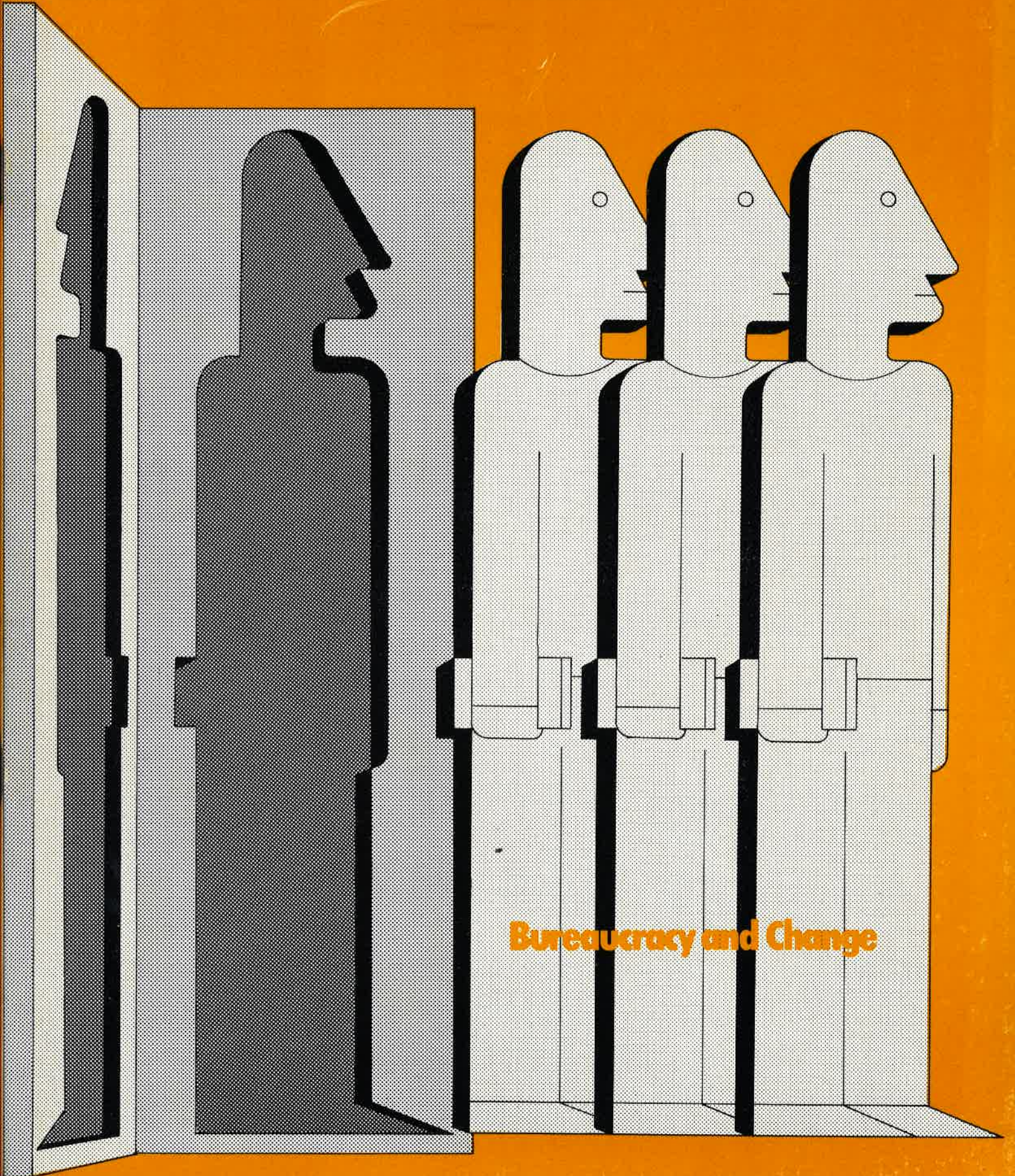


Teachers & Writers

Magazine

Volume 9, No. 3



Bureaucracy and Change

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This publication is available in microfilm from: University
Microfilm International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI
48106.

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spring '78
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Bureaucracy and Change

by Bernard Flicker

I am a product of one of the most in-bred educational systems in the world—New York City. This is my New York list—Kindergarten to 6th grade at P.S. 179 Brooklyn, N.Y.; Junior High School years at Montauk Junior High School; 10th to 12th grades at Erasmus Hall High School; BA degree at City College, N.Y., MA degree at Columbia, N.Y.; and my Ph.D. at NYU.

What does one do with a major in social science and a few Ed credits for security? You teach in the New York City schools, of course. (The overwhelming majority of teachers in the New York City schools are produced by New York City colleges). Thus my work career began—teacher of social studies at Stuyvesant High School; teacher of social studies at Julia Richman High School; return trip to Stuyvesant High School; part-time history instructor at Hunter College; Assistant Professor in the Education Department at Hunter College; and finally, Associate Professor in the Education Department at Lehman College. Lots of other diversions along the way—like working for Martin Luther King on voter registration; setting up a high school chapter of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee; helping to build the teachers union in its early stages; and various other semi-radical activities which were usually frowned upon by principals and department chairmen.

Politicians and professors often take the same ego trips: they make some noise and move up the ladder. Most of the time they are “chosen” by leaders to join their ranks when it is deemed appropriate or safe. It is rare for individuals to move up on the

basis of popular sentiment though not impossible—at least not impossible in politics but definitely unheard of in education. Thus, it came about that I was selected by the “leaders” in typical “Godfather” fashion to become Director of the City University Training the Trainers of Teachers Project. The TTT Project was funded at \$397,000 by the U.S. Office of Education to support TTT programs at Brooklyn, City, Hunter and Richmond Colleges and a Central Office. The concept behind the Project was that through training the trainers of teachers in new concepts of education, a multiplier effect would occur and reach many more thousands of teachers and students than through federally funded institutes.

