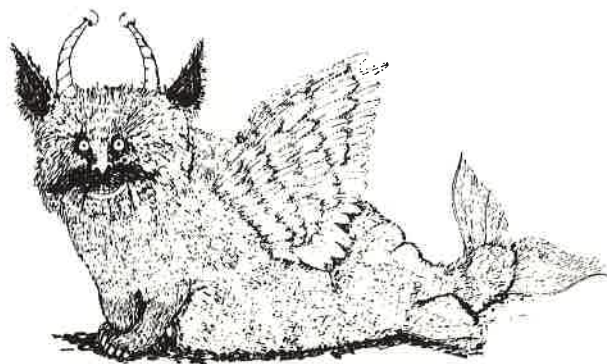




teachers & writers collaborative



teachers' & writers'  
collaborative  
newsletter  
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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.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Children as Teachers by Ron Padgett	1
Letter to a Teacher by The Schoolboys of Barbiana	14
Can I Tell You A Story? by Roger Landrum	16
A Dream That Is Killing Me by Phillip Lopate	26
The Loft by Marv Hoffman	44
Garbage Picking by Sheila Murphy	56
Everything About Elephants by Rosellen Brown	71
The Dance of Things by David Shapiro	84
Looking for a Personal Method by Bill Zavatsky	94
The Clinton Program by Clarence Major	97
Ying Kit and Kenneth Lee by Hannah Green	103
P.S. On Open Education by Phillip Lopate	107
<u>Techniques</u>	
Mr. Everything by Larry Fagin	110
My Friend, America by Doc Long and Ruby Saunders	115

Why Dragons Are Mean by Merle Molofsky Chianese	121
Crazy Math by Ron Padgett and Dick Gallup	130
Memories by Hannah Green	137
It's Winter, But With Her It's Warm by Phillip Lopate	142
<u>Contributions</u>	
The Things They Talked About Lit Up by Betty Kline	156
Books for Non-Readers by Dan Levine	163
The Exotic Zoo by Etta Proshansky	167
I'm Going To Build A School by Robert Clancy	170
Report From Adamstown by Richard O. Curtis	174
If John Wayne Was My Grandmother by Barry Rader	178
On Not Correcting Children's Writing by Selma Bokar	183
<u>Anthology</u>	185
<u>Writers' Biographies</u>	200
<u>Plugs</u>	204

# Children As Teachers

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

with an additional note from

ROSELLEN BROWN - HOPI WORKBENCH, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

In **early** March, Ron Padgett started to take small groups of sixth graders to kindergarten classes at P.S. 61. The sixth graders, many of whom have written with Mr. Padgett and Mr. Koch for three years, became poetry teachers for the **younger** children. Excerpts from Mr. Padgett's diaries and transcripts of conferences with the sixth graders **concerning** their teaching experiences follow.

**March 8, 1971**

I arrived a few minutes before one o'clock and went straight into Mrs. Block's kindergarten class. She welcomed me but informed me that because of something, the kids are being let out at 2 today. How could I organize everything and teach 2 kindergarten classes in that time—they have to start putting their coats on at 1:50! I went across the hall to see if I could come in Miss Perelman's class and she said fine. I rushed up to Mr. Bowman's sixth grade class and, with his help, selected the kids to help me with the kindergartners. In fact I had made a list of 5 or 6 who were originally to go with me to each class. Since each kindergarten class only has 12 kids, I figured I could use 3 sixth graders in each class and do the classes simultaneously, with the teachers helping and me going back and forth between the classes.

I had picked Vivian Tuft, Mayra Morales, Billy Constant, Eliza Bailey, Arnaldo Gomez and Tracy Roberts. I wanted a blend of boys and girls, of Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking. The kids were really happy to be picked, but I assured the others that I would take them in

the future.

These six kids and I went down to the second floor, where the kindergarten classes are, and we had a quick conference in the hall. I reminded them that they must be especially nice and patient with the little kids, and that they should encourage them a lot, but not to let the kids say only "I like doggies," "I like kitties"... in short to encourage them with praise but also to get them into something more imaginative. They all understood perfectly—in fact it is absolutely amazing to me how well they remember all my techniques. I said to Tracy, "If a kindergartner says, I like doggies, what would you say to him?" She said, "I'd ask him to tell me more about the dog, what color it was, and what kind of dreams the dog had and stuff like that." This is known as "developing an idea" and Tracy really knows how to do that in many ways.

So I asked them what we should do first. Unanimous: Wishes. OK. We all went into Mrs. Block's class, where most of the kids are Spanish-speaking, and I introduced Arnaldo, Mayra and Billy to Mrs. Block. Arnaldo and Mayra speak Spanish, Billy doesn't, but I told him just to try doing a Wish poem anyway. Mrs. Block introduced these kids to her class and divided the 12 kids into three groups and arranged for them to sit in different spots in the room. I told her that my Poetry Assistants were briefed and ready to go. They did.

Vivian, Tracy and Eliza and I went across to Miss Perelman's and we arranged things similarly. When the classes had started I went back and forth, a little confused and very excited and happy and really proud of the sixth graders, their seriousness, their understanding, their poise and their genuine interest.

Arnaldo's group wasn't very verbal and I was impressed by how he switched from Wishes to something simpler, something which he did on his own, having the kids just tell him what they liked, and then he had them add colors. If this sounds regimented or too much like a recipe, it is good to point out that the kids and the teacher-kids were having a very nice time with it.

At one point Tracy had stopped doing Wishes and taken her group over to the piano and was playing different notes for them and asking them what the notes made them think of. She noted that they were unresponsive when she played single notes but when she began banging on all different keys they livened up and got interested. (That sounds like a parable for education with a capital E.)

After a while our time was up—Mrs. Block was sorry to inform us. I'm very happy to see that she had wanted us

to come, and I was happy that her hesitation about using older kids (to teach her kids) had simply vanished.

So I called the classes to an end and met outside in the hall with the 6 kids. A lady who has some supervisory job at the school, or perhaps in the school district, was strolling by and I asked her if there were a conference room we could use—she offered us her office. We went in. Some of the kids said, "Is it really OK for us to be in here?" I thought that was pretty funny. Then we had a brief conference until 2:15. I sat down and they started talking, sometimes in order and sometimes with interruptions, sometimes reading examples, but it was clear that they had been surprised by how nervous they had felt, how distracting it was to have kids wiggling around while you're trying to talk with them, and by how successful the whole thing had been. I was impressed by their esprit de corps: they sympathized with each other. Billy said that his kids had wanted to talk about nothing but Hot Wheels and Johnny Lightning and he didn't get much from them otherwise: I told him that what you have to do in that case is follow their interests, like write about a race between Hot Wheels and Johnny Lightning. Vivian's kids were OK, except for one kid who insisted on singing "One little two little three little Indians..." over and over... "It drove me nuts," she said. But she had liked doing this: it gave her a whole new sense of herself, I think, in fact I think that all these kids were zapped into some new place by this experience.

Except perhaps Eliza, who already has been to this new place. In fact, she told me that Kenneth [Koch] had taken her along as an assistant before. The difference here was that these kids weren't my assistants, they were doing the teaching and each handling it in his or her own way and making decisions without consulting anyone. I was really proud of the way they handled things. Mayra Morales was superb, not only in the way she worked with her kids, but with the poems they wrote for her and the astonishing way she had of understanding everything that went on and of verbalizing it in our meeting afterwards.

I told them I thought they were all great, because that's what they were.

\* \* \* \* \*

March 25, 1971

Today, I ended up taking Arnaldo and Tracy (who went down to kindergarten last week) and Marion Mackles, Nancy Ortiz, Andrew Vecchione and George (Jorge) Robles.

The kids got loose and we went right down to the



second floor and had a little conference outside the kindergarten rooms: I went over last week's sessions and asked the kids what they would do, or what they thought might be good to do today, after Wishes last week. Several suggestions were made, among them Lies, Toys, etc. I suggested that each of them do whatever they wanted, and to be ready to switch off onto something else in case they couldn't make any headway with their original idea. They seemed pretty well pulled together and I selected two of the Spanish-speaking ones to go into Mrs. Block's with one non-Spanish-speaking, with the same ratio reversed for Miss Perelman's.

I introduced the kids to the substitutes and asked them to help organize and discipline the classes. This went OK but not nearly so well as it had last week. The subs did their best, but they don't command so much authority as the regular teachers, and they don't know the kids.

So I started the two classes and went back and forth, as I had last week. The classes seemed a little wilder and noisier than last week, and some of the 6th graders seemed a little discouraged. I stopped with their groups to help them as best I could, but it wasn't easy.

Then after a while I arranged for readings in each room: in Mrs. Block's class I read the works myself, and the kindergartners seemed to like them a lot, and in Miss Perelman's the 6th-graders read the poems their groups had written. I missed part of this reading. When I came in Tracy was sitting at the piano reading her group's poem, and having a lot of trouble doing so: the little kids were so active!

I told her to go ahead and not be bothered, and at the same time I helped quiet the kids. To my astonishment, I had some success in doing so.

What had I missed? I asked. Marion handed me the Noises poem her group had done. I sensed that everyone was interested in this, so I asked her to read it again.

"A plane goes..." she began,

"Brrroooooommm!" the kids shouted.

"A fire engine goes..."

"Wweeeeeeee!" they answered...

and so on throughout the poem.

It was a terrific success and I think everyone liked it. It was the kind of experience that everyone, including us, could dig. It made me feel better, too.

After the readings we adjourned to the Office to see if there was an available Conference Room and one of the office secretaries suggested the principal's office. This impressed our kids. We went in and had a conference.

\* \* \* \* \*

April 22, 1971

Here is the group that emerged today: Ileana Nesen, Esther Garcia, Lisa Smalley, Jeannie Turner, Mayra Morales, Miklos Lengyel and Oscar Marcilla. I had decided to ask Oscar even though he had originally indicated that he didn't want to help, and when I asked him about it later, he explained that he had been reading a book when I asked him, and he had misunderstood.

We followed the same procedure as last time: I get the sixth graders, we go down to the second floor, rendezvous for a briefing outside the kindergarten doors, where I suggested we do Noises this time, because we had some success last time with one little group of kids doing them. I thought it would be good if they all tried it this time.

It seemed to go remarkably well. I alternated between classes, and generally everything proceeded quietly. At one point I noticed that Mayra Morales had a pained expression on her face, so I went over to help, and I spent some time with her group.

After a while I asked the Big Teachers to assemble all the kids in one spot so we could have a reading. I read all the poems in Mrs. Block's room because my sixth graders were shy about reading them—and I think they thought the poems weren't very good and they didn't want to be associated with them—and then I joined the reading in Miss Perelman's, which was in progress. I listened a little and read some too.

About the quality of the poems: they're not great masterpieces, and I think we can do better, but still they're nice, and the sessions are nice anyway. There is almost no way, unfortunately, to measure the effect on the sixth graders, though our post-mortem sessions might give some idea.

I was especially impressed today by the fact that Miklos, Jeannie and Lisa found their lack of Spanish to be no drawback.

[Excerpts from tape transcriptions of Mr. Padgett's "post-mortem" conferences follow.]

## BIG TEACHERS

Marion: One thing that wasn't good was that Mrs. Y. was very pushy, and she'd walk around and suggest things, and she kept on talking to me. I was trying to talk to the kids, and one wouldn't sit down. I kept saying please sit down, please sit down, and finally the kid did and she gave me a long discussion about how to make children to sit down. She came around and a girl had to go to the bathroom and she said well, you tell Marion some nice things for a little story, and then after you do you can go. And she wouldn't give me anything until she went to the bathroom, and finally I said go tell the teacher that you have to go badly and that you wrote a nice story.

\* \* \*

Ron Padgett: Did the teacher, —I think you had a substitute in there—, help you any?

Miklos: Well, no not much. We really didn't need any help.

Ron Padgett: I thought the class got very wild at one point.

Miklos: Oh, at one point, yes.

Jeannie: In a way when the teacher used to come around, they never liked to say anything.

Ron Padgett: What do you mean?

Jeannie: —You know, when I asked them what a fire engine sounded like, and the teacher came around they wouldn't answer, but when she left, they said wrrrrrrrrrrr. They're kind of like afraid of saying something in front of the teacher.

Ron Padgett: Are you that way?

Miklos: Yeh, it's just like us, like if we were talking to another person, and our teacher would come by we just shut up.

## DISCIPLINE

Ken Padgett: Oscar, what didn't you like about it?

Oscar: The chairs and the kids, they were running all over the place. Some of them went under the table. I didn't know how I could get them out.

Ken Padgett: How did you get them back?

Oscar: I don't know...I told Ruben. He was just like an angel. He just stayed and he listened to me, and I told him to go get Angelo...

\* \* \*

Tracy: You know, when I started with the piano, I started pressing the keys, then Julia started pressing the keys, and then Louis started pressing the keys, and Giacomo, and then the whole thing was just a big concert, and I felt like shutting the piano on their fingers.

\* \* \*

Marion: These two girls kept on tickling each other and they were giving me this headache while all the other kids were telling me some lines, and I wanted to tell them to stop and listen and write something but you just couldn't tell them that.

\* \* \*

Marion: I had this one that kept on running from one group to another. And finally I asked him, because he was at my table half the time, if he knew any good noises. And he said, "No, I can't give you any good noises because I'm really from that group over there."

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Marion: I asked them if they liked to lie and they said yes and I asked them if they lied and they said yes. I said we're going to write a poem ...we'll try writing a little set of stories, with different lines and we'll try lying. Maybe to make it sound a little pretty we could put a color in. But they didn't understand, so I

tried giving them an example, like saying the sun is green, so a kids goes "that's a lie." So I said ok then it's yellow, and he said "that's a lie too, it's white." And then I asked, well you can write something like that. I said, well, you want to try anything, and they all screamed yes. Then nobody would try any lines.

Ron Padgett: When did you decide to do a noise poem instead of lies?

Marion: It was so noisy at the other table I thought maybe they had some ideas.

### WORKING WITH TWO LANGUAGES

Ron Padgett: Did you find that it was hard to work with the kids who didn't speak English?

Miklos: No, not really.

Ron Padgett: Why, was their English good enough?

Miklos: Not really. One didn't understand, but one of them could translate. I told him a little bit and he understood it and he told the other one.

### INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

Ron Padgett: Did you notice that when we were reading the sound poems that some of the kids didn't like all the noise? So it's not every kid who likes to make noise and run and tear up and down.

Tracy: "Different strokes for different folks."

### CLASSROOM STRUCTURE

Tracy: When I went in there today I was totally blank, I didn't know anything, so I think what would be better would be if someone came in there a special day every week. Say you go in there every Thursday, and the teacher says Mr. Padgett's coming tomorrow, and they start to

understand who he is, what you want and what you need. So they know what they're supposed to do tomorrow, their thoughts and everything. It would probably have to be the same kids every time, because if different kids came in they probably wouldn't get the idea.

\* \* \*

Tracy:

One thing that would be better is taking the whole class, putting them together, and ask them questions, because I find in bigger groups, the other kids give the other kids an idea, and the other kids take that idea, dress it up and you've got another idea from that idea.

\* \* \*

Jeannie:

One time you could work with one special group, and then have others listen to it, see if they like it.

#### MATERIALS

Tracy:

What would be a good idea is if every day you brought something different, like a pot and did something with it. I think maybe if we got something, anything, and did something to it, and said, if it wasn't that, what would it be.

Marion:

You know, —like I have a scarf that's green and red, there's a loop there and you go like that, and it goes inside-out and it turns to yellow and green.

Ann Padgett:

I'm sure that I can amuse the kids for 45 minutes...

Tracy:

But we don't want to turn into a magic act...

\* \* \*

Tracy:

I thought that maybe we could try having a person that could stand perfectly still and almost not breathing but decorate him with all this junk, you know paper, and pots and pans, and all this, and bring him down and then see what they would think of it.

Ann Padgett:

Do what, cover him with paper and pots and pans?

Tracy: Yeh, and all sorts of other junk, crates, you know, somebody who would look like a monster.

Marion: Once we had a show at the end of the year and we made dummies out of our own clothes and tried to make them look exactly like us, and we made this big pile out of them and some of us went under the dummies and then made these queer sounds, and the little kids didn't know where it was coming from and they really liked it.

\* \* \*

Andrew: Maybe we could get pictures of the stuff, like they don't know any of the animals in the zoo, and we could get stuff that they could look at.

#### CHILDREN

Tracy: It's really a strange feeling, you know, 'cause you're in a classroom and you're used to seeing people who are your height, and then you look down at these little midgets, and you know....

Marion: They're midgets.

Tracy: You know the other little girl I had, Julia?

Ron Padgett: No, I don't remember their names.

Tracy: Well, anyway, the little one with the pony tail sitting next to Louis. And she goes like this to Louis, "Like me, like me, Louis, like me." I was laughing and I told her you're a little too young to get a boyfriend, —why don't you wait a couple of years. So she said, "all right," and after that she wrote a lot of nice lines.

#### THE TEACHING EXPERIENCE - A SUMMARY

Lisa: They're cute, you know, —I had fun.

Ron Padgett: You said you had a headache in the hall.

Lisa: I had a headache and fun—half headache, half fun.

A few of the kindergarten poems follow.

### WISHES

I wish for a Choo-Choo train that's  
black with diamonds and green  
wheels.

I wish for a yellow cat with black  
eyes.

I wish to be Batman and your sister  
is going to be Robin Wonder.

I wish to be a queen with jewels and  
a castle.

I wish to be a princess and wear all  
pink.

I wish I was popeye and would fight.

I wish I was a painting to hang on  
the wall.

I wish I could be a policeman and  
blow the whistle.

I wish to be a fish and swim.

I wish to be an elephant that was  
orange.

I wish to be a monkey.

Teacher: Vivian

### A PIANO POEM

**Pressing** one key quickly. Running using three keys—a  
mosquito.

**Pressing** deep keys—someone waking up.

**Pressing** all different keys of the scale—working fast.

**Pressing** deep keys—a big ghost that is going to eat you.

Teacher: Tracy



## WISHES

I wish I was Superman.

I wish I had a gun with real bullets to arrest the  
police and a robber too.

I wish I could steal jewels.

I wish I wasn't in jail.

I wish I could kill a policeman.

I wish I could break through a steel door.

I wish I had a car.

I wish I had a police suit so I could disguise my-  
self and kill the police.

I wish I was a robber and I killed somebody.

Told by: Giacomo

I asked them what moooo sounds like.  
They said cow.

I asked what was brown with a big  
hairy mouth

and they said monkey.

I asked what has a curly tail  
and they said pig.

I asked them what was green, lives in  
the water,

and they said turtle.

What did the fall of a chair sound like?

A piano when they played real hard.

How does a dog sound? Raff raff

How does a fire engine sound? dad-don-dig

Chalk says sh sh sh

Candy says chomp chomp

Floor says stamp stamp

Teeth say tick tick

Dress says rubbing

Shoe laces say shut up

Cielo says up sky blue

When a leaf drops, it goes tic, thoup, roasp,  
wee wee weeee, ahhhh

Rosellen Brown is assisted at the Hopi Workbench by Laurie Morton. Laurie is hardly a "child teacher," yet her ability to relate to the workshop participants, more or less her peers, is very significant. We therefore include a portion of Miss Brown's diary in this section.

"Laurie Morton, a high-school junior, just turned 17, who attends the Village School, a free school in Great Neck, volunteered to 'help out' in the workshop. By coincidence, the day she contacted me about the possibility I had been reading an interview with Richard Lewis in This Magazine is About Schools in which he says:

'I think that the younger we can get teachers to actually be working with children, the more definitive and profound results will happen in the whole learning situation. What happens so often is that we wait such a long time before we allow a person to work with children that a lot of the connections that we've been talking about earlier to the initial growth of fantasy and language and movement and all these things ...are so lost by that time, that it's really the children who in this respect are superior to the adult.'

This seemed a good chance to let a young writer, perhaps a young teacher for all she or I or anyone knows, stand somewhere between students and "teacher" and find her own way. I am, at this point, really excited at the way it's working out.

"She, probably because she's in a new and wide-open school situation of her own, has fallen completely into the spirit of the search (new on my part too) for active methods of stimulating and freeing the kids' imaginations. I mean, she is talented at it, picks up cues and moves on, makes her own wonderful suggestions out of them, and has terrific insight into the kids. I fail myself continually with her by jumping in too quickly in class, saying things she could as easily or better say, in other words (a presumptuousness I don't admire) automatically acceding to the tacit but unnecessary definitions of authority before the group. I don't know how much of it she herself expects. However much, she is doing a lot of work and doing it so well that I am more than eager to give her credit for a good deal of what's so far been good about the workshop. (She intends to try to work with that same oldest girl as a kind of peer, bringing in her own poetry, which is quite a bit more advanced, and which in turn I am working on with her. It's a chain that I hope we can forge.)"

# Letter to A Teacher

(reprinted with permission of Random House from Letter to a Teacher by the Schoolboys of Barbiana. 1970. Vintage Paperback Edition, pp.14-15, 118-119.)

THE RULES OF GOOD WRITING      After three years of schooling at Barbiana I took, in June, my exams for the intermediate diploma as a private-school candidate. The composition topic was: "The Railroad Cars Speak."

At Barbiana I had learned that the rules of good writing are: Have something important to say, something useful to everyone or at least to many. Know for whom you are writing. Gather all useful materials. Find a logical pattern with which to develop the theme. Eliminate every useless word. Eliminate every word not used in the spoken language. Never set time limits.

That is the way my schoolmates and I are writing this letter. That is the way my pupils will write, I hope, when I am a teacher.

THE KNIFE IN YOUR HANDS      But, facing that composition topic, what use could I make of the humble and sound rules of the art of writing in all ages? If I wanted to be honest I should have left the page blank. Or else criticized the theme and whoever had thought it up.

But I was fourteen years old and I came from the mountains. To go to a teachers' school I needed the diploma. This piece of paper lay in the hands of five or six persons alien to my life and to everything I loved and knew. Careless people who held the handle of the knife completely in their own grasp.

I tried to write the way you want us to. I can easily believe I was not a success. No doubt there was a better flow to the papers of your own young men, already masters in the production of hot air and warmed-over platitudes.

\* \* \*

**COMMENTS** One subject is totally missing from your programs: the art of writing.

It is enough simply to see some of the comments you write at the top of your students' compositions. I have a choice collection of them, right here. They are all nothing more than assertions—never a means for improving the work. "Childish, Infantile. Shows immaturity. Poor. Trivial." What use can a boy make of this sort of thing? Perhaps he should send his grandfather to school; he's more mature.

Other comments: "Meager contents. Poor conception. Pale ideas. No real participation in what you wrote." The theme must have been wrong, then. It ought not to have been assigned.

Or: "Try to improve your form. Incorrect form. Cramped. Unclear. Not well constructed. Poor usage. Try to write more simply. Sentence structure all wrong. Your way of expressing yourself is not always felicitous. You must have better control of your means of expression." You are the one who should have taught all that. But you don't even believe that writing can be taught; you don't believe there are any objective rules for the art of writing; you are still embalmed in your nineteenth-century individualism.

Then we also meet the creature touched by the hands of gods: "Spontaneous. Rich flow of ideas. Fitting use of your ideas, in harmony with a striking personality." Having gone that far, why not just add: "Blessed be the mother who gave you birth"?

# Can I Tell You A Story ?

FROM THE DIARIES OF ROGER LANDRUM

P.S. 42, MANHATTAN

"Collecting oral literature from children is slow and savory work. There is one knack required in making it easy for them to body forth their insights and conceptions of things seen and things mythical. There is another knack required in the hard mechanical labor of printing the materials in hand-made readers and ironing out language problems day after day.

"Three of us in Teachers Incorporated decided to experiment with a project which takes kids' spoken stories as the beginning of an oral literature project. Two classes are involved—a bottom track 4th grade at P.S. 1 and an upper track 5th grade at P.S. 42, both in the Two Bridges area of the Lower East Side. The two classes are polyglot—Americans of Chinese, Latin and Black descent, and a lot of Chinese immigrants who are not citizens. Both classes are open classrooms in a style of their own.

"The project began simply, in January of this year, with kids telling stories one at a time in some comfortable corner. We write them down in long-hand verbatim. No interruptions for grammar or illogicalities. The stories are then typed and brought back for the kid to read out loud to one of us, making revisions if he wants. If the story is any good at all we read it to the class or to a small group to make it public and communal. A lot of emphasis is placed on creating an ambiance in the classes with the kids' material as the center of reading, printing, story reading, drawing and enjoying each other's ideas and humor.

"We also take notes when typing the stories on individual or typical problems with pronunciation, grammar and the various details of story telling. A lot of the English teaching in the classes grows out of the problems in the stories in the form of oral linguistic drills. The kids work hard on problems from their own materials.

"After a month of collecting, we put many of the

stories into a hand-made book, printed on ditto sheets, illustrated by the kids, and called "CAN I TELL YOU A STORY." There was a chapter of monster stories, one of fantasies, and one about animals. The book was stapled inside a manila folder, bound with Mystic Tape to hold the staples, and covered with Contac. The copies went to the class library and other classes in the school. Stories printed here come from that first collection.

"Later on, we made up individual books to put the stories in as they were typed and handed back, so each kid accumulates a collection of his own work. Stories can now be told or written. In Bill Currier's class most of the kids write and read painfully, so they tell most of their stories. In Norma Brooks' class most of the kids write and read easily so they write most of their stories.

"Every two weeks we collect the books to select a collection to put on dittos for more hand-made readers. The last batch in Bill Currier's class amounted to 5 twenty-page books: A BOOK OF FABLES; A BOOK OF SCIENCE FICTION; A BOOK OF FAERIE TALES; A BOOK ABOUT TRIPS; A BOOK ABOUT STRANGE CREATURES. These are our categories made up after the stories were collected. We haven't directed the themes, although soon we hope to get deeper into ethnic traditions (including translations from Chinese and Spanish), biography (especially migration tales), and writing about specific themes. Norma Brooks' class has enough material to make a second batch of readers now, and that's the next job. Several kids from each class have enough quality stories to put out a book of their own. One kid is on his fourth chapter of a book about a character called Sargent Fory.

"We have just started a tape library of the stories, read with sound effects and matching the hand-made books. For \$50 we got a Norelco cassette tape recorder and for another \$50 a jack with 8 earphones for each class. Kids can hear and read the stories at the same time, dictate on the recorder, or collect stories from relatives.

"The stories printed here pretty much speak for themselves. They were dictated orally. 'The Giraffe and the Horse' is by a Chinese immigrant boy just catching on to English. Much of his phrasing in the story is Chinese construction translated literally into English. We don't know where his story idea came from. 'Bigmouth and Nick's Fish' is by an immigrant boy from Taiwan who has been here longer than Eddy. John Morris' 'Rocket of Doom' is one of four incredibly imaginative stories he had told with his mastery of American idioms, his epic conceptions, and his sense of humor. John is a native New York black boy from a working-class family. He's brilliant, but not in school. He reads and writes painfully, won't cooperate with the

class curriculum, and spends most of his time thinking, talking, listening, watching and playing. He likes his own and everyone else's stories and does a lot more language work now than before. 'Tom and Little Tiny Pinny' is by a Chinese immigrant girl who writes or tells about 5 stories a week, and like Eddy, writes and speaks in Chinese-English. 'The Differences Between Alligators and Crocodiles' and 'The Mosquito Life Cycle' were both told after some all-class work with some sections about animal behavior in the Man: A Course of Study curriculum."

### THE MOSQUITO LIFE CYCLE

When a mosquito is an adult female she gets blood for her eggs stored in her body in the back. She gets cow's blood and other animals and human blood, not insect's. She puts her needle in the skin and sucks the blood through the tube into her body to the eggs. Then she flies somewhere near the edge of a lake or river or pond and she lays the eggs on the edge. Then she dies.

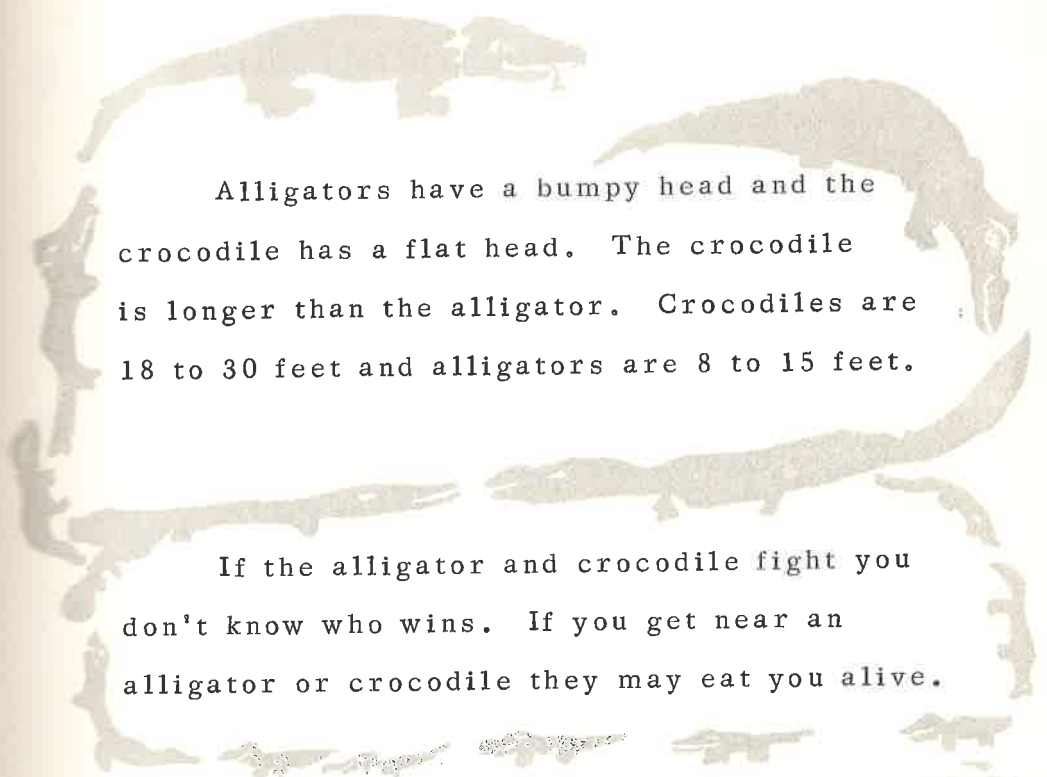
Her babies start growing slowly and turn to larvae and slowly turn to an adult mosquito. The larvae crawl into the water. They start floating upside down. When they smell some food coming they use hairs to sweep it inside their mouths. They slowly change to a mosquito. Their legs grow bigger and longer and then the eye grows and they can see and then they get wings and they are an adult.

Then the generation starts all over. Some of them might get killed by people. A cow might whack its tail and kill some.

THE END

Kam Lui and Kevin Lee

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ALLIGATORS AND CROCODILES



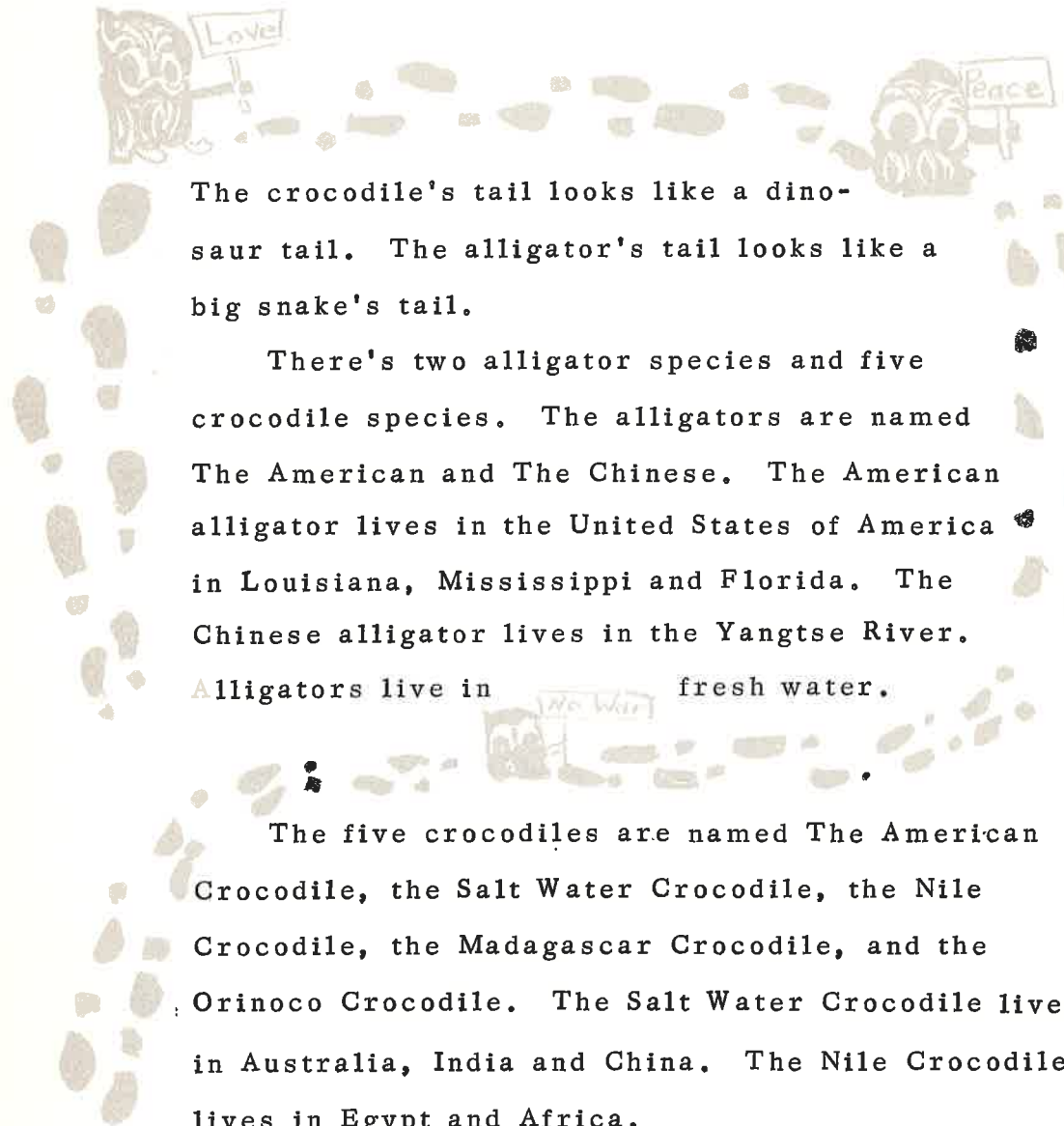
Alligators have a bumpy head and the crocodile has a flat head. The crocodile is longer than the alligator. Crocodiles are 18 to 30 feet and alligators are 8 to 15 feet.

If the alligator and crocodile fight you don't know who wins. If you get near an alligator or crocodile they may eat you alive.

The mother crocodile lays more eggs than the mother alligator. They don't guard the babies. The alligator mother builds a nest near the den. The nest is from dead leaves, sticks and mud. The mother crocodile builds a hole in the sand to put the eggs in.

The crocodile has a flat tail and the alligator has a skinny tail.





The crocodile's tail looks like a dinosaur tail. The alligator's tail looks like a big snake's tail.

There's two alligator species and five crocodile species. The alligators are named The American and The Chinese. The American alligator lives in the United States of America in Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida. The Chinese alligator lives in the Yangtse River. Alligators live in fresh water.

The five crocodiles are named The American Crocodile, the Salt Water Crocodile, the Nile Crocodile, the Madagascar Crocodile, and the Orinoco Crocodile. The Salt Water Crocodile lives in Australia, India and China. The Nile Crocodile lives in Egypt and Africa.

The alligators and crocodiles are reptiles. They lay eggs and have cold blood.

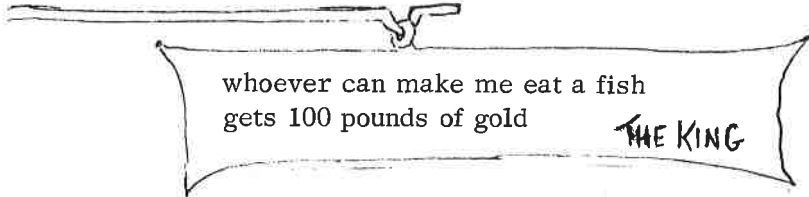
Some are nice.

THE END

Ruth Cruz

## BIGMOUTH AND NICK'S FISH

Once in a kingdom called Pig and Pine there lived a king called Bigmouth. He likes the people in his kingdom, and the people like him. But one thing the people hate about him is he doesn't like fish. So he put out a sign saying



Three hundred men try but fail. But a boy named Nick is very smart. He bought a fish. He cooked it real brown like steak because he knows that the king likes brown meat. Then he brought the fish into the palace. Before he brought the fish into the palace he cut off the fish's head and tail.

He told the king, "This is the best meat in the kingdom." The king thought it was animal meat so he ate it. Then the king asked Nick, "What kind of meat is it?"

Nick told him it was a fish. So the king gave him the 100 pounds of gold and made him his royal fish cooker.

Nick's family lived happily ever after. And so did the king.

THE END

John Morris

## THE ROCKET OF DOOM

"Apollo Seven, Cleveland speaking. Our rocket is wrecked because of meteors. Now we are crash-landing on the moon and we're stranded here forever. Now we are fighting a monster too horrible to describe. There are monsters all over the place. We might live for maybe days, maybe weeks. Who knows?"

Now out of the space-ship we got a moon walker and we are patrolling the area with a monster in pursuit. Our lunar crawler is going as fast as it can and we're shooting our disintegrating rays but they have no effect on the monster. Now our lunar crawler is out of gas and we are running for our very lives. Please send some equipment to us soon or we may not be alive to send back another note.

Now two more monsters have spotted us and they are fighting over us, and we are running. Another monster got one of our crewmates. Now there are only two of us because the monster ate him.

We are in a crater setting camp up. We are short on oxygen. We have made a mistake. We have set our camp up in a monster's trap and he is coming fast. We fired our lazar beams and the entrance caved in. We're digging our way out now. We are weakening of our need for oxygen. We are at the surface now and some more monsters have spotted us. Our lazar beam has no effect on none of the monsters except for the little ones. We are doomed. Our chances are 200 to 0.

