but I don't want him being so rude again either. He won't look directly at me, keeps playing to Ray. 'It hurt your feelings? ...Man, you shouldn't let nothing hurt your feelings. Man, that's life.' I tell him what I think life is. We split, he comes back after breaktime, and something tells me he'll be very cooperative if I work directly with him. I spend the rest of the morning with him on his high school equivalency review."

Indian Wrestling

(FROM THE DIARIES OF ART BERGER, P.S. 76, QUEENS)

"When I entered the room, the teacher was involved in a war of nerves with the class, attempting to dress their ranks. While she was talking to us, one boy was climbing on top of a cabinet and making like Superman. They seemed to welcome any diversion.

"Later, she came down and joined me at a table in the lunch-room. She was apologetic about the tension in her class, but said that they were trying to impress the visitor. She warned me that the kids would test me, with the Superman (Kenny) being the ringleader. She said that he was one of a family with a large number of children, and was really hungering for attention.

"I returned to the room on time but the teacher was still involved in checking out some of the kid's spelling tests. So I sat down in a corner. There I sat cooling my heels with time passing. Kenny, a wiry light brownskinned boy with a puckish smile came over with Sean, a towheaded lad whose nose sported a cluster of freckles. Both had the devil in their eyes. I beat them to the punch and extended both arms out into position for Indian wrestling. I had practically read their minds. They took me on simultaneously, and as I held them in that position, I told them that with their help I would be able to come to their class regularly to do my thing. That really got to them so that they laughed and both 'slipped me five'. Then we put our heads together and talked about what my thing was.

Kenny's sharp eyes peeped at my cassette and he tapped the play button. Before I could shut it off he sang along in glee with the first line from 'Sitting on the Dock of the Bay'. He said, 'You must be a music man.' I agreed, but said that I was mainly interested in the music that is in the words.

"The boy, still grooving, said, 'I can write songs.' I took him up on it and put paper in his hand. While the teacher was bogged down in her routine, Kenny, with Sean's help and watched by a growing cluster of classmates, penned some lyrics slowly, pausing after every few words to ask about spelling. Before long I had won a new song and some friends, and a promise from Kenny to help me in my visits to the class.

"I finally interrupted the teacher to report that I had a song written by members of the class and that it would be a good way of introducing myself to the rest of the class. She thanked me for being patient and occupying the attention of the restless ones and with only a half hour remaining I took over. I read

KENNY and SEAN'S SONG

I went down the park one day
down by the rivabay
if you see me coming
don't you go the other way.

Let's play together
and watch the river make waves
While the ships go riding by
and we said Hi.

(the park is in back of the school on the edge of
the East River.)"

Do You Give the Yum Yum a Name?

(FROM THE DIARIES OF RICHARD ELMAN, P.S. 42, MANHATTAN)

"November 20 -- I visited Zina Steinberg's class before actually beginning to teach there one Friday afternoon around 2 P.M.

"The children had just come up from luncheon recess and the schoolyard where they'd been playing dodge ball. They were all rather excited, some rather frenetic.

"Most of the children in 3A are Chinese; there are also numerous Puerto Rican youngsters. A large tortoise was prowling the floor; he belonged to a student teacher. There was also some interest in a cake which was being baked by another student teacher.

"Most of the excitement this afternoon was generated by an incident that took place before luncheon recess. One of the children had run back into class from the bathroom to report that she had seen a ghost. Everybody was titillated, alarmed. The rumor became a contagion. Zina encouraged the children to tell about the ghost that was now being witnessed by nearly every visitor to the girls' bathroom and by children in various parts of the room. There were various versions circulating: that he was tall; that he was brown; that he could touch you, yet he was invisible.

My arrival caused some stir. A few of the children were surprised by my large size (I am six foot five inches tall) and wanted to measure me first thing. Nobody yet seemed to know who I was, or what I was going to be doing there. Was I simply a friend of Zina's? I was poked, jabbed, and slapped -- ways to get my attention.

"I joined in a brief communal sing, talked to a number of the children individually, helped one or two with their cuisenaire rods. As a visitor, I was commonplace though rather large.

"I tried to ask about the ghost but that obviously was an experience in which I had not shared and could not now belatedly participate.

"At 3 the children were dismissed and I went off with Zina for coffee and a talk.

"November 24 -- I arrived at room 304 just as Zina was engaged in a rather quiet earnest discussion with all the children seated on the rug before a blackboard.

"As soon as I came in the room she immediately (and somewhat abruptly) introduced me.

"'This is Richard...he'll tell you all about himself...'

"I had intended to speak this first time with less than the thirty-odd members of the class, but found myself plunged into the situation of having to speak to the group at large. I sat down on the floor in front of the children (Zina went off to the rear) and explained that I was a writer which was a pretty nice thing to be, I thought, because I was paid to tell all the lies I liked, and that we were going to talk to each other from time to time and maybe tell some lies to each other and maybe write some of them down.

"Considerable agitation ensued. I was recognized by some from the previous Friday and immediately identified: HE'S THE GIANT...

"A few of the young Chinese males got behind the blackboard and began to poke me.

"They called me FREAK, GIANT...

"Zina called for order from the rear of the classroom and then I asked if anybody could tell me if the ghost I had just seen in the boys' bathroom was anything like the ghost seen last Friday. Mine was just a lot of air that suddenly thickened and turned blue except where this invisible air figure stood who was just plain air with a string tied around his finger which, when I pulled, shrivelled him like a paper bag.

"The class was yelling at me.

"Their ghost was n't anything like that.

"He was short.

"He was fat, he had brown hair.

"He was a she.

"Of course he was. How else would he get into the girls' bathroom?

"Again I was called GIANT. My baldness was also made much of...

"I offered the possibility to them that maybe the word GIANT was as misapplied in my case as the word GHOST was to refer to what we had all variously seen.

"NO NO HE WAS A GHOST DEFINITELY...

"YES HE WAS GIANT

"YOU'RE A LIAR. HE WAS A GHOST ALRIGHT...

"I asked if anybody had bothered to measure the ghost as they had measured me last week.

"Everybody was agreed that you could not measure a ghost, but one little boy said that wasn't true. He had. The ghost was definitely five feet tall (we got a tape measure and he spanned out the distance), had long brown hair down below his waist, and six inch eyelashes.

"Other children were in amused agreement with this description. They allowed it was the truest one available, though there were some who still demurred, and quite a few by now (perhaps ten) who had lost all interest in the discussion and were making a commotion, throwing spit balls, etc., or wandering away to other parts of the room.

"To the happy few I continued:

"Why call it a ghost?

"Why not a flibgibbet? Or an urb? Or a ratta tatta?

"BECAUSE IT WAS A GHOST...IT WAS A GHOST.. WE SAW IT THAT'S WHY...

"But it didn't look like my ghost...

"IT WAS SCAREY...

"So then anything that's scarey is a ghost...

"MAYBE SO...YES...

"WE WERE ALL SCARED...YES...

"Then maybe the word is meant to scare people. Maybe it's the word, not the ghost, you experienced...