Attempting To Train The Trainers of Teachers

Probably the Triple T Project was doomed to failure because it had a lousy name. It was always hard to meet someone who asked what line you were into and to reply that you were directing the City University Training The Trainers of Teachers Project. Added to the name game was the simple fact of life that the trainers of teacher trainers didn't think they needed to be retrained.

Our downfall, however, was precipitated by the fact that we attempted to follow the guidelines we were asked to follow by the U.S. Office of Education. The most objectionable guideline was the concept of parity as the method of operation. Parity was defined (sometimes) as meaning that members of the local community, public school classroom teachers, public school supervisors

and administrators, and students would comprise the on-going committees charged with the responsibility for running the project. Members of these committees would have an equal (parity) vote on all decisions.

The need for parity in education in New York City could be traced back to the bitter New York school strikes of 1968-69 which brought to the surface the hard fact that there was a serious breakdown in communication and cooperation between the community, public schools and the university. The fight over decentralization and community control of the city schools resulted in a new law providing for limited decentralization enacted by the New York State legislature. The new law was purposely vague and immediately led to problems of interpretation as competing groups sought to interpret the law in their favor. Triple T hoped, through the parity concept, to provide an alternative to the divisive actions of contending groups in fighting each other for power over the schools.

The age-old battle between liberal arts and education faculties over who's to blame for producing teachers who can't teach, was also slated to be worked over through the close cooperation and planning of both groups in producing new curricula in teacher education. There has never been any doubt in the minds of most people that graduates of New York City colleges are essentially liberal arts graduates since out of 128 credits of courses, potential teachers take either twelve credits of education plus supervised student teaching for secondary school or twenty-four credits

plus supervised student teaching for elementary school.

Parents whose children attended schools involved in the project were asked to join Triple T teams and to function on a parity basis with other team members (including professors and students). Community parents and community representatives were asked to serve in teaching roles for the purpose of instructing non-community personnel in the areas of community problems, progress and aspirations. The basic concept underlying this participatory action was that the parents had insights into the realities of the child's life which had to be linked up to the "professional" methods of educators in order to produce successful teaching designed to stem the massive retardation afflicting poverty areas.

Students planning to teach were given a parity role in the creation and implementation of the Triple T project. Students who had revolted against the system of exclusion from the decision-making process of universities during the 1968-69 academic year, were now asked to contribute to the planning and implementation of a project dedicated to changing education.

The Change Game Begins

Perhaps the most important goal of the TTT program was the attempt to effect change at the highest level of teacher training. With this goal in mind, a group of teacher education deans and education department chairmen was brought together with community parents and TTT staff in a human relations laboratory training conference at Greystone Center in Riverdale, New York, from October 31 to November 1, 1969.

The original plan for the con-

ference called for a training group composed of liberal arts deans, Board of Education superintendents, teacher education deans, community parents and TTT staff. Due to an emergency meeting of liberal arts deans called by City University, only one representative of the liberal arts was able to attend.

Approximately forty representatives of these groups attended the conference. The purpose of the conference was threefold; first, to introduce the concept of parity in creating teachers; second, to gain an understanding of the need to work through and build a rationale for the use of group process techniques in solving problems and making decisions; and, third, to utilize group process to define and implement parity as the major instrument of change in the TTT program.

The Change Machine Reveals Slugs In Its Innards

Immediately after the TTT Human Relations Laboratory Training Conference, an evaluation questionnaire was sent out to all who took part in the weekend session. The conference was the first one to bring together all levels of the three T's from the total project. It was intended to translate action into words—the main word being PARITY. The conference attempted to give all members of the TTT community the opportunity to find out what the participants thought about this concept and its implementation.

The first element of the evaluation to be noted was the tabulation of interest groups and the number of responses from each group to the evaluation questionnaire. The chart below reveals the distribution. The most striking point made by the chart

is that the group representing teacher education gave proportionately fewer responses than any other group. Sixty percent of the teacher education group refused or simply neglected to take part in the crucial process of feedback and evaluation. Regardless of what reasons could be offered for this state of affairs, it is of special significance since the group included those individuals who were the original sponsors of the TTT proposal as well as deans and chairmen of teacher education departments acting as hosts to TTT projects.

The first question asked on the evaluation questionnaire was, "What are some of the main things you have learned from this conference?" Responses to this question fell into three areas as follows:

1. Several people mentioned the need to develop respect for all participating groups. It was suggested that project participants must be taught to listen and learn from each other. Training in group dynamics was applauded and participants called for proceeding by group consensus rather than individual decrees.
2. Participants cited fear and suspicion most frequently as the barriers to successful parity participation. The problem of communicating with people of different backgrounds was a central concern.

The lack of time for intensive communication was another factor cited. The insecurity of educators and community when confronting each other was seen as a barrier which could only be lifted through intensive training over a longer time period. Participants stated that the con-

	<u>Number Present</u>	<u>Responded</u>	<u>No Response</u>
Liberal Arts (University)	1	1	—
Teacher Education (University)	10	4	6
Board of Education	2	2	—
Community	8	7	1
TTT Staff	4	3	1
Public School Teachers	3	3	—
TOTAL	28	20	8

ference was not long enough to establish strong rapport between reference groups, and, in fact, was diverted to misunderstandings and reinforcing differing viewpoints.

3. The college level educators who responded to the first question regarded parity as being a dangerous concept. Their principal objection was that parity neglected to insure that academic competence would be recognized in the decision-making process operative under the parity concept. While admitting the need for communication between groups, the educators felt that parity would inevitably lead to the inadequate use of specialists and inefficient use of time and energy.

The second question asked of the participants was, "If we could offer another training weekend, in what areas, if any, would you like us to concentrate?" Several areas were suggested as follows:

- _____ trust building
- _____ learning how you work in groups
- _____ group decision-making
- _____ community decision-making
- _____ other (specify)

Trust building received the most responses, followed by group and then community decision-making. Two administrators who responded thought that the substantive problems of TTT should be dealt with before people had learned to deal with the group dynamics of a parity situation. Parity was dismissed as the most negligible aspect of TTT.