\*\*\*\*\*

We lost the monsters during the night and we met some Martians. The head leader has two big antennas and is firing lightning rods at us. Now we are running. The monsters have found us and the Martians are in back of us so we ducked and the Martians met the monsters head on. The Martians killed some monsters. Now there are 20 monsters left and 100 Martians.

The monsters are chasing us again. We killed some more Martians. There are 90 left. We lost the Martians but we are dying of oxygen. There is only one chance and that is for you to send us some air tanks. If we (gasp) meet the Martians (gasp) or the monsters (gasp) we will have to (gasp) try our grenades on them (gasp). We have just found (gasp) a giant monster (gasp) bigger than all the (gasp) others. We are running (gasp) but he seems to catch (gasp) up to us (gasp) because we are weak (gasp) for air. (gasp) One of my crewmates (gasp) was eaten by the (gasp) king monster.

\*\*\*\*\*

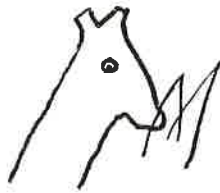
It is nightfall now. I am hiding from the monster. I am low on food supplies because we left most of our equipment where we first set camp. My air conditioner is failing. It will be a matter of weeks now and then I will just die unless you send me the equipment I need. One of the Martians is a traitor and helped me steal some food. Their food is different from ours because it is little machines. You put it in your mouth and press a button and it tastes like whatever you want it to taste like.

P.S. This letter I got to you by half-full jet pack. Attached to this jet pack is a picture of the king monster. That's all I have to say.

THE END

John Morris

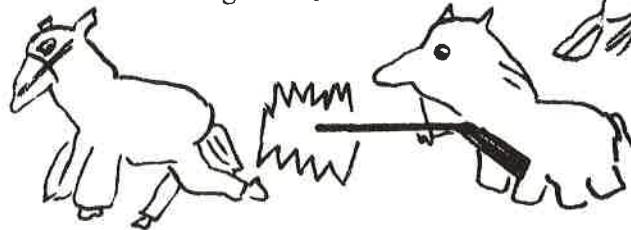
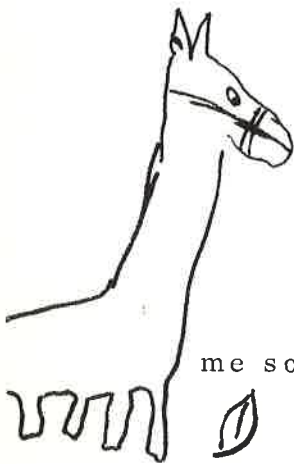
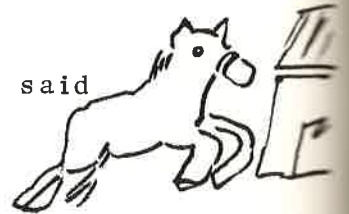
THE GIRAFFE AND THE HORSE



Once upon a time there was a giraffe and he go to eat some leaves and a horse said, "You eat my leaves, I fight you."

"Wait, I tell you something," said the giraffe. "In 100 miles there is a cave. Inside are 4,000 Batman and Robins. You go to fight with them. O.K., let's go inside," said the giraffe.

"Wait, I go home to get a gun first," said the horse. "O.K. Let's go in."



BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG BANG

"Inside have no Batman and Robins. He trick me so I go home to get him," said the horse.

YOOOOOHOO.

"I eat all your leaves," said the giraffe.

"O my leaves. I don't have the leaves to get my wife," said the horse.

"Bye Bye, next week see you," said the giraffe.



THE END



Eddy Young

## TOM AND LITTLE TINY PINNY

Once upon a time there was a forest of many animals. One animal was named Tom. He was sad, because he has no friends. All the animals don't like him and Tom went for a little walk. He bumped into a little rock and fall down in the pool and he was very wet. He has to go back to his house to clean up his clothes.

And a girl bear was named Little Tiny Pinny. She was walking by to Tom's house and Little Tiny Pinny fell on Tom's shoe, and Little Tiny Pinny said, "You big dumpbell. Why don't you take your shoe and get out of my way." And Tom said, "Why don't you get out of my house too." And they two were fighting. When they two were fighting they bump together and they said, "I am sorry." "Do not talk like that," said Little Tiny Pinny.

Then Tom went with Little Tiny Pinny to the forest to talk about the forest. Then Little Tiny Pinny said, "This forest is so pretty I wish I was living here so I can play here and look at the moon." And Tom said, "I wish I lived here too." And all the animals came and said, "Why are you standing here? Why are you standing here and looking at the moon?" And Tom said, "So I like to see the moon." But the animals do not let him look at the moon. But Tom was sad because nobody let them go out and play, when his father came. He saw him and yelled at him and said, "What are you standing here on this night? Well, you go to sleep," said the father. Tom said, "NO! I don't want to! I like to stay here and look at the moon." "Why? said his father. "Because I like the moon," said Tom. Then his father said, "When you see the moon you should already be asleep." Then Tom said, "O.K."

When the next day Little Tiny Pinny woke up and tell her mother to buy a little present for Tom. Then her mother said, "You have no money to buy a present. Why don't you pick some flowers?" Then Tom woke up too and went to look at the sun. Then they two bump again. Then they two said, "Good morning." When they look at each other they like to be friends. Then they play together in the little forest. They were happy. Then they two were married. Then they were happy ever after.

THE END

Lai Ko

# A Dream That Is Killing Me

FROM THE DIARIES OF PHILLIP LOPATE  
EAST HARLEM YOUTH SERVICES

## THE AGENCY

The educational arm of East Harlem Youth Employment Services is on the second floor above a storefront, and can be reached through one of those black pissy staircases. In the climactic heat of summer the students who are "motivated" bend over high school equivalency exams like hypnotized beetles. Only the downstairs (job training) part is air conditioned; this reflects the larger agency attitude of treating the remedial education program like a step-daughter.

Coming into the study rooms, one first senses that nothing is happening. There are too many staff members for the meager number of students; I am told this happens every Monday but improves as the week goes along. Also that attendance has dropped with each week of mounting summer heat—even though many of the students are paid by Neighborhood Youth Corps to come and must punch a time clock to establish their hours.

The agency is rather impoverished, uses paper which is blank only on one side. Recently it purchased several dozen attractive paperbacks—from Cleaver to Fu Manchu—but then decided to lock them up since otherwise they would disappear too quickly. Paradoxically, the dust-eaten bound volumes of Rudyard Kipling which no one has ever touched are openly displayed.

The agency has serious structural problems as a learning environment; it is not likely to become a healthy "free school" without a larger commitment of funds and energy from the downstairs people. But there are at least four terrific and dedicated staff members, which is far more than most places have. Many of the kids find it, if not stimulating, then at least a haven from the streets; and for a number of "problem cases" (heavy drugs,

physical or emotional difficulties) it is probably the last place for them to turn. These "kids" by the way, are from 18 to 21.

## MARVIN AND RICKY

Marvin told me he and several other kids in the drug program had been dropped. We had a long talk in which he voiced all his complaints, and I told him I'd go to bat for him. He claimed he was being dropped because he was a little late and spent more time on the magazine than group therapy. His salary is so pitiful that the idea of docking his pay repelled me.

\* \* \* \*

A nasty business this defense of Marvin turned out to be. Everyone went off to the beach while I cajoled several administrators into taking him and Ricky back. Ricky stood in danger of going back to jail for five months if he was dropped, because he is on probation to the agency for an old offense. I didn't mind so much the intervention, but I began feeling desperate, after my encomiums about Marvin's attendance, when he didn't show up. They were waiting for him to drop in so they could arrange a new schedule more suitable to his needs, and I was waiting for him because we had planned to rehearse a poetry reading at the beach.

Marvin never showed, so Ricky and Ikiem and I set off for Riis Park to rehearse with the others. On the subway Ricky started nodding out right next to me, a silly sleepy expression on his face and his head dropping lower and lower. Sure I'd seen it happening many times before, but not happening to somebody I knew. Junk is scary. He woke up, and we talked about jails and the Tombs riot. I got the feeling the problems in junkies' lives are bottomless...they really do seem irresponsible, and I'm not so eager to protect them.

\* \* \* \*

Lack of enthusiasm for some student work here is one of the biggest problems I face. When I taught elementary school kids their fantastic imaginations and innocence lent their compositions a charm that was not difficult to love. But I feel that some of the life has gone out of kids writing by 18, to be replaced by cliches and attitudinizing. My job is much simpler when I think what the kids write is terrific.

Take Ricky's poem, Whitey Go Home. Now Ricky is ... one of three brilliant participants in this program.



He's so brilliant that he barely participates, just ducks in and out when he's in the mood to detoxify. Ricky could easily be hired as a teacher by the agency if he wanted to. He writes poems on his own. Whitey Go Home has strong rhythm, an adventurous picture-from, some necessary ideas and is basically a carbon copy of a thousand black is beautiful poems. Being white isn't the only reason I can't appreciate the poem fully, but being white, I'm defensive about telling him what's wrong with it. He needs a black poetry teacher.

### WHITEEEEEYYY GO HOME

It's not the world but a dream that is killing me  
A dream as real as the warm and unclean fluid i  
Inject into my vein, a dream as cruel and savage  
As the white slave master that murdered the man  
that  
Lived within me in the beginning and killed the  
woman in  
Her.  
Oh White dream who belongs to the blonde headed  
blue eye  
Oh white dream who polluted my soul and frightens  
my nightmare.  
Oh white dream that comes sometimes in million  
dollar  
Commercials why torment my blackness and simulate  
my africa  
Self with your whiteness  
Oh evil white dream let me be a man, a man  
(I don't wanna be a junkie)  
I don't wanna roam this synthetic jungle in search of  
Some wild drug to feed my infected mind.  
Oh beautiful black dream come together and create  
and create, create life where there is now death  
come  
Together and create love where there is now hate  
where  
There is whiteness make it black Oh god let me be  
black,  
Oh beautiful black dream come into my heart, my  
mind, my life  
Oh God! Oh dream, Oh dream Oh God let this black  
soul live.

Ricky came by to tell me some guys from the Mafia were taking shots at him because he owed them \$400, and he was thinking of asking to have his parole revoked because it was safer to be in jail.

## MONA

I had a tense getting-to-know-you conversation with Mona, who's everybody's favorite ex-mental patient, an incredibly good writer, incredibly quick to take offense, who demands to be handled with kid gloves but also is a bit of a prima donna. I had replaced a teacher whom she had loved, named Marc, and the first day all she would say to me was "You're not Marc." The second day I greeted her with a cheerful "Good morning Mona," and she replied, "In what sense do you mean good." I said "Oh forget it!" So far, it is hard to know when to be supportive or when to refuse to flatter the narcissism of her acting different. She wrote me a story about her last hospital ward:

To walk into an empty room filled with a crowd of people—watching you. The door shuts locked behind you. This crowd of people—you're trying to see them—but the crowd is hidden from you. But you know they're there. And you wonder why—this time. Locked up—again.—

To be locked up in a small secluded room. Not knowing whether they'll let you out within a couple of hours or a couple of days. You'll get used to it. And you wonder why—this time.

Is it because you threw a knife at someone? or you didn't do your homework? or you participated in or agitated a fight? could it have been because you tried to escape? or that—the people got up-tight because of something outside before they came in? and you were the first one in the way to take it out on?

Accept it—they're bigger than you are. Enjoy yourself in that room; don't think of—the people—watching you. They got their kicks out of taking advantage of their positions. Enjoy yourself—there's a lot to learn in that room they put you in

with (what they think) nothing to do.

LEARN! \*                   Stand on your head  
                                  do temple salts  
                                  wonder —  
                                  play with the spiders you  
                                  make from the strands  
of your hair.               live in any world you feel  
                                  like living in.

Laugh!

It'll get so that "they" see it isn't a punishment—really to put you in there. They won't do it anymore.

PAM

Pamela had undertaken to keep a lengthy diary, filling three to five pages a day on her movements. It is certainly indicative of something important going on in her, this drive for self-reportage. After she has finished an entry, she shows it to a number of people, not seeming too affected by their comments. The diaries are written in a flat style which mixes the most mundane happenings ("then I borrowed a dollar from my cousin for some fish and chips") to glimpses of feelings and conflicts. Either she is purposely being private or she doesn't know what phenomena mean more to her, have more dramatic urgency. Through all this opening up process she still looks depressed, empty. A member of the agency staff told me that three weeks ago she threatened suicide so seriously that one of the downstairs staff-men was going to call an ambulance to put her away.

I feel tense about my own role: I don't want to shut off the faucet with "help" about improving her writing style ("why not concentrate on the highlights, dearie?"). And I am afraid she is pinning some secret hopes on the writing which I—it—will not be able to satisfy. One day, in order to have some relation to her outlay, I corrected her grammatical errors. She smiled and wrote me a note: Which do you want, good grammar or good taste.

The next day she repeated the same errors (Her and I went to the store, etc.) that I had painstakingly explained away. So I think I'll prefer good taste for the time being.

On Friday evening I went to my sister's house to visit her, and as I was visiting something came to my mind about my room. It didn't even dawn on me that it was time for me to go home, and when I got there, there was a key in the door that was broken and what I didn't understand was what the key was doing there. I tried to pull but it didn't work. So I tried to bust the door down that didn't work. The night guard said "Miss ———, your rent was due three days ago." I told him that I will bring in the money Monday. I told him that it is not my fault it is the Welfare's fault, because they are the ones who pay the rent. The night guard told me, That is what Mr. Parker told me to do. That night I walk from 94th St. the East Side to the West Side of 96th St. to 112 and third Ave. and second Ave. to spend the night with my sister. Saturday morning my sister's baby wasn't feeling well. She took the baby to the hospital to find out what was wrong with him. My sister's daughter and I went to the hospital with her. We walk down there and the doctor said that the baby's tubes were full of cold. He gave her some medicine for the cold. The medicine didn't work. So the baby was getting sicker. She took the baby back to the hospital and the doctor gave him a different kind of medicine. This medicine is much stronger than the other one. The strong kind still didn't do no good. She took him back to the hospital that night and brought him home and that night the doctor gave him some shots to break up his cold. The shots didn't do no good. That night she had to call the ambulance so they would take the baby to the hospital. The baby was admitted. Ever since then everything was going wrong. My sister's daughter coughing all night long. Sunday I walk from the East side to the West side cause I didn't have any money so I had no choice. Sunday afternoon my sister gave birth to a baby boy. The baby was a premature baby. I went to see her Monday. She look pretty good. I stay with her for a little while we talk about the baby. I told her that I will see her tomorrow. Now does that sound like a fucked up weekend.

Another Friday: Pam strolls in at 11, two hours late. Don't you mess with me, I don't want no complications today. She sits glowering in the corner. Little by little I get her to open up. It seems her landlord took away her hotplate and won't give it back to her. Furthermore, it was the hotplate her boyfriend had given her. Her boyfriend said, I'm going to go over to that guy and show him what a man is. No, don't, she says, let me try to handle it first. So she "aks" him sweetly and he says Sorry young lady, we can't have any hotplates in here. He was a whitey too, she says. She didn't even get angry, she just walked away..."because I kept thinking I was gonna get a gun and shoot him in the head and go right up to my room and leave the gun on the counter and nobody would know the difference."

This is just part of it. "I don't want to talk about the rest cause it just gives me more aggravation. Did you ever love someone and wanted to stay with that person and no matter what it just wouldn't work out?" Yeah, I say, and would say more, but she's still playing the game with me of Whitey don't know nothing about troubles. Then she drops a remark about killing herself. Says she's tried it a few times. Has strong insight into it too. She associates it with having to get her way, everything when she wants it, and if it doesn't work out just on schedule she doesn't want to go on living.

Lunch time comes, and although she's brought her lunch Pam starts grumbling about how much she wishes she had a dollar so she could get some fish'n chips. I offer her a dollar, and she's so surprised that she immediately turns the request into another one: that I take her to lunch. It's a little flirtatious: Aw, won't you take me with you? Although I had been looking forward to the privacy I realize it's a big step that she asks me. Outside it's the hottest September day in ninety years. For once all talk has to be about the weather, it's so overwhelming. We enter the sweltering fish'n chips shop and I order two chips and two orange sodas, which is the only kind that's cold. The portions are gigantic. Pam is laughing to herself. What's so funny? I ask. Oh...I just wish I could go out with lots of white people and everybody be looking at me. I dig the attention. See that man passing us, he sees me and you, he saying to himself, what the hell's going on?

\* \* \* \*

Pam has written her tenth story in a row which says exactly the same thing about people giving you trouble in the street. It was for her partially that I devised

the fantasy horror assignment—to get her off the street. So this time she set out to write a horror story. It begins:

"Horror stories are a bitch. Cause when you walk down the street and a mother fucker bust your head wide open and you just stand there and let him do that to you like a dam fool, you have to get yourself together so no mother fucker will fuck with you again."

Sometimes it takes an Art Berger to appreciate the ambiguities and rich repetition of this kind of writing. I kind of like it, sometimes it wears thin, who knows? I continue to look at the person's own reaction to his writing; if he seems to have exerted himself and dug deeply and believes in it himself and is proud of it, then I'm really pleased.

## TONY

One day Tony, who's been an enigma to us—so pleasant, handsome and remote—, started talking about the hideous things he had seen in the Dominican Republic civil war. Faces blown off by .38's, corpses rotting in the street, political chicanery. The event hit him when he was 16; once he began opening up about it he had a hard time stopping. Previously he'd been very sleepy and seemed to ask for unimaginative work though I knew he was quite intelligent. With very little prodding I got him to start an account of the Dominican Revolution which is now 8 pages long. I suggested that he write originally in Spanish because I wanted it to come from the heart. For the last week he's been working on this story, one day in Spanish, the next day translating into English from a dictionary, with incredible absorption. The translation work gives me all sorts of opportunities to teach English usage. Tony began with an objective statement of the events of the Dominican Revolution which was quite good; but I told him also I wanted his own experiences, because they were so interesting and none of us had been through an actual war. He is shy about committing these things to paper—actually afraid that the U.S. government will find out and revoke his visa and send him back to D.R. where he'd be shot. But I'm very pleased with the form it's taking. I said I wanted him to write not only as a journalist but as a novelist oo, with precise details and feelings...

## THE DOMINICAN REVOLUTION

On the morning of April 24, 1965, the Dominican people received notice that the government, headed by Dr. Donald Read Cabral, had collapsed. Immediately, the mobilization of the rebel troops began in the camps of the Army. Official radio and television began to incite agitation, telling the people to take up arms and attack the police stations. At noon, the Air Force said to the people, over the radio, that it was going to bomb the rebel areas.

Immediately, masses of people entrenched themselves in the nearest shelter. The Air Force armed themselves heavily. Later the attacks began in the air and on land and the restlessness of the Dominican people began. Some people ran without direction when they heard the bombardment of the airplanes, and most were trying to get out of the city looking for peace. In the Armed Forces there was great confusion the first three days, the Army fighting with the Air Force.

After three days of intense fighting between brothers, the Air Force called the United States Army, intensifying the struggle in this case with one more army. At the arrival of the U.S. Army, they began to evacuate the North American citizens in Santo Domingo.

The Organization of American States (O.A.S.) formed the Inter-American Peace Force, made up of the following

countries: Brazil, United States, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

The Revolutionary Movements saw this force formed by foreign armies, so they met in two groups, one in uptown and the other one in downtown. It was heartbreaking to see so many people dead because of the stupidity of the world, things that nobody had seen before Columbus arrived at Santo Domingo.

Since the dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina collapsed in 1961, the Dominican people have confronted so many internal troubles that in the passage of time the country has suffered a political decadence. These problems came from before to the Dominican Revolution, and they have tried to finish with the abuses but even now they are following the same mistakes. A large group of bad Dominicans are robbing and killing, supported by an irresponsible government, like most of the governments since the fall of Trujillo.

I'm not political nor a partisan of any political group, but I can see the abuses that have been happening since the arrival of Christopher Columbus till our time, —all the problems confronted by my country and the suffering, without any freedom of expression. I think that every revolution must be fought away from the urban zones to avoid the things that my eyes have witnessed, to avoid looking at innocent victims whose heads have been shot off by one or more bullets of different calibers. During the



Revolution, I could see so many air bombers and naval attacks directed against a city full of children, women and old men too. Some of those people unluckily found death in their own homes, at the hands of the bombers directed by the Air Force and the Navy, without any necessity, guided by ambition and the thirst to kill.

A lot of times I had to go out early looking for some place to buy food for my family. Before the cease fire was over the curfew was from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. In my wanderings to look for food I could see cadavers in a state of putrefaction that sometimes gave me a hunger to vomit. The bad smells that those bodies emitted were completely disagreeable. Sometimes I got caught in ambushes between the opposing groups and miraculously got out alive in the battle between the troops.

I remember once I was by myself in a neighborhood looking for some place to buy some food. When I got off in front of a church, I had to return because I saw troops of the Air Force with tanks and arms of great calibers. Immediately I told two rebel soldiers what was happening outside and told them where they should hide inside of the sacristy, but there were denounced by ignorant people that were threatened by the troops. Later the rebels were arrested and disarmed and I do not know what luck they had since that moment.

The hate that there is in different sectors of the country is very hard to finish; if this would be accomplished, then the people might live a quiet life in the whole nation, contributing to their development and well-being without the necessity of foreign aid.

The national economy is one of the factors that can remedy the situation. With this effort we can stop the mineral riches of the country from being exploited by the simple interests of North American Companies.

Ramon Antonio (Tony)

## GILBERT

I worked with Gilbert in the afternoon. He's the epileptic kid with the tragic eyes who can't read or learn much, and who always moans to everyone how his teachers aren't helping him enough. He seems to feel abandoned if I turn my head. This afternoon I stuck to math for the most part, because it's what he likes and does best. He understands things to a point, but whenever several processes are involved he gets them confused and simply tosses numbers around with no regard for meaning. (This,  $4/9 \times 16$  will be a common answer... no sense of parts or wholes.) I gave my other students writing assignments and held Gilbert's hand; in the last half hour I asked him to write a paragraph about his job. "No, I can't write," he insisted, but I told him I'd help him spell any word he wished. This contented him. He proceeded to write about his job cleaning up in the projects, and his desire to learn at the agency. "If the teacher do what he suppose to do I would learn but he don't do what he suppose and this way I don't learn nothing...." All this self-righteous vitriol was coming out as I patiently helped him spell every third word on how no one helped him!

At the end I told him he had done very well and he should feel proud of his essay. "No, I don't learn nothing here," he said with clear satisfaction, "because no one would help me. My brother tole me I wouldn't learn nothing here."

Just then Vince, another teacher who had worked also with Gilbert and was thoroughly tired of his song and dance, walked in and said, "Aw tell it to the priest." Don't you have a good word for anyone? Gilbert redoubled his efforts to convince any passers-by of the righteousness of his complaint. Then he sank into: "I don't want to live in this world any more. I tole my mother that. Because I don't like the way I learn. (Gilbert can only vacillate between two states: suicidal reality—that he doesn't learn at all well, has been diagnosed as retarded, and may never be employable; or life-affirming paranoia—that it's Their fault.) I don't want to be in this world no more. I could go on the roof and kill myself."

"I know just how he feels," says Pam, our other suicide-head (plus your narrator makes three). I was seized by the happy idea of joining Pam's, Gilbert's and my arms and heading toward the window singing "Let's all jump out together." Faced with the threat Gilbert laughed and held onto his chair. For a moment we were all happy. But then Gilbert had to make good his words: "You think I no do it?" and with epileptic joy ran to the window. I stepped in front of him: "Forget it Gilbert, it's just the second floor!"

\* \* \* \*

At 10 o'clock on Thursday who should show up but Gilbert, victorious with his latest catastrophe, a burnt arm, which enables him not to have to go to work. He reiterates his desire to spend all day with us in the school "so I could learn good reading." With his latest scar he seems to be telling us that he must have constant attention and get things his way. I ask him to write a story about burning his arm, and he is happy to do so, and the next hour is spent slowly adding one word to the next, one phrase to the next, until by the end he has almost a page of writing. Even he's surprised. "If I could do that every day I would get my reading because if nobody helps me I don't learn nothin." Appropriating the Ashton-Warner method, I decide to start him with a series of flash cards taken from his own writing. The first three are friend—touch—pain.

In the afternoon good work with Gilbert on math. Then he wrote a love letter to his girl (I helped him with the spelling). I didn't have the heart to impound it for Teachers and Writers but it went something like:

Dear Tessie,

I want you to be the woman to work in my house and be nice to me and make me happy so I could stay with you for the rest of my life.

\* \* \* \*

What a genius Gilbert has turned out to be! I was teaching him decimal problems in division and for the first time he retained everything. He actually learned three variables in one day; the most I've ever managed to get him to keep in his head was one, so that whenever a problem in the book was varied slightly he would muddle everything in his mind. But this time he sailed through the assignment, announced that he could do the hardest division problem in the world, and I kept him busy with a twelve-figure number which he solved quite correctly. He was so happy that he burst into song! He had us all singing Smoky Robinson and the Temptations, Michael and Bob and I laughing and doing soft shoes, and Gilbert the pied piper leading us downstairs.

\* \* \* \*

Feeling good, listening to the chatter around the table. Gilbert has his arithmetic book with him but I'm not ready just yet to bury myself in his needs. I am just working my way over to him when Jose alerts me that he is having a fit. I don't want to describe it but it's the first time I've seen an epileptic attack and I was terrified. One hand flopped backwards to clutch the back of his spine, and his other began twirling a pencil rapturously in the air. He seemed so dazzled and engrossed in the motion. When he came to (everyone had made a pretence of not watching) he began talking thickly in Spanish. I couldn't help feeling the fit was a punishment for my leaving him alone.

I took him out for coffee and he made a fairly quick recovery. But I was shaken. I kept looking into his eyes, which looked filled with mucus.

\* \* \* \*

Today Gilbert brought me a coffee. I felt a sudden warmth toward him, and leaned over and whispered thanks.

"Anytime," he said with his slow smile. I don't know what it was that touched me, his endurance through all those mishaps, his courage, or his mustachioed Latin handsomeness. We talked about George,\* and he said he wouldn't go to the funeral home because he couldn't see nobody laying flat on a bed. Because every time he sees it he sees his father and his brother. His father was a super, he said, and died a year ago. He died from drinking. And his brother came back from Vietnam and died the next week. And since that time he can't see nobody dead because it hurts too much and he would start crying. And now every night when he goes to bed he sees his father's face.

\* George Soto was a member of the school who plunged mysteriously to his death from an East Harlem tenement roof.

## THE LIFE OF GILBERT

### 1

My name is Gilbert. I like to be here to learn. When I was going to school every year I was going to school, I was going to the hospital, and when I came out of the hospital I was going back to school. And when I went back to school I was in the first grade. And one day I was going to bed and when somebody was in bed with me my eye was out and my sister's eye was out so I don't know who hit the light and it fell down and it hit my sister and me and my sister got burned in a fire and all the smoke came to me. And they started running to the store to get the telephone and when they came inside the ambulance took me and my sister to the hospital. And my mother came with me to the hospital and when we got to the hospital they ran with me to put me in a gas tank and they told my mother don't worry lies. And my sister

was burned all over her body and all the smoke came into my body and the doctor went to tell Gilbert's mother that Gilbert is all right. And Gilbert rested in the hospital and when he came out of the hospital, he went to the house.

2

When I was a 9 year old I was in my house nobody was in the house and I wanted to go out to the street and one day everybody went out to the street and I was in bed. And when I got out of the bed I look all around the house and I seen no one. And then I wanted to go out and the door was closed. And I looked out the window and I seen the window open and I jump out. When I was 13 years old and I was in school in the 5th grade and my father was a super, one day I was playing in the yard and I ran to the fire escape and I ran to the third floor and then I made a mistake and fell down and hit the ground.

3

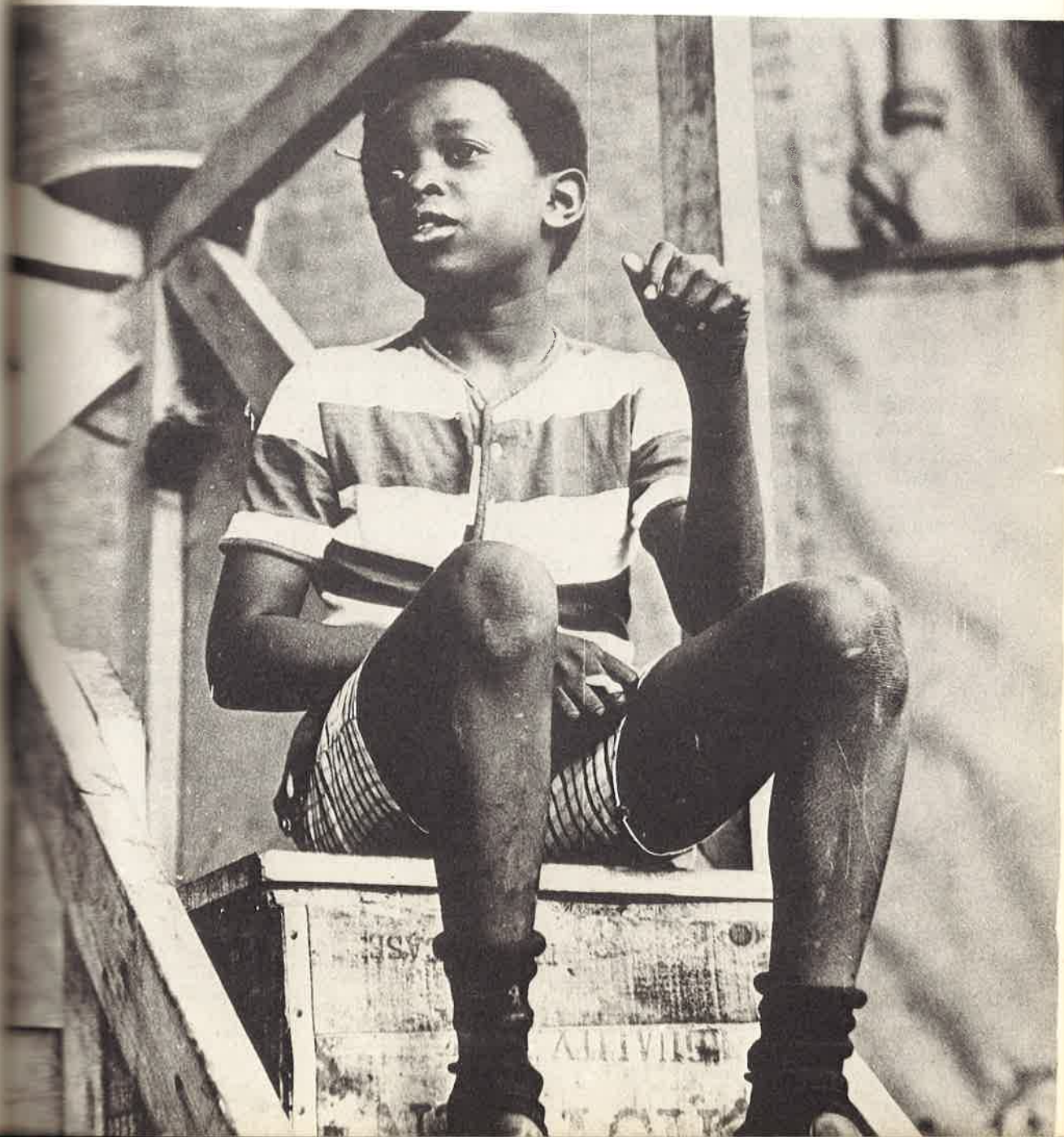
And when I was 13 years old I was going down to see my father and when I was going down the stair a dog was after me and when I hit the ground the dog took a piece of my leg. And when I was 14 years old I was helping the sanitation department truck and one day I was in the back of the truck and I was going to help clean the street and when we got to 111th street on Park Avenue Gilbert fell

down and the back wheel hit me in the left leg. One day I was playing in the back yard to have a little fun and I was climbing the fire escape and when I got to the second floor I fell down on my leg and when they took me to the hospital the doctor told my mother that Gilbert's left leg might be out of line, but we going to put a duplicate leg. And one day when I was living in 112th street and I was in the street and I went running to catch the ball and a taxi hit me in the left leg and my left leg give me trouble when I walk too much. And this is my last accident I had in the world. I hope I won't have no more accident after the last accident I had in the world it almost took me out of the world. But the bullet that hit me was a .22 and it hit me in the left leg and when I got off the bed I forgot my mother's name and when I remember my mother's name I wanted to got out. And when I got out I didn't know my name. That's why I came to this program to learn about school not about work and if I go to work I want to learn my school work because after all the accidents I had in the world I never knew nothing in the world and if I get out of this place in the morning and come only in the afternoon I won't never learn no school. And the only thing I want to learn is my schoolwork. And if they don't help me to learn about school not about work and if I don't learn anything I will find a way to get out of the world. And if I don't find a way to learn about school I will find a way to be in the hospital and if I don't learn about school I will be in the hospital and if I won't be in the

hospital I will be out of the world.

Gilbert

Note: This story was Gilbert's final work at the agency before being dismissed because he was overage. It took about three days to write, but every word was his own and was written without spelling or any other assistance, because by this time writing had become one of his greatest pleasures. On his last day Gilbert happily vowed to write an expose of the agency and its teaching staff for the local newspapers.





# The Loft

BY MARV HOFFMAN

Last summer we asked two writers to conduct some workshops for kids in a loft we had rented in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn. The loft was located on the second floor of a small building above a shoe store in a predominantly White (Irish and Italian) working-class neighborhood, the kind that usually gets by-passed by "special" educational programs like ours, as well as by the whole battery of poverty programs. The residents often don't want them, don't want to be associated with the kinds of people who do want them, and aren't besieged by offers in any case.

The kids are the ones who suffer most from the ensuing vacuum. The official face of the neighborhood is one of pride, patriotism, and self-reliance—the flag, the church, the pro-police stickers, the army recruiting posters. There's not much sustenance that a 16- or 17-year-old can draw from any of these, not much to do at all but hang out on the corner or in Prospect Park (when it's warm). After a while some of the kids start looking for their own diversions, and you can see them—glassy-eyed, spaced-out, freaked-out,—standing, squatting, lying on stoops,—against lamp-posts and up against those graffiti-rich brick walls.

It seemed obvious that the young people in the neighborhood needed something, and though none of us had any illusions about art as a panacea, we had some sense that perhaps writing workshops could lead to a budding self-awareness, perhaps even some political awareness and interest. Maybe a community newspaper could come out of the group, a receptacle for all the dissipated energy evident on those streets.

In fact, Tony, one of the people we hired to work in The Loft (so it came to be called), was a young man who had begun moving off the streets when he started writing in his own uniquely awkward but powerful style.

The previous summer Tony had been part of a group that came to be known as the Park People. They hung out together, took drugs together, and as a group, were victims of some particularly senseless police harassment which received publicity in several New York papers. With

the help of Sol Yurick, a novelist who lived in the area, they had begun meeting together and a few, like Tony, had started trying to write. A group of SDS organizers, attracted by the newspaper coverage of the Park People, rented a house in the neighborhood and set about trying to "organize" the Park People and the many others like them on the streets. These were the alienated and rootless White working-class youth who were to form the backbone of the revolutionary class struggle in America, or so the prevailing Weatherman ideology of the time stated. The organizers' strategy appears to have been to encourage revolutionary violence (by bombing local police cars, for example) which would bring the oppressive force of the system down on these kids which would, in turn, "radicalize" them further.

The Park People had something very different in mind for themselves. What they wanted was a chance to go down to the local police precinct and arrange to have the same patrolmen assigned regularly to the park beat so that both sides would get to know each other, thereby cutting down on misunderstandings and pointless busts. The abrasive presence of the Weathermen seems to have hastened the dissolution of the always-shaky bonds among the Park People, so that by the time we appeared in the neighborhood, there was no longer a clearly definable, cohesive group to work with.

Tony told some of the former Park People about The Loft one weekend, and we handed out flyers in the park announcing the schedule of workshops (there were workshops in painting, photography, silk screening and a few other things, in addition to the writing). The entire Loft program was a joint venture between us and the Pratt Center for Community Improvement. They contributed the lion's share of the rental and material costs, as well as a good deal of manpower for getting the place in shape and staffing the non-writing workshops. Each of the two writers was to spend a day a week at The Loft, and Tony was to be there all the time.

A few teenagers showed up from time to time. Once a group came, instruments in hand, and jammed for a few hours with Dick Lourie, one of the two poets, who is also a fine musician. They were eager for help writing their own song lyrics and arranged with Dick to come back soon to work with them. It seemed like a promising beginning, but nothing ever came of it. When Tony saw them on the street they told him, from across the spaced-out miles, that they hadn't been able to "get their heads together" enough to stop by again.

Several other groups of guys came up to The Loft on less benevolent missions. Fingering their knives, they

looked around for something worth stealing, and not finding anything, they shook down whoever was unfortunate enough to be around and left with all they ever wanted of The Loft -- a few spare dollars.

We began to wonder how we had ever deceived ourselves into believing it would be easy. Tony would bring his girl and their friends; they would all be primed to write, and off into the sunset. But the reality was something else:

One of our large problems -- the park people are just not coming. Tony and Susan, occasionally BK, that's it as far as my day-per-week is concerned, and it seems to be mostly like that all the time. Summer, street/drug culture, are some of the reasons. People really do literally just hang out, and it's hard to break that pattern down.

(from Dick Lourie's Diary)

One unexpected development was the appearance of a number of younger kids, almost all of whom lived within a few houses of The Loft. Again, Dick Lourie:

I also meet John, a very bright 12-year-old who lives next door, and consequently hangs around the loft, with several friends. His age group is rapidly becoming part of our constituency. Over the next few weeks I am able to get them to say things into the tape recorder (which can later be transcribed and mimeoed) and to write things. The first week a lot of them wrote about drugs, and later on there was some singing, etc. I am continuing to work with them but have to be careful because if the small kids are around too much, the older ones will stay away. So I decide to set up my schedule not to have poetry and music at separate times, but little kids and big kids at separate times.