"I asked them when they eat a chocolate bar, did they give the yum yum a name?

"(The flavor burst - Note.)

"How do you describe what you smell when you put a flower to your nose?

"Are words names for experiences?

"Or are they ways of experiencing things?

"We decided we would keep a class word book and put down in it any words that really turned us on. Clea was appointed keeper of the larger oak tag volume and she wrote in it in a large hand with a blue felt pen our first entries:

ghost
giant
sir

"Then I told everybody that I thought all these words were lies and that we would talk more about lying next week, and that we would begin to tell some new lies to each other and write them down..."

Dressing Down

(FROM THE DIARIES OF RUBY SAUNDERS, J.H.S. 136, BRONX)

Mr. Y met me in the hall whispering. . ."Miss Saunders, the students were so upset about your not wearing a brassiere" He choked. . ."Oh! God! You don't have one on today!" He coughed and continued. . ."I had to search all over the place for a Vogue Magazine in order to prove to them that the way you dress is the style." I said. . ."It's none of their business how I dress." Knowing that if the students had commented on my dress, the teachers had led the discussion. . ."And furthermore, why didn't you show them the native dress of the African and Spanish women, who have never worn brassieres as a standard mode of dress." Mr. Y choked. . ."I've gotten it all straightened out. . .They (the students) understand, now." I walked into the next classroom mad as Hell.

I gave the students a piece of my mind, let me tell you. I told them the same thing that I had said to Mr. Y. Nobody said nothing! The students looked shocked.

At that moment, I realized. . .these children hadn't said anything about my underwear. . .or the absence of it. I wanted to shoot myself for falling for that garbage Mr. Y had handed me.

Thanks to Mr. Y and Company. . .I had made a jackass out of myself. . .and the students had responded.

The good that came out of the episode surpassed the harm done to my foolish pride. I had shown the students a human being. . .and they responded with some of their best writings. Subject: Cruelty.

From then on. . .I carried my problems and joys to JHS136 every Tuesday. . .The students listened to my beefs. . .and wrote down theirs.

We left playwriting for the playwright. . .and worked with what we had going. Freedom of expression. . .getting it off your chest.

We tried thinking. . .which was a novelty. . .through improvisations. . .Mr. Y said. . .I was teaching acting. We tried storytelling. . .Mr. Y wanted me to teach 'Theme' writing.

Mrs. Z wanted to correct the grammar, and sentence structure.

(FROM THE DIARIES OF MIGUEL ORTIZ, P.S. 54, BRONX)

"As I was leaving the school I was stopped by a delegation of the Parents' Association whose job is to check those who go in and out of the school. When I told them that I would be teaching at the school once a week they reprimanded me for the way I was dressed. Since they were neither friendly nor polite I became incensed and we went to see the principal....He played everything down.

"If I thought my manner of dress was the real issue I would let the matter drop. But the issue is political and racial. These parents identified me with a system that has frustrated and humiliated them. The school has appeased them by letting the Parent's Association dictate the manner in which teachers dress. In this petty thing they are tyrants, but faced with the real problems of the school and the damage done to their children they are impotent. Why don't they complain about the fact that there aren't enough books in the school?

"These parents believe that by acting toward the teachers in the same irrational and degrading manner in which teachers and administrators behave toward the children, they exhibit power and equality commensurate with those whites who come into the neighborhood to occupy the schools.

"The teachers submit to this because they have a vested interest to protect: a large salary and a secure job. I have neither, nor will I sell my freedom for such. I do not relish being the scape goat of black parents who want to strike back at a white system. Though I understand their need to feel important, I cannot let them dictate to me.

My Finest Hour

(FROM THE DIARIES OF RON PADGETT, P.S. 61, MANHATTAN)

"They finished their poems about 2:45 and class halts abruptly 2:55 for room arranging and coats on and ready to go at 3. We had a brief reading by me. I had collected all the poems and said I would read five or so and then we would get ready to go home -- it was Friday afternoon. I read some, to the great delight of everyone, especially the mysteriously penile line by Maria. 'I used to boil hot dogs, but now I squeak the juice out in the bathroom.' This line really brought down the house. I read others. 2:55 came, and Mrs. Strasser told me time's up, as I had asked her to do. I said, 'OK, that's all for today, time to go home.' I have never heard such a storm of protest! The children refused to have me stop, they refused to go home. I explained that it was Friday, they were children, and they should want to get out of school. 'Nooo!' 'Read more!' I was stunned. I quickly read the remaining poems in about 5 minutes, and there was not a moment's inattention in the class. They loved the poems incredibly. It was my finest hour."



CONTRIBUTIONS

The Syracuse Project

In the spring of 1970 poets Donald Justice, Stephen Dunn and Ross Talarico conducted a series of writing workshops for high school students in two schools in Syracuse, New York. Their work was supported by a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. Below are excerpts from the poets' final reports on the project, followed by some selections from the anthology Clear Blue Marbles: poems from the Syracuse Poetry Project, which they produced. The high school teachers who collaborated in the project were Mrs. Ruth Federman and Mr. Sanford Phippen at Corcoran High School and Miss Muriel Ketcham at Central High School.

DONALD JUSTICE

"At the 'orientation meetings', I explained our general purpose and invited the interested students to come back for the six-week workshops which would follow, and Dunn, Talarico, and I each passed out mimeographed copies of some of our poems, read them, called for questions, and asked a few questions ourselves. One question we asked: what modern poets have you read in your textbooks, and what poets have you read on your own? The answers were predictable and disappointing. (Examples: Frost in textbooks; Gibran, McKuen, Simon & Garfunkel, Ferlinghetti on their own.) We were asked the usual type of question, boiling down mostly to what it was like to write poetry. Our answers were probably propaganda, though no doubt true enough: something like - it is a natural activity, which many people can do, and it gives pleasure."

DONALD JUSTICE

"We had agreed in advance, largely as a result of my own experience in teaching the writing of poetry to undergraduates and of reports from similar experiments in New York City schools (especially those of Kenneth Koch), that assignments given in class and performed in class, and afterwards read and talked about in class, so far as time limits would permit, might prove to be the best procedure. Any examples left over or worth talking about further were then Xeroxed and distributed at the next session. Still, not being totally convinced before the fact, and in any case wishing to allow the students taking part as much freedom as possible, we encouraged them to show us poems they had written on their own or might write on their own while the workshops were in operation; further, a few assignments were suggested to be done at home, but the results of these were disappointing, since very few students did them, perhaps missing the stimulation which the presence of their friends and fellow students seemed to provide.

It did prove to be our experience that the in-class assignment or exercise, carried out in class, occasionally by the group acting as a group but more often by the students acting individually, was in fact the most productive method. We got our best results this way, and some of these poems appear in the small anthology we gathered at the end of the six weeks. These 'exercise' poems tend to be short, naturally, partly because time was short, but they are also, in my opinion, generally the most imaginative, the most unpredictable, and perhaps

even the most revealing. One point worth mentioning is that even those who either did no or little work on their own, outside of the class meetings, or those whose work otherwise showed little of interest, did in these assignments on occasion produce work on a level with that of other students who seemed to have more natural talent or more initiative at least."