The third section of the questionnaire was introduced as follows: "Parity was used as a working principle in designing this weekend... By parity we meant to involve representatives of all groups involved in TTT on an equal basis." The statement was followed by the question: "How did the training affect your views about working with varied people to design educational programs?"

Most answers were positive to the experience and cited the need to put theory into practice—in this case, to actually work on parity and not sim-

ply espouse it as a theory. Participants also stated that changing people was a long-term process; that parity was both necessary and feasible and had to be implemented at all levels of TTT program development; that non-professionals had insights into the problems of education and should be listened to; and, that understanding each other is the most difficult initial step to be taken.

When all participants were asked, "Would you be willing to work on a parity basis to prepare a new TTT proposal," and, secondly, "to redesign current programs in education," two educational administrators said no. Everyone else said that they would give it a try.

The Change Machine Charges Forward—Over the Cliff!

When does one ever get rid of his innocence? After all the exposes of Academia carefully read over a period of years, I actually believed that the TTT was not a bad trip but an honest effort to reform education which was supported at all levels. Even after I read the statements of the educational administrators after the first human relations conference, I believed that I now had to follow TTT guidelines and attempt to change their attitudes. And so began the story of the decline and fall of the guidelines and the revelation that the purpose of projects like TTT was really not to change anything or anyone in teacher education but to reinforce existing procedures and the power of bureaucrats.

I would like to present some guidelines which I have learned through my experiences which might help those of you who read this and wish to know how to read in between the lines of government guidelines while consolidating your power and enjoying life at the top:

The Honest Rip-Off or How To Define "Budget"

One of the main problems I encountered as Director of TTT was fending off strange budget requests. Eventually, this led to my demise as Director since I was put into a posi-

tion of denying funds to those who had more power than I did! An example of this problem was a request I received from an administrator for \$5,000 for a "liaison" fund to be given to the New York City Board of Education. One should never question "liaison" funds because the very words should impress you terribly and cause you to sign the proper documents in triplicate posthaste. Don't do what I did—question the words. I got an answer. "Liaison" fund meant providing lunch money for Board of Education people and free time to attend TTT meetings. I refused to honor this request because I knew that Board of Education officials earned high salaries and could afford to pay for their own lunches. In addition, since these officials would only have to attend about three meetings during the year, it seemed to be a rather high price to pay to "release" people to attend these meetings. I also questioned the concept of the Board of Education not providing for the time of its officials to attend meetings pertaining to the training of future teachers since it seemed to be a natural function of education officials.

Don't mess with lunch money for administrators. They like to have lunch and they don't like to pay for it. They might even get you a hamburger and a Coke for free once in a while.

Some of the TTT participants advanced other interesting budget requests. One participant wanted to put his children on the payroll as summer employees. Another participant planned to use TTT funds to travel to England for a week to study the Open Classroom. The denial of these requests met with approval from the administrators because the participants affected were at lower levels. At the same time, the participants at the lower levels blamed the middle level administrator for refusing to accede to their requests. Don't ever get yourself in the middle. That's the place you get crushed.

Budget also can be interpreted as the needs of the administrators on the top. In this case, a new highly salaried

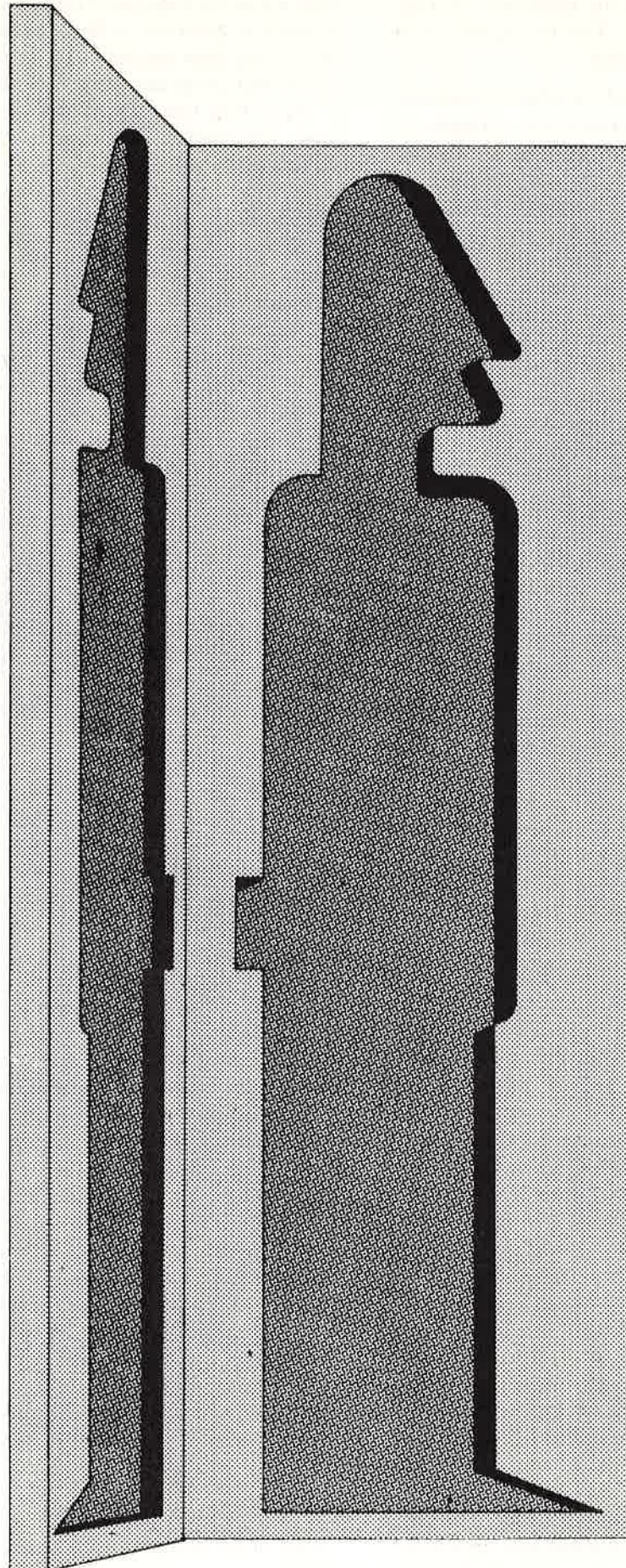
administrator with a title but no function, was suddenly placed over me in the chain of command. I now found myself somewhere in the middle of about six or seven signatures needed to authorize budget requests. I also found that the administrator placed over me had his own pet projects which were directly in opposition to the projects sanctioned by TTT. At first, I was asked gently to sanction his projects with TTT funds. As he began to wield power with more wallop, I was told to sanction his projects. As he watched his muscles flex and grow (the paper kind), I was told that I was a poor administrator and had to leave (also called getting fired in the non-academic world).