But there were no big kids and the younger ones (from 7 up) were very irregular in their comings and goings. It didn't help that our hearts really weren't in the work with the younger ones. They knew that we were tolerating them until the "real thing" came along, and soon enough most of them had abandoned us too. Even some of those who wanted to continue coming up to fool with the tape recorder, peck away at the old typewriter we had carted up to The Loft, or use the ample supply of paints, were being told by their parents to stay away from us. We were strangers, we dressed strangely, and we were in the

community with unclear intentions. Although a few parents came to look around out of genuine, healthy curiosity, the others glared at us hostilely when we passed them on the street, and a few sent word (rumor, threat?) via their kids that "some men" were planning to come by to beat us up any day now.

So we had many hot summer afternoons to sit in the funereal silence of the unused Loft and obsess with one another over the failure which had overtaken us and which we could still reverse if we had not fallen into such a terrible paralysis. The very sight of the Loft's front door with the schedule of aborted workshops posted on it was enough to bring on a bout of nausea. And we began to avoid the place on any flimsy pretext, as one might avoid the home of a dying neighbor with whom one could do nothing but voice false hopes.

The mistakes were so embarrassingly obvious, but we made them nonetheless, like a masochist condemned to search out self-destructive relationships. First, we weren't really going out on the streets where the kids were, but were waiting for them to come to us. Somehow because the objective needs in the community were so clear, we assumed that there was enough of a subjective need to propel kids up that rickety stairway. But any organizer will tell you that it takes a lot of talking and walking to overcome the natural inertia of a group, magnified manifold in this case by drugs.

Tony was the only one of us who really understood the kids on the street well enough to move them, but he was just in off the street and had no desire to go back out there on some chancy, ill-defined rescue mission.

Dick Lourie described what Tony (and all of us) had to face every day: "This week Tony told me he had gone to talk with the people hanging out there. Soon after his arrival, coincidentally, a fight started. Guys falling down, beating on each other. He split to the Loft...." So he made the best possible use of The Loft, capitalizing on its spacious silence to write a ream of poems over the summer. Although Tony was still precariously balanced between the streets and some other as-yet-undefined universe, the writing was obviously central to the act of tremendous will by which he left the street to grope toward that other terrifying and uncertain existence.

The rest of us, in our one or two half days each week at The Loft, were ill-suited to be organizers, and it's questionable whether we could have done it even if we were there full time.

Second (and now that I've started listing, let me go on this way to the bitter end with our catalog of don'ts), since we didn't have the capacity to do the difficult organizing,

we could only have worked with a group that already had some cohesiveness. Given the workshop structure, either the kids were there to be worked with when the writers showed up, or they weren't. If they weren't, that was it till next week. That presupposes some stability and continuity, which means, in turn, plugging into an ongoing process initiated by someone else. We should have recognized the impossibility of starting from scratch on our own.

Third, we were rigid beyond words. We came with a predetermined structure and program to work with a predetermined age group. Together with the Pratt students, who were to be responsible for all the non-writing activities in The Loft, we spent two weeks at the beginning of the summer painting the place, stocking it with materials, building platforms, partitions — in short, playing with our own fantasies about what would go on in the space from day to day. And we hadn't seen a single kid yet! Of course that was one of the functions served by all this attention to physical details. We were all scared to get started, uncertain of how it would turn out. Instead of acknowledging our confusion and being open to it, we fled into carpentry and painting.

I often wonder what would have happened if we had begun with a space and program that had minimal structure. If we had been offering, at the outset, a hang-out, a place where kids could feel safe and happy with each other and with us, perhaps something more natural, more organic would have evolved. True, this approach presented its own problems: the landlord might have kicked us out, or the cops would have certainly started making drug raids. But I fear that the real reason we didn't push for this alternative had to do with an unwillingness to trust that it would eventually work around to writing or some other "constructive" form of self-expression. Our own hang-ups about work and productivity often get between us and the kids we want to relate to.

Finally, we made no effort to establish any links with the adult community around The Loft. We were scared of the local hard-hat population, and slipped into viewing them as the enemy. The only reason they didn't come to beat on our heads was that we were never effective enough to present a threat. If we were serious about surviving in a community which doesn't take well to any kind of outsider, we had to make some effort to explain ourselves to the parents, possibly even to enlist their aid in running the center. Perhaps with a strong group of teenagers committed to the center, we could have survived without this politicking; there would have been a constituency with the community fighting for The Loft's survival.

It's painful and humiliating to write about such

failures. It makes your hopes and ambitions appear foolish in retrospect. I don't want that to be the case. I still believe that a good program is possible in places like The Loft and that writing can play a central part in such a program. But don't underestimate the difficulty of making it work. It's easy enough for a writer to walk into a prestructured situation in a school and concentrate from the start on writing. But here we're talking about creating a new institution, a task that's not to be taken as lightly or as half-assedly as we did.

Here are some selections from the transcript of a taped discussion with a group of youngsters, age 10 - 14, which Dick Lourie did at The Loft one day early in the summer. We think it reflects both their extraordinary energy and potential as well as the paralyzing burden of racism with which they live. The intensity of the racism voiced by several of the boys has never failed to shock people who have listened to this tape. No matter how we may be tempted to psychologize or moralize about their racism, it reflects the norms and values of the most respected people in their community. We had neither enough time nor enough wisdom to offer a better alternative.

Lourie: How long have you lived here?

Sean: Thirteen years. Ah, fourteen years. Sometime I'm gonna move.

Lourie: What don't you like about it?

Sean: What do I like about it?

Lourie: What do you like about it?

Sean: Nothing.

Lourie: Nothing. Why, what's the trouble?

Sean: I don't get in trouble. It's just that you can't do anything without anybody bothering you.

Lourie: Around here?

Sean: Yea.

Lourie: Like what, say?

Sean: Well, when we go fishin', when you go fishing... come back with no rod and reel.

Lourie: 'Cause somebody's got it?

Sean: Yup.

George: No. The colored guys they mug you and they take all your money. When you go to the park, right. And, you know, the coons they don't come by one -- they come by around twenty and they come running after you and you don't even have a chance to get away. Even if you yell or anything. They don't even do anything. They just stay there and they start muggin' you and takin' your poles and everything.

Sean: What about your bike?

George: Yea, they got me in the park and they was muggin' on me and everything. Beating me up and everything, and they took my bike. And one day me and Sean went fishin' up Sheepshead Bay, and we caught a nigger trying to rob his pole. Sean threw his knife and almost sliced his finger off. Cut it over here. And I was laughin' 'cause we were chasin' after him with the knife, and they were running like rabbits. Never saw coons run so fast in my life.

Lourie: You know any colored guys that are nice?

George: You show me one nice colored guy in this world and I'll eat my hat.

Mike: I do. Adrian\*. Right out there.

George: Oh... he's the only one.

(mocking laughter)

Lourie: He's the only one you've met, right? I'll tell you something else. I know some white guys who would mug you too.

Kids (together): (They disagree generally with this)  
Nah. Ah. They don't bother their own kind. Just like colored.

Lourie: Is that the way it is in this neighborhood?

George: Remember one time I went to the park, right. With my friend Paul. And we were walking along, right. So, we come up... there's around five niggers. They come

\* One of the Pratt students who was working at The Loft.

over. "Hey, give me all your money." I got no money. I had only twenty cents in my pocket. They come over and they teared my pocket off. You can see where they teared it all the way down. And they took the twenty cents. That's what you call raidin' the pocket.

Lourie: I guess so.

George: Yea. These coons are really bad.

Lourie: Are you sure there ain't some white guys who are bad, too?

George: Not around here at least.

Lourie: What? Not around here. (to another kid) Do you think he's wrong?

Mike: There's some around here but there's not many. You hardly ever see them....

Lourie: You hardly ever see what?

Mike: Many white guys bothering you. They're mainly colored guys.

George: It's mostly all colored guys.

Lourie: Why do you think that is?

George: Well, because the niggers and them are... they're on welfare and they can't afford, you know, to buy clothes or anything. So they, you know, buy fishing poles. So they come and rob from us. See, they get the money, but they spend it on dope and stupid things like that. When like us — the white people — we spend our money on things that, you know, are reliable. But, you see, a coon (laughs) he don't... he don't... he wastes his money on drugs. When us, you know, white guys.... You know what they have down the school yard? Black power not white power.

Lourie: You mean written on the school yard?

George: Yea. And they think they're hot.

Mike: But you know where you can see a good example of that is on...like on Sundays there's this... down on the piers on 29th



and 35th Street they're these guys who race cars. And you can't go down there. If you have a bike you can't go near the place. 'Cause you wouldn't get two feet near a car without losing your bike. And...

Lourie: Somebody run it over?

Mike: No, they would steal it on you. And, lots of kids just like to go down there and sit down there and watch the cars race illegally. And it's even more fun when you see a cop car come after them and the guys are running away. And it's a lot better... but... you're scared to go down there if you got anything on you valuable.

Lourie: You think he's right?

George: Yes. He is. Very right.

Lourie: Do you think he's right?

Billy: No, not all of them are, but... I think he's just... I think he's prejudiced. He hates them all.

George: No, not all of 'em but, you know, after I got my bike robbed and they, you know, they robbed my pole and reels. I'm really, you know, mad about that. And that's why I don't like 'em.

Lourie: Yea, that got you real angry...

Billy: Yea. But, George, how do you know it was colored people that robbed you. We don't know who took 'em.

Sean: We saw them.

George: We did. I'll tell you now. It happened to me plenty of times. I got robbed plenty of times.

Billy: Maybe you got bad luck.

Lourie: I got robbed. Somebody broke into my apartment. And that wasn't even around here.

George: Yea, well. It happened on my friend, too. He plays the saxophone. Right upstairs in my building. Somebody robbed two houses

on the same day. They robbed the one right next to me and the one on the floor right above. Robbed the saxophone, a portable radio, TV. You now, portable. That's why my mother got a big TV. This way if they try to rob it they won't be able to get away. 'Cause it's much too heavy. That's what most are being robbed, is their portable TV.

- Lourie: Do you think people are stealing stuff because they're junkies?
- George: They want to get the money. They probably bring it to a hock shop or somethin'. And they hock it. And then they get about maybe twenty dollars for, you know, like a saxophone. You get good money for that in hock. Pretty expensive instrument — two hundred, three hundred dollars for a saxophone.
- Lourie: Sounds like a tough neighborhood to live in. Is your school better than the neighborhood, or the neighborhood better than the school?
- Billy: Um, the neighborhood's better than the school.
- Lourie: How come?
- Billy: 'Cause the school I went to...they called it Pill Hill because it was up on a hill. And there was a lot of kids trying to sell dope and they caught 'em so they called it Pill Hill.
- Mike: Yea. But...but where this place is located and where we live is pretty good compared to some of the other neighborhoods. There's only two colored families on the block and you wouldn't even know they lived here.
- George: Did ya ever see Duanie and Booboo? The small colored kids?
- Billy: They were the first family to live on the block, and you don't notice them. When they moved in on the block the people thought, "Aw, there goes the neighborhood. They're gonna start reckin' everything." But now that the people got to see how they are they don't even think anything.

George: Just a few days ago, ...his father (indicating one of the other kids present) caught these two Spanish kids pickin' his garbage.

Lourie: Well, that's not illegal is it?

George: Well, you see. They don't just garbage pick. They take everything out and leave it there. They don't even bother pickin' it up. See. They litter, too. Before you know it everybody's going to have to be using gas masks before this pollution. That's really bad.

Lourie: The pollution's bad around here?

George: Yea. Up in the park. The water! It's filthy. Really. Like mud. Coney Island —forget it. Oil. You can't even go swimmin'. You come out with big strips of oil on you. It's really bad. It's really bad. All the fish are dyin'. There's no more fishin'. Like me and Sean like to go fishin'. But when we go—Billy, too— we only get these small things. You know, all the big ones are mostly all dyin'. The ones that we really wanta catch, see? Yea. If there was anything to help with the pollution I would help, really.

Mike: Like, in my school we had Earth Day. And nearly all the teachers made us go out and clean up around the neighborhood. Instead of going to classes the whole day we spent goin' around cleaning up the streets for Earth Day.

Lourie: Did the neighborhood look different after that?

Mike: It looked a little better.

George: Well. We had one guy down here named Tommy. And he's on welfare, right. But, you see, he's crazy. You know, like he's retarded. And if you bother him he comes after you with sticks....

Billy: Yes. He's not really crazy. Just that he lived with his mother all his life, ya see. And when his mother died, he got very lonely.

George: He may be retarded, right? He may be

retarded but he cleaned this whole block. Right, Billy? He cleaned this, swepted everything up in the streets, and everything. He's really good. Like, he's a nice guy to talk with but once you start talking with him you never stop.

Billy: Yea. He's always saying "Lindsay got Leary" and "Nixon's no good," "Gold-water—flush him down the toiletbowl," and things like that. Everybody thinks he's crazy.

A postscript from Dick Lourie:

Some last reflections on the interview/rap tape made with the neighborhood kids. Whatever the reasons, they haven't been back—or 3 of the 4 of them haven't—since they made the tape. Maybe they got uneasy when we were playing it for people that same day. They all crossed their names off the tape-index list, after they had finished the tape... ironically, these were the Irish kids who literally live next door—of anyone, they have the most claim to the Loft in terms of neighborhood. But we haven't been able to make them feel that. On the contrary, they see it now as a kind of foreign presence; as Billy remarked to me in the first couple of weeks, some of the neighborhood people think it is some kind of the usual do-nothing poverty program.

So, if we are to continue here, to try and make a thing out of the community and for the community, we are going to have to find ways to let the kids in the community take it over from us, to become a community place. This obviously will not be easy.



We have printed Sheila Murphy's report along with Rosellen Brown's Hopi Workbench diaries because, while both are concerned with the development of more open techniques for the teaching of writing, each has worked in a distinctly different environment. Miss Brown has had to make all her materials portable. As her report states, she brings the "important furniture" of the workshop to Fordham each week, cannot decorate even the walls of the sterile classroom, and cannot leave anything behind. This problem should be familiar to many specialists working in schools, as well as intermediate and high school teachers who work in schools where students change classes. Sheila Murphy, on the other hand, has had the opportunity to develop a permanent language center at the Creative Teaching Workshop. She has therefore been able to consider a much wider range of materials—and to think in terms of constructing a new and pleasant space for language activities.

Incidentally, Rosellen and Sheila are the wives of the Director and Associate Director of the Collaborative. We haven't done much editing of their work, either, because a few months ago they both started meeting with a Women's Lib discussion group.

# Garbage Picking

BY SHEILA MURPHY

\*  
Creative Teaching Workshop (CTW) is a branch of Education Development Center. It is an experiment in teacher education, housed in a huge loft on Suffolk Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The loft is full of the kinds of evocative materials one would hope to find in a good open classroom. Teachers are free to work with these materials. In so doing, they learn the many educational possibilities inherent in simple materials, and gain insight into the ways that children learn. They experience for themselves learning in an open classroom situation, and they learn more about how to recreate the same environment and atmosphere in their own classrooms.

Several of the staff from Teachers and Writers went to visit CTW in March. We were overwhelmed by what we saw, and realized immediately that the Collaborative had never given due attention to materials and environment for language activity. We asked if we could assist the staff in setting up a "language center," and Sheila Murphy, School Coordinator for the Collaborative, began working with the CTW staff in early April.

SHEILA MURPHY:

"At CTW a great deal of thought and effort has gone into making an environment in which teachers would respond actively and not passively. Materials are suggestive; the few finished products that are exhibited suggest further possibilities. There is nothing pre-digested, didactic, or static.

"We would like the Language Arts Area to be as stimulating as the other areas at CTW. A list of suggestions follows. This list consists mostly of ideas for making the language corner more desirable. An immediate concern is with the separation of functions: (1) reference materials made accessible, but elsewhere (they are teaching materials, pure and simple, and have nothing to do with the

\* Not to be confused with the Childrens Television Workshop.

teacher-as-doer); (2) receptive language areas—children's literature, reading materials, listening activities, etc.—nearby, but also clearly out of the thick of things; and (3) work space for expressive language arts—writing, acting, talking, printing, recording.

1. Build small platform in one corner of Language Arts area. Put up ladder and build railings with wide boards. Have that be library for children's books; many, many more paperbacks and a rotating public library collection. Cushions (many and brightly colored). Have real circulating library system where workshop participants can borrow books (by signing the card they become responsible for any overdue fines due the public library) to read or try out with kids. Also have copies of all the books printed in workshop, — many, many books by children.

An alternative for the stage could be a Kabuki-like raised platform, large enough for real dramatic activity. Perhaps make half the entire language area into a stage, which can serve a dual purpose of work area and dramatics area. When the stage is to be used, remove things from the center and slide panels in three sides to cover whatever work things are against the walls. Beneath the stage there might be a dressing and make-up area. Panels would be changed for each new performance.

A third alternative could be pasteboard cubes, strong enough for seats, or—when turned upside-down and pushed together—for a stage.

2. Build low stage beneath raised platform and make draw curtain around stage (hung from platform). Simple props near the stage: several sturdy boxes; a few costumes on a coatrack nearby (a man's hat, coat, a lady's hat, coat, a cane, an umbrella).
3. Use entire lower level of area for making things and doing things. Make it as seductive as the rest of the workshop. The homey-syndrome having been catered to with the raised platform, this area can look as busy as all the other areas.

4. Have printing wall with long table, many different things\* available:

Proof press, available and  
clearly functioning  
Label-makers  
Linoleum  
Rubber stamps, with letters  
Inks  
Potatoes  
Carrots  
Sandpaper  
Cardboard  
Art supplies (with samples  
of book illustrations  
done in other areas)  
Book-binding equipment:  
more cardboard,  
thread, glue  
Junk

As in the other areas, there should be things being worked on, to give some idea of function.

5. Have writing equipment: pencils, paper, manual typewriter. All kinds and shapes of paper— including large rolls of wrapping paper and newsprint. Paper could be on large rolls and spools, much as other supplies in the room are displayed.
6. Paper cutter.
7. Tape recorder (cassette would be best).
8. Cardboard box T.V. with cardboard roller spools for making own T.V. visuals.

\*An excellent source for simple instructional materials is a pamphlet called "Children Printing," published by Elementary Science Study, Education Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel Street, Newton, Mass. 02160. Also, in paperback, Printing as a Hobby by J. Ben Lieberman, Signet Books.



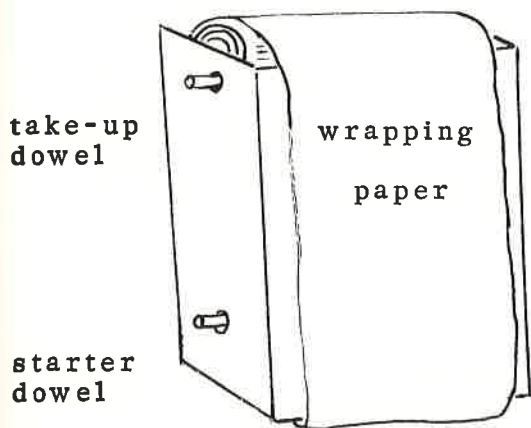
9. Puppet stage and makings for puppets: paper bags, cardboard boxes, socks, toilet paper and other paper rolls (or at least enough varied puppets to give ideas of what to do in area where art supplies are already stored), fabric, etc.
10. Lots of tin-can and string telephones.
11. Why not put the reference material now in the language area near the pertinent interest area? A book or ten about rabbits on the rabbit cage, along with paper and pencils for observations. Or at least some indication of where to find pertinent reading materials in reference library.
12. In fact, perhaps a workshop in which teachers all discover, research, write, and produce reference books to be used right there in the workshop. Then there really would be books for the rabbit cage, for the darkroom, for the kitchen corner, etc.
13. Put a telescope on the balcony, or at least up high so that one could climb up, if only on a box, to look at tiny portions of the rest of the room. Telescopes help one focus on details that would otherwise go unnoticed.
14. Scrounge an old mimeo machine, or ditto machine, so teachers can reproduce their kids work or make booklets for them.
15. A tape library with tapes of:
  - children talking
  - reading their writing
  - improvising
  
  - teachers talking
  - reading their writing
  - reading kids' work
  - improvising
  - giving dramatic readings

music, with lyrics printed  
at hand

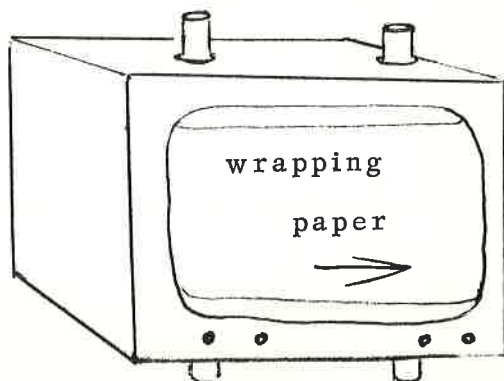
music, without lyrics, for  
background

blank tapes.

16. Bins with old magazines for cutting up.
17. Bins with pencil pieces and erasers.
18. Picture books without words—in children's books library.
19. Word books without pictures.
20. Large dowel frame for collaborative stories, poems, thoughts. Make frame about 4 inches high. Put board over—I can't describe it, here:



This is like the T.V. described in #8 which is basically the same but sideways and the paper rolls inside.



strong cardboard box  
or wood frame

## FURTHER THOUGHTS ON LANGUAGE MATERIALS FOR CTW

Having made the principled decision to avoid commercial "teaching materials," one must become a garbage picker. An easy habit to acquire if you relax and let the possibilities of lively trash take over where your compunctions leave off. Street yoga.

Thinking of turning language ideas into materials returned me to the joys of garbage picking. I had to recover old habits of eyeing other people's trash for magazines, sturdy boxes, cardboard, colorful paper, material ... and our own wastebaskets for the same. One sleepy Sunday morning I found A Find, —immaculately clean, pre-folded cardboard sheets (the kind that comes in large cartons supporting stoves, refrigerators, and the like). If I had found the big carton itself I would have been overwhelmed, so it was better that my Find was modest. But the cardboard, when cut into the cards already suggested by the folds (about 12" X 8") were perfect for individualized, pick-me-up language activities. A child could take one of these cards, read it, move around with it, and eventually sit down with it, and following its suggestions, write something.

To be more specific. These first cards are the 12" X 8" cardboard ones mentioned above. I cut them with a mat knife, doing great damage to a carpet we have always hated. Then I covered them with Contac paper (brightly colored, though usually plain so as not to distract from the writing) and bound the edges with Mystic Tape (again, brightly colored). The Contac, to my disappointment, repelled Pentel pen ink, and I had hoped to write instructions on the cards with these pens. I had to resort to Magic Markers (one brand does "take") though I have since made some instructions by typing directly on the contac before sticking it on the cards. The advantage/disadvantage of the larger-tip markers is that you have to be much much more concise in

the wording of instructions; there is simply no room for much more than a one-sentence instruction on one side of a card. But that is an interesting exercise.

As for what went on these cards, I started as simply as possible, knowing the limitations of my one-sentence instructions. For example, on one side of one card, I wrote:

Wish Poem

Write something that begins and ends with a wish. Or write a wish on every line.

Or something like that; I can't remember exactly. It doesn't matter. But that is all I had room for. Had I been able to write more, I would have fallen all over myself directing, suggesting, explaining. As it is, the child, if he intends to do anything with it at all, will get some idea, and do something with it, without having to follow some rigid rules. To be even more certain of this I put a sample on the other side of the card, a sample that is indeed a Wish Poem, but it almost defies whatever formula is implied in the directions. So, on the other side of this same card was (I did write this with a smaller-tip pen, on plain paper, which was then pasted down):

I Wish

I wish, I wish to be in an imaginary garden  
Where rabbits ran all about  
And fairies float in bubbles to their secret  
House in the pine trees. And ballerinas dancing  
on their toes. And where the sun has  
The colors of rainbows. And storybook creatures  
Come true. Oh, I wish, I wish

Alice Lee  
P.S. 20, Manhattan

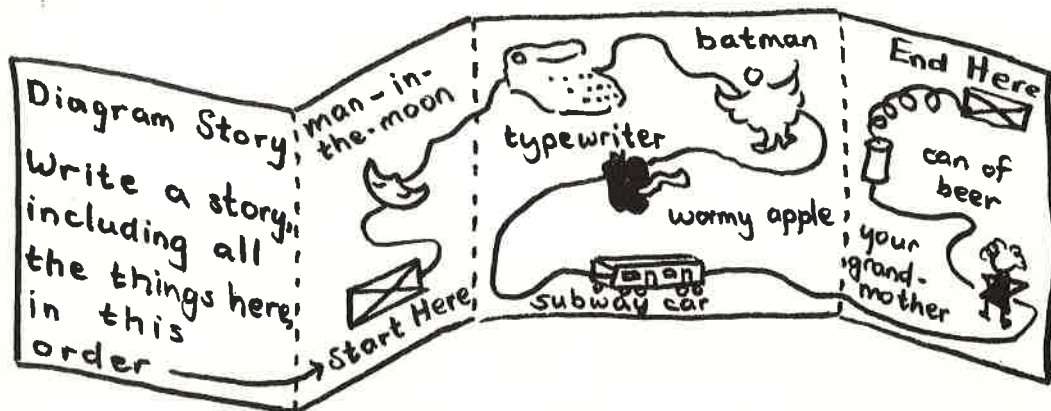
All of these cards, then had instructions on one side, and samples on the other side. Whenever the instructions leaned towards prescription, I looked carefully for a sample that moved away from the rule. And when I felt that the instructions were hopelessly unclear, I looked for a sample that could clarify where I could not. The result is

a bookshelf, that could be duplicated in any classroom, of sturdy cards, standing on end, like brightly bound books. Ideally, there should be shelves close by with books made by the class (loose-leaf, perhaps, and continuously growing) giving additional examples of each idea. Other cards of this variety I made were:

disgusting menus\*  
 color poems  
 pictograms  
 lies  
 dreams  
 I used to be...but now  
 cartoons  
 insults and praises  
 how it feels to be...  
 rank-outs  
 blues and bluelets  
 opposites

saying hello to...  
 mirrors  
 satirical pieces  
 (nursery rhymes,  
 pollution, etc.)  
 sestina  
 "translations"  
 descriptive galaxies  
 (finding as many  
 words as possible  
 to describe a  
 noun, say an apple)  
 metaphors

Then I got terribly bored with these cards, and tired of cutting neat 12" X 8" pieces of cardboard. I was thinking about Diagram Stories, and my own obsession with geography and maps made me uncomfortable with little bitsy cards for this wandering assignment. I "noticed" (remember that I was bored and tired of cutting) that the remaining cardboard had a fine, meandering shape of its own. So I left it as is, wrote the instructions boldly on the left end of the piece, and drew a large diagram on the remaining part. Then I turned it over and made another diagram on the other side. These curvy pieces (perhaps 12" X 36") are wonderful for propping up on a school desk. A kid could hide behind one for a long time, buried in his story, behind his barrier. One side (you must imagine many colors) looks more or less like this:



\*Most of these have been described in previous Newsletters.

That was fun.

But I had lots of Contac paper left, many more ideas for writing assignments, and no will to make 12" X 8" cards. So I covered several shoeboxes (with berserk variations of color and pattern—I have always had the illusion that you could make up with color what you lack in ideas). These turned into, for want of a better word, Theme boxes; i.e. the box itself represented the basic direction, while the contents of the box were variations on the theme. For example, the first box (with the following instructions written on the inside of the cover: "Take any card and write about what it suggests.") was a Situations box. On the top of the box, in very large letters: WHAT IF...? Inside, cards, all beginning with "what if...":

What if you are an egg and you change into a butterfly?

What if you wake up one morning and discover another mouth in the back of your neck?

What if you are several people all at once?

What if you get seven years older every year, like a dog?

These cards are identical to the first ones (Contac with Mystic binding) but they are smaller: 3" X 5". That variation pleased me for a while. But, as can be expected, it was more fun to think of possibilities for cards than to actually make the cards, but I do feel that it is important to have cards that are substantial enough not to get lost right away in the shuffle of a normal classroom; hence the added Contac/Mystic step with each card. Anyone would get weary of this card-making after a while, so it is best for the teacher to do it for a while, and then leave many empty boxes, and plenty of materials for the kids. When they get tired of writing about the ideas contained in the boxes, they can make their own cards. And there could be a suggestion box where students could contribute card ideas, while leaving the actual card-making to more artsy/craftsy friends.

Box #2 is a touch box. The instructions are for a writing assignment, but there are variations for pre-readers/writers as well. Inside the cover are the directions: "Reach in the box and take something out. How

does it feel? Write about what it would be like to live inside this thing." In the box (another brightly colored shoe-box): a purple, spotted bean; a piece of cotton; gauze; a pressed autumn leaf; a clear, plastic pill bottle; a green, plastic Excedrin bottle with label removed; an empty thread spool; and other things. Younger children would use the same box as follows: they could close their eyes, reach in, find one object, describe it in detail, saying how it feels and what it feels like ("how it feels" and "what it feels like" are not redundant). If there is too much emphasis on identifying the object, then that becomes the object, and the richer discussion is difficult to encourage.

Meanwhile, I have been collecting magazines for cut-out poems. They have been thrown into a pasteboard barrel which has painted on it in large, red, sloppy letters: MAGAZINES FOR CUTTING. There can be no sanctity about these magazines; they are to be cut, torn, chewed. The barrel is on its side, and (until it collapsed) it was held up to child height, for easy access, by a cardboard base. Nearby are empty coffee tins with scissors and Rub-'n'-Glues. Also, many more coffee tins, covered with the ubiquitous Contac, marked: WORDS; PHRASES; LETTERS; NUMBERS AND NUMERALS.

Where to now? Several miscellaneous items, that came simply of seeing possibilities in materials I was about to throw out. I covered a cardboard tube (from inside a roll of Contac paper) with—you guessed it—Contac paper, finished the ends with Mystic tape, and wrote on it (length-wise) in large letters: "Look through one end of this tube until you see something that reminds you of something else. Write about the something else."

And the mailbox (described in Rosellen Brown's Hopi Workbench report) was a plain carton, with a slit in the bottom (many cartons come this way). The slit became the mail slot. (That's a hard sentence to say.) One half was painted red, and the other half, blue. I have heard, perhaps in my paranoid dreams, that They will come to get You if you put U.S. Mail on something that is not U.S. Mail. So I stuck on the letters, M a i l b o x, cut from white Contac. I had originally intended that it be used simply for "mailing" and removing (tampering with) letters. Kid writes letter, puts in slot, then runs behind and reads someone else's letter. But Rosellen Brown's idea of putting non-letters as well (poems, stories) has so many wonderful possibilities. That's probably what all of us hide-your-poems-in-the-sock-drawer poets secretly wish anyway; someone else to read the work without your getting caught exposing yourself.

Another bin, this time with just large pictures, some with leading ideas, others without. If these are backed

with cardboard they will last much longer and your energy will be saved for more important things like cutting 12" X 8" cardboard cards.

Yet another bin of reproductions of representational and abstract art, again with and without leading ideas. I haven't done this, but I can imagine some nice thoughts emerging from seeing a Chagall painting and the question: "What would your world be like if everything, including yourself, were floating?" These too should be backed with something sturdy.

Some things simply can't be confined to the size of cards; the Diagram stories were an example. Another way of Making Things Large is to make wall charts to be hung with strong clothes pins from coat hangers. Maps certainly belong in this category, maps of imaginary states, complete with descriptions of each state. These could be hung along side the other classroom maps and would be no more unreal than most maps of Africa. A large chart of imaginary animals (a bestiary), with descriptions of each animal, his habits, habitat, etc., hung near an anatomical chart of the human body would invite interesting comparisons.

There are many writing ideas which might be best presented in teacher-made books. These can be as simple as two pieces of cardboard stapled together with pages between, or pages in a manila folder stapled together. They could then be covered, colored, and bound with varying degrees of elaborateness. There are, of course, more formal book-making techniques, but that is another subject, and an abundance of very simple books has the distinct advantage of not intimidating the kids. They see right away that they can do it themselves. Some book ideas are (each with instructions for independent writing):

Biographies	Print a piece and have children write another piece on their own, creating new characters with the personalities of the original ones;
Autobiographies	or putting the same characters in different situations and anticipating their reactions, writing an altogether different piece but retaining the same mood; and so on.
Parody pieces	





draws to itself, the less it looks like a deadly workbook item, proportionately the more attractive it becomes. Workbooks look so very embarrassed with themselves, and rightly so. Giving over an entire wall for graffiti is in this vein. Simply keeping the wall covered with large sheets of wrapping paper and a very large notice that reads: DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA!!!!!! ON PAIN OF BEING DRAWN AND QUARTERED!!!!!! The joke will not go unnoticed, and the paper will be covered with writing and drawing before you can get more paper to replace it. If those huge rolls of wrapping paper are not available in your school, scrounge big cardboard cartons (again the variety that house new-born refrigerators and stoves). When cut and flattened, these make wonderful and free graffiti walls.

Yet there is something disquieting, putting all this down on paper. It reads like one grand belly-laugh, which I do not intend. The materials described here, although they are intended to be used by a child, alone, or in a cluster of buddies, can become gimmicky time-fillers. And here I want to make certain assumptions about the teacher who will use these ideas. The materials are, for the most part, inherently fun, or else engaging in a more serious way. Beyond the fun of it all, and the fun is important, the materials will not be used to advantage unless there is an atmosphere of seriousness—a work ethic minus masochism. Even while writing a whimsical piece, a kid must be working hard to do it well. And here the burden falls entirely on the teacher, because the materials alone cannot accomplish that. I realize that this atmosphere is a characteristic of the non-restrictive promised land we all yearn for, where every student will pull his weight and achieve his potential (and whatever other sad, sad phrase you can think of). Few saintly teachers have ever accomplished it. Suffice it to say that these materials will be, though perhaps more fun than some traditional materials, of little value to the teacher who is not trying to learn different forms of authority for himself, and different forms of independence for his students. Beyond classroom metaphysics, these materials should be but a beginning, and should grow with each piece that a child writes. Every teacher-made book should have a way of adding new pages as they are written; each child's book should have real check-out cards so that others can read them; each hanger should have clips strong enough to hold new student-made charts; for every teacher-made box of idea cards there should be another box with blank cards for the kids.

There are countless ideas which aren't included here because I either didn't think of them while writing this, or else I have never thought of them. Any additions to this list would be gratefully appreciated.

And what about sustaining a writing idea over two days, weeks, months? Pursuing a single theme. That old bug-a-boo. In that same Never-Never Land, of course, kids (and adults) would do this with only one vitamin pill per day. But in most of our classrooms? Even a teacher with super-sensitive tuning would have to be very careful not to step beyond firm encouragement to manipulation. Perhaps this ability to sustain a writing idea is something that just won't happen to most ordinary people, that it is, beyond a specific writing talent, what makes writers special (or any other specialist pursuing his speciality). I wish A.S. Neill's graduates would write about the experience of emerging from their Summerhillian summer into a specialty. How does it happen? And maybe we are asking too much of open classroom techniques. Yet the need of most students, which is all too evident, to confine their writing to the physical limits of one page, or to the temporal limits of one class period, seems symbolic of so many other confinements.

And one final thorn. I haven't given any room to collaborative writing materials. Given half a chance, kids will do almost everything with a friend, or a bunch of buddies. But how to plan and promote real collaborations is a mystery to me. When the schoolboys of Barbiana speak of their collaborative effort writing their incredible book, it all sounds so easy, and apparently without too much direction from their priest-teacher. I am plagued by a memory of that hybrid glop of bloodless purpose, the Great American Committee, or at least the form it takes in the elementary school classroom. I am sure that the fathomless absurdity of "committee projects" has left enduring scars on us all: some freak out at the very thought of working with other people; others let the Purpose take over and do the work for them and their colleagues. So I can't find any suggestions for materials for some of those wonderful collaborative writing assignments that, as teacher-directed activities, work so well. That's for someone else to tackle.

# Everything About Elephants

FROM THE DIARIES OF ROSELLEN BROWN  
HOPI WORKBENCH, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

The workshop I'm calling "Words, Poems, Tall Tales" at the Hopi Workbench is a very different situation from the usual Teachers & Writers set-up. It's easier to bring off in some ways, harder in others. The workshops are run independently of any school; we meet on Saturday mornings in the cool and very adult (make that inhuman) seminar rooms of Fordham.

When I walk into the room in its stunning "modern" blankness (a couple of book titles or invitations to lectures on "The New Theology" scrawled on the board) it is no one's, neither a teacher's, whose conception or misconception of a classroom has already defined the space, nor mine either. We can't decorate it, except for our hour-and-a-half. I come in like a nomad, carting the significant furniture of the room in a couple of shopping bags. On the other hand, there is on one to deal with but the kids, and they come mercifully liberated from their conception of what must go on in a classroom.

At the first meeting I was presented with a unique, and I hope not insoluble, problem that this particular arrangement brings with it, either by the policy or the inattention of the Hopi Workbench administration. There were many more kids than I'd been told to expect —17— a very mixed group, socially, sexually, economically — but I lectured myself rather sternly that any public school teacher would give her aching feet to have such a problem. I'd asked that they try to delimit the ages at least for this workshop —the brochure invites children from 7 to 14. I have no idea how the film-making people, for example, manage that spread, but that's their problem. I offered to teach two separate workshops if the ages clustered more or less evenly, older and younger, because one class with an 8-year spread seemed to me to invite greater difficulty than I can handle my first time out. They told me the kids were all coming in more or less around 9. Ah yes. Some are approaching it, others are well into their next 9. We

have three 7-year olds, four 8's, two 9's, two 10's, two 11's, one 12, no 13's since they would undoubtedly bring us bad luck, and one 14-year-old freshman from Bronx Science.

My opening gambit, borrowed without shame, was a collaborative poem. I had been talking about words on paper as the finest kind of secrets, kept or unkept depending on how they felt about both secret and reader. I had handed out notebooks I'd made for them which they were urged to decorate in whatever way seemed best to express their style. If I had trouble discussing these preliminaries with them, intimidated by how little I suddenly felt I really knew about their level of comprehension, I was somewhat bemused by the fact that there were 8 or so "levels" looking me in the eye, and double that number if your scale has black keys in it.