STEPHEN DUNN

"Overall, the exercises we did in class were far more successful than those that they were supposed to do outside of class. This may be a result of the kind of assignments I gave. They were:

Write a poem about the worst (best) experience they had ever been through as if they were neutral observers of that experience. (No superlatives allowed).

You are a caterpillar about to become a butterfly, or anything about to become something else.

The first four lines of a poem by Charles Simic:

"After I forgot about the horses
And the fire turned into cool water flowing
And the old woman took off her mourning to enter a coffin,
At the end of a long life:"

Students were asked to complete this poem in any way they wanted, though they were asked to try to be consistent with the rhythm and tone already established.

You are the sum of all your experiences --write a poem which defines what that means to you.

Complete these lines: "I am the fourth in a line/of four men.
We are waiting/for things to open up."

The poems that resulted from these assignments were sometimes good. I would mimeograph them and we'd discuss them in class. As I remember, only "The sum of all your experiences" assignment drew out students who hadn't written before.

I think six was the maximum number of poems I received at any time. Thinking anonymity might work, I told them they didn't have to sign their poems. That didn't work. My conclusion was that although

many people were interested in writing poetry only few were capable of such solitary work. . . "

DONALD JUSTICE

"The assignments were designed to propagandize or indoctrinate to some degree, as most assignments are (including, for instance, Koch's), chiefly by showing or suggesting that poetry is not necessarily POETRY, in other words, that it may be other than what it has seemed to be or been taught to be: thus, different assignments tried to isolate and emphasize special features such as image-making, words themselves (ordinary and bizarre both), common speech (phrases and rhythms), and so on. "

ROSS J. TALARICO

"I concentrated most on getting the student to use language he had a real feeling for. I did this by having them use familiar, everyday expressions (and eventually, variations of them), by having them look for found-poems, and by having them use simple activities and simple objects at random to provide a working vocabulary (a process-- exchanging note-cards-- which, through the element of chance, eliminated the gross and ordinary preconceived attitudes which often gave the poems a sermon quality). Often, romantic ramblings and antiquated forms appeared in places where the student felt the need to assure himself that he was writing "poetry", but the notion that elevated language makes for poetry has been with us a long time, and high school anthologies that contain no living poets and high school English teachers who do not read contemporary poets will make it a difficult notion to overcome. "

DONALD JUSTICE

"In my view, those assignments which were concerned with what might be called the 'technical' aspects were more successful than those which tried to elicit feelings and attitudes more directly. The curse of much of the poetry the students had been writing and continued to write on their own was a typical half-naive expression of what they thought of as their very personal inner feelings and moods, their already formed and relatively fixed opinions and attitudes, all of which, not surprisingly, tended to resemble one another. (This, I would say, holds true for much undergraduate poetry in college as well.) A minimal distraction toward more 'technical' concerns often enough had the effect not so much of stifling such expressiveness but of shaping it, or so it seemed to me. In short, the students could not so easily be self-indulgent if given something else to pay attention to while in any case their feelings and attitudes did continue to come out, as of course they should have. At no time were we interested in imposing fixed formal approaches to poetry on the students; in some cases we had to take pains to discourage them from facile rhyming, for instance, or from otherwise trying to make their poems look and sound like POETRY. In this I think we were pretty successful."

DONALD JUSTICE

"The small anthology of work done by the students in the workshops consists of poems chosen by Dunn, Talarico, and me. They seemed the best, or among the best, work, and fairly representative as well. To me these results, especially considered only in themselves as poems, are fairly disappointing. Some of them are, it is true, on a par with what I have seen many undergraduates write, but this is faint praise. Here and there are striking phrases, images, even vestigial poetic forms or ideas for poems, and one or two no doubt are better than this description would lead one to suspect. But I had hoped for more, for better. I believe - but what follows can only be guesswork - that more sessions were needed, smaller groups, a better-designed series of assignments based perhaps on the experience we now have, and, if possible, some advance preparation by the regular teachers before the workshops start, preparation that would consist in part of readings in contemporary poetry (perhaps supported by visits of poets reading their own work or other contemporary poems)."

STEPHEN DUNN

"I had read Kenneth Koch's report of his experiences in N.Y.C. with younger children, which seemed beneficial to all involved. Now that the project is over, and if I had to compare our results with Koch's, I'd have to say we were not very successful. However, to some degree I know we did make many of the students more aware of poetry and their own capacity to produce it. And even though the poetry that was written was frequently not startling, I suspect that the experience as a whole was helpful to the students."

SELECTIONS FROM CLEAR BLUE MARBLES FOLLOW:

FOUND POEM

INVALID STATEMENTS
C 36 ERROR AT STATEMENT NUMBER 3
C 28 ERROR AT STATEMENT NUMBER 4
LIST SOURCE PROGRAM
LOADING HAS BEEN TERMINATED
COMPILATION DISCONTINUED
EXECUTION SUPPRESSED

found on computer program when
asked to add 1 plus 1

Karl Anderson
Corcoran High School
Syracuse, New York

I spin in the air.
Hundreds like me fall, too.
But I still fall alone.
Gentle forces of wind
Sweep
Redirect me.

I may do a million things!

Wash the summer dust from a drooping leaf
Or
Fall upon the faces of mad girls lying in meadows.

The sun reappears
And a child watches
Light sparkle through my natural prism.

I am still falling...

But closer and closer I come
To being one
With all my brothers

TOGETHER
We are a force
That can crumble mountains
And drown the children...

And when I join,
My aloneness is gone
For I will plunge with the others
Over the cliffs

I will be indistinguishable from your eyes...

When time passes
Old age comes
And I will harden and freeze
Immovable from past convictions
Forever in the right.

Alexandria
Corcoran High School
Syracuse, New York

antiprison

we are slaves to a line;
tired tightropers, wishing
to walk on
adjacent air.

our minds are boarders here
as we eat spectacular
meals.

we are children guilty of
innocence,
and sentenced to freedom
in an antiprison.

Jeffrey Cooper
Central High School
Syracuse

THE WORLD GROWN SUCH EXPECTANT CREATURES HELD
CAPTIVE BY UNBLOOMED DREAMS OF HEARTS NOW ACHING

Your black face is in my mind
always growing and gaining
as a tumor that will not kill
but be ever-present.
Don't change in the midst of my whiteness.
I want to leave this line
Better than when I came
With you.

Tracy Whitely
Corcoran High School
Syracuse

You can meet someone on a mountain anytime.
They're always looking for a new place to go.

You should know--
You are a friend of the road.

You can love someone on a mountain anytime,
And they won't ask you to stay.

You should know--
You are a friend of the road.

And when you think
that you have found someone
to stay with for a while,
but she says that home
is the only place that she can go,

You should know--
that you can't stay.
You should know--
You are a friend of the road.
You should know--
You belong to the road.