How To Talk to Government Officials

The best way to talk to government officials is not to talk. Listen. Nod your head in the affirmative. Agree with everything. Let the officials talk and marvel at their great intelligence and insight. When invited to express your views on a problem, make certain you give them exactly what they think. Follow these rules and you will never have trouble with the government. I didn't follow these rules. I had lots of trouble.

As it became clear to me that the administrators of the university were much more interested in pursuing their special interests than in following government guidelines for the TTT project. I engaged in a dialogue with government officials to seek some method of rectifying the situation. The central issue I presented to the government officials was the fact that the parity concept was not being honored by the university. The government officials agreed that this was contradictory to the guidelines but qualified this contradiction by stating that the precise definition of parity was still being worked out.

Guess who was working out the precise definition of parity? Why the administrators of the university and the government officials. Crunch. Don Quixote gets creamed again. I discovered that those who are on top intend staying on top by making up



the rules and the definitions as they move along. You're supposed to follow the parade.

After several months of conversation with government officials, it became clear to me that my support of what I thought was a clearly defined concept of parity was being listened to by the government while they were working closely with university officials on the basis of the university's definition of parity! When it finally dawned on me that I was being had, I asked one of the officials for an honest explanation of why the parity guideline had been tossed aside in favor of the university's own special definition. I was told that the government had allocated funds to the City University and had to spend this money as part of its commitment to spend funds for education in New York State. In effect, I learned that the United States Office of Education receives funds to disburse and then creates "guidelines" for disbursement. The fundamental role of the Office of Education, however, is to get rid of the money it has been given through legislative acts of Congress and Presidential approval. The least important aspect of this chain of events is the clear definition of whether or not the recipients are living up to the "guidelines" under which funds are being allocated.

I discovered more about government spending in education through attendance at TTT conferences in Washington, D.C. At meetings with directors of TTT projects across the country, it was revealed that TTT funds were being used to support traditional programs at various universities. Thus, a college needing funds to support a doctoral program in social studies education or school administration, sent the government a proposal defining its program as one which would train the trainers of teachers. The government, which had to spend funds in the area served by certain universities anyway, then allocated funds to the university's TTT program which was actually its old doctoral program cloaked under a new name with some new definitions thrown in for good measure. Univer-

sities are in the business of ripping off as much in government funds as they can to help their special interests and established programs—translate that to mean help their top officials and those designated as material to become top officials. Most universities hire specialists in proposal writing who know how to write a proposal in such a way as to make it sound like it adheres to government guidelines while in actuality it serves the interests of special programs entrenched at the university.

The other interesting thing I found out about getting government funds for your project is that government officials are experts at the "who you know" game. This game is played by knowing somebody in government and doing a favor for him. The government official now knows you and feels guilty if he doesn't do a favor for you. You both know each other by first name. You both buy each other lunch. When it comes time for you to submit a proposal for funding to the government, you call the person you know in government and get assurance that your proposal will be looked upon favorably. It usually is. It hardly matters what the proposal says. It matters even less what you do with the proposal once it's been funded. The government has now gotten rid of the money it was supposed to get rid of (its job) and now you can get rid of the money as you see fit (your job).

Most proposal writers never run the projects funded under proposals. The university hires someone to "run" the project in order to give it the look of legitimacy while looking at the funds as extra money for the coffers of whatever projects the administrators favor at the moment. The government knows about this but removes itself from the scene once the money has been spent. Financial statements are prepared by the university to prove that the money has been spent honestly. It is always honestly spent.

War Is Peace, True Is False, and Change Is No Change

Out of all this comes the sobering thought that one simply has to carry a

dictionary defining terms as *he* sees fit if one is to pursue the game of "educational reform".

What are some of the definitions and how were they redefined? Here are some of the "definitions" from a document called "Training of Teacher Trainers—The Four Partners," compiled by the Leadership Training Institute of the TTT and dated January, 1970. (The document was sent to TTT directors by Fordham University School of Education under a cover letter dated March 31, 1970):