In any event, the collaborative was an attractive enough idea for everyone, the great leveler, so we went to it. Out of the secret idea came "I know something no one knows" and the response had to be untrue. (A lie? Maybe.) I'm wary of beginning with the kind of comic strip/place-name kind of direction Kenneth [Koch] describes in his book, not as an absolute doctrine—it should be fun sometime—but because it seems to me to make less use of the kids' own (and perhaps unfrivolous) resources than the looser kind of direction. They wrote down one or more lines, and we read them together.

### I KNOW SOMETHING NO ONE KNOWS

I know something no one knows: telephones  
can hear what you say. Signs can  
speak.

I know something no one knows: I know  
something is white. I know you are  
black. I know the swing is blue. I  
know something is red.

I know something no one knows: I have an  
eye in the back of my head under my  
hair.

I know something no one knows: I know a  
turtle is really my grandfather.

I know something no one knows: I know my  
dog talks. I know I'm a Martian.

I know something no one knows: that some  
one in this classroom is a liar and  
cheater.

I know something no one knows: I know the sky is red.

I know something no one knows: I know that school is not good.

I know something no one knows: I know the Jolly Green Giant and all his little helpers. I also know that the helpers' names are Poindexter, Archibald, Ludwig, Arabella, and Julius. I know, too, that they plow the fields with blue elephants with yellow tiger stripes.

I know something no one else knows: I know my cat's kittens have radar but without antennas.

I know something no one knows: I know my sister has a spare medusa's head.

I know something no one knows: I know my dirt is anti-septic.

I know something no one knows: I know only my sister knows I know!

I know something no one knows: I know that I hear with my nose.

I know something no one knows: I feel with my ears.

I know something no one knows: I know mountains can fly. I know flowers are dreams. I know bars are freedom.

I know something no one knows: I know cats can eat elephants.

I know something no one knows: I know that deep inside my stomach there's a little man who makes orange cupcakes.

I know something no one knows: I know my brother isn't engaged. I know that the sky isn't green.

I know something no one knows: My father eats my peanuts when I'm sleeping.

(collaborative poem)

I used the last 15 minutes to do, experimentally, what I feared they'd do badly. Free time. Is there anything you've been wanting to write? I guess, aside from being caught a few minutes short, I was trying to get the first sort of "control" group of writings, to see if they'd respond differently, say, by the end of the ten weeks. Except for a few of them [see following examples] the response was blank panic. But there was very little time left; it hardly dampened their spirits.

## STATISTICS

or

It Could Have Been Your Kid  
Mister Newsman.

I think I  
just heard the radio say a 1 year  
old kid was burnt to death in a  
fire. But they did not dally,  
they went right on.

They told where  
the building was but then,  
they went right on.  
No tribute to  
the child or a man who may have  
tried to save him.

No.  
There was more important news.  
A man on the moon. An upward trend in stocks.

They went right on.  
No condolences for tears  
No, not that day  
They just

went

right on...

ON AND ON AND ON it goes

Mat

Teddy bears can be a habit,  
Even though they are stuffed.  
After you finish playing with them  
You just set them aside.  
They give you the look like they are  
going to cry.  
You go over, pick them up and play  
again, instead of saying  
goodbye.

Cheryl

It took one more session to make the point inescapably, but it was already clear after an hour-and-a-half with this tremendously varied group that there was only one way to approach it with any chance of dealing fairly with such differing capacities. (Even if the same range existed in a regular classroom, there is a virtual universe of complications we are spared.) This will have to be an "open classroom" situation, the materials limited to those which, broadly defined, deal with or lead to or encourage the use of words. There is simply no reason to address the group as a whole, unless there are things they might be able to do together.

They can pick their own activities, work at them in as fitful or sustained a manner as their inclinations allow, and ask of us what they will.

Here is what we did at our second meeting when this idea was about half-hatched. It was clear that the length of the session, if nothing else, demanded that we break it down into at least two activities, preferably one active exercise in which they break away from their notebooks, from those blue lines that are by now ruled on their eyes. We brought in two huge pieces of heavy paper, one long and white, one square brown hunk of wrapping-paper, and had them taped to the back walls when the kids arrived. We handed them colored magic markers, dimmed the lights a little and told them that one sheet was a cave wall; they were lost in the cave, perhaps they would never get out. What would they remember, what would they miss, in pictures and in words? The brown paper was the subway wall



they had always longed to decorate or deface. (One of the older girls wrote a letter to Mayor Lindsay suggesting that subway stations provide one blank wall for just that purpose.) I didn't mention graffiti, I can't imagine kids much care that the sport has a name.

Most of them did wonderful things, to the point and to no point. There were slow starters. One of the cavemen: "I'm finished." "Well, think. What do you really like to do, that you'd miss if you could never ever do it again?" "I like to swim." "How about writing about that, then?" "I did —here's a picture of a swimming pool." And so it is—a small solid orange rectangle. Maybe, just maybe, I'd have grasped it if someone else wasn't off drawing a horse with the chlorine-water-blue pen, the horse dripping a substance labeled "blue blood" for dimwits like me. There are a few girls, not the youngest but near the lower end of the age-spectrum, who "finish" everything within three minutes and at this rate will devour our ideas unchewed, leaving us emptyhanded and hardly nourishing themselves. I know it doesn't help for me to be stifling the terribly inappropriate and thin-lipped response I can't deny they bring out in me: "Where's your imagination? You're supposed to fall all over these marvelous ideas! What are you here for? What do you think writing is?" Then again, why not be flexible enough to be grateful for small delights. For example: a girl who is writing a story suggested by a picture of many elephants walking (after asking if she can please talk about where they came from, where they're going, what it's like, EVERYTHING about elephants —yes! yes!) writes this. In its entirety. "They're marching away from dragons."

By now we've urged them to sit all over the room, on the tables, on the floor, anywhere. One girl marched straight to a table next to the window where she worked assiduously for nearly an hour (she's 7); another is lying stretched out on her own table, oblivious.

Most of them are writing stories in response to some very weird situations on cards they've picked out of a bag; a few, having finished, have appropriated the set of blank cards and are creating their own situations, some of which the other kids then write about. (Actually, that idea came from one of the girls I accused of having none. That confirms me in my feeling that I'd do better in the background.) Some are writing stories to accompany pictures. The oldest three are doing what could loosely be called "utopian" (again, without the label) fantasies and to our delight, two of them, both boys, don't want to hand their work in at the end. They promise they'll go on at home.

Here is a list of some of the ideas on cards to which I've alluded in my diaries. as well as some ideas which were developed for later sessions.

1. Strange situations

- a. You are a magician. You can take anything you want to out of someone's ear and nose. One day, by surprise, you pull something strange out of a little boy's ear.
- b. You wake up on Thursday morning and you are invisible.
- c. You live in a lighthouse where the sea meets the land. One day you wake up and you can't find any water.
- d. You are two inches high.
- e. In the middle of one night you go to the kitchen for a snack and the mice are having a party (or an important meeting). You listen.
- f. One day you get on the subway and it keeps going...and going...and going, and when it stops you are nowhere you have ever been.
- g. You are in the forest alone. You have lost your way and it is getting dark.
- h. One day you get out of bed and everything is soft. There is nothing hard left in the world.




THE CASE OF SOFTNESS

One day I got out of bed and everything was soft. Nothing in the world was hard. I didn't know what to do. So I went into my mother's room and shook her but she was so soft my hand went through her. I screamed but nothing happened so I went back to my room and started to color. My crayons went through the book. I was starting to call the police but I daren't to do it. Then I smelled something so I sprayed some spray but that spray was hard spray. That's how the cure for softness came to be.

Lisa

- i. You are travelling with the circus. The only bed they have to give you is in a corner of the lion's cage. You accept.
- j. It is your birthday and you are having a party. Everyone is there, but there is another knock on the door. It is an amazing guest you didn't invite.
- k. You have an eye in the back of your head.
- l. You are living in Iceland and it doesn't get dark at night for many months. Or better: You are at home and it doesn't get dark at night for many months.
- m. One morning you wake up to find that you have a new part on your body. It is a machine that \_\_\_\_\_ (what does it do? How does it work?)

Here are some of Laurie's: (We both brought in cards.)

- a. You are a little triangle . You want to find your friends the square  and the circle . But they live on another piece of paper. How do you find them?
- b. You are a piece of chocolate that was left on the windowsill. The sun is just starting to come out. You know if it hits you, you will melt.
- c. You are a balloon on a string. You were tied onto a kid's hand, but you slipped off. Suddenly you are free. And you begin to fly away. Now what happens?

And here, best of all, are the kids' own cards. They (some of them) enjoyed doing their own situations more than writing about ours. Surprise!

- a. One day you met a pig that talked.
- b. Every night it is light and every day it is dark.
- c. One morning you wake up and find out you are the strongest person in the world.
- d. One day you find out that you seem to be getting smaller than a mouse.

- e. You seem to be turning into an elephant. (Variation: You seem to be getting a noise (sic.—nose?) like an elephant.)
  - f. You find yourself in the colonial days.
  - g. Suddenly you seem to be growing as tall as the Empire State Building.
  - h. You saw a dinosaur in your bedroom.
  - i. You found you could fly.
  - j. Suddenly you seem to be floating all around.
  - k. What would you do if you had a 1,000 dollars and somebody stoned (stole?) it. What would you do?
  - l. One day when I went to school my teacher said, how much is  $2+2$  and I got it right and she said.....
  - m. One night my father said, "Tomorrow I am going to a place far from here and so when I come home I will bring all of you a gift."
2. An extremely successful prop for a few children was a roll of what is probably adding machine tape. (It's about 3" wide, and comes narrower too.) Two kids taped theirs to the wall and did a sequential story, each contributing the alternate sentences; two others did the same at a table; one girl wrote two or three stories herself. On the card I placed next to the tape I called it a TAPEWORM STORY. My suggestion, which they didn't use because they weren't working with more than one other friend, read this way: With the tape held this way someone writes the first sentence of the story. Unroll it a few inches. Next person writes the next sentence. And so on. (Pass it along. If there are only 2 of you, take turns.)
3. THE ENDLESS POEM. Someone begins at the top, and someone adds a line, and someone else adds a line, and we don't stop adding lines ever..... (This is a long piece of paper taped to the wall. But the 14-year-old girl and a friend she'd brought with her got to it and repeated the graffiti scrawling we'd done the previous week. So I'll never know if it works unless I put it back again.)

4. RIDDLES AND MIND-BENDERS. Can you describe something without naming it? Look in the books (A Pocketful of Riddles, William Wiesner, Dutton; and Riddles, Riddles Everywhere, Ennis Rees, Abelard-Schuman) for ideas of how to do it. Try your descriptions on someone else — can he/she guess what you described?
5. COLLAGE. (Interestingly, a number of kids really worked on their paste-ups for a long time, with attention; but only one showed his to me and that was because I happened to remember to ask to see it—the others, even the ones who always show me their writing—seemed to consider this their own, or insignificant or somehow—I don't know how—different from a written "product." (I wonder if that word has anything to do with it?))
6. LETTERS TO....(The following week I borrowed a mailbox, made of decorated cardboard, and had the kids put in a letter, take out a letter. Some of the notes I'd put in myself to prime the flow and though a few were the letters other kids had done, copied from the Newsletter, I also included some of the kids' non-letter material, a few poems and speculations on self, and some quotes from Dick Lewis's Journeys, in an attempt to have them read somewhat more serious work by their fellow-students.
7. DRAW A DREAM (OR NIGHTMARE). (If you can, write about it on another piece of paper.)
8. FANTASTIC WEATHER. Imagine a new kind of weather. You could be the Weatherman writing about it. Or you could be you, waking up one morning and going outside. Or...anything you can imagine....
9. WHAT IS YOUR FIRST MEMORY? Try to write about exactly what you remember.
10. CLOSE YOUR EYES. PICTURE YOUR MOTHER. What do you see? What is she doing when you think of her? (You can do this with a few of the other people you love most.)
11. IF YOUR FATHER WAS AN ANIMAL...what kind would he be?  
IF YOUR TEACHER WAS A TASTE...what kind would he/she be?

DO YOUR OWN LIST.

Try to imagine what they really remind you of — don't just say anything. If they were something in another life, maybe you could feel what it was by thinking of them this way....?

12. WHAT GOOD LUCK! WHAT BAD LUCK! Write a story like the one in the book (What Good Luck, What Bad Luck, Remy Charlip) where everything that happens is either very good or very bad luck. If you want to write with someone else, one of you can do all the good luck, the other all the bad.
13. WORD RUMMY. (Have a couple of hundred small cards containing all parts of speech with interesting nouns and verbs.)

If you are playing alone:

- 1) Pick 5 cards without looking at them.
- 2) Turn them over.
- 3) Can you make a sentence or part of a sentence with them?
- 4) Copy the sentence onto paper. (You can supply a few unimportant words if you have to, but try to stick to what your cards say.)
- 5) When you've done a few, use your best sentence as the TITLE OF A POEM OR A STORY.

If you are playing with a partner:

- 1) Each pick 15 cards.
  - 2) Trade cards you think you can't use (one for one—pick them out of partner's hand). Maybe your partner can use them.
  - 3) Copy sentences onto paper.
  - 4) Use your best sentence as the TITLE OF A POEM OR A STORY.
14. WRITE A STORY ABOUT THE WAY THE WORLD MIGHT HAVE BEGUN. (Or how the first people were made.) Have on hand some stories you can read, or the kids can read themselves, depending on the situation, if they need prompting.
  15. YOU ARE THE FIRST PERSON IN THE WORLD....What do you see? What does it feel like? And what do you do?
  16. MAKE YOUR OWN ANIMAL! Make him strange. Tell what he looks like and what he does. Don't forget to give him a name. (Yes, you can draw him too.)
  17. THINK OF AN ANIMAL AND THINK OF SOME WAY HE IS SPECIAL. (The leopard has spots, the robin has a red chest.) CAN YOU IMAGINE HOW HE MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN THAT WAY?
  18. Last week we put on blindfolds and touched a tableful of things. Here is what some of them felt like to our

very different hands.

A BLACK VELVET DRESS FEELS LIKE my dog's fur. One of my best stuffed animals. When I'm in an elevator in a crowd. A lady's pocketbook. A nice smooth blanket while I'm sleeping. Water in a swimming pool. Like a big antique soft chair, all cushiony. Like a mystical-looking flowy robe. Very calm water with little ripples. Feels like I'm in a T.V. studio and they have a blanket over me, and I'm taking pictures of a movie star. Like I'm holding a dead cat. Feels like my mother's best dress getting washed. Feels weightless. Feels like a dream.

A SMOOTH ROCK FEELS LIKE soap. A doll's plate. A bird's beak. A chimney. A skeleton's head. Feels like you're cold.

AN ELECTRIC SOCKET PLUG FEELS LIKE an airplane. Like a stick with arms. A cross on the churches. A tiny radio. A submarine.

CELLOPHANE FEELS LIKE pins. Like some kind of satellite in space and I'm reaching up to catch it. The rough ground. Feels ticklish. Feels like a leaf that's very old, it's lived through one whole year and the wind can break it. Feels like a complicated sculpture that isn't complicated. Like a meteorite that's skinny. Like a star and I'm reaching for it to make my wish come true.

A CLOTHESPIN FEELS LIKE a crab. An oyster biting my finger. Me and my best friend together.

A PINE CONE FEELS LIKE wood steps going up. Like I'm in a strange place with a lot of noises. Dead flowers crunched up.

GRAVEL FEELS LIKE marbles. Quicksand. Makes me think of a horse galloping and stepping on rocks. Like I picked up something that fell down and made a lot of noise. Feels like something you could sink. Frightening but comforting in the way it wraps around you. Like a windy day on the beach. Sounds like beans in a bean bag. Makes me angry when I play with it.

A GRATER FEELS LIKE I'm on the moon and I found a rock and I'm rubbing my hand on it. I'm rubbing a lot of grass. Like a platform with a lot of splinters. A porcupine. A cactus. Something itchy. Like my dog barking. Like little swords sticking out. Like I'm painting a picture. Feels like some people are cutting down trees. Feels like if it was a person, obnoxious on the outside, nice on the inside. The big thing they

use in pizza parlors. A desert island made from volcanos.

WEARING A BLINDFOLD IS LIKE GETTING KILLED....  
(Someone said that and kept her eyes open.)

We also tried to pretend we were tasting things for the first time, and couldn't use words like "sweet" or "sour."

CRANBERRIES TASTE LIKE the beach. Pain, agony. Bright bright yellow. A loud rock group. Cold snow that hurts your hands. A cracking sound. Dirty water. The ground. Fire. A Balloon. An insect shell. A bomb. A machine gun.

PEANUT BUTTER MAKES ME THINK OF daisies and the circus. Foam rubber. Mud. Summer: hot and mucky and you're swimming through the air. Squirming worms. Dooky. (How do you spell that?) Walking in mushy sand. One of the meanest substitutes in school, her face and her perfume because she puts on too much. Teachers who are always teasing boys about getting married and that's mushy.

CURRY MAKES ME THINK OF dust. Sand. Sunset. Grass. Dried-out wheat. The whole world started to smell like that all of a sudden. There was no way to cure it. One day someone jumped off the Empire State Building and fell through the street because he was really fat. And he found some kind of metal that cured it.

A RAISIN MAKES ME THINK OF balloon plastic. It's salty. It's soft and springy, then it pops and its insides come out. It's raggedy, like a witch.



# The Dance of Things

FROM THE DIARIES AND TAPES OF DAVID SHAPIRO

P.S. 9 and I.S. 44, MANHATTAN

For six weeks this spring we were involved in a joint program with Lincoln Center. A team of artists—writer, painter, dancer, actor, musician—worked together in two schools in Manhattan, P.S. 9 and I.S. 44. Since we believe very strongly in the importance of developing a long-term relationship between a writer and a group of students, we were not entirely happy about the brevity of the program. Nevertheless we were curious to see what would happen when people working with very different modes of expression got together in a school.

David Shapiro was the poet we chose for the writing portion of the program. He seemed ideal, since he is also a highly accomplished violinist. What follows are some excerpts from David's diaries describing the evolution of particular writing ideas in his workshops, some summary thoughts about children's writings culled both from his diaries and a taped post-mortem discussion with us, and a healthy sampler of the lovely work of his students. The effects of the cross-fertilization of the arts are evident in the poem-painting, the dance poems, and some of the poetry set to music (not included here). There's still a lot to be done in breaking down the artificial boundary lines which separate the arts.

Excerpts from the taped discussion follow.

"All my expectations for the Lincoln Center project were based on my experiences teaching children at MUSE.\* I didn't know what the schools would be like. MUSE is a very special place: it is extracurricular; it has animals and pets; it has very good space. Though some people have complained about the space, it certainly doesn't have the

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\*Brooklyn Children's Museum which sponsors a number of workshops in the arts for children.

claustrophobic corridors that other schools do. There are other activities going on at the same time, and a certain kind of freedom in which children could move into or dwindle away from an activity. Time was much more open ended than in a school situation. That is, you didn't have the alarming situation of alarms, you didn't have the horror of the speakers and announcers. In schools time is ruthlessly cut up, and I don't believe that much good poetry can come out of fractured time experiences, or horrifyingly enclosing spatial experiences. All the poems that came out of the Lincoln Center program are slightly embarrassing to me, in that they have the tingle of falseness of trying to produce something very beautiful in an unbeautiful place. I refer to it as prison poetry. I think it has some of that flavor of being used to caress the wardens, or of letters to support the expectations of those at home."

\* \* \*

"I prepared for class by reviewing in my mind everything that I had previously done with children. It became increasingly apparent to me that I had still been too afraid to experiment with children. I did resent how much I'd been influenced by all the existing techniques of dealing with children, and I became increasingly aware of how difficult it was to generate and transform new vocabularies of working with children. Even in my own work, I generated a damaging vocabulary, or an inhibiting vocabulary. There was no reason to use this vocabulary any more, and each day I tried to see if I could throw over the ways I worked with children. Instead of using catalogue forms, repetitive forms that you can always make children succeed at, forms in which words are repeated or in which certain rules are given, rules which are comparable to IBM programming cards, rules in which nobody ever loses, but in which maybe no one ever wins —(there is a maximization of results but a minimization of value)—I tried to discover what kinds of poems were important to the children to produce. These were not exactly the poems that I was interested in arriving at, that is there were poems that weren't exactly my kind of poems."

\* \* \*

"At the beginning of the project, I tended to want to rush in for results. I immediately got a lot of a certain ilk of poetry. However, the techniques that worked finally, that were most important, were techniques in which I was dealing with children that I more or less knew. The program was long enough to permit me to know the children. To the extent that I didn't know the children, hadn't been with them long enough to know idiosyncratically what each one was, then I could only return to a vocabulary of poetic techniques that would work with, well, to some extent, with dogs. When I didn't know them, it seems to me that my

position was limited to extracting game choices for a blank space. For example, a teacher had a temper tantrum in one of my classes, and started saying how long she had been waiting for me, because I had been held up in another room. I was desperately interested in getting a good poem from this class—it was an early session, perhaps my second—and I started playing around with 'we were waiting for...' and so the poem started with a catalogue of 'we were waiting for this' and 'we were waiting for that,' and it was very beautiful after a while: 'we were waiting for the sun,' 'we were waiting for the desks to disappear.' I got a lot of what popularizers of this genre would call their true feelings. But actually I had imposed a pretty easy formula on them. I had told them something of the delights of form, it's true, I had given them a certain sense of rhythm, but I really was still dealing with a mass of a class, that is, I was sort of swimming through it, perhaps successfully. I was avoiding undertows. But the most successful things happened only when each child became very defined to me, so I really knew who Nora was, I really knew Mandy's interest in horses."

\* \* \*

"Sex is very important in sixth and seventh grade. At I.S. 44, for example, there was a very pretty white girl in the class, and the black boys would taunt her by making up sexual fantasies when they realized that I would permit this, and she was becoming increasingly uncomfortable. I realized that I would have to defuse it, but I also realized that this was a point in which one was making a very interesting decision, because it was very true that what some of the black boys were saying were some of their most creative, strong impulses..."

[David Shapiro's diaries begin:]

#### Racist Poems:

Obvious racism in class. I do not for once take pacifist tone, but let it all come out. A racist poem thus follows, with one black girl absolutely inspired in telling the white girls in class to stick "their heads between their legs until they kiss their little white behinds." The white girls cry No no no no. The black girl then makes it clear that this is payment for "How they treated us during the Civil War." A peaceful conclusion follows, with the black girl saying that all would be well "When they say 'I surrender.'" Perhaps, as Ron Padgett said on the phone about sex, I should not "capitalize" on racism, but rage is a fountain and why invert it.

## LOVE POEMS

I hate white people!

No! No! No!

I think it was cruel

to treat the black

people like that

during the Civil War

I know you!

I think we should treat

white people like that

Squash them!

and make them kiss

their little white behinds

Goodbye!

We'll come back together

when they say

"I surrender!"

### Dancing Worlds:

I am thinking of perfect worlds but it doesn't work with the children, then I think of dance-poem and get bad results with a mere catalogue of current dances. I move to a certain concentration on similes and get "Kissing up and down like water," but can't explain or get through to children why, when the teacher burst out "My patience is running dry," exactly what was happening. But one student does say, "Then patience must have been wet once." Meanwhile, one boy is acting out a lot of fighting-dancing routines; this turns off the girls utterly, and I am more interested in the psychic contraposta than in utilizing the tensions. I take them up to music class but the period is over. Next period I am thinking of a world and of dance

and "suddenly" —not to sound like Roentgen—they come together in my mind and I ask for a poem in which everything dances. Suddenly everything does. The boy in class —Willie—contributes wonderful lines about basketball players dancing with their balls; the "smart" Miriam contributes some very cool lines about planets and science; Diane contributes some wistful lines and Milagre gives the the whole class a sort of Silent Muse. At the end of the poem, concluding with some "when the dancing dies" sentiments, I am clutching the dance-poem to my heart and the children too look satisfied, though I still find Milagre's name difficult, and Willie is probably off to a basketball game. So what?

### EL BAILE DE LA COSA OR THE DANCE OF THINGS

This is the mystery of the dancing world  
Love minus dancing equals a love scene  
I was dancing but I changed all that  
Hunting for baseballs, hunting for action, hunting  
for boys, hunting for girls

Stars dance in every kind of way  
The trees just swing down and swing up  
The basketball players dance with their balls  
The students study and study and study and then  
dance  
The school house starts moving  
The ceiling comes up  
The time turns back to when nobody was born  
When cavemen were dancing on rocks  
And when cavewomen were dancing with the sounds  
of the washing boards

The squirrels are dancing in the trees  
And the bear in the woods baila  
The land dances oh wow  
Milagre is dancing ballet  
Diane is dancing in the air  
Willie is dancing on a football field while the foot-  
ball players are attacking each other  
Miriam is dancing in the mind: a scientific dance

The sun is dancing shine  
The table leans back and forth  
Flowers close and then open  
The typewriter and the clock starts ticking away  
Books dance up in the air like little squares of  
puzzles  
The announcer is talking, the speaker is talking,  
the speaker is dancing too much

(cont'd)

Then everything stays still  
Flowers die of dancing in the sunshine  
The shine of the sun dies  
Basketball players forget how to play it  
Football players pull a ligament  
You get crippled  
From all the shine-brightness-glittering-it's been  
          throwing out the sun explodes

#### Accidental Worlds:

I was doing a slightly unsuccessful "job" of creating Utopians among the twenty children in the poetry "session" at P.S. 1,342,567. My voice was also becoming strained and had the general lack of joy that Russell noted among his friends as they snoozed, "less happy than the mice under their tables." Calling upon one of the teachers—no the only one there—to help me create a little of the necessary leisure of decibel liberty, she to my amazement suddenly cried out, Let's see if you can all FREEZE. As a matter of fact, they almost did, and I recalled this rather "cheap" trick of discipline from my own days at Maple Avenue in Newark. Suddenly I was inspired by these child-ice-cubes and asked them how it would feel in a perfectly cold world, how it would feel to be ice-cubes, how it would feel in a world on fire, how it looked, what customs, music, etc. There was an onrushing of wit: "In summer it snows. Frozen daisies, frozen rose." They also had a great deal of concentration for an exercise in "melted flowers." I particularly liked the visualization of petals as iron shreds, roots that were like the tips of fingernails, and the winter clothes of the melted flowers as "dungaree leaves." Generally the concentration aided the rhythm of the class, the rhythm of their lines. Even one pretty rhymster in class was not defeated: "They die at the sight of the moon/but they'll revive soon." This girl stayed after class to learn some more about poetry, writing, "In a perfectly cold world everything droops." Also a wonderful verb she coined: "Horses 'palamino' all around."

#### POEMS OF THE WORLD

##### 1. The School System

In a perfect world everything droops  
In a perfect world horses palamino all around  
School is nothing in a perfect world  
No school, only learning pills

You take the pill every day and learn what you  
    need  
It costs ten dollars a bottle, a thousand pills  
    in each bottle  
The bottle is shaped like a head  
The pills are in the shape of a brain  
Yes, there is school but only for the poor kids  
There's an orphanage for one class  
One class shoots up another class  
Then they are all friends again, no pollution

## 2. Art, Architecture, Government

Jeana is in the world of beads, making bead-cakes  
Jeremy is in the world of Gallapogos  
Laura is in the world of ballet, dancing and  
    making herself famous

In the world of mathematical numbers houses  
eat cake made out of beads, glass, and ballet  
shoes. The tiny people eat crumbs and ants  
climb all over them. The government IS chil-  
dren. The government is stupid. The President  
is two years old. The government is naked. The  
government is fair to everyone: no discrimina-  
tion. A little baby chooses the government. The  
President serves one day and then CHANGE! A  
year is a month in the world of mathematical  
numbers.

## 3. Climate

Your toes get cold in a perfectly cold world  
You can skate all year round in a perfectly  
    cold world

The boys freeze and the girls don't  
The birds come out frozen  
The girls freeze and the boys don't  
People are eaten by their abominable snowmen  
They turn into peanut butter  
Someone falls underground and it turns out to  
    be a heated place

## 4. Creation

The world was created by me  
The world was created by a dead finger  
The world was created by a bloodstream of glasses  
    and eyeballs

The world was created by smelly boys  
The world was created by cod-liver oil  
The world was created by nothing, by dust

The world was created by a toy-maker

## 5. Music and Peace

In the world of ballet the music is classical:  
No oogie-woogie, dodledoodle music and igge-  
wiggie music. The music comes out of your  
hand. The music comes out of your ear.

Out of your toes  
Out of your nose

The sex machine is a big brain called IT. And  
there is peace. Pieces of cake. Peace with  
hand grenades. Pieces of wee-wee. Peace not  
war. Pieces of pieces of pie.

## 6. Cold World

In the perfectly cold world there is ice-cream  
boys turn into chocolate snowballs. Girls turn  
into vanilla snowballs. It's a tragedy when  
CON ED goes on strike then you don't have any  
heat. Boys turn into freezing trees. Girls  
turn into fudge. Girls turn into non-polluted  
air.

For music there's ice-cold rock'n'roll  
Frozen milky way music  
They have ice-cream pop concerts  
And shoes made of ice  
For dancing you go Clonk clonk  
Icebergs fall out of the sky

You try to break out of the ice  
You freeze in a perfectly cold world; it's  
1 thousand below zero  
The world is cold. In summer it snows.  
Frozen daisies, frozen roses  
The fish freeze; they swim through the ice.  
Fish freeze, motors freeze, cars freeze.  
Me and my friend live in the overheated igloo  
skyscraper.



A boy named Matthew wrote a wonderful poem about marshmallows. When Matthew said, "I had a dream that I was a marshmallow," I was waiting for some silly poem. But it turned out to be a very dense, almost complete essay in a form that I would never have been able to invent. When I read it back to the class he proceeded to strangle the boy next to him. I thought this was very funny because there are very few poets I know who would, while one of their poems was being recited to class, ignore it. I told this to Matthew. But he said, oh that's ok, I know that poem, I just wrote it and I don't have to hear it again, and he continued to strangle the boy.

The children at P.S. 9 repeatedly requested the recitation of the Marshmallow poem, a great hit, particularly because of the powerful phrase, "And then he took his squat in the reddish-yellow street." Never, said David Margolies, have I seen anality so vivid within the poem.

#### MATTHEW'S DREAM

I had a dream  
that I was a marshmallow  
squeezed in among the other marshmallows  
being squeezed down  
among the plastic bags that we lived in  
and one day  
a man brought us to a store  
and put a ten cent tag on us

And then a boy bought us for ten cents  
and I was the first one  
that he touched  
and then he dropped me on the blue ground

And then an orange streetcleaner  
came by and flushed me up with blue water  
I felt like it was the end for all the marshmallows  
in the world

A red dog ran by and ate me  
And it felt very mushy in with all the disposables  
in his stomach

Then he took his squat in the reddish yellow street  
And I came out all mushed up  
Then fiery red winter came and I was buried under  
the black snow  
It was the yellow end of me in the colourful world.

## After-Images

After the performance at Lincoln Center, [a culminating performance by all the children in the program,] I was given a gift of a cardboard Monster by Michael, who signed on the Monster's head "to David, from Michael the Crazy Poet." He had received the epithet "crazy" with such approbation. Likewise, Nora and Mandy wanted to know if this were the end.

I remembered the class in I.S. 44 writing to the Future:

Dear Future

Drop dead!

I remembered a boy drifting into my poetry room in I.S. 44 and threatening to beat me up, I asking: Do you always threaten people so? He answering, "Yeah man."

And the teacher in I.S. 44 who during a poem said, "Can I say something? Just tell the students how dull they are and how we teachers hate to teach them." And I rejected putting her line in, unfair.

The boy in P.S. 9 who when shown the fake method of "biting a violin" actually took a bite on my violin. He was that hungry.

Kids feeling resin in P.S. 9 and each taking turn in playing the violin.

The girl who said, while I cupped her eyes with my hand (hmm), I see money even when my eyes are not closed.

Debra who threatened me with a tub of paint for no reason, later saying, "Oh you know I didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

Ronnie and Terry at Lincoln Center: acting out the life of a snake and racoon so realistically that Terry actually threw Ronnie off stage when the eagle is thrown off the rock "like an ant."

# Looking For A Personal Method

FROM THE DIARIES OF BILL ZAVATSKY

P.S. 84 , MANHATTAN

We do a wish poem, strictly warmups, and three or four of the kids are obviously highly talented. Some don't speak any English. Some copy. It's very hard to talk them out of wanting correct spellings, but I insist I'm NOT a spelling teacher. THEY insist on spending 10 minutes putting heading etc. on their papers. We begin each line with "I wish" and I suggest (with their help) that we include a color and the name of a person in each line. I make the mistake of writing "I wish color name" on the blackboard, and get exactly THAT back on several papers. Copying is evidently held in high esteem in this classroom, and I've fallen into the trap. But the kids are excited, some write several "lines" etc. Mrs. Gerhardt just stays there in the back of the room, except to get up once or twice and quiet things down.

I'm aggravated with the wish assignment, and I don't plan to use the formulas again, unless the going gets incredibly rough. The results (and this may be MY problem) don't seem to merit my using it any longer.... As an icebreaker—okay. I intend to use a much more personal, organic approach next time. And I want each child to write his own poem.

I'm very consciously leaving Kenneth Koch's approach out in the cold for the time being. It seems to me that Kenneth's method, which can be a very serviceable one, and a genuinely inspiring one, is so much Kenneth—and a pretty thorough knowledge on my part of his own poetry has led me to this conclusion—that, except for certain crucial emphases such as comparison, metaphor, etc., it's really necessary for each poet working with children to FIND HIS OR HER OWN METHOD OF TEACHING THE WRITING OF POETRY. I've decided, for the time being, that to look for some infallible method of writing instruction is, at least for me, an unprofitable pursuit. It would follow that, given my feelings, it couldn't help but be an unprofitable one for the children too.

Some teaching experiences outside P.S. 84 have gotten me to thinking about a more organic approach to teaching writing — an approach which I think will best suit my own temperament, my own conception of writing. No need restating that the poet's idea of what poetry should be is a determining factor in what the kids will think of as acceptable poetically, as possible poetically. I want, at this point, to give them as wide a notion of the possibilities of poetry as I can. The one drawback to this approach (and it's a difficulty I struggle with in my own poetry, hence pass the struggle on to the kids I think) is that, while I have a strong, principled esthetic sense (of like and dislike), my esthetic has a large range.

To tie up the strings: this kind of wide-ranging attack does NOT lead immediately to startling results, which I would like to believe are currently held at a premium. On the one hand, I'd very much like to let the kids move along, writing what others might consider only moderately interesting poems. On the other, Ron Padgett's blitzkrieg assignments DO impress me, for what they've elicited, and for Ron's ingenuity in devising them. Yet I continue to suspect the foolproof assignment, and tend to fall back upon it as a kind of crutch. My experience at MUSE has shown me that the best way to work with children—at least the most organic, NATURAL, I've so far experienced—is on a one-to-one level, really sitting right down with the kid and helping him or her get it out. The problem with the "Here-I-am-let's-write-about-this" method is its utter ACADEMICISM, even if it can inspire remarkable results. Yes, the kids take part madly and laugh and become excited and want more, but I don't know if I want them to want more of what is essentially a me-professor you-student relationship. Which, no matter how "liberating" it may seem, just buttresses the old cornball classroom regimen, because for once something exciting happened for an hour one afternoon on one day of a long, long week. I really hate not being able to have a more natural relationship with the kids, because they're helping me learn just as much about writing poetry as I seem to be helping them.

Well, I suppose all this ranting comes from my not knowing really where I'm at, not really having it completely together. Which leads into other ideas I've been having (to close the circle) about the "more organic approach to teaching writing" I mentioned earlier.

Organic: in the sense that I intend to find out what's happening IN and AROUND the classes I'm working with, in terms of (a generalized word for a lot of ideas) VOCABULARY. VOCABULARY meaning any experience (and the words of that experience, be they from geography, history, mathematics, current events, etc.) the students are having AROUND my

weekly appearance. If I'm going to be stuck in a formal classroom situation for a while, I am going to aggressively make use of its fabric.

What I feel very strongly with the kids at MUSE is a sense of community and friendship. A real CONTINUITY of shared experience. It stands to reason that by cutting myself off from the children's other classroom pursuits at P.S. 84, I'm losing a chance to gain a context, a community, an...environment. Like being driven blindfolded to the beach, missing the scenery, being led blindfolded to the water, swimming around for 45 minutes with the blindfold off and having a great time, then being reblindfolded and driven home. No good! I want the kids to learn that they can put every particle of their experience, their VOCABULARY, into their poems, and to help them do that I've got to learn their vocabulary.

# The Clinton Program

FROM CLARENCE MAJOR'S WRITING WORKSHOP

THE CLINTON PROGRAM, MANHATTAN

The Clinton Program is a unique junior high school located in New York City. As far as we know it is the only public junior high anywhere which is operating on the Parkway—School Without Walls model. For half of each day the students are outside the school taking courses at various city agencies, institutions, and corporations. They may be studying biology at the Museum of Natural History, or videotaping in some professional's loft studio, or studying computer math at Western Electric, or World Literature at the U.N. The possibilities are boundless.

Since September, poet-novelist Clarence Major has been conducting a writing workshop for the program's students in a comfortably furnished youth center in Manhattan. On any Tuesday afternoon you can find Clarence, his students and their very able teacher Kathy Howe, stretched out on the rugs, slung across the easy chairs or sitting on the tables talking, writing, reading each other's work or collaborating on some group writing project. The style, in keeping with the rest of the Clinton Program, is free-wheeling and loosely structured. Clarence has discovered that traditional writing assignments are not very workable in this context—and a healthy thing it is:

"i took along with me a copy of AVANT GARDE, a portfolio of photographs and showing the pictures to them suggested they (each, in the interest of developing further their abilities to describe incidents, people, situations, scenes, landscapes, etc.) try to describe in detail one of the pictures from the portfolio. the idea didn't appeal to them. dean was the only one who even tried it and his effort was weak. when i tried to point out to him what he'd left out he expressed little interest in developing it. he went off in a corner to write a poem.

jenny says she'd much rather write straight from her own imagination. and what an imagination she has!"