Annie Lauffer
Central High School
Syracuse

The perfect stranger
will conquer my boredom
with his voice,
and my sadness will vanish
as he breathes
on my white nakedness.
My shaking hands
will float and dance.
He will make me perfect.
I will no longer need
his forgiving voice.
I will not be misunderstood.
I will be alone,
and the perfect stranger
will remain
anonymous

Annie Lauffer
Central High School
Syracuse

You Can't Write Poems About Wrestlers

In 1968 Goucher College and the Baltimore Public Schools agreed to cooperate with Teachers and Writers Collaborative in sponsoring a pilot project which placed undergraduate English students from Goucher in the city high schools. The undergraduates read and discussed contemporary poetry and encouraged the high school students to write poetry themselves. The project was directed by Florence Howe, Assistant Professor of English at Goucher. Its success led to the incorporation of the program into the regular undergraduate English curriculum at Goucher. Barbara Danish, one of Miss Howe's students, discusses her initiation into teaching in the report below.

I never wanted to be a teacher. My one constant promise to myself was that once I was out of school, I would never go back. For any reason.

When I was a first-term sophomore I had a course with Florence Howe called An Introduction to Poetry. Our first assignment was to write what our goals were in this course. I wrote that I was not so much interested in how to read or analyze poetry, as I was in writing poetry. My goal was respected and I wrote for the whole term. This was the first time I had had a teacher who let the student decide what she wanted out of the course, and who let this student work with her own goals and grade herself accordingly. If a class could be like this, if a teacher could do this, I thought perhaps school could be good, perhaps it could be helpful for the student and flexible enough to her needs and desires.

From September of that year until April when I started teaching (at Mergenthaler High School, in Baltimore), I had two poetry courses and attended a poetry workshop, where we usually discussed our own poetry. All of this time, I was writing. I wasn't paying much attention to class or to what the rest of the class was doing. You understand that while I thought I had been learning about writing poetry, I had also been learning an understanding of poetry, and an approach to studying poetry.

When I began teaching I learned that every clue that a student gives while he is reading, while someone else is reading, during the discussion - all of it can be used to get into the poem. At first, not being skilled with handling questions and picking up clues. I was not able to get far into the poem, and I missed a lot of chances for discussion. As both the students and I became more experienced in talking about poetry, talking with each other, and following questions and answers, we were able to get more deeply into the poem.

The students had a choice about the poems we would discuss. Twice during the project, I gave them page-long poems, but usually I gave them a page of short poems to pick from. At first I would ask, "Well, which one do you want to read?" When someone suggested a poem, I would ask who wanted to read it, and we would proceed from there. Later, someone would just start reading a poem that interested him. Of course, once in a while there was no poem they wanted to read, but when this happened I would ask, "Why don't you like any of these?" It's important to work with negative as well

as affirmative response to the poetry. For example, on the first day, we had a sheet with four poems: "Pop Poem" by Ronald Gross that they hardly looked at, a long poem which they hardly looked at because of its length, "The Eagle" by Tennyson which they looked at and discussed for a minute, and "Jimmie's Got A Goil" by e.e. cummings. My journal entry reads:

I asked if they liked the poem. They didn't. They had trouble reading it, especially "coitnly." They laughed. It wasn't read well. No one else wanted to read it. They said, "There's something wrong with it. Things are spelled wrong. Whoever wrote it is s foreigner or wants to sound cute. He doesn't know how to spell." They said it wasn't a poem. I asked why and they said because it didn't say anything. I asked why he wrote it. They said, "Well everybody envies someone for something and this guy envies another guy for his girl. He wants her because she can shimmi and twist and twirl."

From the beginning we hadn't used traditional school poems. Most of the poems weren't about subjects that poetry was supposed to be about. One day we were reading one of Henry Braun's poems, "The Wrestlers," because Braun was coming to visit us the next day.

Mike read "The Wrestlers."

Lon: You can't write poems about wrestlers. Poems are about beautiful things like love. (snicker)

Mike: Well they don't have to be.

Lon: Well, I thought poems were just about intangible things.

Me: Well what about "Airplane Glue?"

Lon: That's different.

Me: And the boy who cut off his hand?

Lon: Well that's different too.

Me: And "Last Night I Drove A Car"?

Lon: Well, maybe I don't know what I'm talking about.

Mike: You can write about anything, like that chair over there. About the metal and where it came from and everything.

Lon: Well, write it.

Mike: Naw, I can't.

Lon: You can so.. (to me) He's really intelligent.

Me: Well why don't you try?

Lon: I'll write about dirt.
They start writing. Showing each other. Crossing
out. Ask if I am writing a poem.

This was our first day of writing. Often after that we would get into writing because it helped solve a problem we were having with a poem we were reading. For instance, perhaps you noticed one boy in my group translated everything quite literally while another one could interpret things on a more abstract level. Most of the times we could still communicate, but sometimes discussion was difficult. For example, one day we were talking about "Complete Destruction" by William Carlos Williams:

Complete Destruction

It was an icy day.
We buried the cat,
then took her box
and set match to it.

in the back yard.
Those fleas that escaped
earth and fire
died by the cold.

Mike: Yeah, I think I get it. The cat died and when the fleas crawled out of the fire it was so cold that they died too.

Lon: It must have some other meaning. I don't think he meant cat. I think he's trying to put some point across, but I don't know what it is.

Mike: Well, if he says cat, he should mean it.

Well, we had written before, so I suggested that maybe there was more than a cat and his fleas dying, and perhaps we could try writing a poem which said one thing on the surface and could also be interpreted on another level. In other words, why didn't we write a poem where we consciously made the non-literal translation what we meant. Mike, the literalist wrote:

Think

Many men work to support and comfort others.
For all I know they may have injured themselves
 Take a good look at the sweat
Put into it the craftsmanship and maybe sore
muscles in this
 All this takes place while people sit around.

Lon wrote:

The Man

The Man who
Died/ flew high
in the sky
never to be
seen.

But yet-in-the-high
mountains
he is still heard
as he is perched
on his roost.

With Mike's poem we got into a discussion of lining and how to emphasize things when you're writing a poem. While Mike continued to interpret poems literally, I think that at least while he was reading the poem, he understood the concept of an image, and that a poet can mean a cat to be more things than a cat. However, while he admitted in later discussion that there were such things as images, he still did not understand why the poet didn't just say what he meant.

With Lon's we talked about the subject of the poem. I asked why he had written it and he said, "It was just an interpretation, a miracle." Then we asked him to explain it. He didn't have to. One of the rules of writing was that you never had to show it to anyone or answer any questions about it. But he answered, "Well if a man dies you say a man dies, and if a bird dies, you say a bird dies. But if a great bird is extinct then it's like a man. That's just the way I see it."

The guys liked writing. At the beginning of the project they had said once about a cummings poem, "If we had written that, the teacher would throw it away, but just because this guy cummings wrote it it's a poem." Well, in the project their poems were treated like cummings'. And it was thrilling for them to see their poems mimeographed and discussed

seriously. The first week they were all going to be poets. They all offered their autographs. By the end of the project they agreed that poets probably don't write just for money, the way they had thought at the beginning of the project.