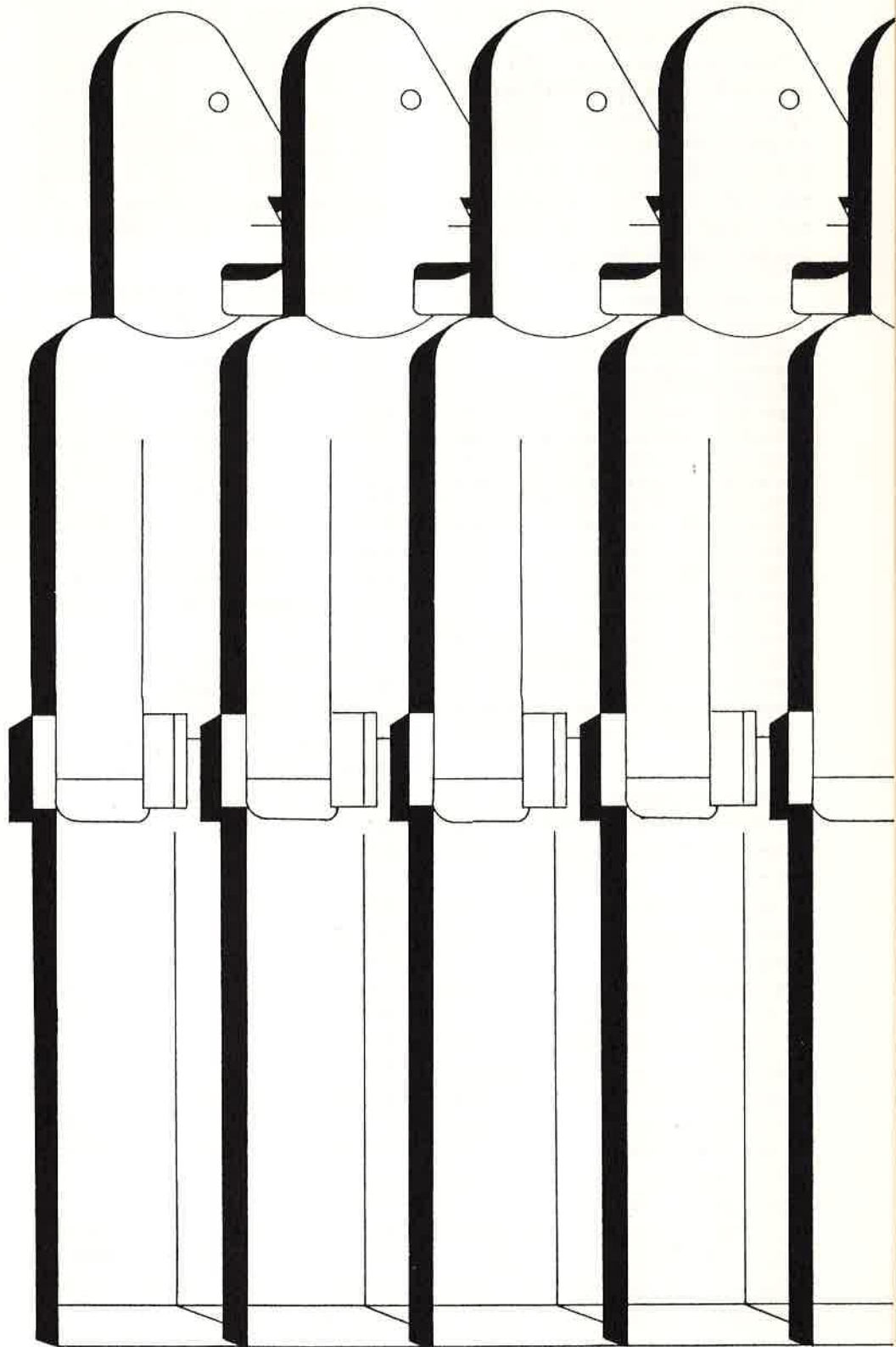
The Trainers of Teacher Trainers Program (TTT), funded by the Education Professions Development Act, recognizes the futility of trying to restructure American education by attempting to influence directly the attitudes and skills of nearly two million teachers. Instead, it is focusing its efforts on the partners... (Arts and Sciences, Teacher Education faculty, Schools, Community, and Students), those "gatekeepers" in the field of education who are most influential in shaping the thrust of developing education process. If the decision-makers—deans, professors, school administrators, supervisors, experienced teachers, influential leaders in the community—can together develop policies within each project that are meaningful for its participants, then through a "multiplier effect", these will reach and affect the inexperienced, traditionally trained, uncertain, young and even mature teacher either in the classroom already or being prepared for the task of teaching in schools for the children of today and tomorrow.

I must admit that every time I re-read the above statement I feel as if I've uncovered a relic of some past civilization. The key definition in the statement is the concept of the "decision-makers." Read that part over a few times and let it roll through your head. It should very neatly lead you to understand how you can make reform equal no reform. If you empower the so-called "decision-makers" to develop policies for project participants, it is inevitable that the policies developed will insure the supremacy of the "decision-makers" and allow only "reforms" to take effect which perpetuate the power of the institution and its "gatekeepers." The use of the term "gatekeepers" in the above statement is a dead giveaway as to the intent of TTT leaders in reforming American education. Once

you set up "gatekeepers" you have narrowed the effective choices participants can make and defined the parameters of the game to be played. The entire statement defines power as the function of the established order which has the "message" and can deliver it to the masses below.

Who are the decision-makers in your community affecting education? If they are presently the "deans, professors, school administrators, supervisors, experienced teachers, influential leaders..."—perhaps you had better take a searching look at the educational problems of your community and ask yourself if they can ever be solved by such decision-makers. The United States Office of Education is peopled with the very folk it has labeled decision-makers. Defining yourself into power is quite simple when you hold power. No need to bring power to the masses since that would require a redistribution of power definitions. It would also threaten the high paying jobs held by the decision-makers since it might prove that the masses have as much intelligence in making decisions as do their highly paid civil service bureaucrats.

Who are the teachers in the schools defined as "the inexperienced, traditionally trained, uncertain, young and even mature..." who are expected to benefit from the decisions of their leaders to change American education? Some of these teachers are doing battle with these very leaders because they want to change the educational system and find the leadership loathe to change! Oh, yes, the leaders pick up the latest catch phrase currently in vogue, i.e. "open classroom," "open corridor," "free school," "alternative education," etc., and then bureaucratically destroy the concept by redefining it into a traditional system. Educational leaders — deans, superintendents, principals, professors, experienced teachers—are those who have made it, often have tenure, command large salaries and play it safe to placate all sides on most issues thus insuring that there will be no change. Most historians of American education state that significant change in American



education takes about ten to twenty years to take effect. Education in the United States is one of the most resistant institutions to any kind of change because of the great danger to its bureaucratic structure.