— Clarence Major

The group has been extraordinarily productive. They have written innumerable short stories, poems, two long and wildly fanciful plays, and—most recently—a novel which is still in progress.

Since the novel and the plays are too long to be reproduced here, we have appended instead some samples of the shorter work which the class has produced.

How long will it be? Will I be able to stand pacing up and down a cage, peering through the bars at those people staring at me?

I daydream once in a while... of India. Roaming through the jungles, smelling the sweet grass, hearing it crunch under my paws, lying under trees, cooling my hot fur... the shadow of those damn bars as though they were closing in on me.... Why can't I face reality? Look at those bars. They jeer at me; the lock rattles and says, "You can't get out, you know you can't get out, you can't get out, you can never get out, you can't get out..."

"NO!!" I rush to the bars, grabbing them, trying to strangle them.

"NO!!" Look, people, look what you did me; you could never exist in these conditions, you know! You sadists! You...."

I want to hurt them that have hurt me, I hate them.

The door opens. Out comes the hated zoo-keeper. He whips me.

"GET DOWN YOU SAVAGE IDIOT!"

"HA, HA, DADDY LOOK AT THE TIGER! HA, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA, HA...."

The echoes hit me; each one is like the slash of the whip. I lie in contortions on the floor, in pure agony. I want to die, I want to die, I want to die.

\* \* \*

A body of a tiger lies on the floor. The body is contorted, the mouth open, foam still new on its mouth, its eyes open in an expression of insane terror. Yet the eyes hold the look of a tiger that has once known the smell of sweet grass, the crunch of it under its paws, resting beneath a tree, the expression, however hard to see, of a once free tiger.

Jennifer Wada



"S H E"

"It's true, I tell you, it's true."

"But it can't be, she couldn't, she wouldn't die, she wouldn't leave me all alone at a time like this. She's the only one I had, the only one I could talk to, the only one who listened and didn't bite back at me."

I said this slowly, in a low, confused voice. Because I was confused, and I couldn't understand why she was dead. Why would she leave me alone. The whole concept was too much for me to take on at once, too much.

The door slammed and in walked a medium-sized woman, about 30 or so. She was wearing a red wool pullover sweater and blue dungarees.

"Nina says she's dead. That's not true, is it? She wouldn't leave me, she wouldn't go without telling me, would she?"

"But she did, honey, she had to, she didn't have any choice. You understand, don't you?"

"She didn't have to go, I know why she went. She didn't like me."

Tears came to my eyes; I started crying. Then I yelled, "She left because I was bad to her." I turned towards Nina, my friend, and Kathy, my aunt, and yelled, still crying, "Why didn't you tell me I was being bad? Why? Why didn't you tell me before she left? Why, why, why?"

At this point I started crying more. I dropped to the floor and started kicking and screaming and yelling. I just couldn't face the fact she was dead. I cried and kicked and screamed for hours on end until the doctor came and gave me a sedative. I slept for maybe 12 hours or so.

When I woke up I pretended she was still alive. For a little while I even pretended my parents were still alive, but when my aunt walked into my room I remembered when my parents died. I still pretended she was alive, though, and the more I pretended the more it became reality, and the more it became reality, the more I moved away from reality. For about a week I was in a dream world, a wish world, a fantasy world of my own. I went around doing things she and I used to do. All the time thinking she was there,

doing them with me.

It got worse and worse every day. I fell deeper and deeper into this fantasy world of mine. My aunt was getting desperate. She had to do something to stop both of us from going out of our minds. I was halfway there already and there was only one thing she could think of to do. She didn't know whether it would help me face reality or throw me deeper into my fantasy world. Since there was nothing else to do my aunt had to try it.

One day, after school, my aunt picked me up. I got in the car with her and we drove off. I didn't ask her where we were going, for at that time I was still pretending she was alive and we were in the back seat having a conversation (or rather I was). My aunt said nothing to me, nor I to her. She just kept driving and I talking.

Finally, after about an hour or two of driving and talking, the car came to a stop. My aunt got out and told me to come with her. I nodded, but before getting out I turned around, and still being in a fantasy world I said she wasn't allowed out of the car and into buildings with my aunt and me.

When I got out, we walked up the block, crossed the street and up another block; then we turned the corner, walked half a block and started going up a path. It led to a rest home and burial grounds. I wondered about that because it didn't seem possible that a cemetery could fit in the middle of a block of buildings. When we got inside the building a man led us to a room and then left. We walked in and there on a table with a white cloth was a miniature coffin. I looked curiously up at my aunt. She walked to the coffin and said, "Look." I did, and there she was, lying there looking beautiful, as beautiful as a collie ever looked. I knew she was dead, though, and that she would never be alive again. Now that I could face up to that fact, it would be easier.

I still miss her but I know that some day she and I will be back together again somewhere else. Then we'll have as much fun as we used to. And neither of us will ever leave each other. Never.

Laura Halstead

I lay helpless, death only a few minutes from me. I was delirious; it seemed like an illusion, a dream, yet it was so real. Shapes—things knelt over me. I made them out to be people, yet distorted beyond recognition in my failing eyes. They were moving about, aimlessly, it seemed to me. One of the shapes placed a damp cloth on my brow. It seemed to send shafts of ice through every vein and artery. I stiffened, waiting for some unseen thing to warm me, yet I knew if it did, my blood would boil and I would feel a bubbling mass of flesh. A dull murmur was throbbing in my ears, unbearably soft and consistent. I could feel a look of terror pass over my face; a fantastically loud scream stood in the air for a moment, then shattered like paper-thin glass in my ears. All the shapes become more distorted and hideous than ever. I knew I was suffocating. The shapes beat over me; the hideous faces. I wanted to push them away, to give me some air, but I could feel my soul already struggling within me to escape. It broke away from the sickening body and flew up in such absolute freedom; indescribable freedom. A feeling of utter joy filled me, filling every part of me, brimming over, overflowing. I could feel it pouring out of my fingers, every pore in my skin, and a fresh healthy feeling taking over. Then I flew away, wanting to leave any unhappy, ill feelings, and fly off in freedom as no one else will ever know.

Fin

Jennifer Wada

# Ying Kit & Kenneth Lee

FROM THE DIARIES OF HANNAH GREEN

P.S. 42, MANHATTAN

Norma Brooks wanted me to choose six of the students and work with them each week now. Ideally this is a good idea. I would have liked a little more time before choosing which six in order to have first a sense of all the children in the class. I would have had a clearer idea then of which ones I and my way of working with them would mean the most to.

My idea in doing this is that I don't want to have any over-all assignment or group project. I want them each to write what they want. It demands of me that I must be sensitive to what they could write, to finding in one story the seed of another perhaps more powerful. Also I can read what they have written and suggest something else, ways of developing a story, the idea of images, etc. If a child feels joy doing this, that is enough. Joy. Especially if that same child is miserable much of the time. If she feels joy, develops some skill, feels approval, gains sureness, will not this help her as she goes on through times where there may be none of this? Eleanor is intelligent, and she is careful, and many lovely things about her show in her lovely printing which is soft, and round, and full, sensitive and individual.

So do Ying Kit's qualities show in his printing. His beautiful delicate poems are written, printed, in a soft, lovely, clear, easy writing. He, clearly, is really a poet. He withdraws, and looks into space (this very hard with the playing and joking of Juan, Luis, etc.)—this hard for him with me, I think, looking on. At first I thought he needed help. I went to see what he was doing. I was ashamed of my insensitivity. I must wait in the future, and read his poem after he has finished. Also I think it is wrong for me to correct his spelling. His vision is so special, so private, so extraordinary. I want to bring him poems, and read poems with him. Chinese poems in translation. English

poems. Not poems for children. Poems with beautiful language. Even Shakespeare. I feel he is ready for anything. And it must be the best. And I must be careful not to tread heavily. I felt very bad when I gave Norma his poems, and she said, "But Ying Kit, you already wrote this one in the guinea pig book." He said, "It has the same title, but it isn't the same." I was afraid she had shamed him; she suggested he had copied himself. It wasn't true at all. I read the poem in the guinea pig book, and it was like a first draft of this poem. Perhaps the idea had been in his head a time, more images had come to him. But Mink Shoes—Mink Shoes he kept.

Sheila\* was worried he had asked to leave because he didn't know how good his poems were. I think he had done all he could possibly do in a noisy afternoon. But after this I will have things to read with him, or to give him to read.

I must be careful not to embarrass him. He has a real gift; his way of thinking, of writing is that of a real poet, he is older than his years. With him I would like to be able to do anything I could to protect and nourish his gift. Look at the feeling he has for words in a language still new to him!

And Kenneth. I find him so charming; he is a lovable and moving child. Norma says, "Kenneth has to be breast fed." I have a feeling that this kind of special work writing may help him to get easier in it, feel more at home in it. He has a wonderful mind, he loves to talk, to think; and at this point he flounders, gets restless when he starts to write. Look at what Sheila did with him. She read his poem about the turtle; in the end he speaks of death. She asked him—what? A question about his own death, and asked him if he would like to dictate a poem she would write down. And see what came out. I am not sure how Sheila did this because I was really concentrating on something else, so only half heard what she said. If he is demanding and needs, well then this may be of some real help to him.

---

\* Sheila Murphy of TWC staff, who was visiting Hannah's class that day.

## SILENT WIND

Let me feel the silent wind of the North  
blowing the winter snow,  
coming down slow  
It seems to say blow blow blow to the snow  
blowing my hat to the sad snow  
blowing the snow until spring comes to life.

Ying Kit

## MINK SHOES

Let me feel the softness of rabbits,  
having furs like curls.  
As white as the breast of gulls,  
As beautiful as nature.  
Having star dust in their eyes  
Hopping everywhere, going anywhere.

Ying Kit

## THE TURTLE

Once there was a turtle  
It was a female turtle  
One day the turtle tried to put on her girdle.

Then the mother called her Myrtle  
Then Myrtle the turtle went to the forest  
She went further and further.

Then she got on her mother  
Just when Myrtle got sick  
She got hurter and hurter inside her.

One day she got better  
Then she was O.K.  
Then she live till her death.

Kenneth Lee

## THE DEATH OF MINE

To my long day on  
the death comes closer to me  
The old bad days  
and the old good days  
and good luck  
and bad luck  
to the death of mine  
in the grave I am.  
And in the cemetery I am.  
It's very lonely being in a grave.  
But my mind is still up in the sky.  
When will I come back to life again?  
When and when and when?  
In the soft ground of the cemetery.

Kenneth Lee

# P. S. on Open Education

FROM THE DIARIES OF PHILLIP LOPATE

There is in the new, free classroom ideas the attraction of total control. Some traditional teachers must have strict obedience to their schedule of learning. They are called rigid, old-fashioned, authoritarian. Others, whose belief in their ability to control persons is greater, enjoy giving those around them more space, more room for "accidents," more rope to reach the desired prearranged result. Like certain psychopaths—who think that the world is a product of their will, (and believe they are benignly allowing the interaction to take an undefined course), but who will one day show a sterner face, will step in and call back all the defective marionettes,—there are open classroom teachers who have not really given up the dream of invoking the Inquisitional apparatus of schoolmaster authority.

There are, I know, some sensible adults strong enough in their own paths to relish the autonomy of others, and even the control freaks have an ambivalent yearning for human freedom, want to be surprised and disarmed and have the burden lifted from their shoulders. Why they find the autonomy of small children so much more disarming than teenagers is something else again. But I will leave it to Peter Marin to unravel.

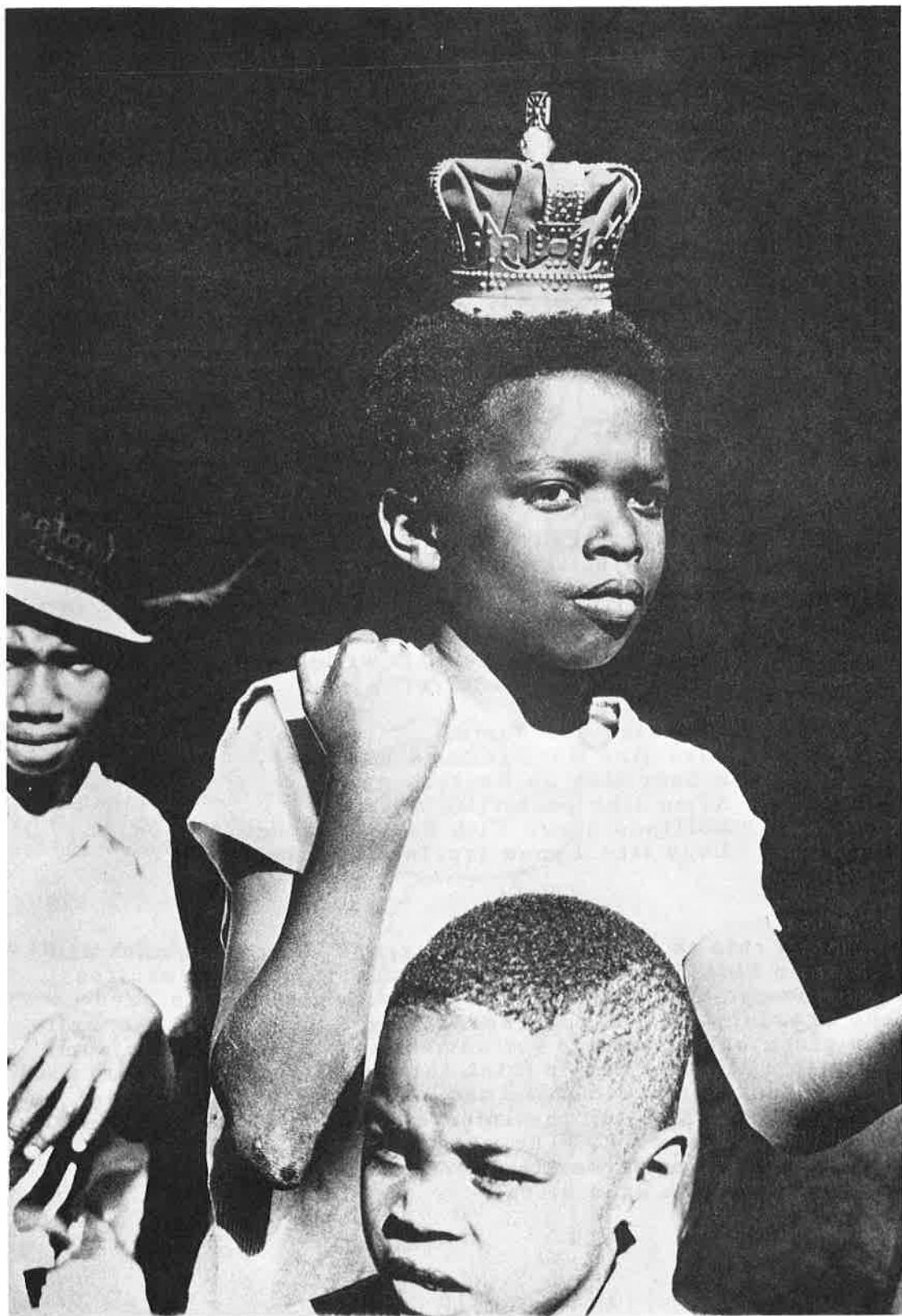
PETER MARIN:

"We must remember that our schools are simply adult ideas of how things should be—and they share that with the public schools. Some of them seem more congenial or benevolent than others, but all of them are arbitrary impositions upon the young. We are using them—as do all "teachers"—to fulfill something in ourselves, and usually the impulse behind them is not primarily a concern for the young: it is our own loneliness and sense of misuse or disconnection; our need for a vocation to make sense of things; our desire to be near energy or warmth; our thirst for community, or to be looked up to,



or to be touched. What lies behind all our self-justifying words is a series of deep and legitimate adult needs, and we construct environments for the young in order to find our own rightful places in the world. Because that is inevitable, and human, there is nothing wrong with it; but we ought to be straight about it, WE ought to remember that the young may not need 'schooling' at all; they may not need teachers, or classrooms, or 'subjects' or progress reports or projects or guided learning or field-trips, or 'child-centered education.' They may simply need a place to feel at home and sensible adults around to give them a sense of protection and support. Were our communities more complete, more sane, we might not need anything like schools at all. Maybe the young don't need them now. We need them, and so we build them, and run them—in the same way that we might once have wanted a coffee-house, or a magazine, or an old-fashioned newspaper where we could sleep in the back among the presses. God knows the hidden fantasies and needs involved, and the power and ego trips, and the need to control or intimidate. That is inescapable. But we might at least be more honest about it!"

# TECHNIQUES



# Mr. Everything

FROM THE DIARIES OF LARRY FAGIN

P.S. 61, MANHATTAN

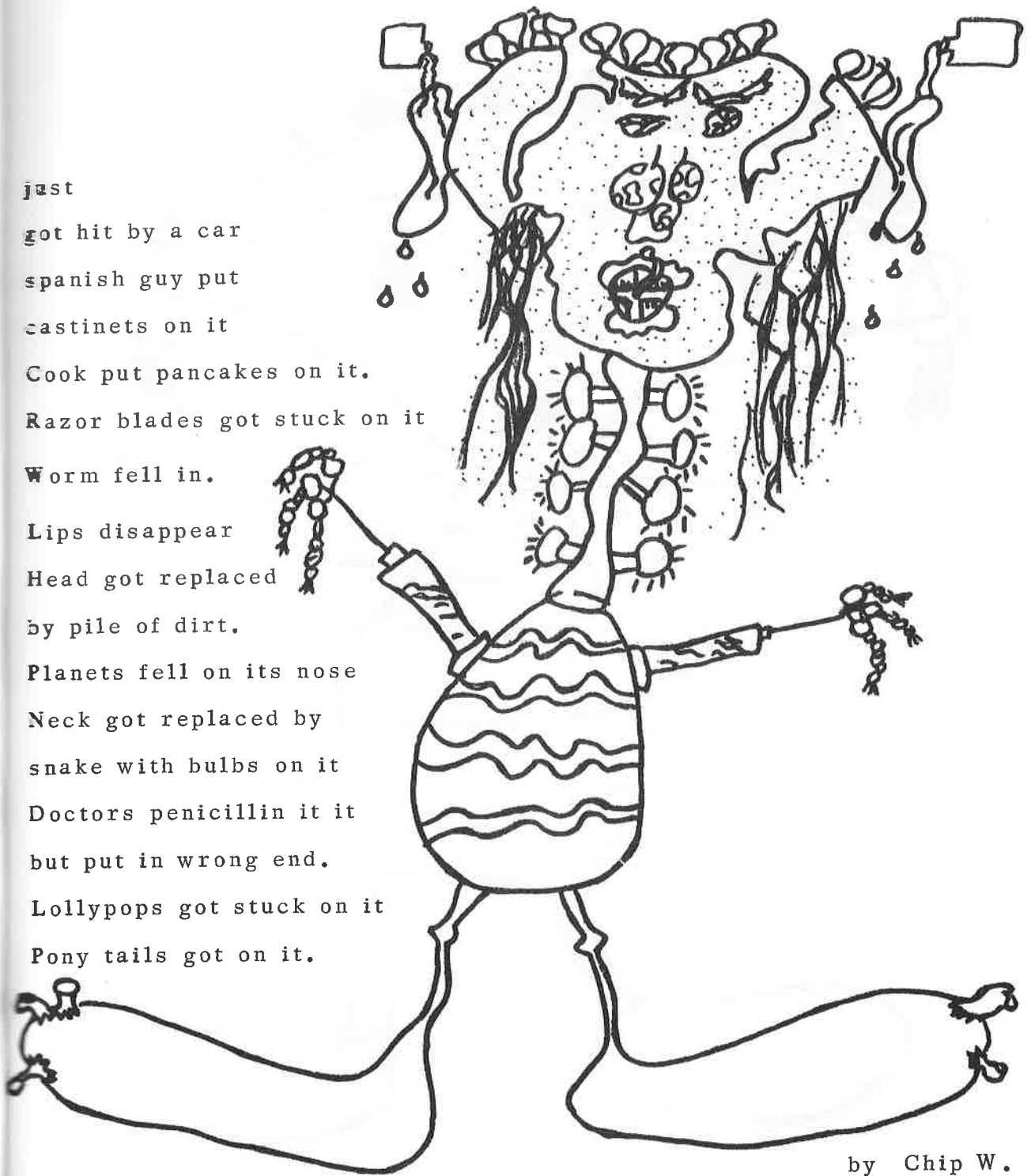
"...I decide to try a collaboration, to make a Monster:

## MR. EVERYTHING

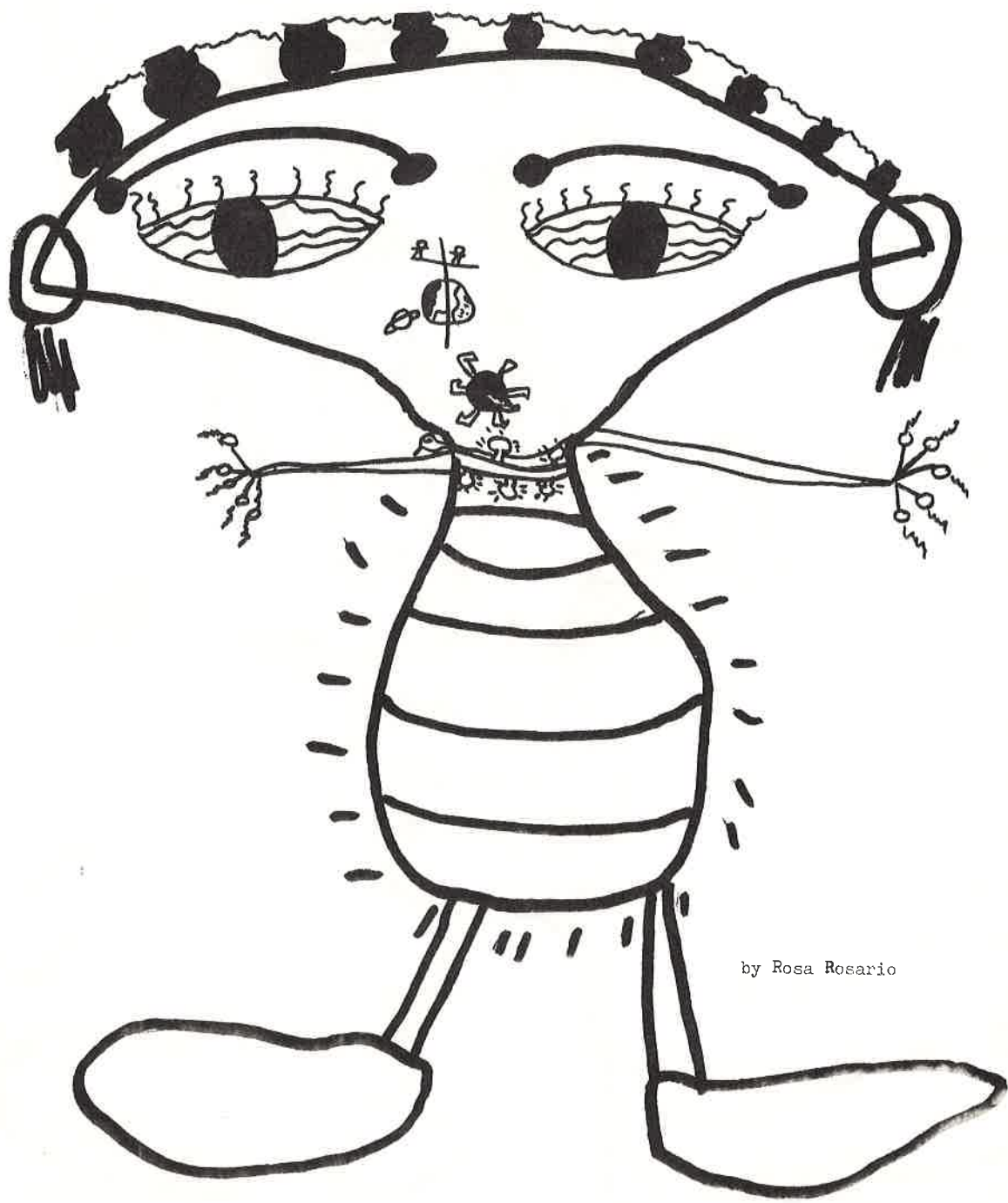
Eyes with red lines going through,  
Nose with tiny planets growing on it,  
A head shaped like a sneaker,  
A neck like a snake with light bulbs,  
Eyebrows like winged bananas,  
A mouth like an eyeball with a worm in it,  
Teeth like screwdrivers,  
Empty lips,  
Hair like castanets,  
Ears like Aunt Jemima pancakes,  
A body like an Easter egg,  
Arms like penicillin needles,  
Lollipop claws with ponytail fingers,  
Legs like Lynne (spring) Chicken.

"As this is being written I expand the assignment and have the kids draw and color the monster. This excites them no end and, as they are all concentrating so hard on the drawing, I am hard pressed to get the rest of the written piece out of them. But someone always seems to come up with a line. I didn't think this was going to take up all of the hour but it did. We had a contest (but no prizes) for the best name for the monster, which would be the title of the poem or work. The winner was Mr. Everything. Everyone agreed it was the perfect name. The drawings, of course, were exquisite."

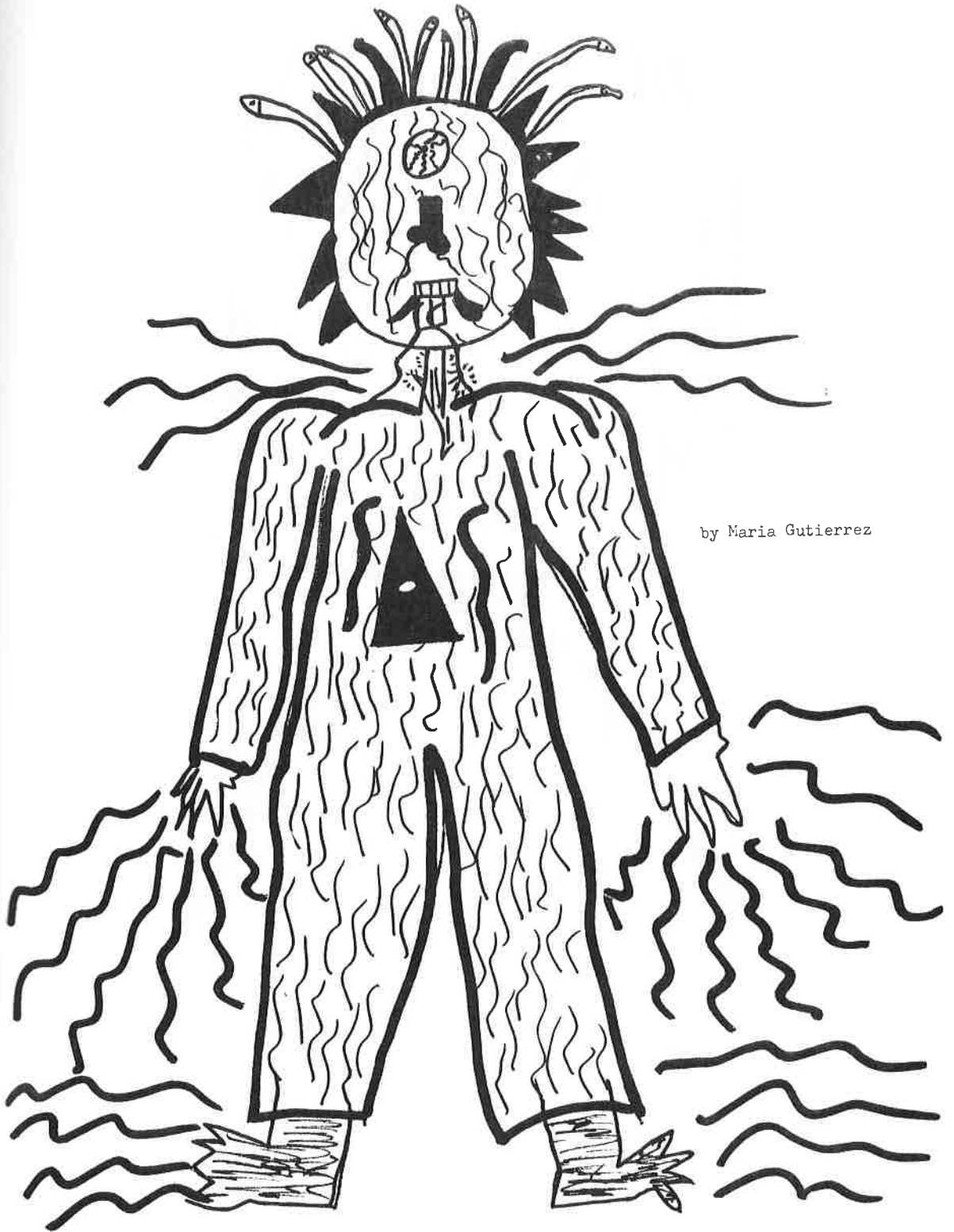
just  
got hit by a car  
spanish guy put  
castinets on it  
Cook put pancakes on it.  
Razor blades got stuck on it  
Worm fell in.  
Lips disappear  
Head got replaced  
by pile of dirt.  
Planets fell on its nose  
Neck got replaced by  
snake with bulbs on it  
Doctors penicillin it it  
but put in wrong end.  
Lollypops got stuck on it  
Pony tails got on it.



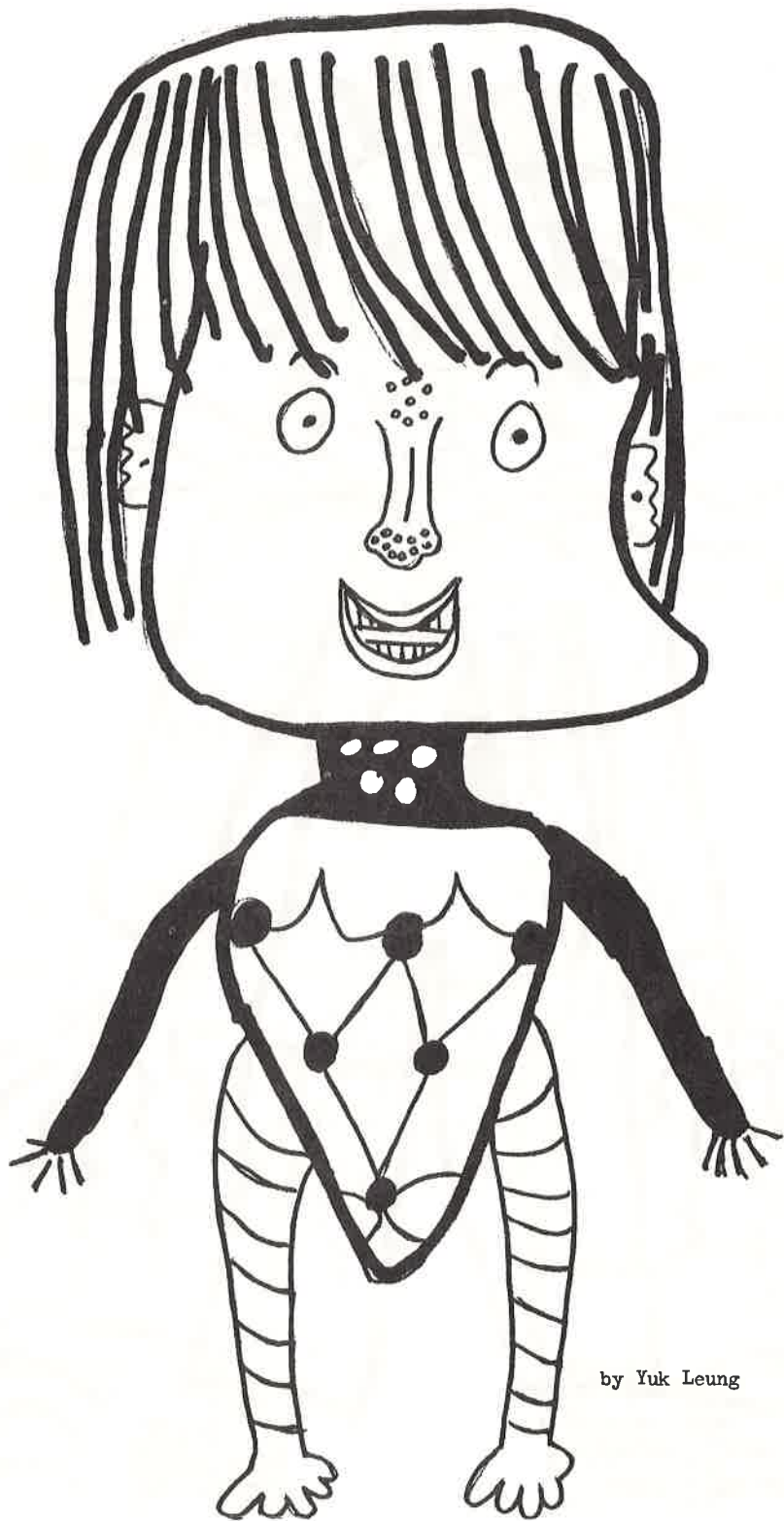
by Chip W.



by Rosa Rosario



by Maria Gutierrez



by Yuk Leung

# My Friend, America

FROM THE DIARIES OF DOC LONG

P.S. 75, MANHATTAN

with additions from RUBY SAUNDERS - J.H.S. 136, BRONX

Doc Long is one of three graduate writing students from Columbia's Master of Fine Arts program who have been working together at P.S. 75 in Manhattan. Although none of the three (the others are Carole Clemmons and Merle Chinese) had any previous experience teaching writing to young children, they have done some highly original work. Here are two of Doc's early assignments, described very briefly, although the samples of student work we have chosen are self-explanatory.

## DOC LONG:

My sessions begin at 9:00 a.m. with around 40 sixth-grade students. Our first exercise dealt with the sense of smell; students were asked to cover their eyes and smell an incense which was passed around the room. They were then told to describe the smell by using lies, "crazy" ideas, or by exaggeration. They were told before the exercise that there was no correct answer as to what the smell was.

\* \* \* \* \*

St. Thomas Virgin Island there when the men are digging up holes in the ground. When they are fixing the streets and when somebody is smoking cigars. These men brings old clothing because they don't want the new clothes to get wet. St. Thomas is like summer there you don't get any winter and these men sometimes take off those shirts. When the men is ready to eat they sit down by the holes and smoke cigars and drink beer. Or drink soda.

Beverly F.



The smell is such an odor  
I cannot stand it smells like  
someone's dirty hand. Someone  
sopped his hand with maple sauce  
that was squashed out of some  
forest moss.

David

It's the smell of a dream.  
It's sweet. It's sour.  
It's smell like incense in Mark III.  
I think it is a dream.

My dream ↓

Once I was walking on a very hot summer day. A lady stopped me she gave me a flower. I smelled the flower suddenly it was cool.

I tasted it in the air. It was gone.

Roy Parker

fresh made taffy.  
I never smelled airplane glue  
but I got a hunch that is it.

George

It make me feel like a light feather.  
I am going off my feet. I feel like I am  
dancing in mid-air.  
It make me feel like a person I know.  
(I forgot his name.)  
I feel like dancing all night long.  
I feel like a pillow falling from the sky.  
I feel like I am taking a trip in space.

Alvetta Allen

It reminds me of the African  
shop where they had incense  
and a cute boy.

Denise Roberts

#### A SMELL

It smelled like flowers on a windy day.  
It smelled like sweet candy.  
Or a light cologne. Or a  
tropical island with a lot of  
breezes blowing. Or maybe better  
than a beach. A beach smells  
of salt but this smells sweet.  
But I bet it smells better than  
it is, like cherry or something.  
I bet it smells better than it  
tastes. And I can still smell it.  
I guess I don't want to know what  
it is. It's too nice.

But I just saw it and...

Lisa A.

It makes me think about I am  
going back to Hong Kong. I  
was staying outside my house  
and it makes me think about  
I was in the temple. It makes  
me feel very softly in my  
feelings and I thought I was  
lost in the sky and I was never  
coming back until it gone.

Karen Lee

Here are some fruits of a very similar smells assignment  
which Ruby Saunders tried at J.H.S. 136 in the Bronx:

#### Smell Test #1

It smells like something I put up my nose  
when I have a cold. It's groovy for getting my  
nose unstopped. It makes my nose feel cool  
and not so stuffy when I smell it. My nose gets  
all cold and feels all right. When, like when it  
first snows & the sun is shining and you go out  
sick (this is in the country of Florence, S.C.  
My Home Town) and take a deep breath of fresh!!  
Air & it really feels good the cold fresh air in  
my head. I wonder if I'll ever smell fresh air  
again?

Tillie McIver

## Smell Test #2

I take one sniff  
I take two sniffs  
And I just go right on sniffing  
it smells so good.  
It even makes me feel hungry  
I walk down the street  
sniffing & minding my own  
business  
And along comes a cop  
He taps me on my shoulder  
& says Hey man (girl) whats ya  
sniffing?  
& I say pure Heaven  
He says let me try it  
& I say O.K.  
He sniffs it once  
He sniffs it twice  
And just go right on  
Sniffing dig it with  
My pure Heaven  
One thing I learn  
Never give a cop  
a sniff. They just don't know  
when to stop.

I smelled something. Something that reminded me of what happen one summer night. That night everybody was getting ready for bed when I heard the fire bells ringing. By chance I was just looking to see where the fire was. It happen to be right next to my building. I got all of my family, run out the building, so did everyone else. It was a big fire. The firemen couldn't get the fire under control till 6 o'clock in the morning. A fireman got hurt and part of the building collapsed. But lucky for us the fire didn't reach my building. So whenever I hear the fire bell or smell anything it reminds me of the awful summer night.

Mildred Bowman

## DOC LONG:

I asked the students to describe America, only I told them to use the characteristics and personality of a fellow classmate. Again they were told to use lies, to exaggerate, etc.

America has freckles.