My thoughts and abilities also changed during the project. As a teacher, I developed skill in asking questions, steering a discussion, getting into a poem. I have hardly mastered the technique and obviously need more work in getting into abstract questions such as "If he meant cat, why doesn't he say it?" As a poet, I found that the project erased any lingering thoughts I might have had that one had to be in a certain mood to write. I wrote when everyone else did. Even more than before the project I was learning to understand different styles of writing by being conscious of how I wrote poems, and why I lined in particular ways, or used certain punctuation or certain words. And I could use this knowledge in the discussion, particularly discussion about the kids' own poems.

Writer's Cramp

(FROM 'THE CLASSROOM OF JIM NEWMAN, BERGEN STREET SCHOOL, NEWARK, N.J.)

Jim Newman teaches fourth grade at the Bergen Street School in Newark. He is among the few teachers we have met who has had the opportunity to work for three years with the same group of children. Throughout this time he has concentrated on developing a writing program with his students, and they have produced a number of exciting publications. These range from student-written, student-controlled newspapers, to the development of their own curriculum material on subjects such as Black History. Mr. Newman describes his project below:

"The children in my fourth grade class were previously classified as disciplinary problems, etc. In the first five months I did little but listen to them and talk with them. We did a great deal of role playing in class and acted out situations that occurred at home and in school. For example, if two children had a fight or an argument, they and others re-enacted it and we all discussed it, exchanging roles and trying to understand each others' point of view. From this we started talking not only about ourselves, but about observations, things seen in the neighborhood, etc. A natural transition took place - from oral presentation to the written form.

"At first the writing was simple and short with many grammatical errors. At this point I was criticized for not stressing grammatical construction. I felt that the first efforts at writing should not be stifled. As a result, the development of sentence structure and verbal agreement, etc. lagged. But there was joy and satisfaction in seeing something accomplished and praised. Slowly, ever so slowly, the children's ability to employ good written grammar did develop....

"We wrote about everything that we saw or did. We then began to write the class newspapers. They had various titles such as the "Charlie Brown Reader" and "Writer's Cramp." But the children did them entirely themselves. They wrote their own stencils and did their own collating. It was truly their own paper.

"Needless to say, I have come under tremendous criticism. Many of the adult readers who have come into my room, particularly supervisors, had been critical of the content of the children's work. They resented the recurring theme of violence and the anti-white sentiment expressed so openly. I believe that to the contrary, it is better to deal with these issues truthfully.

Here are some examples of the work Mr. Newman's fourth graders produced for one of their newspapers - "Writer's Cramp."

My grandmother, and grandfather

My grandmother is a nice lady, she gives me candy, money, and things. She trys to take care of us like my mother. She had her house broken in to and I was sad. She was in bed one time and she did not wake up. She was rushed to the hospital and she was alright. My mother, Aunts and uncles, were praying for her and she was alright. I think she had lost blood. She was not strong, and she had to take pills to get strong. My grandfather is a nice man. He gives me money and things, he takes me swimming, and he takes us a lot of places. Only some times he drinks but not all of the time. He had a car, two cars but he crashed one of them and sold the other one.

Anthony Kreps

Last Night

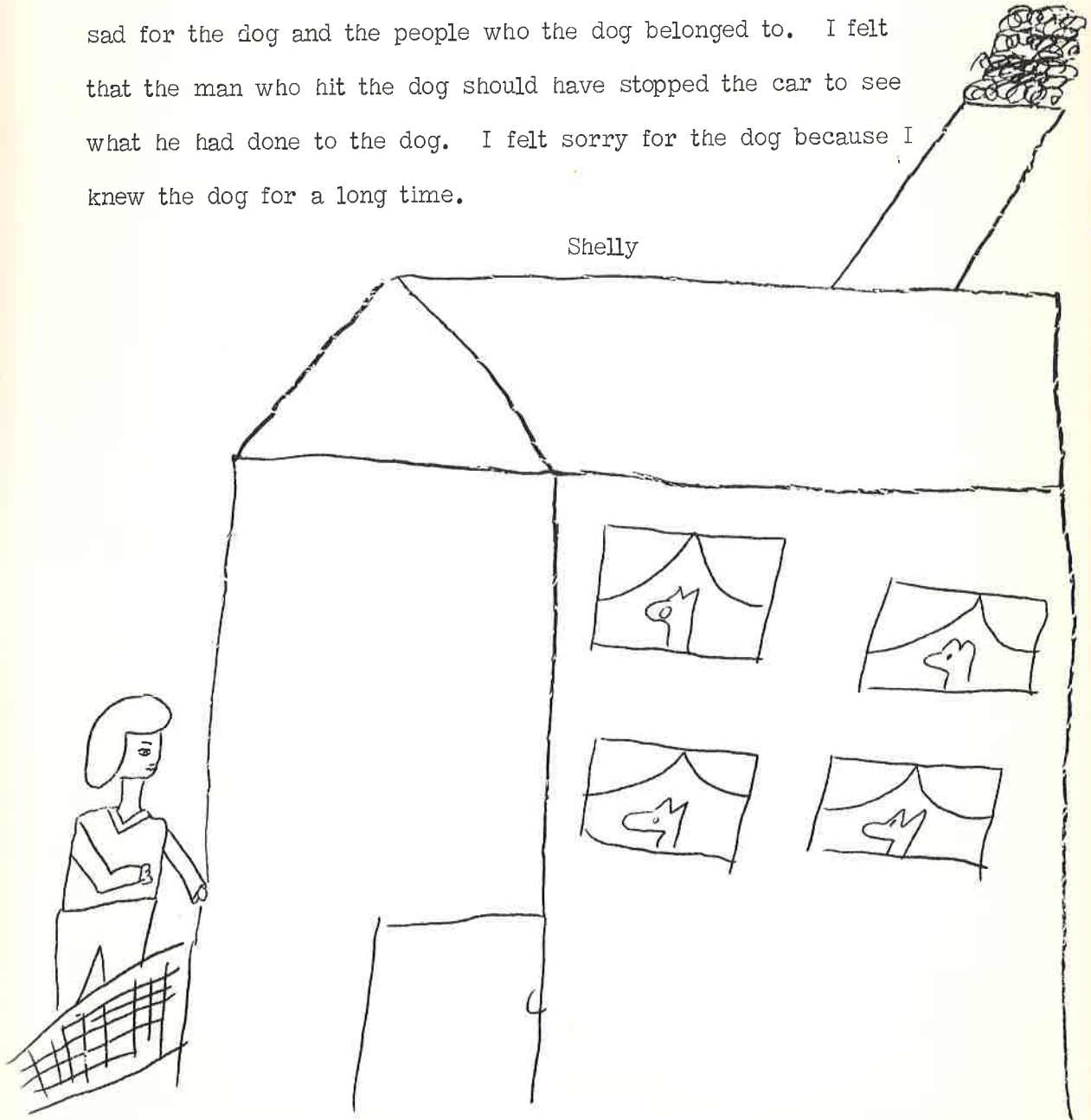
Last night there was a man following my sister and I. We were coming from my Aunt's house. He was following us. When we went into the store he waited outside until we came out. After we came out he was following us again. We were only five blocks from where we live. Then my sister looked in her pocketbook and she had \$1.00. A bus was coming by and we caught it. I was so afraid that he might have killed us. I don't know what he wanted with us. I don't know what I would have done if he had caught us.