How democratic was TTT supposed to be in its operation? According to the definitions provided by the document already cited, "Training of Teacher Trainers—The Four Partners", one would have thought a ship had arrived in the port of Education Utopia. Listen to this stuff:

Generally, proposals for TTT projects are planned and written under policies and guidelines set by Policy or Advisory Committees of the projects. These policy committees are composed of representatives of the four partners (Arts and Sciences, Teacher Education faculty, the Schools, and the Community) who function on the principals of parity and set policy for a director whom they choose. They approve budgets, help recruit and select staff, suggest curriculum change and perform other functions within the control of policy making bodies generally....each TTT director and his policy committee, working cooperatively and on the basis of parity, will have to formulate those experiences, those training activities, those involvements and encounters which will best meet the needs of the particular circumstances at their particular site.

It never happened. There was no real policy committee representing anyone that drew up the original TTT document for City University. Lots of paper committees and lots of chosen representatives to rubber stamp the proposals of one or two men who could lift a phone and call the U.S. Office of Education for an o.k. The director was never chosen by a policy committee. He was chosen by a dean and handed the TTT proposal and told to direct it. No real parity for any committee in most parts of TTT nationwide. TTT would hold local, regional, and national conferences and then parade out some "parity" participants who would rise to the occasion and blast the "decision-makers" for mouthing "parity" but never practicing the concept. Guilt time at the old U.S. Office of Education. Blacks, Puerto Ricans and Chicanos dumping on the white power structure. Elementary social science course 101. Breast beating

galore, a few tears here and there, super abundance of Olde English Anglo-Saxon expressions, cocktails and dinner at government expense after the purge, catch the next flight and get right back into the no-change business! Set up your parity flag outside the university's main entrance and you're back in business. You have successfully demonstrated that you can define parity as unequal rights and decision-making as unilateral, democratically totalitarian.

Can Educational Bureaucracies Be Changed?

My experience with TTT could lead to a very simplistic answer—no. I would rather, however, attempt to answer this question by setting out some tentative guidelines based on my experiences which might help those who are sincerely attempting to produce change in education in the hope that such change will release the creative energies of all those involved in educating.

The basic change mechanism in education is the organizational structure. The amount of change, the type of change and the definition of change comes from the organization running the educational empire. No government money, no unilateral proposal, no good or bad intentions can change a system unless an honest effort is made by the system to change itself. It is the rare educational institution which has either the ability or desire to change itself. It is essential, therefore, to set up decentralized systems which are empowered to develop educational systems along parity lines of their own making. Since forcing people to be "democratic" does not work and democracy as practiced by those holding power is a farce, one must start from scratch. Educational institutions should be *change* institutions whose structure should embody ongoing change.

One might start with the simplest structure in the ladder of education—the elementary school. Take the entire staff, parents, children, community and all those involved in the educative process of one school—

define everyone as equal—shake well and pour out some change! Redo the entire curriculum. Organize the school along *any* lines agreed upon by all parties. Give the school budget to everyone and seek consensus on how the funds are to be allocated. Investigate every reading program extant and then either invent one or adopt one based on consensus. Create learning contracts between teachers, kids and parents. *Give* the school to all who reside there—teachers, kids, parents, staff, community.

In order to help the "school" develop as a change mechanism, education must employ the techniques of organizational development. Trainers in organization development are capable of moving an organization to either change itself completely or piecemeal—depending on the wishes of the participants. Private industry often hires trainers to help change their organizations in order to compete successfully in the marketplace. There is no reason for schools, school systems and education as an institution not to use these same techniques—except for the fear of change.

Change in education must be thought of as total. All aspects of the institution should be considered change agents—the technology of education, the individuals in the organization and their attitudes, group processes, administrative structure and the relationship between the organization and the environment.

Both human relations and political systems approaches to change should be used in creating ongoing change structures. It is equally important to focus on the individual and peer group relationships as it is to focus on the administration, technology and environment. One cannot really change an ongoing system or build a new system without changing the individuals running the system or responding to the system. An effective change mechanism would help the individuals in the system restructure themselves *and* all other internal and external elements.

Education is perhaps the most tyrannical of all institutions in the United States. I classify it thusly

because it has tried to con us into believing that it is exactly the opposite while ripping off a public only too gullible to believe that education has the answers to the good life. Education in the United States, in fact, has been a middle class institution devoted to the perpetuation of economic and social class privilege as defined by petty civil service bureaucrats. I often think that the "decision-makers" running our schools would follow in Adolph Eichmann's footsteps and obey orders from anyone on top to do their bidding and ingratiate themselves in the eyes of authority in order to get ahead. Harsh as this may seem, it is harsher to continue to live in an institutional world filled with half-truths and wholesale lies concocted to perpetuate power

for the few.

If education does not change in the future, I predict that more and more people in the educative stream will become more and more apathetic towards the institution and develop alternatives outside the mainstream until such time as the institution "gives in" and permits those who want out to get out and develop their own institutions. Public school systems in suburbia and in some major urban centers are already engaged in this process—allowing students, parents and faculty to set up alternative schools funded by the same local board of education. The danger for these schools, however, is that they will never be allowed to succeed if they threaten to expose the inadequacy of the power structure attempt-

ing to exercise control over *all* the schools.

In sum, there is no possibility of producing an act of creation in education until such time as we are prepared to wipe out the structures of the past and begin to work together on producing a truly democratic school for a democratic society. Or, we may have to work together to produce the democratic society in order to bring a sense of reality to our lives which in turn make the schools a microcosm of our society. Change or no change—either is a choice we are making every day. The problem is to bring ourselves to the stage of understanding that we in effect will either make our institutions do our bidding or continue to be had, and had, and had

□

“Midnight Dance” -An Animation Fantasy Film

by Deanna Morse





I knew that Joanne had a thing for Raggedy Ann dolls. They were scattered around her apartment, sitting together on the couch under the Raggedy Ann poster, on the bed beside the Raggedy Ann bank. But I discovered that it was more than a casual interest. One day, as she was digging through a trunk showing her art work to me, she pulled out a giant red yarn wig and the rag doll style dress that *she* wears, complete with "I love you" heart and striped leggings. It's impressive. With her round face, she really resembles the mopsy doll. It made sense that Joanne's first film would be an animation using Raggedy Ann dolls.