He is 11 years old and America likes to travel. America travels by car a lot of the time.

Sometimes America travels by plane.

America travels a lot because America's father is an architect.

America wants to be an architect too.

America also wants to be a doctor.

America enjoys chemistry and America has a giant chemistry set and America is always working on experiments.

Bruce Diamond

## MY UNFRIEND AMERICA

My unfriend likes to dress very modern. He wears bellbottoms and Mickey Mouse shirts. She has real long hair. She likes to eat things like pizza and spaghetti. America believes physical fitness and good health habits and also a sound mind. She likes to talk a lot. She has a disgusting brother. She and her brother like to buy me a lot. She lives in 711 but likes to visit Briendell's Building.

(unsigned)

America is very stupid. He thinks  
just like Lucille Ball. He gets such  
stupid ideas and whenever he thinks  
up something dumb he laughs like this  
ouhahaha ouhahaha yucayuca uga uga  
hahaha dumb isn't it. He sits in row  
six!!

America is such a sore loser it  
stamps its foot and twists his eyes.  
And dances around and lies. He  
jumps us and down and screams  
god Damn you  
It's amazing he doesn't have a hole  
in his shoe.

David

#### MY FRIEND

He lives in a dream  
When America wants to eat  
he has to steal.  
America's a Junky. So you'd know  
the kind of life he lives  
One time outside he beat a  
kid up for three cents  
No one likes him because he raped a girl.  
The last time I saw him he had a  
needle in his when they put a blanket  
over him.  
America  
America.

Michael M.

One day me and america went to buy some  
pizza and I put a little garlic on it. Some-  
one before america and I came in had  
loosened the top of the pepper. America  
wanted to put some pepper on so he pick  
it up and turn it over and all the pepper  
went on his pizza. Then he was so mad.  
Then we went to playland into the shooting  
gallery and america put in a quarter and  
it didn't work. He went to the manager  
and screaming at him he said "you mother-  
blanking bitch" and the cops came and took  
us to the cop car and ball us out and put  
in his book. When they left, he went home  
and I did too.

Chris O.

# Why Dragons Are Mean

FROM THE DIARIES OF MERLE MOLOFSKY CHIANESE  
P.S. 75, MANHATTAN

Merle Molofsky Chianese is also a student in the Columbia Master of Fine Arts program. Excerpts from her diaries and samples of children's work from her classes follow.

"I read them a newspaper story, which was a factual, straightforward, non-human-interest account of a student riot in Manilla in which the students, demonstrating in support of transportation workers on strike, threw rocks at busses and taxis, burned a professor's car, and threw homemade bombs. The police wounded 41 and killed three students, the professor shot at and wounded a student, and the riot eventually was contained when student leaders were arrested. I then began to ask questions and got eager responses. I tried not to slant the story to either the students' or the police's point of view. I did say that I was freaked by the professor shooting the student. Did it do any good to shoot the student after the car was already burned? Why did they burn his car? Maybe they had a grudge against him long before the riot. Maybe he shot at a student who had been bugging him all year. Policemen have children. Could the policemen have had children, sons, and daughters, attending the university? What if they were shooting at their own kids? How does a passenger on a bus feel when people throw rocks at the bus? What if they were going to the doctor? How does a striking transportation worker feel when he learns a student has been killed demonstrating for his sake, so that he could have more money? etc.

"The kids responded. Maybe the bus drivers who weren't on strike carried guns because they expected trouble. Maybe one of them killed the student. Burning a car isn't nice. Cars cost money. But the teacher shouldn't have shot anyone. He should have asked them to pay him back. If the students didn't have bombs and the police were

shooting, they'd be scared. One curly-headed right winger told me that the students were probably led by outsiders, that they didn't care about the workers, but just wanted to make trouble and that if they threw bombs they got what they deserved. Others said if they were passengers they'd get off and walk. Or run. Away. I then said that newspaper writing demanded a clear, logical, unfeeling approach, so that people could learn the facts, but only the facts—the who, what, where, how... but that the WHY belonged to the province of the creative writer, the reasons, the feelings, that people have, were one of the things writers thought about. I then asked them to imagine that they were really there—not in class reading about it on page 15, safe and comfortable, not at home reading the paper after dinner, not listening to a teacher describing something far away—but really and truly there—they might be a student demonstrating, a student throwing a bomb, a student sympathetic to the cause but not quite ready for violence, a cop, a cop with kids at the college, a fireman, a doctor or nurse who heard about it on the radio and so rushed over to help the injured, a teacher, the teacher who shot the student, a bus driver on strike or scabbing, a passenger on a bus being stoned...or even a little puppy dog lost in the melee. Think about it. What does it look like, sound like, feel like? What do bombs do? One boy described the fire a bomb makes, and then gave a detailed account of how grenades work. Another boy scornfully pointed out that these were homemade bombs, not grenades. They were all becoming excited and turned on, discussing the possibilities—so I pounced—write a story from the point of view of someone on the scene. This is not for a newspaper, spelling doesn't count, neatness doesn't count, grammar doesn't count; for a newspaper, for a composition, it counts, not now. What counts now is fun, ideas and you, you and your ideas count. Questions: Does there have to be a title. Can I write about a THING? Can I be a bomb? Me and him we're gonna be two different bombs. I'm gonna get him. Can I be a window? Answer: You can be anything, do anything, write anything—title or no title—I'm not gonna mark these. I'm gonna read them.

"Results: 4 girls were puppy dogs, that idea really grabbed them. One "Student who was there but a non(sic)-fighter." One bus driver, highly descriptive, pure poetry—

"Hours later blood on streets  
Everything quiet and calm  
Riot under control at last  
Buses moving everything finished  
No more shooting."

2 homemade bombs—sounds delightful: screeeee booom tinkle ratatatat— 2 factual accounts, some moralizing and speculation. One Frankenstein at the riot fantasy—really

weird and hard/hip imaginative. One 'Sorry but I didn't have anything to say so have this' picture."

[Ed. note: Unfortunately, Miss Chianese handed these papers back to the children before they could be reproduced for the Newsletter.]

\* \* \* \*

"We discussed different phenomena of nature. The WHAT not the WHY. I explained the process of mythmaking, giving the example of a 3-year-old asking interminable questions and the parent, not knowing the TRUE answer, makes up a story to shut the kid up. Again, this class plunged right in, talking and writing. I thought I didn't quite get the idea across. I was disappointed with my explanation, etc. But they created myths, choosing not the topics I suggested, but topics of their own devising. How the Sun and Moon Were Made, Why Birds Fly, Why is the Grass Green, How was the Sun Put up in the Sky (a volcano erupted—I love that one), Why There is a Rainbow After it Rains, How the Sun Rules the Day and the Moon Rules the Night (the only one of my suggestions used), Why Dragons are Mean, Why There are Eclipses. Some were in dialogue form—all were GOOD MYTH-MAKING.

#### WHY DRAGONS ARE MEAN

Once there was a nice dragon. He roamed the woods, but Glushis Brunhilda the witch got very mad because he was nice. So she cast a spell on him to make him mean and made a mean she-dragon and they had mean babies that had mean babies and so on.

Gaby



## WHY THERE ARE ECLIPSES

Well, it all started when the sun made the moon shine at night. Once the sun got the moon mad so he started to chase the sun. Once every century he would catch her. And once every century she would catch him.

Gaby

"How was the sun put up in the sky?" said my sister. (When three years old.) I said, "Well, a long time ago a big volcano blew up and it fired a hot ball up in the sky and it stayed in orbit with our solar system and that's that. Now shut up while I am reading and get out of here! And that is a recording."

Stephen Wheeler

## WHY DO BIRDS FLY?

Once a bird was walking down the street and turned on the radio and heard that a tiger escaped from the zoo and then he turned it off and the tiger was right in front of him and the tiger said, I'm going to eat you up. And then the bird said, Lord give me wings so I can get away from this tiger. And so it was done, and from then on they had wings.

Tristan

HOW THE SUN RULES THE DAY  
AND THE MOON RULES THE NIGHT

One day the sun had a party. He invited the moon and a fish. When the fish came he said "You must have a bigger house for me to put my water in or else I will die." So the sun gave the moon a hundred dollars to buy a bigger house. But then the sun and the moon couldn't live because they had to move so they decided that the fish would go to the river and every day the sun would go to the sky every day and talk to the fish and every night the moon would go to the sky and talk. And from that day on the party is still going.

Noam

"I praised their mythmaking. Told them their myths were as creative as any myth that had lasted for thousands of years. One child was taken aback that I hadn't written any comments on his paper. I answered that the work was so good in the whole class that I would get bored writing GREAT on every paper, so I would just tell the class aloud, GREAT. They liked that.

\* \* \* \*

"I showed them a deck of tarot cards and gave them a brief account of its history, explained that good fortune-tellers did not use a set standard of meanings but bounced the pictures around in their head, unleashed the subconscious and made up a story about the person. I told them good storytellers did the same thing. Gave each child two cards, told them to study the pictures, look for meanings,

ideas, feelings, stories. (It's a French deck so they couldn't get clues from the captions.) They started working immediately. They were a little uptight about whether their ideas were valid, but they were reassured that spelling, neatness, etc. didn't count, that I didn't give marks, and what I cared about most was that they have FUN. They wrote with abandon. I had another class to make so I told the kids who were still writing to keep writing and hand it in to their teacher. The papers were evenly divided between made-up stories and descriptions of the cards. One paper described inner feelings, responses to the pictures:

#### CARD 14

This is a picture that makes me feel happy. It is like when you wake up in the morning and you see the blue sky and the bright sun and you go out to get some fresh water from the well. And you dance around in the meadows and you roll around in the grass and you feel free. And you feel very good.

Robin Morrison

Card III: This is a picture of a lady. The clothing and the head above her waist makes her look sort of rich. Below her waist she looks like a poor ragged woman. She's kneeling on a shaved floor. In back of her is a roundish stone wall. The picture makes me feel as though she's all mixed-up. On the bottom of this picture is the word "L'IMPERATRICE." I suppose it means

mixed-up or something of that sort. It's possible that she might be a goddess of mix-ups or ugliness.

Card VIII: This is a picture of a chubby lady. She must have lived a long time ago. She looks like a soldier. In her right hand she holds a sword. In her left hand she holds a scale. It makes me feel as though I just lost a battle.

Maria Silsdorf

Once upon a time there lived a king and his son. And the son was in love with a poor girl named Fina. The king did not like the girl because she was poor but the girl had a little angel and a little old man said Come with me and you will live again. But the king was not happy. But the son was.

Josefina

Card 15: This picture makes me feel sort of weird. It is a picture of a Devil and a girl, but it makes me feel like nothing of the sort. In modern times it makes me feel like the girl is in a jury and the judge is claiming her guilty. In times of Julius Caesar it makes me feel like a god came down from the Heavens and put a curse on the girl because

she was a murderer.

### Vallet De Batton

This picture makes me feel like I am lost in the wilderness of 1494. I think it is a picture of a baron or a prince. This picture also makes me feel that this man is a soldier or a leader. In his right hand is a staff which I think he uses as a walking staff. In his left hand he holds a hat which is most likely his hat.

Daniel Lipman

### VII Le Chariot

The king is going to die. He also has a son but the king does not want his son to go to his flying chariot. If he went on it he would go to the end of the earth and he will burn from the sun.

Maurice

### The Skeleton

This skeleton is about to kill a guy. You can tell by what he's holding in his hand. He is going to chop a life, not wheat. A skeleton symbolizes death. He is going to chop through many lives. Kill! Grind! Rip! Tear! Snarl! (Gasp!) Ugh! Urk! Now the wheat (I mean lives) is cut.

One time "bloody teeth" Dracula was walking along. He bit "clean teeth." And he dropped dead after the horrible taste.

Edward Rosen

\* \* \* \*

"When I came in one of the girls grabbed me and said, "Don't talk so much, it's boring. Let us write."

Okay.

Gave them an assignment. Everyone began to work, even Marcia, who is totally disoriented. She's like a little ashen ghost, soft-voiced, always touching, always pawing, "Teacher, teacher..." They finished quick, so I threw another assignment at them. Once Upon a Time fairy tales, modern or old fashioned.

One result: Once upon a time I killed myself.

They wrote a lot and were very quiet, very subdued. Is that the way to teach writing? Say WRITE THIS? It's boring!"

# Crazy Math

FROM THE DIARIES OF RON PADGETT - P.S. 61  
AND DICK GALLUP - P.S. 20, MANHATTAN

RON PADGETT:

Miss Pitts' class was scheduled to go to math lab, but she sent a note to Gert Weiner, the math lab operator, asking if the kids could do poetry instead and she said OK. I asked the kids if they would rather go to math lab or poetry and we had a vote. I was surprised to see that a number of kids wanted to go to math lab, even though poetry won the vote. So I said, "Why not do both here?" The subject was Fractions in math lab. So I wrote 3 on the board and drew a line under it, but the board was empty and I just kept drawing the line until I came to the end of the board, partly to do something bizarre because the attention spans seemed shaky today. It looked like this:

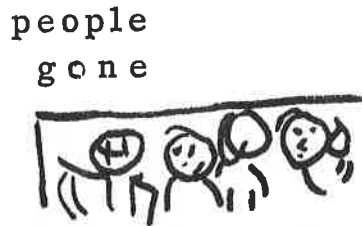
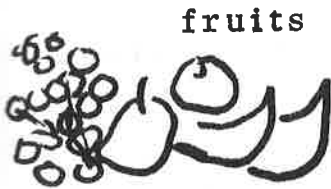
3

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Pretty great! Under it I drew a car. What is 3 divided by a car? A banana. I added an = and drew a banana. I added stars to the 3. Is 3 stars divided by car still equal to banana? No! Banana split! So I made a banana split. The problem kept growing and growing until a host of things divided by an incredible number of cars and bananas and smoke and black eyes were equal to a banana split disaster P.S. 61 smorgasboard earthquake etc.

I had to encourage the kids to use words instead of pictures in their equations. After a while I collected and read back the poems. They were delightful!

Mr. Bowman divided by school  
equals disaster.



story  
- tales  

---

nothing

P.S. 61  
+ Kids  

---

Teacher strike

by Janet

An apple with a worm = a hole in one.

A long stick and clothes and a wig = Mr. Padgett.

A beautiful reddish brown = Miss Pitts.

by Carmen B.



10 orange *S* strings = a bowl  
of spaghetti = 1 night supper bowl.

9 spoon equals 1 car = 312 banana splits.

One dumb-dumb = equals 2 dumb-dumbs = 1 nut head.

by Fung Ping

2 bombs + 5 buildings + 20 people  
+ 8 babies = a major disaster.

by Joseph S.

$$\frac{50000000 \text{ 20th of nothing}}{\text{nothing}} = \text{hairy sheep dog}$$

by Chip

$$\frac{\text{A car}}{\text{A kiss}} = \text{marriage}$$

$$\frac{\text{Andrea}}{\text{Janet}} = \text{in the hospital}$$

by Aicza B.

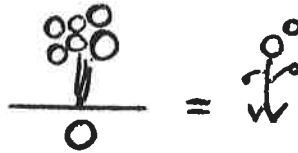
1 man + 1 woman = something interesting.

by Jose

Mr. Padgett and Mr. Koch = a puppy.

by Yuk

A coconut tree  
and a coconut  
= a knock on  
the head.



by Lynne R.

If I had a car  
and I break it  
into five pieces  
I would have an  
eyelash.

If I had 100% I would  
be hot but my answer  
is mashed potatoes.

by Rebeca Crespo

12 Block Busters  
6 A-Bombs  
7 Crashing Airplanes  
7 Air-Bombs

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IT ADDS UP

?

by Melinda and Andrea Dockery

Inspired by Ron's foray into higher mathematics, Dick Gallup tried a Crazy Math assignment of his own at P.S. 20 the next day. We're particularly glad to see our old tormentors—the "two-trains-leave-Chicago-at-the-same-time" variety of math problems—coming in for the drubbing they so justly deserve.

### MATH TEST

1. Puff had 5 bowls of cat food. She lent 1 to Dick. He ate it and got his stomach pumped. He got it back and gave it to Puff. Then Jane was lent some. She thought it delicious, so she gave some to Ann, and she opened market and kept the can of cat food in memorium of Puff. How many bowls of cat food did Puff have left?

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

2. A car is 495 tons. It goes 64 M.P.H. A boy was  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch from the road. In how much time will it take for him to eat his sandwich?

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

3. One day John found 1 billion dollars. He gave 100,000,000 to the druggist and 100,000,000 to stop pollution and 900 to his boss. Then he got a raise of 100,000,000,000. How much does he have left?

Answer \_\_\_\_\_

4.           2 oranges  
          + 2 crates  
          x 4 seeds  
          - 1 skin

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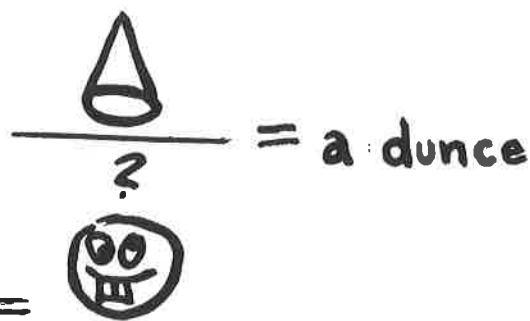
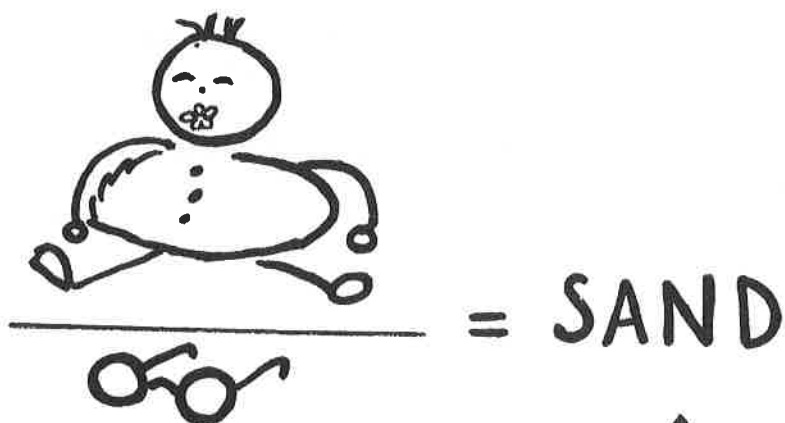
0 \_\_\_\_\_ glasses of orange juice.

5. If Bill had 1 stick of gum he chewed for 3 seconds, how much does he have left?

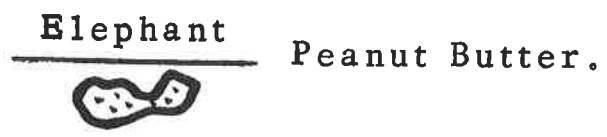
Answer \_\_\_\_\_

A Prize will be given to anyone who gets 100%.

by Alicia & Melody



Jackie Gleason - 100 lbs. =  
Mission Impossible.



by Helen

### CRAZY MATH

1. Man X 2 women = 2 timer.
2. Bad Driver X Bad Accident = Bad Hospital.
3. Crazy teacher X crazy principal = retarded student.
4. 600 beads + 6 strings = 6 necklaces.

by David Valentin

Grandfather had 5 boxes of cigars. He gave out some to Father. Father gave them to Spot. Spot cracked up cause he couldn't smoke, and threw them away. Grandfather found 2 million tax was 1.296 and found 1,1,1,1,1,1, and tax was 2968. So how much did he lose with tax and cigars, and how much did he gain?

(unsigned)

Mr. Gallup  

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Poems = Fun

The Phantom

### CRAZY MATH

1. Duck X 50 X pond = squoosh duck.
2. Man + woman X 50 = 50 bed.
3. Chimney + trucks + cars = smog.
4. Teachers + school = work.
5. Principal + students = enemy.
6. Firecrackers + fireworks + bang  
= chicken person.

by Sammy Chung

# Memories

FROM THE DIARIES OF HANNAH GREEN

P.S. 42, MANHATTAN

I had two ideas, and one was that I thought it would be best to work with a small group, 7 or 8 at a time, I said. And the other was the idea that they would write down a memory, something they remembered. This because I think memories are very close to what one is, and somehow very close to the creative source of things.

The children—many of them are Chinese; many remember leaving Hong Kong, arriving here. Two little boys have just arrived and they only speak a few words of English. They all fall to speaking their own language with each other as soon as they stop speaking English. Many are from Puerto Rico. One is from Santo Domingo, one from Burma, one from Korea. Two or three are black. One is from Yugoslavia.

On the first day it was Eleanor Greene who shone. She began and wrote down a memory, and I read it, and said that I loved it, and asked her if she could think of another, and so it went. She wrote four of them in a very short time. I think about eight from Miss Brooks' class came with me the first day into Miss Sessom's room which was empty and quiet except for one other small group of about 7 working on something with another teacher. We talked back and forth a while about memories, and then I asked them to write one down. Kenneth went into the closet to hide. Alicia was poking Luis with a pencil, and didn't stop when I asked her. She started poking him with a broom straw. He was starting to write. I didn't know what to do. And I said to the children, "What shall I do? How can I get Alicia to stop poking Luis so he can write?" The children said, "Separate them." Alicia agreed to this, and went to another table and wrote down her memory of Richard. She is a very affectionate, restless child, capable of great love and great rage and hate too, I think.

Then I got Kenneth to come out of the closet. He is Chinese and very bright. He talks as if he has a fine theoretical mind. I think maybe he has trouble expressing himself in writing. He started a memory and stopped. Then he said he would write one down if I did. So I did. With many interruptions to spell words and answer questions. And Kenneth read it, and he said he liked it. And then he wrote his down. He is so bright and he talks so well that I think his troubles with writing frustrate him and he tries to avoid it. Or it might be that I just didn't have a subject that interested him. I thought he might have discoursed very clearly on some theoretical subject like The Nature of Man.

"In my country..." writes Deyanira Dela Cruz. She began and wrote story after story. She asked me words, how to spell them. She knew the words. She seemed to shine with these memories and with the joy of writing, learning. Miss Sessoms was amazed. She said she had not been able to concentrate on anything else since she'd been in the class. She wrote all afternoon, and through the free period too. Then the next week she told me she had been bad, she hadn't done her work, she had been taken to the principal. Miss Sessoms let her start with me again, but only stay one period; and she says she must do her other work. This made me sad, because I feel that this is how she could learn. Not to mention the meaning of the joy of writing. Read her stories. This child, Deyanira, has a real poetic gift. There is a natural music in her writing. I wanted to know where she came from, and she said Santo Domingo. I said she should put it in her story, the name of her country. I showed her how to spell it. But then later when I read the story I saw that saying, "In my country..." was so much better than saying "in Santo Domingo." I told her that the next week, and I am changing back the story, "My Dream" to be the way it was before she put in Santo Domingo.

I used to fight with my brother.  
When my mother came home from  
work and saw us, she hit us with  
a small, thin piece of wood. The  
stick was an enemy to me. One  
day I broke it and threw it out  
the window. She couldn't hit me  
with it again. That is one thing  
I remember about me.

Geen Hong Lee

## MY DREAM

This happened a long time ago when I was little. I lived in my country. I heard that my grandfather was dead and I cried a lot. When it was time to go to bed, I thought of him, and when thinking of him, I felt sleepy and went to sleep, and I had a dream of my grandfather. And in the morning my mother called to tell me the good news and my mother told me that it wasn't real that my grandfather had died, and I was so happy that I kissed my mother so much, and then mother told me to stop kissing her so much, that she has another surprise for me; and I asked her what was the surprise, and she opened the door and I couldn't believe that it was my grandfather. And I told him what I heard, and he said I should go out and teach them a good lesson, and I told him I was so surprised that I kissed her so much.

## MY STORY

A long time ago when I lived in my country I had two bad brothers and they died, and when they died, me and my mother and my father and sisters cried a lot. When two days passed, in the morning, my mother called me and my sisters to get up. I went to the bathroom. I saw my little brothers on the floor and I ran to get my mother and father and sisters, and when they went they didn't see anything and I cried a lot. My mother and father thought that I was crazy.

## MY FISH

Once when I came to New York, me and my father went shopping; I saw a little fish and told my father to buy it, and my father bought it. I told my father to buy a fish tank, and he bought one, too, and he bought some fish food. The fish was red and his eyes were blue, and I liked him so much. In the morning I got up and saw the fish was dead, and I went to tell my mother that the fish was dead, and I cried a lot, and my father said that he'd buy me another one and I told him that I loved the one I had, and wanted him back.

Deyanira Dela Cruz



I used to live in Little Rock, Arkansas. They either have one-family houses or two. My family lived upstairs. When you go down to the corner and turn, you would see a house with eggs in it. I had to cross railroads before I could get to the school. There were two bridges to get there. One was very high and made of stone. The other was made of boards and very rocky. I didn't like to go on either one of them. There were some berry patches near my house. I liked it very much.

(unsigned)

When I was about four years old we used to live in a big house. We had a few horses, cows, but no pigs because we were Moslem. If we ate any meat from a pig we would be breaking our religion. I was very small when I grabbed a pig by the ear. He ran and I fell. I asked my father to buy me a pig but he wouldn't.

The first time I came to America from Yugoslavia, a friend of mine asked me to go skiing with him. First I tried to go on a big mountain, but as I was skiing I hit a big rock and bruised my hand and broke my skis. But now I know how to ski very well.

Xheudet T.

#### I REMEMBER IN KOREA...

When I was small, my older sister and I was sharing a carriage together because my mother couldn't carry us both. While we were riding along the park I saw all the other children playing but none were in or had a carriage. I wanted to get out because I felt embarrassed. My mother hit me and told me to stay in.

My house in Korea was big. It was like a country house. We had a maid who liked my sister very much. We also had 3 dogs and a big lawn where they lived. My father had trained the German shepherd whose name was Tiger. I also had a big shaggy dog which I used to ride and his name was Shag. And the last dog is a hot dog and that is his name.

Shirley

## I REMEMBER

I remember that I lived out in the country. And my father was a farmer. And my brother used to milk the cows. And when my brother was milking the cows my brother smacked me in the face. When my brother smacked me in the face it hurt me a lot. Then my father gave my brother a spanking.

When I was in the country I remember that my father used to do tricks. My father was a remarkable man. My father gave me everything that I wanted. My father was a great cook. My mother was a great woman. When I was in the country I was just a little girl.

When I was little I used to tumble over. When my mother used to see me tumble over she used to laugh at me. Sometimes my father used to carry me. My mother used to let me sit on her lap.

I remember that my mother and father used to call me curly. Every time when my father and mother used to call me curly my brother used to laugh. But I used to tease my brother. But my brother didn't like it at all.

Eleanor Green

Burma is a place where I was born. I like it there very much. I live on a main floor. My family live there and work there. My father's work is like selling jewelry, like watches, rings, necklaces, bracelets and dresses too. We have someone to help us. My mother help sewing and my father sell the jewelry. It's very warm. In the morning about 3:00 I went with my parents to see the sun rise. When the sun rise it's so beautiful and bright. Sometimes I go with my sister to the park. You have to cross the railroad track to get there. We climb trees to get some pretty flowers and go to the other side to play badminton. It was real fun chasing each other and everything. The weather in Burma is warm and cool in the morning. I live on a first floor but it's just like a house. Starting from second floor up it's just like apartment and have balcony with them. Oh! I just love my country.

Betty Leong

# It's Winter, But With Her It's Warm

FROM THE DIARIES OF PHILLIP LOPATE  
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY

Phillip Lopate has been conducting a course for teachers during the spring semester at the Lincoln Center Campus of Fordham University. Throughout the course, Mr. Lopate has insisted that teachers must themselves experience the act of creative writing if they wish to teach writing to children. Some of the "assignments" which Mr. Lopate gave to his students were first used successfully with children, and may be familiar to readers of the Newsletter. Others are new, and have since been used, also with good results, in elementary and high school classrooms.

(February 9) "I'm very excited about the Fordham course. In the first class I expressed my idea of concentrating on the twin foci of teaching creative writing to children, and conducting a workshop of their own writing; only by their learning to express themselves through words could they gain the experience to ask kids to do it and know what was involved. We were given a seminar room with a posh rug and nothing to look at or out of. Just the place to put you to sleep immediately. Since the air was very stuffy I raised the problem of how we would stay awake. Someone suggested coffee and refreshments.

"We went around the table, everyone introducing himself, stating what his work situation was, what attempts he had made already to teach creative writing, and most important, what he wanted from the course. Out of 14 people 11 were teachers, one was an educational administrator and two more were undergraduates—Lisa, and Richard. I was heartened by the fact that most of the teachers were rather bright looking and under thirty-five.

"Several teachers said they hoped the course would be a liberating experience, one that would put them more in touch with the creativity that years of miseducation had

squashed. They came on like crushed flowers. I was leary of being drowned in pages of self-pitying, sensitive' writing; but I also felt encouraged that they wanted to work, to try, not just bullshit about the Educational System. In fact, I was suddenly completely bored with talking about the educational system myself. I realized that this course would have to succeed based on what we created by ourselves and between ourselves.

"They were stunned when I asked them to write in the last twenty minutes. I had been mulling over a delightful assignment which I wanted to try for the first time: write a biography of the person sitting next to you. What better opportunity, before they knew more than a few details about each other. They were all strangers, meeting for the first time, and I explained that they would have to go on non-verbal clues: dress, posture, face. It was like staring at someone in the subway and imagining his life. They could invent any damn thing they wanted, even carry the biography to the very end (I told them I liked death scenes in biographies).

"They set to work. I noticed several cackling to themselves. It was an opportunity for outrageous mischief. I hoped it would be as revealing as a direct Who-are-you assignment, without dredging up that self-pitying gook.

"The results greatly pleased me. Everyone had enjoyed doing it. I was a little alarmed at the degree of malice and condescension that strangers greet each other with, but for me the best written pieces were those which genuinely allowed the malice to flow. Some examples:

His name should be Flash. But it's probably Dennis or Christopher. At 1 he could walk, but he never did, he only runs. At 2 he could talk, fast. He sped through school and walked away from Yale full of ideas and inspiration. Our man Flash is a contributor and a joiner and a husband and a father. He has two little girls Jessica and Mindy and they already know Mozart when they hear him. At night he goes home from some creative-type, business-type job and has wine with dinner. Life is pleasant and there's so much to be done. Nihilism was discarded with his frivolous college days.

Flash dies, runs himself out. It's been a rich, rewarding life with all the fringe benefits of some education and some

bit of affluence. There have been flights into adolescent romanticism with a few affairs. But marriage is an institution he joined.

On the tombstone reads "Here lies a happy man. He lived quickly but he lived well."

Lisa Feldman

### LENA

Lena, at the age of 20, moved to New York. She was fed up of Ann Arbor, Michigan and her parents who played the social game. She was never close with her brother who was a serious architectural student. She realized that having to worry what caviar the 1st V.P. of Magnavox prefers at dinner parties was not her bag.

So when Mitchell a medical student turned social worker asked her to go to New York with him she accepted.

She had no great plans of what she would do in New York, but she liked the idea of being with Mitchell, who could inspire her to do things she would never think of doing in Ann Arbor. She always wanted to dance. But when she thought of going to Northwestern U. which has a very fine dance department, her father was dead set against it. He always said to her, "Dancers were just a bunch of bums."

Mitchell quietly prodded her to do what she really wanted to do. He wanted her to be happy. She enrolled in the New School and took two dance courses. She worked odd hours in a coffee shop in the Village to pay for her courses. Meanwhile, Mitchell got himself a job with the recreation department.

After a while, Lena became very interested in dance and she began to lose interest in Mitchell. Lena became quite enamored of her dance instructor, Paul.

Soon after, Lena parted with Mitchell, and moved in with Paul near Columbia. She finished her dance semester and decided that she would take some urban education courses to further her knowledge, because Paul insisted that dance was not enough for her intellect.

Peter Berman

\* \* \* \*

(February 16) "I began talking, nervously aware of the tape machine, explaining the different approaches to teaching children how to write: direct observation, memory reporting and fantasy. I used Elwyn Richardson, Aston-Warner and Koch as the representatives of each approach. People started taking notes; eyes drooped; I realized that most of my students had never tried to teach children how to write, so that the discussion was becoming a monologue. I alone had any experience in the field. Again it seemed that the students wanted to write, or play word games, not to worry about their classrooms. Later Trudy said to me: I keep thinking of them as children, and although it seemed patronizing I knew what she meant: they wanted to do, express themselves, Write, yet they weren't particularly interested in literature, or artists' egos. A golden opportunity?

"I dropped the discussion on method. I asked them to close their eyes and had each smell a box of sandalwood incense and write down their associations with the smell. Places it reminded them of, people, feelings, memories. They set happily to work. John wrote:

Walking past Kerby's drug store at lunch time in grammar school.—White shirts, blue pants, blue ties. Mr. Kerby who went to jail for illegal selling of drugs.—A store window full of soaps, perfumes and cosmetics and the milkwhite bottles of Old Spice aftershave stuff.

Marian wrote:

La Paz / smell of street woman  
windy walks big holes chalk on walls  
2¢ flowers  
prickly thorns on feet milkweeds  
peonies—large pink exciting

Bloomington counter—squirt on  
all the perfume while saleslady isn't looking  
Yes— Do they see

42nd Street Library—writing a paper on  
the influence of smell on sex  
Numbers— big room. Writing about sex  
always gets an A.

"Each person read his paper aloud. I thought they showed more poetic ambition than in any other assignments. I asked them to spend the rest of the class just writing down their memories, floating from one memory to another, perhaps using the I Remember form of Joe Brainard or any other form they liked. It might be a good idea to include sensory details since smell had started them remembering so well and memory was linked to the senses. (We mentioned Proust.) It was the first bit of personal writing I'd asked of them.

I remember the clinging sounds of my father's  
motorman's tools as he placed them under  
the stove every morning when he came in  
from work.

I remember the painful feeling of getting up  
every morning thinking of the endless  
hours of school for the day.

I remember the sick feeling of watching Ed  
Sullivan end his show on Sunday  
knowing that I had to go to bed and that  
when I woke up it would be Monday.

I remember getting the chills as the cross on  
the nun's rosary beads clanged against  
the iron siding on the desk.

I remember Sister Muriel Vincent who taught  
art and how nice she smelled.

I remember the tough guys in class—Daniel Margh, John Moakler, talking about clothes—peg pants, saddle-stitch—and not having the vaguest idea what they were, and at the same time thinking those guys were big shots.

I remember thinking that I would be a social outcast if I didn't go to a Catholic high school.

I remember the incredible fear and loneliness when the subway door closed at DeKalb Avenue and my mother was on the train and I was still on the station.

I remember the elated feeling of getting off at Coney Island and smelling the cotton candy and listening to the roll of the tornado—thinking heaven must be like Coney Island.

John Murray

No one belived me but when I lay down on my bed and looked at the wall, I saw a tarantula.

I'll never forget his true and beautiful eyes.

I hope I never forget the first time I was touched, really touched, and how warm it was.

May I be shot in the head if I forget about tenderness.

Grace Church lying against a midnight blue sky.

The first time I tasted passion fruit and thought it was so delicious because it was an aphrodisiac.

I remember the feeling of chocolate milk coming out of my nose since I was laughing so hard.

The ice felt warm it was so smooth.



I took the train out of New York and when I saw  
the grass in front of the Railroad  
Station it looked like velvet, then I  
lay down and it felt like velvet.

Touching down in Honolulu and feeling very good  
to be "home," in America, my land.

Smelling apple sauce in the house.

Seeing somebody reading Nausea on the subway,  
in French.

Playing with a baby that belonged to an old high  
school friend.

Greasy lipstick on my lips.

The woman next to me smelled so good I had to  
ask what perfume she had on. She  
was surprised but overjoyed that I  
liked it and told her.

A black man was beat up at the "3 guys from  
Brooklyn" fruit stand on 2nd Ave.  
for doing nothing wrong. Crying  
about him. And me.

I remember looking at the knife and being afraid  
I might use it.

Lisa

I remember the radio playing something like  
Helen Trent and my mother ironing. The  
kitchen was warm. Daddy was working  
with his hands—fixing something. I  
played near by. The evening passed.

I remember sitting on the kitchen table and  
Daddy brushing my hair—100 times.

I remember Greg coming to my house the first  
time. Wonder what he'll be like now I  
thought. Can hardly remember what he  
looks like.

I remember the walk in the park. He would drive all the way to my house for an hour's time together. The phone calls —when you couldn't get off—and the "wanting" after you were through.

I remember the nurse holding my baby and I remember thinking that she was the most beautiful baby I had ever seen.

I remember the holidays. Mommy still shopping on Christmas Eve, and the smell of fish being cleaned for supper. I remember the knocks on the door and people stopping by for drinks....

I remember those summer nights when all the kids came together and played Ring-o-Levio. And the Halloweens that we were allowed to stay out late. Water balloons being dropped. Laughs.

I remember mommy's face changing. I remember the last summer at the country house. "Next year," she said, "after I get better we'll worry about it then or we'll do it then. Next year we'll take the baby shopping downtown...." Next year....

R. Moglia

\* \* \* \*

(February 23) "I sat at the front of the room for a change, for the first time really accepting my role as the teacher or guide. I began by confessing that at last week's class I had been unhappy and actually would have liked to tell them that there was no point in going on and we should all hop off the bridge, but instead carried on about dull educational questions... and the writing they did last week was terrific, which led me to the conclusion that the teacher was no factor in the production of students' work! Lisa said I should have told them how I felt. Loren said he wasn't able to guess from my facial expression. In any case, I said today I was feeling wonderful and we could just relax and concentrate on poetry. We began by reading

Rosalie's, John's and Lisa's I Remember poems, and Richard's new out-of-class work. Something about Richard's poem led beautifully to the meat of the presentation; he had tried very hard to make it sound like a poem. I remarked that nine-tenths of the faults in poems come from authors trying to write Poetry. What is poetry? I asked. A few evasive answers and they turned to me for my opinion. I came out with something about images and feelings and perceptions filtered through condensed interesting language, but I wasn't satisfied. Then I took a deep breath and told them my own private idea of poetry, which I had never told a class before. I said...Poetry is a meditation. It's close to sleep. It's like that moment before you fall asleep when you get that little jab between the eyes... that moment when all the places and faces and ideas you've been absorbing float up to the surface one by one. The poet learns to record the path of his thought, to slow it down... he watches inner environment pictures in the TV screen in his stomach. There was a surrealist poet named Robert Desnos, I said, who used to hang a sign outside his door whenever he slept: Quiet. Poet at Work. Poetry is like hypnotic suggestion. Opening yourself to the voices within. Like the Christian mystics or the Zen mystics. Poetry is a gift from God! I've written many poems, I said, and published many poems, and I know the difference between the poems that came to me like a religious experience and the poems that I worked on and forced.