Sylvia Pollard

all about a dog

One night a dog was hit by a car. My mother was looking out of the window and she called me and the dog was laying in the street. The dog belonged to a lady next door from me. The lady came and took the dog in the backyard. The dog was not dead he came out of the backyard and ran out into the street and got hit again. This time he ran away and died. I felt very sad for the dog and the people who the dog belonged to. I felt that the man who hit the dog should have stopped the car to see what he had done to the dog. I felt sorry for the dog because I knew the dog for a long time.

Shelly



ANTHOLOGY

Hashee

Elementary

I am an Indian boy named Hashee
I have a pet hawk
I use him like a falcon
One time I was hunting for a rabbit
And then we saw a bear
And we ran and ran and ran
Until our feet could no longer stand the speed
And then we had to hide
He passed us without any trouble at all
And then we went to my village
And we had to have dinner
And then I went to bed.

Joel
Grade 2
Twin Pines Day School
Oakland, California

God's Story of Love

God is everything
He plays with the clouds
We're his marionettes
If he ever wanted to very much
He'd make us fly
Whatever we do he makes us do with his fingers
If we sell Kool Aid
He makes our mothers get out the pot
and make the Kool Aid
He makes the ball fly
And he makes it bounce.

Jonathon
Grade 1
Twin Pines Day School
Oakland, California

Trouble
I can't think
my head is like a loose TV spring
thats why I cantithink of anything
to write. Its like I've never learned
anything before. So I just sit there
doin nothin. Aint nobody around
to learn from. I cant think, can you?

Laurie Williamson
I.S. 72 Queens
Grade 6

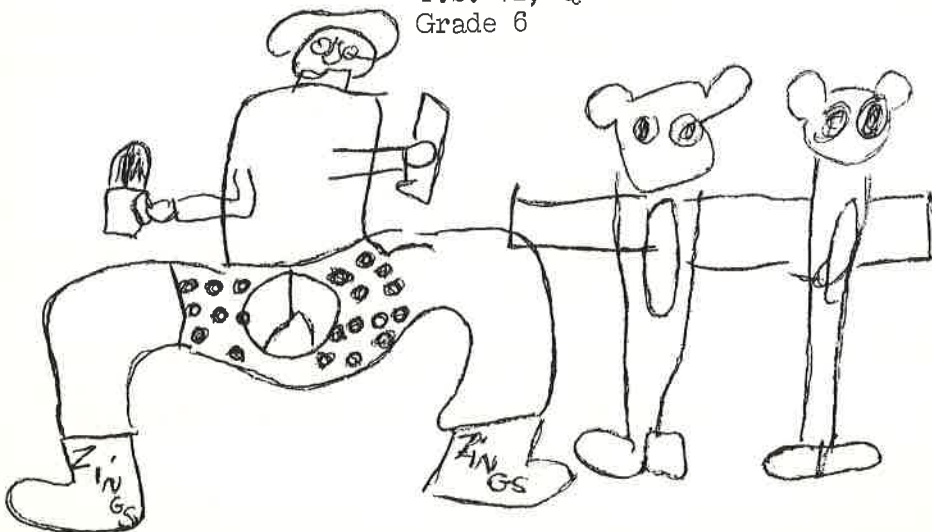
The old folk better make way for the young people because we are going
to get up and do our thing.
And we are going to get up and sing
Our Song so - you better get out of the way.

James Taylor
I.S. 72, Queens

Hi Bum

Sitting on the steps
Drinking gallons of
Snowwhite and the
7 Dwarfs beer. His
Sneakers smelling
The night air. A
Torn underwear
With the sign of
Peace ☮. With
A UNICEF cup
Filled with cracked
Buttons. A Superman
Watch he carries around
To smash the gears.
I carry a pair of Mickey
Mouse crutches.
I'm equipped with
My grandpapa picture
signed GRANDPA
DRAWKIN!

Unsigned
I.S. 72, Queens
Grade 6



Intermediate

AFTER SCHOOL

CHARACTERS:

MOM: Short hair, nice short, medium

FATHER
DAD Tall, glasses, black and a little grey hair.

LAURENCE: Short, smart, short hair spoiled.

DEBRA: Short long hair, light skin, smart

NARRATOR:

CHRIS: Short, crys from time to times.

SCENE 1

NARRATOR: LAURENCE PUTS ON HIS GLASSES AND STARTS ON HIS WAY HOME. FIVE MINUTES LATER HIS IS PUT THE KEY IN THE DOOR OPENS THE DOOR WALKS IN.

LAURENCE: "Hi Mom"

MOM: After you take off your coat put the ironboard up for me please.

LAURENCE: "Okay"

SHERRI: Mom, can I go outside and play with Belinda for a little while?

MOM: Go on and play.

DEBRA: Mom can I have some tuna fish?

MOM: No that tuna fish is mine and nobody is getting any so there.

NARRATOR: DEBRA GOES OUT OF THE KITCHEN MAD. LAURENCE PUTS UP THE IRONBOARD AND GOES TO CHANGE HIS SCHOOL CLOTHES.

MOM: Debra come here and turn up this T.V. please.

NARRATOR: THEN AFTER MOM'S TV STORIES GO OFF SHE GOES AND LOOK OUT THE WINDOW AND HERE COMES SHERRI AND HITS HER ON HER REAR END SHERRI LAUGHTS AND RUNS INTO THE LIVING ROOM HIDE FROM HER. HERE COME MOM RUNNING AFTER SHERRI SAYING

MOM: Sherri you're going to get it when I catch you you mangy kid. I'll break your neck negger.

SHERRI: No you won't

MOM: We'll see when I get my hands on you.

NARRATOR: MOM AND SHERRI ARE PLAYING AND DAD COMES IN THE HOUSE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYTHING. MEANWHILE SHERRI IS LOSING THAT BATTLE.

LAURENCE: "hi" Dad

DAD: "Hi"

MOM: GEORGE WHATS WITH YOU? You don't want me to kiss me. What's was your beef you got a problem or something?

DAD: I sorry Hon, but I was thinking about something else.

MOM: I don't know if I should kiss you or not if I have to ask you. I don't want you to kiss me.

NARRATOR: THEN LIKE A BURST OF LIGHT HE TOOK HER IN HIS ARM AND KISSED HER, WHEN HE WAS FINISHED MOM WAS IN A DAZE.

DAD: Now how was that for a Kiss?

MOM: I don't know that one didn't come out so good how about another one?