Joanne Alspaugh and I had worked together for two weeks at Freedom Road School, a public alternative school for teenage drug abusers. (Some of its students had been arrested for using drugs, others came by their own initiative or through the recommendation of former school officials, friends or parents.) Joanne taught art at the school. I was working with her and the art classes for six weeks as the film artist in residence through the Filmmaker-in-the-Schools Program of the South Carolina Arts Commission. Joanne had never done filmmaking, neither of us had team-taught.

My plan for the six weeks was to involve Joanne and the students in a variety of personal and creative experiences with film, photography, and video. I hoped Joanne and the students would discover that they could use film as a tool for self-expression or communication, and from this understanding, that they would be better able to relate to television and movies. I also hoped that by the end of the residency there would be groups of trained and interested students who would teach others, continuing the activities throughout the school year.

Together, Joanne and I introduced media making to all forty-five of the school's students. Some students weren't interested in it, but most expressed a lot of excitement. At the end of the year, students were still working in the darkroom, shooting video, and filming animations.

Joanne is a craftsperson as well as a teacher. She works in textiles, making bold batiks of African tribesmen, weaving pillows from bright red and orange yarns, embroidering peasant scenes and angels on her jeans, and sewing large patchwork pillows. We quickly became friends.

I was pleased to discover that the art classes were informal. Joanne taught basic skills to the class, and then allowed students to choose a project and work independently. I felt that filmmaking could work well within this structure. In my experience, the most successful classes of high school filmmaking are those which allow the students to work individually or together in small groups on film projects which hold personal meaning for them. When I arrived, most of the students were working with textiles: batiking wall hangings, making macrame belts and plant hangers, and embroidering on purses, pillows, and jeans. Other students were creating a collage on the walls of the artroom and the stalls of the bathroom with images cut from magazines. The main hallway had already been covered—it was full of super-graphics, colorful images from unused highway poster billboards.

I wanted to capitalize on this interest in images, so we spent the first two weeks doing still photography. We looked at photographs and did visual exercises (blindfold walks, people mirroring each other, remembering and describing images). We converted a bathroom into a darkroom and began taking, developing and enlarging photographs. Some of the students who had been doing collage became very excited about making their *own* pictures. Joanne and I met with the individuals and wrote independent study contracts defining a theme for their photo projects such as cats, cars, a river, people around the school, or moods. We were moving fast. I was impressed with the amount of responsibility that the students took. Several of them, and Joanne, too, learned the technical fundamentals very quickly. Many of the students were teaching each other.

I wanted to get into filmmaking. I asked Joanne if she was interested in



learning animation. “You mean that we can do *animation*?” she responded, with such enthusiasm that I hesitated.

“Well, it’s not like Walt Disney or the Flintstones,” I began, “but it’s still exciting. Our animations look different. We use different materials. They use acetate sheets with paintings on them; we use more common things, like paper, chalk, clay, pencils, shoes, people—we can animate almost anything.”

“This is great!” Joanne replied enthusiastically. “I read an article about eight years ago in *Seventeen* magazine about animation, and I got so excited that I stayed up until two in the morning drawing characters. But when I wanted to film it, all these people told me that I couldn’t do it, that I needed to use acetate that sold for a dollar a sheet, and that I’d need a light table and a whole bunch of other real expensive equipment.”

“Great,” I laughed. “Your fairy godmother has arrived!” She promised to look for her drawn characters. We decided that we would film a short animation together before teaching it to the classes.

I learned about animation when I was a film student in college, twenty years old. As part of a film history class, we were given a TV commercial to analyze. I studied the Pillsbury Doughboy commercial and had to figure out how they got that little character to *move*. I’d never thought much about it. I asked other people if they knew how the Doughboy moved. Several people thought it was a marionette, like Howdy Doody, but more sophisticated. A few others explained that it was a robot. My grandmother was convinced that they had trained a little animal to wear the Doughboy costume. Only one girl actually knew how it was done—as a youngster she had seen a sequence demonstrating animation on the Woody Woodpecker show.

Often filmmakers, like magicians, are secretive about how they perform their magic. (Many early filmmakers, in fact, had been magicians before they discovered movie making.) The film process is glamorized when discussing Hollywood dramatic feature



films, or ignored when discussing TV news. Filmmaking is rarely presented as technical, complicated, time-consuming work.

There I was priding myself on my curiosity, feeling worldly and knowledgeable at twenty years old, yet I had never questioned the thousands of bouncing and dancing animated images that I had watched on my TV and movie screen. Doughboys, Gumby, Speedy Alka-Seltzer, Mr. Tooth Decay, Dumbo, Mickey Mouse—I knew all of these characters intimately. Well, I thought I did.

I learned about animation. It turned my head around. I carried the film of the Doughboy commercial around campus for weeks afterwards. I unreeled it and shared my new knowledge with any available listener. I had new eyes for TV and movies.

This is how animation works. Normally film runs through a Super-8 camera taking eighteen frames (small pictures on the film) every second. (You can hear the motor whirring as this happens.) When the film is shown, the projector flashes those small single images at the same rate—eighteen frames a second. But some cameras allow you to film just one of those frames at a time—click, click (called single framing). To animate a banana, you click a couple frames of the banana, then step into the picture and move the banana a tiny bit; back to the camera—click, click; move the banana a little bit; click, click; banana move; camera click, click, and so forth. When you are clicking (i.e. when the camera is filming), you are not in the frame. When you *are* in the picture, moving your banana, you don't click any film. So, because your presence is never filmed, it looks like the banana is moving all by itself. And that's animation. It's an easy, but *time consuming* process. Because it takes eighteen clicks to make one second, and you are only clicking two times for each movement¹, you will have to make nine separate movements for each second of film. Slow process.

¹Using two clicks and small movements will make the object appear to slide along smoothly on the film. If your moves are small,

So, if you're going to do animation, you want to do something fantastic, fanciful, unreal—something that couldn't happen in real life. Otherwise, you might as well use real people and stage it, saving a lot of time and energy.