"To put it another way, I asked them if they knew Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, and the somnambulist. I acted out for them Conrad Veidt creeping along the wall and the dark shadows, crossing the bridge, never falling in the water though... because he saw what was out there, but through the grid of his dreams. And that's what a poet is.

"I had promised them I'd read them part of Walt Whitman's 'The Sleepers' and it had completely slipped my mind. Someone remembered—the poem! I read a few pages... just enough to show the elegiac sleepy rhythms and to put everyone in a reflective mood. I have no idea what effect it had. Then I asked them to write to the music I was going to play—any associations that the music raised in them, be aware of the movements of their minds. I put on Bill Evans' 'My Man's Gone Now', the saddest music in the world. Then I put on Alban Berg's 'Three Pieces for Orchestra', the most anxious music in the world.

## WRITING TO MUSIC

Jimmy Armstrong's Saloon—with a singer from Miles  
Davis—

I never really got to know him  
The beach at Coney Island is white if you want it to be  
I hope work won't be a drag tonight  
Lisa is smoking what's left of my cigarette and there  
is a whole tin full of chips  
Some more wine would be refreshing  
I somehow feel as though I'm tripping—feels good.  
Phillip's sitting and I'm writing for a while  
I've become the poet but I still feel like Richard  
Somehow that seems funny and right  
Dennis is my friend  
He's sad lately but I have no happiness to give him  
Maybe if I let my pencil move and not help it  
I can pick up the vibrations of all the other  
pencils in the room  
So lonesome friend!

My brother spent a year in Vietnam and I spent a life-  
time at war with my life. It seemed like a  
melodrama with music as thick as on Phillip's  
record.

Pageantry ritual

Stephen is a young man from Ireland who I always knew  
was a priest.

Today I was walking down the hall and I saw him saying  
a mass in ceremonial robes.

He told me God lived there and I told him God lived in  
me.

I somehow drift back to the beach, only this beach  
seems whiter than Coney Island.

It seems desolate and full of rough rocks.

It is a beach I sometimes visit, yet have never seen.

Somewhat like the Cloisters, and Ad Rhinehart.

Driving through a wheat field—shiny car—new tires

Lots of money for gas—like a shiny yellow school bus  
my friend Tom lives in.

Dora Murand has a cat and two roommates. The cat no  
longer lives there, but I feel I always will.

Pour a carafe of wine and smack it on the white sand.

Say goodbye to Virginia and Brooklyn and Vermont

A frozen lake covered with white hard show.

Try to carve a peace sign through the snow, and the

Moon picks up the gleam of the ice.

It's cold but I'm warm.

Richard D'Arcy

"I gave them their homework assignment: to write a poem of hypnotic suggestions, telling the reader to do something in each line. Then the class ended.

## HYPNOSIS

You're resting on top of a gigantic  
marshmellow.  
Sink into the softness. Move with it.  
It's raining pink lemonade.  
Your mellow float bounces through  
the rapids and lemonade falls.  
Open your mouth. Open your eyes.  
Step off on the beach of sugar. Lie  
in it,  
Bury yourself. Roll down the hills.  
Drag yourself through honey swamps.  
Cover your body with molasses.  
Bathe in smooth bubbly milk.  
Stretch out on the hostess twinkee.  
Burrow through the layers.  
Don't stop until you reach the oasis.  
Then let yourself go, run, jump,  
into the pistachio ice cream.

Lisa

\* \* \* \*

(March 2) "I had already prepared for them several poems in foreign languages to mistranslate and lost no time in getting to it. I explained minimally the idea behind mistranslations, to have the sounds suggest a word in English and to write your own poem working with this basic raw material. Then I went round the table to see if everyone understood. I encouraged them to try to translate a poem in a language which they didn't understand. The results were pretty terrific. Maybe miraculous. Here is a poem by Holderlin:

## HALFTE DES LEBENS

Mit gelben Birnen hanget  
Und voll mit wilden Rosen  
Das Land in den See,  
Ihr holden Schwane,  
Und trunken von Küssen  
Tunkt ihr das Haupt  
Ins heilgnuchterne Wasser.

Weh mir, wo nehm' ich, wenn  
Es Winter ist, die Blumen und wo  
Der Sonnenschein  
Und Schatten der Erde?  
Die Mauern stehn  
Sprachlos und kalt, im Winde  
Klirren die Fahnen.

**Here is Peter's version of it:**

Bernie, don't hang me up.  
She's a wild doll named Rose  
She's from Fort Lee.  
G'wan hold her  
She's cute when drunk  
Thank her  
Wasser gave her to me

Wow Wow  
It's winter but with her it's warm  
Hi ya Sunshine  
What's your name?  
It's morning you say  
Look like it's raining  
outside but I'm  
not going home  
just yet

**I love the Americanisms in that! The same poem translated by John:**

My heart burns heavy  
As I behold this wild rose  
In the land and the sea  
I hold always  
The truths of von Kussen  
and the dreams of Haupt  
in the spirit of Wasser.

Where am I? What now? What next?  
It is winter. Die, Blumen, in the  
womb of Sonnenschein.  
The earth is shattering,  
Dying steadily,  
Breaking in pieces, the Wind  
carries it down.

And he knows no German! John's translation put the lie to the idea (expressed by Marian) that this assignment encouraged everyone to be ridiculous and nonsensical....I love the way John uses so solemnly certain words in German he can't translate as names... The truths of von Kussen/and the dreams of Haupt/in the spirit of Wasser...The ending, if excessively romantic, is still the best poetry and very close to Holderlin's spirit.

"Rosalie also wrote a serious poem, a two-liner from the Cendrars original which she was shy about reading:

Jesus laid down  
In my solitude I am forced to remember.

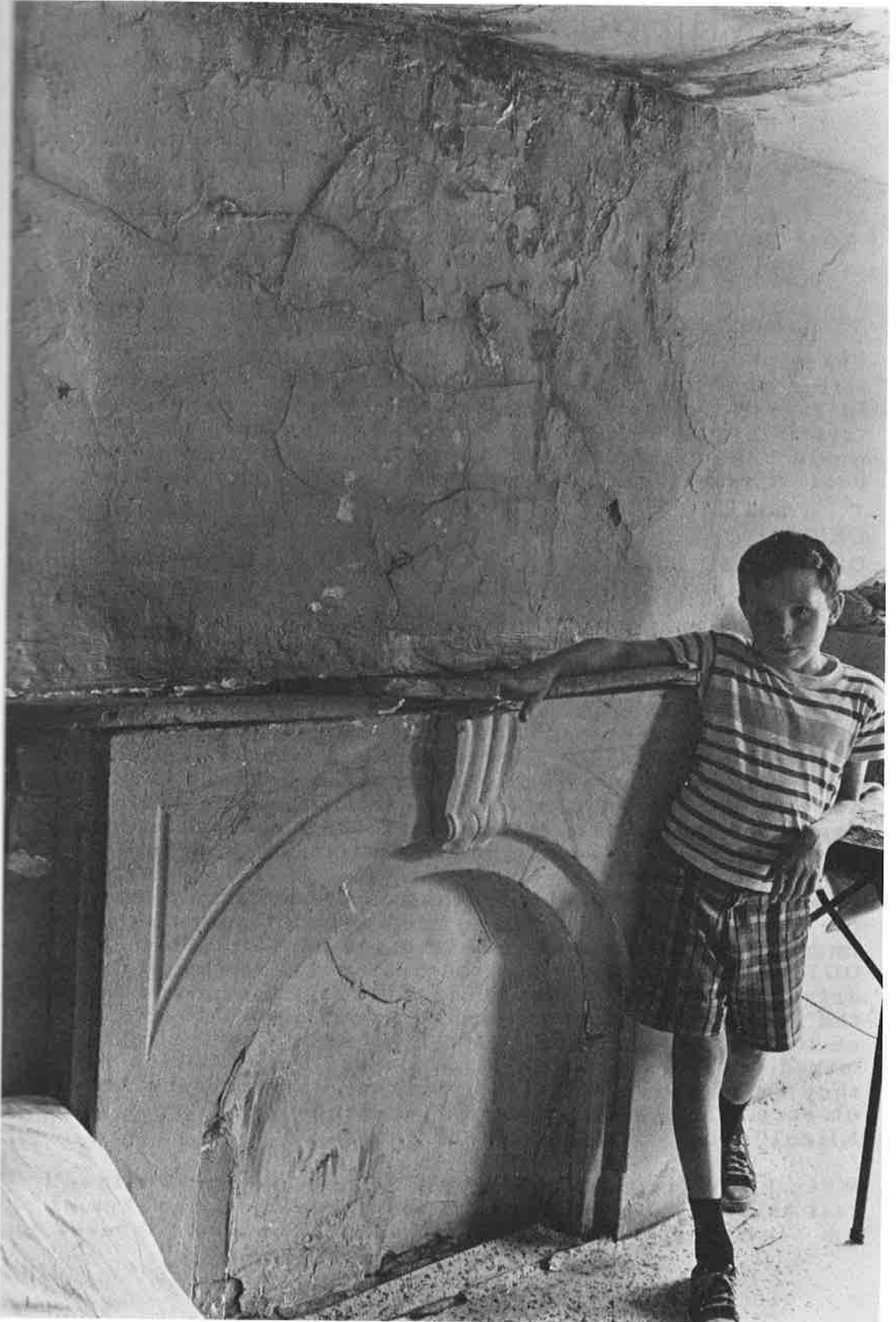
"The funniest zaniest poem was Sister Claudia's, which the class applauded when she read it. Stupidly I forgot to collect it from her before she left, but I remember that her riffs off Rimbaud included things like green chow mein and catch a choo-choo for "Caoutchoucs." She was bubbling over with success.

"When I told Loren I liked his last three lines:

black thoughts	Noir laideron
coupled with mandates	Tu couperais mandoline
from the front	Au fil du front.

he told me gloweringly that it referred to his not wanting to do the assignment but submitting anyway. The reading spilled over to 6:05 when the next class's instructor knocked on the door to get us out. Most of us repaired next door where we discussed the imminent end of the seminar and what we could do to forestall it.

# CONTRIBUTIONS





# The Things They Talked About

## Lit Up

FROM BETTY KLINE - HAYWARD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL  
SPRINGFIELD, OHIO

Thank you for your nice letter and for the latest Newsletter of Teachers and Writers Collaborative. I love it. In fact if I didn't know there were people—out there—trying to make the schools more exciting and creative, I would be about ready to give up. I am convinced (after a year of teaching) that a want ad for a teacher would read —"WANTED: ADULT WITH AS LITTLE IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY AS POSSIBLE. MUST BELIEVE IN LAW AND ORDER AND MUST AGREE TO YELL FOR THE PRINCIPAL AT THE FIRST SIGN OF NON-CONFORMITY."

I am aged 52, married to an architect, have six children, and one and a half grandchildren. I have been teaching at Hayward Junior High in Springfield all year.

My seventh graders are the kids who are not conforming to the classroom, for one reason or another. I work with them in small groups outside the classroom and try to stay away from classroom procedure as much as possible. I have been using field trips, plays and monologues, music, art, discussion, reading, and creative writing.

I think the field trips have been the greatest joy for both the kids and me. They have been unambitious trips in the immediate area, but they have given us a chance to GET OUT and to relate to each other as people to people. As I drive along with my little VW packed with six kids (one in the hole behind the back seat) the questions hit like bullets on the back of my head: "Mrs. Kline, do you believe in mixed marriage? Mrs. Kline, do you hit your kids when they cuss? Mrs. Kline, do you and your husband play out on each other? Are you sure you know what I mean, Mrs. Kline?"

When I have returned each to his home and me to mine, I fall asleep in complete exhaustion, but when I awaken, I am convinced that a Field Trip School, on a bus forever on

the move, is the real answer to education. The rest of the world may be against bussing. I'm all for it.

Of course my real love is creative writing, and the field trips lead to IT because they (hopefully) fan the processes of observation and awareness which must precede the creation. On a recent field trip to John Bryan State Park in Yellow Springs, we shared our sack lunches at a picnic table while Antioch couples "studied" each other on the grass. When we finished eating, my boys discovered a field trip of girls and followed them up a wooded hill. As I sat at the picnic table watching them, they walked across the top of the hill, right along the line of the horizon. When they returned to the picnic table, I asked them if they knew what a horizon was and pointed to the place I had seen them walking. Jeff asked if they had been silhouettes, and so—at our next class—I asked them: "How does a silhouette feel when it is walking across the horizon?" They answered with the enclosed and then went to the board and drew themselves walking across the horizon with the picnic table below.

Most of my kids are poor at spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. I figure they have had plenty of time to learn these things, and will have plenty of time more. I will leave that part of it to someone else to worry about, and I'm not even sure, in these days of tape recorders, etc., that it is very important. So—as a former secretary, I have put myself at their disposal with my notebook ready for dictation at all times. I take down their words in shorthand, transcribe my notes at home, and return the next day with their words typed and signed with their names. They read their own creation to the rest of the class with little difficulty and high motivation. And I have even taught them a little shorthand and typing!

We have followed this pattern with many different themes. One example (enclosed) was on "Reincarnation." We were reading poetry from a great book of poems, and I had not realized that this particular poem would set off an explosion. But it caught their imagination, and one of them said what he would like to be if he had a new life, and pretty soon they were all talking at once. So I said, "Whoa, one at a time," and asked each one what he would like to be re-born as. Their efforts are enclosed.

With "X-Ray," I just gave them the word, and they took it from there.

HOW DOES A SILHOUETTE FEEL  
WHEN IT IS WALKING ACROSS THE HORIZON?

Following the path that was  
On the hill  
All I was thinking about  
How rough the road is  
And my cub scout master  
Told us about wagon trains  
How can they ride those  
Wagon trains  
All the way to the top?  
I don't see how they could  
Because it's so bumpy  
And everything  
I just thought I was on  
A high mountain  
Chasing those girls  
What if we fell off  
That hill  
We would never stop  
I didn't feel nothing  
I was just walking  
On top there  
And it look like  
We was going  
To fall off or something  
Plus it was scarey  
Like I was going down  
Because the mountain  
Was bumpy  
And it was hard  
Climbing up there

It seems like  
If you go a long way  
You will go straight  
To the end  
And fall off.

William Davenport  
Deer Gray  
Ralph Gilmer  
James Bibbs  
Jeff Jackson  
Paul Smith

## GLOBE TROTTER

I'm a Harlem Globe Trotter.  
My name is Showboat.  
I hit thirty-eight points every game.  
I dribble down the court,  
I pass it to Curly O'Neal,  
Curly shoots - and it's good!

They take the ball out  
and come down the court  
And Goose Taylor takes the ball.  
He dribbles down the court  
And shoots for the basket.  
Curly shoots half-court  
And hits.

They come back down the court.  
Meadowlark steals the ball.  
He shoots and hits another  
Two points.  
They are coming down when  
Meadowlark fouls him.  
So the referee calls the foul.  
When the man tries to shoot  
The ball  
Meadowlark jumps in front of him  
And the referee says  
"You can't do that!"

The Globe Trotters win eighty to nothing.  
The other team walks out  
All sad.

Mario Avery

## PIRATE HISTORY

I want to be a pirate  
And find a treasure  
Of gold doubloons  
And pieces of eight

And one day  
I hope to capture  
A ship  
And take all the men  
Aboard  
To make them into  
My slaves

And I hope  
To make  
History  
One day.

Jeff Jackson

## FROG MAN

I want to be a frog man  
And get in a fight with  
A shark  
I'm going to be a  
Famous scuba diver  
And open the hatch  
Of Apollo Sixteen.

Deer Gray

## THE RICH PET

I'd rather be a pet  
Of a rich person  
Because they would be  
Eating steaks  
And giving me steaks  
While the other pets  
Ate Gravy Train.

William Davenport

## THE BAKER

I would like to be a baker  
And bake stuff  
Like Doughnuts with jelly  
(I like lumpy doughnuts)  
I'd make a giant cake  
That big  
I'd sell the ones I burn

Joseph Peacock

## THE X-RAY

What do X-rays make me think of?  
X-rays make me think of shots.  
X-rays! Shots?  
They don't make me think of no shots.  
See what's wrong with you or something.  
Makes me think of the doctor.  
The doctor X-rays my bones.  
You can't see your heart in an X-ray.  
Can you?  
No.

(cont'd)

(The X-Ray, cont'd)

I never want to go to the doctor.  
He make me sit.  
And I don't get out  
Till three or four o'clock.  
My cousin went at ten thirty  
And didn't get out till two.  
You pay all that money  
And you already know  
What's wrong.  
He put you in the chair to wait  
And he in there watching T.V.  
That needle was that big -  
When she stuck it in me.  
They took three capsules of my blood  
(I was sorry to lose all that blood.  
It came out fast.)  
She said, "it don't hurt."  
And then she stuck me right here.  
They put you behind a screen  
And look through  
To see your bones.

Your heart isn't big enough  
To see.  
It's as big as a fist.  
Why is it as big as a fist?

Our teacher  
We called her Miss Freckleface  
Because she had freckles on  
Her face  
And she brought a pig's heart  
For science.

We went to a museum  
And saw a transparent woman.  
The things they talked about  
Lit up.

When we went to the fair  
We saw a little man.  
He said, "Can I help you?"  
But I was scared.  
I turned my head.

Dean, Robin, Gary,  
Gloria and Joseph

# Books for Non-Readers

LETTER FROM DAN LEVINE

TAMPA, FLORIDA

"... thanks to the preposterous system of grouping for reading, my class was disintegrated after eight weeks ...I was furious and hated to lose the kids who were assuming an identity and beginning a growth that was noticeable and gratifying to them as well as me...anyhow I do have them for a couple of hours....

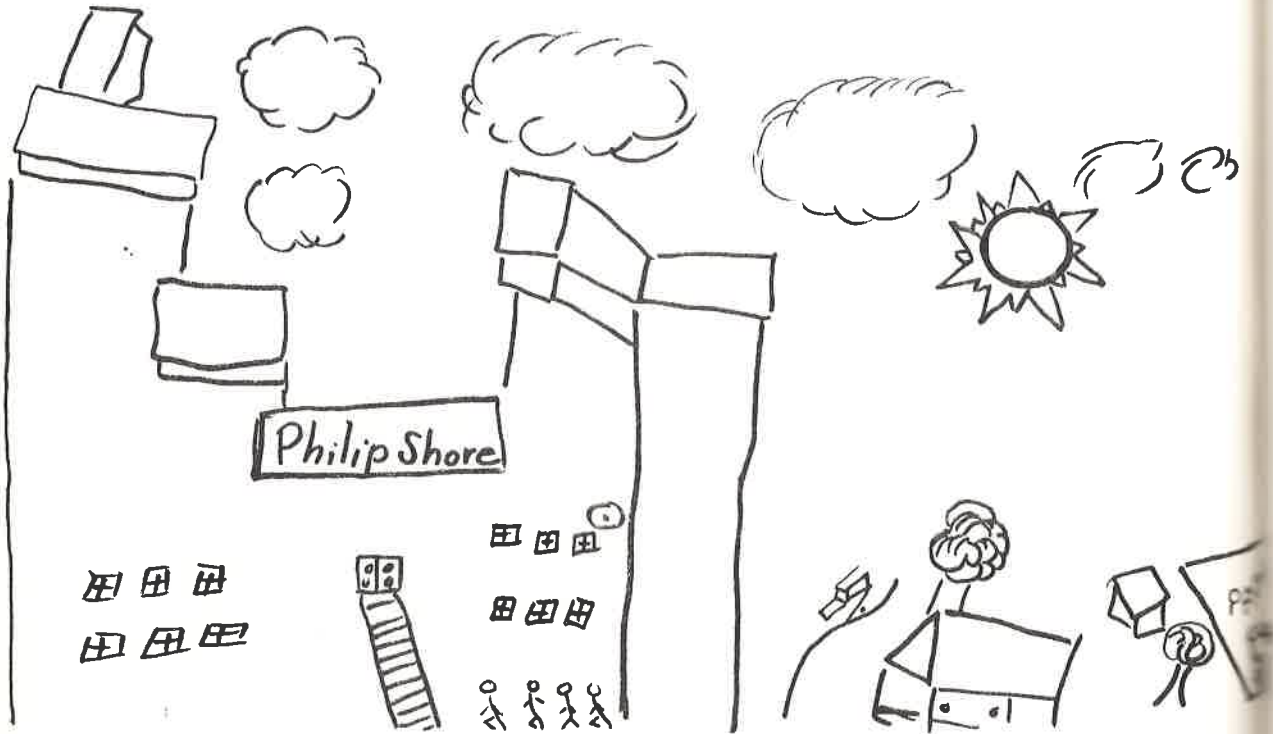
"I was lucky and got the non-readers...fifth and sixth graders who are not able to read...you know the picture....

"...the only sensible thing to do is to have them provide their own book...so we're writing one...we talk it over...dictate it to me and I put it on the board for them to copy...I contribute spelling and try to take advantage of such opportunities to teach word and letter sounds, etc. ...but they're really more pre-occupied with the story than with learning—so the chances are they will learn something...when I distributed the enclosure [see following pages] they each sat down as though they had lead in their tails and commenced to read what they had produced ...each mouthed the words aloud...but they did so eagerly and with great satisfaction...other kids in the school, and the teachers about whom they have written, know of the project and they feel kind of exclusive—my kids do, that is—about writing their own book...there's more to do... but I think it's a healthy start and we're able to get some involvement. One boy, in particular,—a non-reader and non-writer, but one who has been able to deliver some nice ideas orally—is beginning to come alive...it's exciting...and it's sad...I think it's too late to make any significant change...but they're having experiences they won't soon forget."



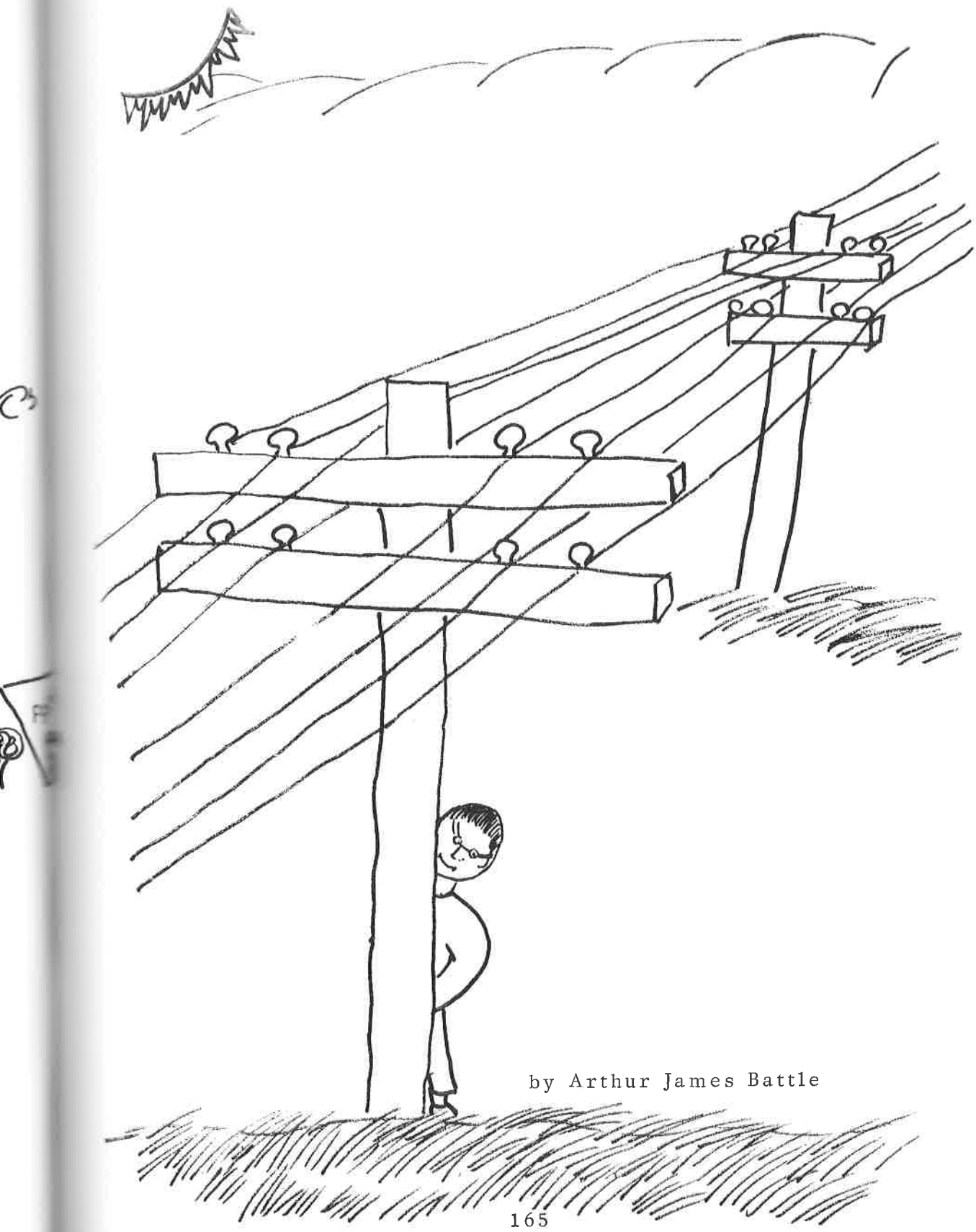
## OUR SCHOOL.

This is a story about Philip Shore School. It's in Tampa, Florida in an old section. It's all broken down. It looks like the old folks' home. It has broken windows and paint coming off the walls. The lunchroom is noisy and the food's good and the milk's sweet.



### THE PRINCIPAL OF OUR SCHOOL

Mr. J.V. Sheehy is the principal of our school. He is handsome. He is an old man. Mr. Sheehy always wear suits and black shoes. He is so skinny he could hide behind a telephone pole. He take children home when they get sick. He keeps the children from running in the hall. He stops kids from fighting. He fill out reports. He is a smart man.



by Arthur James Battle

## MISS LONG TEACHES SIXTH GRADE

She cute. She wear pretty clothes. She got long lovely hair. Her eyes are light gray and they shine like marbles. Her skin is soft like a marshmallow.

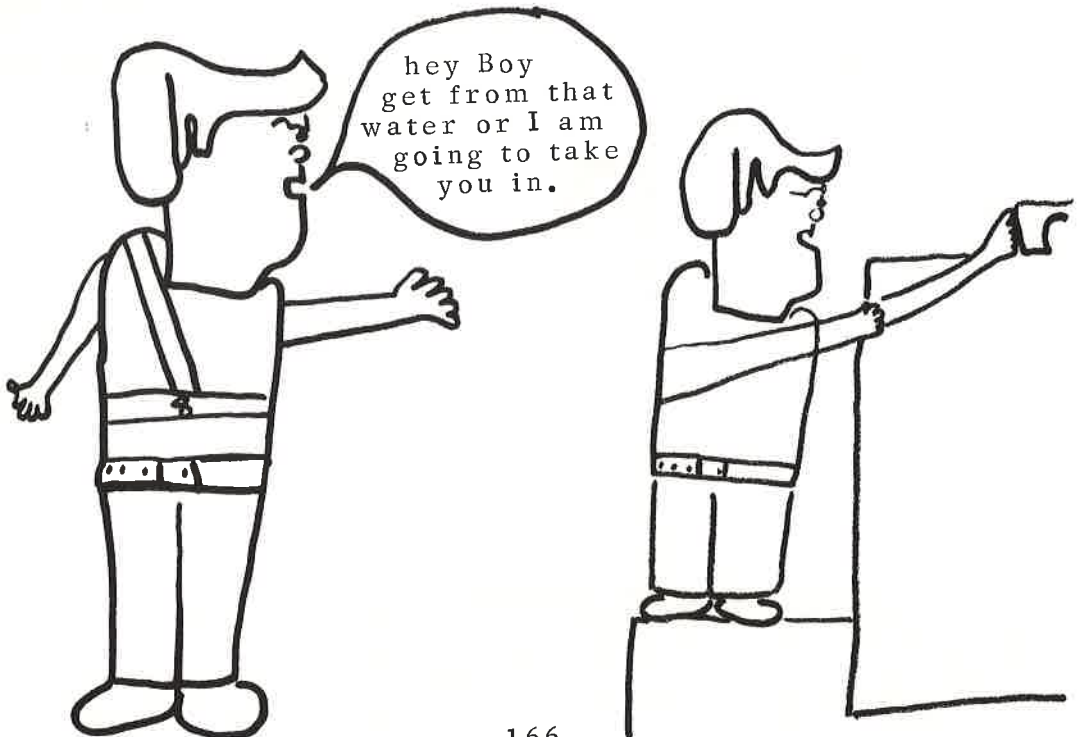
Miss Long smoke and we wish she would kick the habit and join the unhooked generation.

She teach her class good but they fight her and make her cry with her pretty gray eyes. They say dirty words to her and she get sad. The way they treat her is not necessary. They should treat her like a lady.

## THE MEAN MONITOR

They be showing off when they get the monitor belt. Once in a while some of the monitors try to boss us around.

We should not have monitor. We should have two German Shepherd. Or they should pick children who know how to behave and have self respect and pride.



# The Exotic Zoo

LETTER FROM ETTA PROSHANSKY

CLASS 3-106, P.S. 152, MANHATTAN

Thank you for sending me the Teacher/Writer Collaborative magazine. As you will notice by our work, it certainly acted as a wonderful inspiration for me.

The children love writing about their exotic zoo and it has involved work in science as well as reading comprehension.

I hope you enjoy the stories.

## THE STEGABAT

The Stegabab has a mouse-like face with wings on its ears and a stegasaurous body. It is black with a brownish body.

The Stegabab is found on the planet Bombodale. It lives in a blatch in the air.

The Stegabab obtains its food by walking around and knocking over its food with its tail.

The Stegabab eats people. It knocks them over with its tail, then juggles them and then it eats them.

The Stegabab reproduces by eating some rocks, waving its tail and spits out the rocks which turn into baby Stegababs.

The mother Stegabab takes care of its baby by feeding it canned people and also when there is danger it hides its baby in its mouth.

Jeffrie Hausman

## THE SLOBAT

The Slobat lives in the continent of Asia. It lives in the country of China. They mainly live in the city Mongol. They're friends with the Datopussunarm.

The Slobat has long, black wings. It has funny looking big feet and it talks. The colors of them are black, green, orange and blue.

They get their food from people's refrigerator and they drink people's blood. It eats like a slob.

The Slobat lives in a Hotel. It mainly lives in the basement or the top floor.

The Slobat has its babies in the hospital. It usually has 10 or 11 babies. It gets mommy and daddy nuts.

They get 100 spankings a day, so the babies leave mommy and daddy Slobat.

Alan Sheptinsky

## THE HAIRIDILLO

The Hairidillo lives in places under 80°F. It has to live under 50°F. or it will die. If it lives in 290' it will die. The Hairidillo eats ice. It is its favorite food. It also eats seals, but mostly ice. It eats with whales, which are like a fork.

They live by sleeping in furs which make it 300'. They need to sleep 80 hours and be awake 200 hours. It never rests.

They are born by tiny seeds of snow, in the North Pole.

They take care of their babies by making them have exercise and give them penucoated popcorn.

Robert Piotrowski

## THE STRIPED MANDRIL BAT

The Striped Mandril Bat is found in the eastern part of Evroux. It looks like a striped purple mouse with wings. It gets its food by going down to the beach and eating crabs. It eats with a fork or spoon that it keeps in its pocket wherever it goes. And the mommy Mandril Bat feeds the baby lots of crabs because she says it would give him muscles. And he will be healthy.

Lesli Birnbaum

## ARMVARKDRILLO

An Armvarkdrillo is found in the darkest part of Africa. They are carnivorous. They eat Mandavarks and a Mockingposum. He drinks water. He eats with a bone of a Jaguar. They live with their parents until they grow to 20 feet. They reproduce by laying hairy eggs. They take care of their baby by providing food, protecting their young from other animals. They look like a plated ardvark and a mandril. Their face has a pointy snout with the colors blue and purple. His middle is Indian red and his back is brown.

Matthew Soloman

## VERKMOTHRIL BAT

Verkmothdril Bat. It is found in Los Angles river. The Verkmothdril Bat is made of hair, cloth, feathers, and ice. It has striped eyes and green claws. It hangs over trees, bars, and it talks. They find their food in jungles, bushes, peanut shells, sea weed. And they eat the sea weed to get their food. The Verkmothdril has to eat the peanut shell to get the peanut. They have to fight their ways through the bushes and jungles. They live in an apartment building and they get room service. They are born in a egg and they come out in a bubble. They don't have to open their eyes and mouth in a year. The parents lick their babies and they lay on top of them.

Dana

# I'm Going to Build A School

FROM ROBERT CLANCY, ENGLISH TEACHER  
ARDSLEY HIGH SCHOOL, ARDSLEY, NEW YORK

## SANTA CLAWS

If that white mother-hubbard comes down my black  
chimney, dragging his playful bag  
If that red-suited fagot starts Ho-Ho-Hoing on my  
rooftop,  
If that old fat cracker creeps into my house  
If that antique reindeer-raper races across my lawn,  
If that old-time nigger-knocker fills my man's  
stocking  
If that haint who thinks he's a saint  
Come sled-flying across my home  
If that old Con-man comes on with his toyful jive  
If that overstuffed Gut-busting gangster  
Shows up tonight,  
  
He & me show gonna have a batteling  
Xmas and it show ain't gonna be  
White!

Cathy Coleman

I'm going to build a school—  
A high school—  
  for all high schoolers.  
I'm going to teach them the difference  
between being gauche  
  and declassé  
  and not.  
I'm going to teach them to be respectful  
  of themselves  
  and others.  
And when they're all through,  
I'm going to say,  
  "All right, you fuckers, what do you  
  think of the world now?"  
And they're going to like the world,  
  for a change.

Bob Fontaine

I awoke. Ice  
was everywhere.  
It sparkled on  
the trees. It had  
changed  
the world  
to glass.  
There were  
glass  
trees,  
glass  
fences,  
glass  
houses,  
even  
glass  
grass.  
All  
made  
of  
ice  
.

Billie Aul



C

A

D

### CREATIVE PIECE OF LITERATURE

This is a creative piece of literature. Fold this paper along imaginary line AB so that point C touches point D. Now you have a piece of paper that is folded in half so you can't read this side. Next, open the paper back up, and fold along imaginary lines AE and AF. Now fold again along AG and AH outside of the other folds. Then fold down along AI and AJ, and voila...you have a paper airplane. The paper airplane you have made has a one-flight warrantee... we will replace all defective parts for a slight fee, which includes labor.

E

F

G

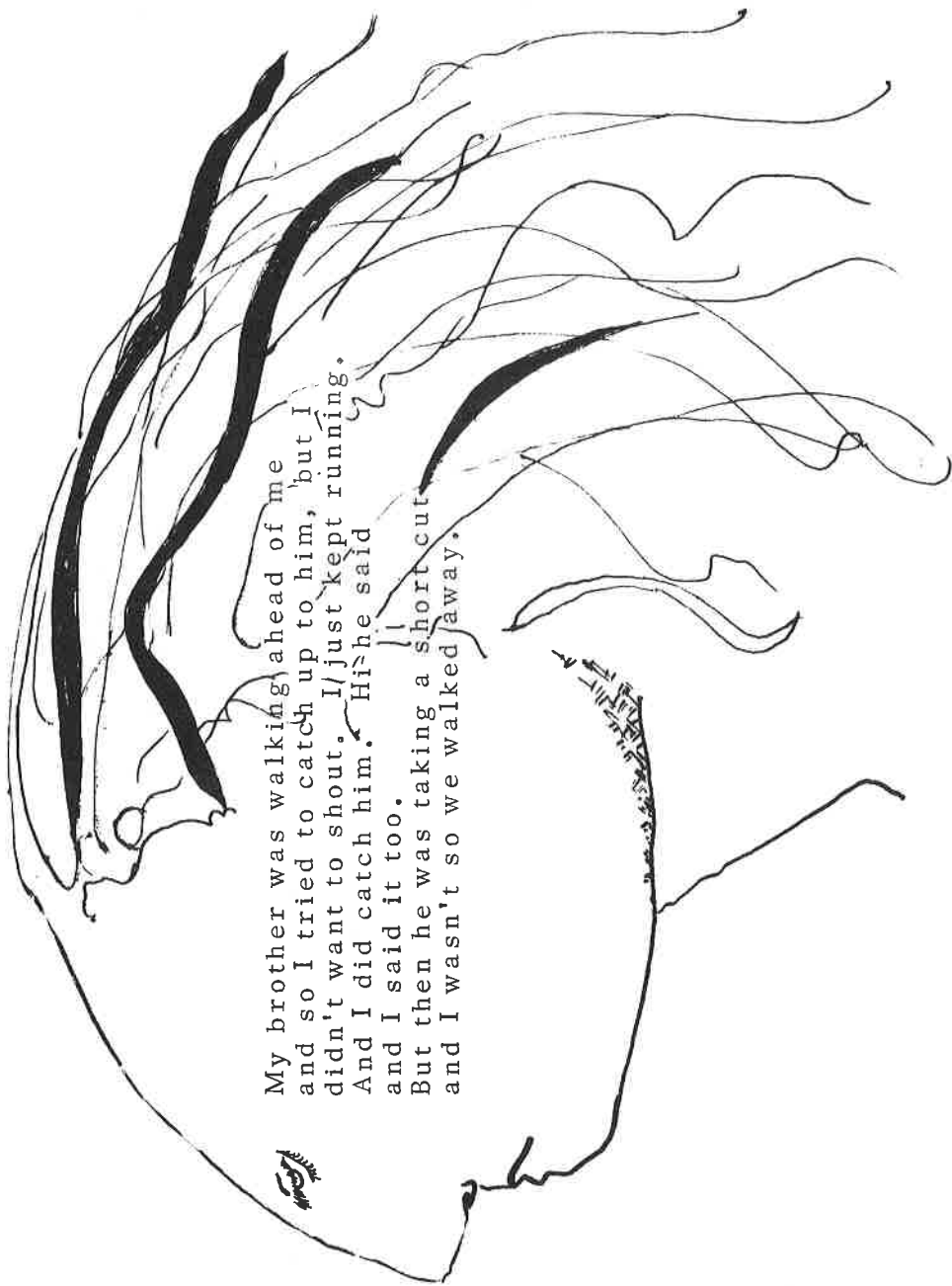
H

If you mess this up,  
forget it.