NARRATOR: I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE WANTED ONE MORE BUT, THIS TIME SHE WAS ALMOST KNOCKED OUT BY THAT ONE KISS.

MOM: W O W!! What a kiss. That was the best kiss I got all year. I wonder how it will be at night before I go to bed.

NARRATOR: DAD LEAVES THE KITCHEN AND GOES IN HIS ROOM. MEANWHILE SHERRI IS STILL LOSING THE FIGHT. DEBRA IS IN THE LIVING ROOM WATCHING T.V. AND LAURENCE IS DOING HOMEWORK.

MOM: Debra & Laurence come set the table for dinner.

NARRATOR: THEN AT THE DINNER TABLE DEBRA ASK A QUESTION TO DAD.

DEBRA: Dad, what did you do at work today?

DAD: Well, mailed some letters, stamped books and flirting with the girls, and you mother getting mad by the second. Ha, ha, ha.

MOM: Listen George the only woman you flirt with is me got it buster?

NARRATOR: THEN AFTER DINNER LAURENCE & DEBRA STAYED IN THE KITCHEN TO DO THE DISHES. DAD & MOM WENT IN THE ROOM. SHERRI WENT IN THE LIVING ROOM TO WATCH T.V. AT ABOUT 10:00 P.M. EVERYBODY WENT TO BED.

MOM: How about my kiss George?

DAD: Give me a chance to put my night clothes on will you.

MOM: Don't get bad with me I twist your head all the way around.

DAD: Alright I'm ready.

NARRATOR: GEORGE TAKES HER IN HIS ARMS AND
KISSES HER FOR ABOUT 5 MINUTES. THEN
AFTER HE WAS FINISHED HE DIDN'T HAVE
TO LISTEN TO HER TALK FOR A LONG
WHILE BECAUSE THAT KISS PUT HER TO
SLEEP ON THE SPOT.

SHERRI: W O W !!!!! Dad that sure was a long kiss.

DAD: Get yourself in that bed before I get mad.

DEBRA: Dad kiss mommy so much it put her to sleep
on the instant we didn't have a chance to say
good nite to her.

LAURENCE: I wonder if I kissed mom like that and she was
in a daze like the first time Dad kissed her. But
the second kiss was all most a knock-out. Sop-
post I kissed Mom like that and the same thing
happened.

DEBRA: Forget it your bad breath would knock her out
before the kiss would.

NARRATOR: LAURENCE AND DEBRA AND SHERRI GO TO
BED AND EVERYBODY IS SLEEP. AND THAT
IS WHAT I DO AFTER SCHOOL.

Laurence George

The Room

We are in a big room
and in a colored room
a round room
a good room
my favorite color is in it
beautiful blue in this room
square black windows on the side
a big room
It is a room with many geometric
shapes. It makes me feel relaxed
and comfortable.
And it is filled with people;
people are as natural as the
furniture in this room.
IT MAKES ME FEEL AT EASE
VERY COMFORTABLE. I FEEL
FREE IT'S WONDERFUL.
Yet this room seems to frighten me, I want
to run but too afraid.
This is a room dream, a vast room, a dwarf room.

Group Poem
8th Grade
Clinton Program

The Gerbil

You are a gerbil. In a pet store. Running around in dirty wood shavings, longing for freedom. People come. They stare. They look. They poke. They say no. A man comes in. He looks. He pokes. He says yes. He takes you to a place. In a cardboard box. It is opened. Other people come and look. They poke. You are taken out and put in a maze of blocks. You hurry in and out trying to get free. The blocks move. There's a new maze. You run around in it. The blocks change. There's a new maze. You hurry in, out. People look in. They stare. They stare for a long time. They take notes. This goes on. You are moved to another place. There, more people stare. Some laugh. They stare. They stare. You are in the maze. The blocks change. You hurry in and out of them, trying to get free. The blocks change. You hurry in, out. You are near insanity. The blocks change. You scurry in, out. The blocks change. You scurry in, out. The blocks change. You scurry in, out. The blocks change. You scurry in, out. The blocks change. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. You DIE. YOU DIE. YOU DIE. YOU DIE.

Jennifer Wasa
8th Grade
Clinton Program

High School

Through the street light
The snow is gently falling
Starry on the tree limbs
Lights reflect on the wall
As the fire dances merrily in
its small cove.
Monopoly Game pieces
Scattered and shuffled
On the floor cover the
Empty marshmellow crumpled bag
by the fireplace.

Janet Hollen
sophomore
Northern High School
Baltimore

This Is A Black Room

This is a black room
And all the people here are Black too.
There are windows on the wall,
But no one's gonna open them.

All the white people in the world
Are waiting outside this room,
And most of us don't want to look at them
Or hear them saying, "Shine my shoes, boy"
Or "Scrub my floor, woman."

I'm willing to open the window
To see if they've changed
But the Black people in this room might kill me.

Joshua Beasley
senior
Forest Park High School
Baltimore

Resting Place of Leaves

Cold winds
Blowing the leaves
Across the dirty street
To Old Lady Jones' hedge
To rest.

Ronald Saunders
senior
Forest Park High School
Baltimore

THIS IS A LONG SLIMY GREEN POEM

Robert Dubman
sophomore
Northern High School
Baltimore

The Somnabulist

I am walking down the subway stairs
I see a thief stripping tires from a car
I see junkies breaking into a store
I dream about women in my house
I fall down into a manhole
I see fuzzy shapes that I don't know how to explain
A dog is running with a hand in his mouth
a guy is running down the street with no legs
I hang up my shirt and it looks like a person
I see guys at night walking with their head in their hands
My heart and my liver jump out of me and run away
I don't know where but I wish they'd come back
Chino gets hot at the beach

I arrive at 125th Street in the middle of the night
Stores are robbed, girls raped in the alley, junkies
getting their second boot in the hallway
A crowd of ants moving every which way
And the lights from the movies and the discotheques
shining and blinking off and on
And someone on the side just watching
It's Bob.

A hustler asks me if I want a girl
I walk on

I saw a man, he was laying down in the gutter,
he had no toes, just the two stumps of his feet.

On the sidewalk lies a half-eaten Nedick's frankfurter
And a long-headed man with boogies.

I see two dogs smelling their asses
it smells good to them
I see skeletons riding bikes
I see a man standing in the corner with a knife in his chest
He is old and he's talking to your mother
It was raining and he had a coat on
he had his chingalee hanging out
and he was boxing with his two balls
It spit, the chingalee died and went back to its normal size
They buried it in 125th St.

It's 4:30 in the morning
The cafes are opening up for the truckers
The milkmen and the garbagemen and the bums
The newspaper trucks are throwing their
papers in front of the stores
Four men with long hair go through an alley and never come out
They work at the Youth Corps.

The Statue of Liberty is dancing at the Automat.

I end up in front of my doorstep
I pick up the milk, go upstairs and go to sleep.