Janice Young

I

J



My brother was walking ahead of me  
and so I tried to catch up to him, but I  
didn't want to shout. I just kept running.  
And I did catch him. Hi he said  
and I said it too.  
But then he was taking a short cut  
and I wasn't so we walked away.

Linda Boearth

# Report From Adamstown

BY RICHARD O. CURTIS

Frederick County farm kids have every juice in them any other child of the Aquarian Age has. At age 11 they are contentious, lusty, ingratiating, sentient—everything all of us could be. At age 9 and 10, they are taking instructions.

I was struck with the naturally metaphorical style of the children's speech. It has a character all of its own—as if their style of life has allowed them the luxury of reflection. Their views are not particularly pantheistic nor do they tend to make gods of their chores. They are just inexplicably quiet about the most appropriate things.

They are also children who have had four or five years of "skill acquisition" and can resolutely tick off the answer to most any academic question an authority can ask. And with the peculiar genius of children, they manage to do their pain gracefully.

We had been playing with the idea of five of the most evocative words that we could recall, strung together in as many different ways as we could. It is fascinating to see how words can become poems in themselves when in concert with other seemingly dissonant words. We had been talking about how the metaphor seemed to leave more for the reader to say than did the simile and that in general, a poem is.....approximately.

Of course dreams are a fertile source of stuff for poetry. I asked the kids to take a series of events in their lives and combine them in the context of a dream, stressing the character of the events' order rather than the events themselves. They were then to take the fabric and clean it, "woodshed it, take the fat off its heart and bones and make it lean and looking for a listener."

They seemed particularly taken by the notion. As a result, I received a startling set of papers. With the exception of two poems which had been written the day before in the same context, these poems were all on one day.

One redline between Me and the  
beginning. For some pain, some  
light. I am high in dark, but  
I'll get out. Blue writing  
everywhere. A long line between.

Russle B.

Lost yesterday  
somewhere sunrise and  
sunset  
Three gold hours  
Each made with sixdiamond minutes.  
No reward is given

Gwen W.

Our heads hang over,  
a patch of clover,  
There is a two leafe,  
There is a four leafe,  
Right beside you.  
The two leafe needs help

Joe L.

As the magician looks  
Into his magic hat  
And makes a crowd of people  
On a table,  
The pilgrims land  
The taffy pulls  
A lady gets wet  
And Superman takes the coats?  
When the door of the I.R.S. closes  
All the smoke smells sweet  
The pollen goes back to the roses  
And no more thrashing the wheat.  
Darlene wears her hair down  
The blue-jay sings an air  
Santa wears a nightgown  
And the sun makes a square  
Earthquakes tremble  
Silence hushes  
Then colors glare bright.  
See how much you can get from  
a man with a stick?

Nanette C.

Everyone dies  
But then in a way  
You don't  
It's like  
Swimming in  
The sun.  
It may  
Never  
Quit.

Sammy D.

The freedom of running horses  
Across the desert sky  
With a melting sun  
Unfurled upon a tornado rain.

Vicki E.

In your mind  
Your brain Keeps on Climbing.  
Reaching out.  
Getting lost.

Travers D.

A farm needs weeds for ugly  
grass for pretty  
meadows for life,  
and  
A dirt road to  
lead us there.

Blue Dot



# If John Wayne Was My Grandmother

BY BARRY RADER - P.S. 76, QUEENS

In the 4 years that I have been teaching at P.S. 76 Q, I have spent many hours with my children working in the area of creative writing.

The kids I work with are heterogeneously grouped, and creative writing provides for the wide range of individual differences found in such a group. It gives the children the opportunity to use their imaginations by asking them to think about themselves, and about places, ideas, things, or people not actually present. It gives them the chance to develop the perhaps often intangible esthetic sense, along with increased awareness, enjoyment, and appreciation of their own work and that of their fellow classmates. With this in mind I have organized my classroom with creative writing as a focal point, an on-going process of getting the kids to express themselves in as many different ways as possible and as often as possible.

I've found that in the beginning of the year most children, when asked to write, say either that they can't think of anything to write or they would scratch out a couple of lines and say they were finished. They were either afraid to write (poor grammar, spelling, etc.), were lazy, sincerely didn't know how to go about thinking out a problem, or were up tight about writing down what they really wanted to say. I tried to set up a classroom where the atmosphere was one of total acceptance. The children came to know that I would accept all their contributions and that it wasn't a classroom where only my way of doing things was "right". When the kids were encouraged to participate in planning their writing experiences, and when their alternatives were recognized, they began to feel that their own ideas and feelings had worth.

A great deal of time was provided each day (about one hour) during which the children were required to do some writing. As the children began to feel more comfortable, I began to require a minimum length, usually one side of an 8 x 10 page, for each writing assignment. At first there were groans that every teacher is familiar with, but as the class began to write regularly, and began to enjoy sharing

their works, they learned that there were questions that they could ask themselves that might in certain situations produce longer pieces, and slowly they acquired the ability to write at length.

Several of my colleagues have argued, very justifiably, that what is important is quality, not quantity, but what I'm trying to do goes beyond this. I'm trying to show the children that they are capable of writing at length, expounding on ideas, elaborating in detail, organizing their thoughts, and successfully expressing their ideas, without fear of failure or "not being understood." The assignments I give (including one each night for homework) "condition" the kids to write. But I don't like to think that the children were conditioned in the clinical sense of the word. They have come to accept that my expectations are high and that they are all capable of pleasing me and each other if they just give it their best try.

My classroom assignments revolve around the use of the incomplete sentence technique. Over the years I have collected or conjured up some 500 topics which I have organized into various categories to give the children this continuous practice. The first 8 topics concern the kids themselves—e.g., When I was born..., When I first started to walk..., When I started school..., up to When I grow up.... When the assignments were completed and collected they were put together so that each child now has a personal autobiography. This, at the beginning of the year, gave each child a feeling of accomplishment, and a feeling of pride and continuity in their assignments. Following this introductory period, the "compositions" fall into 9 categories, in sequence, gradually bringing the kid's thoughts away from himself and his surrounding and toward an expansion of his thinking processes, hopefully resulting in an ability to project oneself into just about any time, condition, or circumstance.

Briefly, the 9 categories (with 3 examples of each) in order of progression are:

1. Giving the body something more than the natural state. Dreaming about what it would be like to be an extraordinary human:
  - a) If I were invisible...
  - b) If I had eyes in back of my head...
  - c) If I were 6 inches tall...
  
2. Being someone else—putting yourself into someone else's shoes:
  - a) If I were president...
  - b) If I were a criminal...
  - c) If I were a hippy...



3. Projecting oneself into an animate or natural object in the environment:
  - a) If I were a pigeon...
  - b) If I were an elephant...
  - c) If I were a cloud...
  
4. Projecting oneself into inanimate things in the environment:
  - a) If I were a sidewalk...
  - b) If I were a statue...
  - c) If I were a roof...
  
5. Trying to control the environment, or coping with a different one:
  - a) If I were lightning and thunder...
  - b) If it got to be 120'...
  - c) If I lived in the coldest place on earth...
  
6. Tales of Great Adventure:
  - a) When I got shipwrecked...
  - b) There I was, alone in the jungle...
  - c) There I was, tied to the railroad tracks...
  
7. A Little Twist for the Imagination:
  - a) When my friend told me he had murdered someone...
  - b) When I found out I was a hero...
  - c) If John Wayne was my grandmother...
  
8. Learning more about oneself—What would you do and how would you feel?
  - a) When my report card went home...
  - b) I wish I knew how to...
  - c) If I were going to die tomorrow...
  
9. After the children have passed through many examples from each of the above sequences, and have become skilled in projecting themselves into other beings, places, and situations, and have returned (in #8) to more serious self-examination, they can respond to completely open-ended sentences:
  - a) In my opinion...
  - b) People think I...
  - c) If...

I want the children to get their ideas down first without regard for spelling and grammar. These aspects of writing technique are given attention in individual conferences, working on each child's individual problems, after the child has said everything he wants to say. As a rule, the only things that were carefully proofread and rewritten were those pieces which were going to become part of books, or pieces which were going to be printed up and circulated grade-wide or home to parents.

With the burden of correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar lifted, many kids who have previously limited themselves to writing only short pieces, carefully choosing words they knew how to spell, have written much longer and more imaginative pieces.

#### BIRTH

When I was born it was in Jamaica Hospital, because that's where my mother was at the time.

When I was born I had long hair, I had no scars, I was the only girl in my family, and I was very fat.

I was happy to breathe the air and feel it for the first time.

I was born in a bed and it was very peaceful.

When I was born my mother had to go to the bathroom.

I was big when I was born, and the doctor hit me on the butt, and I started to cry a lot, my mother ended up with a headache and started to scream at me, and I knew right then that it was going to be a bad life.

#### TROUBLE

I knew I was in trouble when my mother put me in school, when I played hookie last year, and when I hit my teacher.

I knew I was in trouble when I lost \$10.00, when I burned my pants and when I brought that letter home from school that said I got left back.

I was in trouble when my baby brother fell out of the carriage, when I belted my sister in the mouth, gave my brother a big eye, and kicked all the boys in the class up their ass!!!

I knew I was in trouble because I did not know what I was doing, when the law found out what I did, then when I went home and saw the look on my father's face, and when my father took his belt off!!

## FEAR

I'm afraid of my father -

I'm afraid that when my brother turns 18,  
they'll still be a war and he'll have to  
go.

I know he's afraid to kill

And even more afraid to die.

I get afraid when I have to look at my school,  
and my teacher, and at the math test,  
that I know I failed and that I might get  
left back.

I'm afraid to stay in the house by myself.

I'm afraid when my mother gets mad at me -

I'm afraid...

## CHRISTMAS

Christmas is a very special holiday,  
A joyful day,  
It's my good day, my best holiday of  
all.

You get lots of toys and a week off  
from school.

Christmas is my birthday—

It's when I hang up my dirty socks  
and get them filled with goodies.

Christmas is when Jesus was born—

Last Christmas my brother got shot  
in Viet Nam—Some present!!!

## SOMETIMES

Sometimes I wish everyone would leave me alone.

Sometimes I wish I could be there again, back in the  
country that I came from.

Sometimes I think about my family, and about the kind of  
family I'll have. About the kind of father I'll be.

Sometimes when I'm lonely, I feel like crying—

Sometimes I wish that I could not think about some things.

# On Not Correcting Children's Writing

Selma Bokar is one of the teachers in a workshop on children's writing we've been conducting at P.S. 76 in Queens.

From our workshop contacts with her and from visits to her classroom, we found her extraordinarily articulate about her philosophy of refusing to teach spelling, grammar, and punctuation. So we invited her to discuss her ideas and how she came to them for the Newsletter. Dissenters may find it all too easy to dismiss her conclusions, but if we had the space to do a "before" and "after" job on the improvement in her students' work over the year you'd be as impressed as we were.

MRS. BOKAR:

I always had mixed feelings about whether or not correcting children's creative writing was the right thing to do.

My instincts told me it wasn't, but I was attacked by all of my colleagues whenever I even dared to mention what my inclinations were. Even the more forward-looking among them seemed shocked when I was courageous enough to say, "Never—not even for a purpose—not even on a separate piece of paper—not even using the errors in the children's writing as the basis for skills lessons in correct usage—never."

Most of the time I never even got to say why—I seldom told anyone my reasons were that I didn't think children learned to use language by having their mistakes corrected, or by having skills lessons prepared which are based on their mistakes; that I thought that kids were stifled when they had to submit their work for expert evaluation all the time.

That is—I didn't really have the courage of my convictions until it happened to me!

Until last year I was always supremely confident about my spelling ability and my unfailing instinct for grammatical correctness—but then Miss Smith became my student teacher.

For about one hour I was delighted to have her. She was an older woman whose children were the same age as mine and whose interests seemed the same as mine. She explained that she worked 4 evenings a week as a proofreader for TIME.

That didn't mean anything until the first time I wrote on the board while she stood in the back of the room.

I found myself looking at her for verification—Is that right? Is that the way you spell that word. And then I started making mistakes—and then I started making excuses for not writing on the board—because I didn't want her to see what I wrote—because I didn't know when to use semi-colons—or how to punctuate compound complex sentences—or whatever.

And then—it dawned on me! This is what happened to kids. They were just as good at finding excuses as I was—or doing the barest minimum—as I found myself doing.

That's when I knew what I believed—and when I knew I would never do that again to kids—never—not even for a purpose—not even on a separate sheet of paper—not even using the errors in the children's writing as the basis for skills lessons in correct usage—Never. You see—I still don't know how to use a semi-colon or punctuate compound, complex sentences.

# ANTHOLOGY

## LITTLE SWALLOW'S SORROW

Little swallow was flying by the stream when he spied the most graceful reed, he fell in love with her at once. She made a graceful curtsy and swayed with the wind gracefully.

He asked her will you come with me down south for it is cold here and you will freeze to death and I am deeply in love with you. But she refused. It was getting chilly, he thought, and I must have that reed for I'm deeply in love for her.

One day he couldn't stand it anymore so he plucked her out and flew over the river, but he noticed she didn't curtsy as gracefully as before. When he reached the south pole he noticed she was dead. He was so sad he cried and the tears fell on her and made silver ripples.

Suddenly he noticed something funny looking like worms ...little did he know they were the roots of the plant. So he sat on a man's shoulder thinking he was a statue. The man saw the reed and said this can be planted, but the sparrow wanted to plant it so he pulled it from the man's hand and it broke.

He was sadder than ever. So he dropped her into the stream and flew with tears in his eyes. Everything was blurry. He bumped into a bunch of reeds and where the graceful reed once stood was a graceful flower which attracted the little sparrow.

Karen Elliott  
Age 9  
Bronx, New York

## LILY GRUMP

Lily had always been a grump. She was always in a bad mood. Lily called her mother. What do you want? it's bad enough I have homework to do. Go for a walk Lily Grump. Lily Grump, she muttered. So she went for a walk in the forest. Soon it got dark and she lost her way. So she wandered around.

Soon she spied a cottage. So she went inside and found two people. They were very kind to her and paid no attention to her bad moods, but she wanted them to. And she was mad. I must get rid of them.

Next day she said to them go get some pretty flowers so I could put them in a vase. So they left. I'm glad those nuts left. So she gathered blackberries and made a pie for them. What a nice surprise, they said, and ate the pie. Within the hour they died. She dragged them out of the house, and into the river.

At night she started growing hair like an animal. Next morning she found out and her mood became nastier. Then it started to rain and there was a knock at the door. Without waiting for an answer all the animals of the forest came in. What do you want? demanded Lily Grump. We want to stay here they said. You may stay here under one condition—be my slaves. As a matter of fact I captured you so you're my slaves. Lily Grump made bears soldiers and the rest slaves.

One day a fawn started crying. What's the matter little fawn, said Lily Grump. My parents aren't slaves for you, they live in the forest. Please let me go home. I'm homesick. All right, just you. Soon Lily Grump lost the hair on her face. I'm almost human again, she said. Soon everybody pleaded to go home so she let them go one by one. She lost the rest of her hair. I'm human, all human. She ran all the way home.

Mama, Lily Grump's home. There's nothing better than my Lily Grump, said Mama.

The End

Karen Elliott  
Age 9  
Bronx, New York

## THE PEACEABLE WORLD

The peaceable world is full of love  
Have you ever seen such incredible people?  
This world is based on hopes and dreams  
There are juicy red cranberry trees, and lots  
    of fluffy, little puppies  
This world is yours if you've got imagination

But you say you have no imagination?  
Well, then all you need is love,  
And a couple of little puppies.  
But let's get back to people  
And the cranberry  
Trees and their crazy dreams.

These people have weird dreams.  
In fact, they have such imagination  
That their noses turn as red as a cranberry.  
But through it all they still have love  
Yes, as we've said before, these are incredible  
    people  
But then again, so are their puppies.

Lisa Methfessel  
Eighth Grade  
I.S.70, Manhattan

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF AWARD

I won an Award  
but I don't know why  
I feel I should not accept the award  
I feel there are more kids in my class who should  
take the award because they know something  
that I don't.

If they gave me an award for lovin,  
i would take it.

for saving a life.

But not for something that doesn't mean nothing.  
Like being smart.

Luis Ortiz  
c. Expand 1970  
Voice of the Children  
Brooklyn, New York



Down the hill  
to the bottom, on our sleds  
faster  
faster  
and faster yet  
We are coming to the bottom  
My sister is behind me  
on her sled  
all along  
I am all along  
Down the hill  
the grass shoots by

At the bottom  
I see it, I see it, I see it  
it is there!  
The red water  
The bad water  
The water that kills

Down the hill  
I must avoid it  
I must  
I look back  
To see my sister  
She is gone!  
In the hole  
At the top of the hill  
She fell/ she is gone  
I look ahead  
Oh no, please no  
I cannot stop  
I can't  
I cannot stop  
The red water  
I am being drawn closer  
and closer  
and closer

Over,  
I made it  
But Heidi is gone  
I go up the hill, to the hole,  
to Heidi, I see Heidi,  
"Heidi," I yell, stop them, stop them,  
the animals, stop them!  
The animals are so small,  
so very very small, an inch tall,  
millions of them, eating her up.  
My dear Heidi! —And I wake up

Kate  
Sixth Grade  
P.S. 165, Manhattan

## THE GUTTER

When it rains  
The clean water falls  
It falls to the gutter  
It flows in the gutter and then  
no longer is it clean water  
Over the garbage  
it looks like fun  
if I were small, very very small  
I could flow down the gutter too  
On a rainy day  
But what would happen  
if it were to stop,  
the rain were to stop,  
I would not move  
And at the end,  
at the end of the long block  
I would go down, go down,  
down the sewer to the river  
I do not want to go to the river  
If I were smaller still  
I would go up with the water  
and then rain down  
I would fall  
I would die  
I do not want to die

Kate Van Bellingham  
Sixth Grade  
P.S. 165, Manhattan

Hey Mr. Cohn  
Don't feel bad.  
Today's your birthday  
Now you should be glad.  
We brought everything we could  
everything we had.  
Cheer up Mr. Cohn  
You should be glad.

Francine Norse  
Sixth Grade  
P.S. 165, Manhattan

## TREES

Trees are giants  
wishing for their food.....sunshine  
in summer they are surrounded  
by their children, ...the leaves,  
who were born in spring.  
By summer they will be  
grown and will leave their  
parents for families of  
their own. Trees are sad in  
winter, because they are  
lonely, in summer with their  
children they are happy  
and joyous.

James Callan  
Sixth Grade  
P.S.20, Manhattan

My love, my child, my land

Mi isla, mis Cuba, my island, **my**  
home  
my baby, my mother  
my paradise, my hell  
Oh Cuba, oh Castro  
Oh Why?  
You did this to us  
You killed our spirito.  
Oh Dios, oh Dios  
Salvame, salva mi isla  
Salva mi amor, mi bebe, mi **mama**  
mi Cuba

Salva la luz que me desperto  
en mi infancia  
Salva la tierra a cual  
no podre volver  
Salvala porque es tuya es mia,  
es de la lupe, es de la canciones,  
es de los poetas.

Pero salva la porque es de  
CASTRO!

Lourdes Charon  
Ninth Grade  
J.H.S. 136  
Bronx, New York

TO ALICE COLTRANE

yo magic harp / do it again

awaken them old dried up white  
secretaries I see on the subway  
every morning

bring them back to life  
awaken them the same way you

woke em 'n  
broke me  
soooothed me  
even choked me into a lah-lah by  
of "what the fuck" 'n  
"where the hell"

bleedin love from my heart—  
washin away all the painful memories  
on lonely yesterday  
bringin on new memories for tomorrow

yo magic harp please do it again

turnin back the hands of time

washin away stains left from  
wine dripped from my lips as my  
sweet baby turned on—to turn me on  
to what you was all about

yo magic harp  
please, please do it again

play for the Brothers in the Nam  
you can play for the boys in the Nam too

yo magic harp  
play for the Vietnamese, too.  
you know?

all week long I been playin ya  
album Ptalh the el Daoud/  
all the cats in the buildin with  
slicks done turned in they Cadillacs  
for Volkswagens with stereo  
so they could dig you  
on the way to  
where ever  
they even pawned they slicks  
caught up with gigs in their own turf  
so's to help out where they can  
(ya know?)

(cont'd)

(To Alice Coltrane, cont'd)

you magic harp  
there is a need for you

the tax collector  
the bill collector  
and the landlord  
all came up to the pad yesterday  
and knocked on the door

I turned the volume up real high  
on mah set  
'n they split  
they just couldn't believe  
a Black Sister could  
manipulate so fine

theys back now  
I'm makin it to mah set

you Black Magical Harp  
please  
please  
please  
do it to 'em  
again.

Lil Hawk J. (Wayne Figueroa)  
c. Expand  
Voice of the Children  
Brooklyn, New York

### SKY SCRAPERS

Skyscrapers are long slim glittering blocks  
surrounded by a sea of drifting soft fluffy modelling  
clay.

They are giants with ants swarming around them.

They are high mountain peaks covered with snow.

Skyscrapers are big towers of shining glass.

They are birds with long, slender, glittering, glossy  
necks.

They are monstrous big globs of steel, soot and dust.

They are thick, dark, locked gates which sun can  
never penetrate.

DARK DARK GLOOMY & GLITTERING

A. Peterson  
Sixth Grade  
P.S. 20, Manhattan



(Now and Later, cont'd)

and some spanish people and what else some  
French

kind of people so  
saints maybe some saints no and Satan the devil  
I was trying to protect my family  
and then a big rock came and I died  
I was in a gang fight in the summer they were  
beating up my cousin  
so I went and got some friends and we all got into  
a big fight someone brought a belt and hit  
a boy in the head he had a hole in his head too  
So now we divided the neighborhood into two parts  
we stay on our side and they stay on theirs

I wish they'd turn into crickets  
and my cousins turned into turtles  
and I wish my family turned into lambs and my  
father into  
a lion but he wouldn't eat my mother

Ginda Mortise  
(with David Shapiro)  
MUSE Writing Workshop  
Brooklyn, New York

### SUNRISE

Hey! have you ever  
run through the grass at  
five in the morning  
when the sun is climbing  
out  
of bed  
and it yawns and  
its mouth gleams  
and its teeth are  
the black mountains  
that rise from  
your feet  
and the birds sing  
of the ocean  
that lies on the  
other side of  
the sun  
and the moon,  
weary and pale from

a long night's work  
of shining,  
sinks into its  
cloud bed,  
and fallen cherry  
blossoms  
wet with evening's  
tears  
cling to your feet—  
and have you ever  
wished you could stand  
right IN the sunrise  
but all you can  
do is  
watch?

Cheryl Thornton  
Oakland Technical H.S.  
Oakland, California

SCHOOL TEACHER

She says nothing,  
She teaches nothing  
and  
She knows it!

Marcus Bryant  
Oakland Technical H.S.  
Oakland, California

It hangs so freely and motionless  
with white chalk hair  
It has no eyes  
nor mind of its own  
but still it seems to look  
a very mean look  
I am so glad I do not know  
where he lived or when  
where does he live?  
does he have a body?  
And Tonia not knowing what to do  
Below the "O" and "P"  
above the garbage can  
it hangs  
it hangs with string through its  
eye  
how cruel  
the man put it there  
he wanted it to hang  
and so did I  
but with string through its eyes?

The way it came out with a smile  
its face was horrible. When it  
took off the first mask it had  
another and more; then it was a  
real face it was not bad, it was  
not good.

Dorothy  
Sixth Grade  
P.S. 165, Manhattan



## THE STORY ABOUT JERRY HOLLANDER

I had a best friend  
Named Jerry  
I can't remember his last name  
His last name is Hollander  
He just walked in the kitchen one day  
    And there he was dead  
And he wasn't sick or anything  
And whenever my mother and daddy talk about it  
My stomach feels funny  
Because he was my best friend  
He always used to play with me and tell me stories  
with "I oink you's" in it  
And he told these funny stories  
I just couldn't stand it in a good way  
Like I remember a lot of them  
And the pig and the frog and the frog turned into a  
    prince and the pig turned into a princess  
And they both walked away saying "I oink you"  
He had a moustache I think  
I'm not sure about it  
He was real nice the nicest guy on earth  
He wasn't old he was like in the middle  
    in the middle ages like thirty or forty  
    between that thirty and forty  
He's in the ground right now, naturally  
You I love  
I love you

Adam Wiepert  
with David Shapiro  
MUSE Writing Workshop  
Brooklyn, New York

You can't get away from it.  
It's all around you.  
The killings, the hunger, strikes,  
protest, you live with it.  
There's no where to turn.  
It just like a woman  
You can't get away from her.

George Bosch  
Ninth Grade  
J.H.S. 136  
Bronx, New York

## CINDERFELIX

When I was born the Doc. gave me a slap. It didn't hurt cause I was looking at that beautiful nurse, but I still feel like slapping him back. I was 5, I entered P.S. 54. What a dirty school. I was in kindergarten, I remember once I hit a girl with a wooden hula-hoop right in the nose. First grade what a time I had. My first H.W. was to count to 20—I hated that. Then I was to add 7 and 7. I didn't know that, but now I do. 2nd grade I remember the teacher—she was real pretty. Daisy was in my class—they used to hit her with bean shooters. 3rd grade—another pretty teacher she did not stay so long—she had to have an operation, Mrs. Leven. 4th grade WOW! What a teacher—beautiful—32, 24, 32. Miss Sherrman. I was more interested in her than in learning. 5th grade I was a good science fiction writer. I still am. 6th grade class is big. Mrs. Geary is a very nice teacher as long as you're good. I'm still wait to go to High School. Then I could finish this story.

Felix  
Sixth Grade  
P.S. 54  
Bronx, New York

### YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SLEEP HERE

Nobody going to sleep here  
whatever you say.  
You ain't going to put  
your flunkey feet  
next to me.

Nobody going to sleep here  
whatever you say.  
You ain't going to put  
your luscious body  
against me.

Nobody going to sleep here  
whatever you say.  
You ain't going to put  
your sweet delightful  
craving body next to mine.

Yvonne McBurnie  
Oakland Technical H.S.  
Oakland, California

## THE STORY OF MY FAMILY

I am going to start in order. First there is my father—he's a cool father at times and then again he can bug you a lot. Sometimes he fusses because he don't have nothing to fuss about. Now let's talk about my mother. She's nice, sometimes when she say she is going and tell my father, she never remembers—that's what I like about her! Around Christmastime she always wait till the last minute to go shopping—she hides the toys in my grandfather's room, which I am about to talk about. I never look there.

Now it's time to talk about Dad—he's my grandfather. Boy!!! He makes me mad. His nickname we call him Tim-head—that's what we say when we are doing something bad.

The coolest one out of them all is my sister. I think she is cool because she helped me get my rap with Loretta who I kiss all the time. We helped her lots of time when she used to have boy up in the house. I never tell.

Now it's my (1) brother. He sometimes is not cheap. He always ends up in the hospital. Mostly all the summers he's in the hospital.

Now let's talk about me (2). I am handsome, cute, and all that junk. Sometimes I act crazy so my grandfather can chase me with the belt. My father said I am the only one that can go to the store and come right back. OK. That's enough for Fly Boy which is me.

(3) Now let's talk about Poky—that's one boy that really bothers you all the time—I could knock the stuff out of him. But when I hit him and make him cry I get in trouble and have to go to bed.

(4) Now it's my sister I hate, just because she get all dressed up she thinks she's going out. Let me tell you something—that girl eats so much she makes me sick. I could kill her. If you don't want her to get none, you'd better not let her see it. If you do she says I can get some, and that make you mad.

Last but not least, Jr., my baby brother. He's so greedy. He make me mad. He always asking for something. Before he goes to bed he asking for a glass of milk. He asking for my grandfather's at dinnertime when he has his own.

THE END

Patrick  
Sixth Grade  
P.S. 54  
Bronx, New York

the dumb dirty streets  
of New York

you try and walk through  
an alley

is like trying to walk  
through a Junk yard  
that has been runned over  
by horses.

Willy  
Sixth Grade  
P.S. 54  
Bronx, New York



Drawing by Willy

# 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, a book of poems. This year he is working with children at I.S.8, I.S.72, and P.S.76, all in Queens. He is also conducting workshops in a number of New Jersey communities.

ED BRASH is a poet, born in Pittsburg, Pa., in 1939. His works have appeared in a number of magazines, including Poetry, The Atlantic Monthly, The Partisan Review, Made-moiselle and Sumac. He studied at Williams College, was Scholar-in-Poetry at the Breadloaf Writers Conference, and is presently working as picture editor for Time/Life Publications. He is working at Midwood H.S. in Brooklyn.

ROSELLEN BROWN has taught at Brandeis U. and at Tougaloo College in Mississippi. Her first book of poems, Some Deaths In the Delta, was published in 1970 by the Univ. of Mass. Press. Her poems and short stories have appeared in Atlantic, the Nation, Quarterly Review of Literature, and in the upcoming issue of New American Review.

MERLE MOLOFSKY CHIANESE is a novelist and playwright, born in New York in 1942. A chapter from Street, her novel in progress, is scheduled for publication in Storefront—an anthology of new American writing. Her play, "Three Street Koans" will be performed at the Old Reliable Theater in New York City in the near future. She teaches creative writing at the Brooklyn College Adult Education Program, and will receive her MFA from Columbia in June.

CAROLE CLEMMONS is a graduate of Youngstown U. She is now a writing student in the MFA program at Columbia U. Her poetry has appeared in a number of magazines and anthologies. She has given readings of her work on college campuses in the U.S. and Canada.

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 was published in April by Scribners. He is currently at work on a new novel. Mr. Elman is teaching at P.S. 84 on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

DICK GALLUP was born in 1940 in Greenfield, Mass., 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, was published this year by Harper & Row.

HANNAH GREEN is a novelist and short story writer. Selections from her novel, Dead of the House, appear in the New Yorker magazine. The novel will be published by Doubleday in February, 1972. She is presently Associate Professor of Writing at the Columbia University School of the Arts.

VERTA MAE GROSVENOR is a native of the low country of South Carolina. She is the authoress of Vibration Cooking, published by Doubleday in the spring of 1970. Other works have appeared in The Black World, McCall's magazine, Amistad One, The Black Woman, Parentheses (which is an anthology of writing by black women), and most recently, a story in Tuesday. She is working at P.S.188 in Manhattan.

ROGER LANDRUM worked with the Peace Corps' training program and spent several years in Nigeria. He is the former director of Teachers, Inc.

DOUGHTRY LONG was born in Atlanta, Georgia, attended W. Va. State College. He is currently in the writing program at Columbia University.

PHILLIP LOPATE has taught writing workshops at MUSE in Brooklyn. This past year he taught a course for teachers at Fordham U. and conducted a workshop for students in the Columbia Writing Program who are working at P.S.75 in Manhattan. His work is included in A Cinch, a recent anthology of work by young New York writers published by Columbia Univ. 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., of 4-Telling (to be published by New Books/The Crossing this year), and of Letter For You To Answer (to be published this year by Unicorn Press). Mr. Lourie's poems appear in 31 New American Poets and Campfires of Resistance, and he is an editor of Hanging Loose. Mr. Lourie taught at P.S.54 this past fall. He is now a full time teacher in the Wappingers Falls, N.Y., public schools.

FELIPE LUCIANO is a poet who has given numerous readings on the streets and at universities. He has read with the Last Poets and Concept East Poetry. Mr. Luciano was formerly chairman of the Young Lords and led the Lords' street offensive in New York City in 1969 and much of 1970. He is currently appearing in a movie, Right On, together with the other members of the Original Last Poets.

CLARENCE MAJOR was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1936. His recent publications include All-Night Visitors, a novel, published by Olympia Press; A Dictionary of Afro-American Slang, International Publishers; and Swallow The Lake, poetry, published by Wesleyan Univ. Press. He is the editor of The New Black Poetry which was published by International Press in 1969. Mr. Major's work which will appear this year will include a novel, No, Emerson Hall Publishers; poems, Private Line, Paul Bremman, Ltd., London; and poems, Symptoms In Madness, Corinth.

JESUS PAPOLETO MELENDEZ is a poet born "somewhere in Queens" in 1950. Mr. Meléndez attended New York City schools all his life. His poetry has appeared in an anthology, Talking About Us. Mr. Meléndez is currently teaching with the Collaborative at J.H.S. 136 in the South Bronx.

MIGUEL ORTIZ was born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, in 1944. He has lived in the Bronx since the age of nine. He is a graduate of the New York City H.S. of Music and Art and of City College. Mr. Ortiz is an editor of Hanging Loose, and he has taught poetry workshops with the Academy of American Poets, and now, with the Collaborative, at P.S. 54 in the South Bronx.

RON PADGETT was born in Tulsa, Okla., in 1942. He has published Bean Spasms, with Ted Berrigan, and co-edited the Anthology of New York Poets with David Shapiro. He has had two books of poetry published recently: Great Balls of Fire (1969, Holt, Rhinehart) and The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Jim and Ron (1970, Grossman Publishers, with illustrations by Jim Dine).

MARK RUDMAN is a poet who was born in New York in 1948. He studied at the New School in New York and received his BA last year. He is writing fiction as well as working on a longer poem entitled Sequences. He is working at P.S. 165 in Manhattan.

RUBY SAUNDERS is an actress, dancer, and playwright. Her formal education has been in the sciences. Miss Saunders' writing includes a comedy, a musical, an anthology called American Born Black, and a biographical novel, On A Hill Far Away. Besides her varied acting, dancing, and writing career, Miss Saunders has taught in a junior high school and has taught in and directed a pre-school poverty program in Washington, D.C. She worked at J.H.S. 136 in the South Bronx until the spring of this year.

ARMAND SCHWERNER is a widely published poet whose latest collection, The Tablets, will be published by Grossman, N.Y., in the fall of 1971. Earlier collections of his poems include Seaweed (Black Sparrow Press, Los Angeles, 1969), and The Lightfall (Hawks Well Press, New York, 1963). His work has also appeared in numerous anthologies and magazines. He is working at Lower East Side Prep in Manhattan.

DAVID SHAPIRO, born 1947. He has published two books of poetry: January (1965, Holt, Rhinehart and Winston), and Poems from Deal (1969, E.P. Dutton). Together with Ron Padgett he edited An Anthology of New York Poets (Random House) and a new book of his own poetry, A Man Holding An Acoustic Panel, will be published by Dutton in the fall. David has worked with children at MUSE, and through the Academy of American Poets and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

BILL ZAVATSKY edits two poetry magazines, Sun and Roy Rogers. His poetry has appeared in a number of magazines including The World and Juillard, and his first collection of poems is scheduled for publication this summer. He also teaches writing to younger children at MUSE and under the auspices of Poets and Writers.



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John Holt  
Florence Howe  
June Meyer Jordan

Paul Lauter  
Robert Silvers  
Tinka Topping  
Zelda Wirtschafter



# PLUGS

Outside the Net A new magazine in education which is "edited from a radical perspective" but which welcomes contributions from all viewpoints. A two-year subscription is \$4 for six issues. Write P.O. Box 184, Lansing, Michigan 48901. Manuscripts can be sent to same address.

The Fourth Street i A fine literary and community-oriented magazine published by a group of high school students on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Poems, stories, interviews with neighborhood people, photographs—all beautifully laid out. For copies write: Fourth Street i, 332 East 4th Street, New York, N.Y.

Finding Community: A Guide to Community Research and Action Prepared by W. Ron Jones with Julia Cheever and Jerry Ficklin. A useful book-length alternative to text-book mindlessness. "It is our hope that this manual can involve the student in the active process of collecting and evaluating information rather than the passive consumption of information demanded by traditional learning materials." Order copies from: J. Freel, 577 College Avenue, Palo Alto, California. (No price indicated.)

List of Poets Galen Williams of Poets and Writers has compiled an extensive, though not exhaustive, state-by-state list of poets who may be interested in working in writing programs in the schools. A good resource for teachers and administrators interested in finding out who's available in their area. Write to Poets and Writers, 201 West 54th Street, New York, N.Y.

## BOOKS

There Are Two Lives Edited by Richard Lewis. Simon and Schuster. An absolutely extraordinary collection of translated poems by Japanese schoolchildren. The poems are personal and visceral in a unique way. Excellent reading for American school kids.

Letter to a Teacher by the School Boys of Barbiana With postscripts by Robert Coles and John Holt. Vintage paperback \$1.95. An indictment of the Italian school system by a group of teenagers who were its victims. The relevance to American education will be clear for those with the courage to see it.



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# COMING

Imaginary Worlds a booklet on the utopia/  
dystopia writing project  
by Richard Murphy, together with the teachers  
of P.S. 76, Queens.

The Whole Word Catalog (with apologies to  
the Portola Insti-  
tute, publishers of The Whole Earth Catalog)  
—a collection of writing ideas and materials  
for use in classrooms and writing workshops.

## STILL AVAILABLE

A Grave For My Eyes by Art Berger and mem-  
bers of the Newtown H.S.  
writing workshop, introduction by Diane Divoky.  
This special supplement to the Newsletter de-  
scribes the rise and fall of a writing workshop  
in a New York City high school. Copies 50¢ each.

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