Orland Cruz, Bob Sieverd, Joseph Mackey, Phillip,
Isabel Torres, Chino, Angel Luis
Velasdo

as

Papi Santo
East Harlem Youth Services

The Shirt

- This shirt is mine - We've traveled many miles together - it's like
it's part of me -

Now, it's torn and raggedy and worn down.
It shows physically. My feelings are similar.
I feel torn between many worlds and their people. -
I feel raggedy from the tear. -
I feel worn down from forced opened eyes and
legs that I thought would soon forget how to walk. -

My shirt has been kind to me -
It's kept me warm on cold nights

(continued on next page)

It's protected me from rapers who
let me alone thinking I was a boy.
It's given thought to people to treat
me as a person - a PERSON.
Not categorized - girl. No, a PERSON.
This shirt has protected my books from foul weather.
This shirt has kept me cool in hot weather by being bulky
and not sticking to my skin.
This shirt has made me sweat out sickness
The thickness of my shirt has protected me from worse
hurts and pains (it took the tears instead of my arm)

This shirt and I have traveled together - this shirt is mine.

This shirt has been in brawls and bars
and churches and hospitals
and dirt and tar -

in police stations and bus stations
and subway stations - at Grand Central
and Penn. Stations.

It's sleeves have dusted off counters and cleaned pianos.

We've shared burns together - half this shirt and half my arms
We've shared sweat and dirt it's taken off my face
We've shared a greasy feeling from neither of us being clean
We've shared a high feeling from both of us being clean

My shirt and I were accepted more readily in the south in
poor black sections than in rich white sections

My shirt and I had and have trouble staying together.
The people and the society try to separate us.

My shirt has taken insults from people in
the society who say - "it's raggedy, here -
wear this and throw that away."
It's taken insults from hippies who say -
"I like that - where did you buy it?"

My shirt - my shirt it was complimented
one time when he said truthfully that he
would feel really bad if I didn't wear it.
It's really like it's part of me.

The cuffs of my shirt are gone, now.
My shirt has been through hell, but -
it's also been through heaven.

My shirt and I - we met in Bangor
I will return to Bangor with - my shirt.

Mona Letourneau
East Harlem Youth Services

WRITERS' BIOGRAPHIES

ART BERGER is a poet whose work has appeared in several major anthologies and on two albums, Poems for Peace and New Jazz Poets. He is the author of Blow the Man Down and a book about his teaching experiences, Up Against the Wall, Dick and Jane, is underway. Recently he had an article about teaching poetry in Highpoints, the publication of the New York City Board of Education. Mr. Berger represented the Collaborative at the NCTE annual conference in Atlanta in November. This year he working with children at I.S. 8, I.S. 72, and at P.S. 76, all in Queens. He is also conducting a teacher-training workshop at P.S. 76.

RICHARD ELMAN has taught writing at several colleges, including Bennington and Columbia. He has published eight books of fiction and non-fiction. His non-fiction works include The Poorhouse State, a study of our welfare system. Among his novels are Lilos' Diary, 28 Days of Elul, and An Education In Blood, which will be published in Spring, 1971, by Scribners. He is currently at work on a new novel. Mr. Elman is teaching third and fifth graders at P.S. 42 on Manhattan's Lower East Side.

DICK GALLUP was born in 1940 in Greenfield, Massachusetts, and attended Tulane and Columbia. He has worked with young poets at MUSE in Brooklyn and he teaches a poetry workshop at the St. Marks Poetry Project in Manhattan. Mr. Gallup's first collection of poetry, Where I Hang My Hat, has been published this year by Harper & Row. He continues to teach at P.S. 20 on the Lower East Side.

JACQUES GOODE was a member of Harlem's Black Theatre Workshop. He has just completed his first book of poetry and he is now reading each week at Phase I in Manhattan. He is currently touring college campuses reading his poetry to music. Jacques Goode describes himself as "a Leo, who believes that cooking, painting, playwriting, and running therapy groups with drug addicts can be poetry in motion." He is working with the Voice of the Children in Brooklyn on weekends.

PHILLIP LOPATE has taught writing workshops at MUSE in Brooklyn. This past year he has taught a course for teachers at Fordham University and will be conducting a workshop for students in the Columbia Writing Program who are working in the NYC public schools. His work is included in A Cinch, a recent anthology of work by young New York writers published by Columbia University Press. In Coyoacan, a small book by Mr. Lopate, will be out soon.

DICK LOURIE is a poet and a musician. He is the author of Dream Telephone, published by New Books/ The Crossing, Trumansburg, N.Y.,

PLUGS

Magazines

KIDS - a new magazine written by and for children. Stories, essays, poetry, interviews and magnificent full color art work by children. Subscriptions are \$5.00 for 10 issues. Write to Box 30, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139.

Right On - an excellent magazine of writings by young people at the East Harlem Youth Services, Inc., a program primarily serving high school dropouts from East Harlem. The poems, stories and autobiographical pieces are extremely potent and moving. Copies are 50 cents each. Write to Phillip Lopate, Editor, c/o East Harlem Youth Services, 2037 Third Avenue, New York City.

Books

Talkin' About Us - edited by Bill Wertheim (New Century). A collection of writings by students in the Upward Bound program, a special summer program for high school students who might not otherwise be planning to attend college. High caliber poems and stories from Black, Puerto Rican, Indian, Chicano and Appalachian students.

Stuff - edited by Herbert Kohl and Victor Cruz (World Publishing). Another recent anthology of student writing from a variety of age levels.

Homework: Required Reading for Parents and Teachers - by Gloria Channon (Outerbridge and Dientsfry). A sensitive beautifully written book by a N.Y.C. public school teacher, describing her painful attempts to move from a traditional teaching style to a more "open" approach. A book for teachers who complain that too much educational criticism is written by non-teachers.

Miscellaneous

Occasional Papers - A fine series of essays on subjects related to infant school ("open classroom") education. Copies are available at \$1 per issue from Early Childhood Education Study, Education Development Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, Massachusetts 02160. We've seen two issues, but there may be more.

My new name was born in Brownsville
I came wailing and thrashing
To a deaf-blind world.
I was malformed
There was no place for heart
I said
"Donna Atkins, sit up straight.
The psychologist is coming in ten months
To tell you, you are brain damaged.
Alvin Cruz, remember to do your homework,
If you can find a home.
Roberto Garcia, bring two pencils every day
To erase your sullen face.
Richard Felton, a 3rd grader mustn't come late
When you can't read a word tho your 4+8.
Freida Mosley, stand on line
Your daddy's home drinking wine
Your mother's gone, sister too
I don't want to hear a word out of you.
Johnny Pimental, speak out nice and loud
So we can all hear the terror in your voice.
Marvin Bowers, you are very cooperative
But why did you have to make bookcovers
For the whole class out of newspaper
When your mother is rotting in Kings County Hospital."

I stood in the corner
They all weighed in
When the bell rang.
I lost
I wrote 100 times
"School is a hard lesson to learn."

Eleanor Kaplan



Staff Members:

Marvin Hoffman, Director
Richard Murphy, Associate Director

Sheila Murphy, School Coordinator
Julie Alenick, Secretary