I showed Joanne some animated films and loaned her some books. She couldn't find the characters that she had drawn several years ago. I asked her if she had any other ideas.

"Yeah, I'd like to do something with Raggedy Ann dolls," she replied.

"That would be good," I said. "Do you have any ideas about what you want them to do?"

"Well, I was thinking about a sequence with them like the June Taylor dancers."

"The who?" I asked.

"You know, the June Taylor dancers, used to be on the Jackie Gleason show. They lie on the floor and do these leg patterns, stars, like a kaleidoscope," she explained.

"Oh, you mean Busby Berkeley!" I jumped, enthusiastically. "I've been thinking about doing that, too, but with paper clips, pencils, spoons, match sticks, you know, stuff like that. But using rag dolls is a good idea." Joanne beamed. It's great to be working with someone who is thinking on your same wavelength.

Should the dance be a 'design' film, where the dolls make a variety of interesting, funny shapes, or a part of a story film? We decided to film it as part of a story.

"Did you ever imagine that your toys got up and played when you went to bed?" Joanne asked me.

"Well, I didn't, but I've heard it before. That's a good idea for your film!" I told Joanne about a film workshop that I had recently led where we animated peanuts. We identified different nuts as the leader, army, red cross, the masses, coward,

you can use three clicks, and still have a smooth animation. More than three clicks each time, or large movements, will give a jerky, jumpy, effect. Why not use one click? It's diminishing returns—the visual difference is almost imperceptible, and the work doubles—to eighteen movements for each second of film, rather than nine.

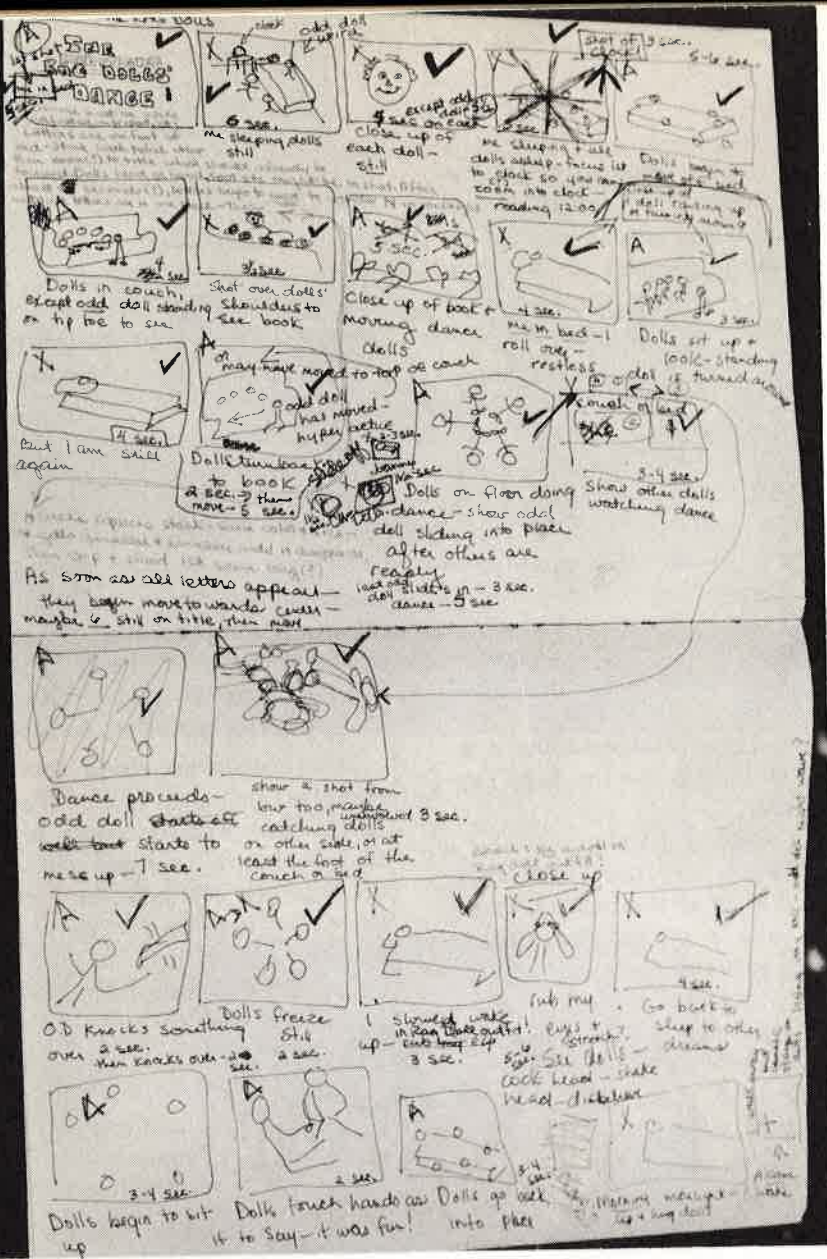
and so forth, just by moving them in different ways. Joanne and I decided that one doll would be real slow and make mistakes on the dance, bumping into the other dolls. We worked on the story. We didn't cling tightly to our first ideas, but tossed around a lot of options.

I showed Joanne how to storyboard. A storyboard is a visual outline for your film that looks a lot like a comic strip. Each drawing represents a different camera shot. Underneath each drawing is written a brief description of the action of the shot, the camera angle of the shot (such as close-up, medium shot, high angle), and the estimated length of the shot.

Storyboards are good tools for planning animated films. They are better than written scripts because they emphasize the *visual* elements of the film and reinforce the fact that there are options for the camera placement. They help the filmmaker define and condense the action, and can serve as a useful guide during the film shooting.

I drew the first few shots on the storyboard, and Joanne drew the rest that night. She showed it to me the next morning. She had timed out each of the shots to last several minutes! I counted out five seconds for her, so she could see how *long* a second lasts, and we retimed the storyboard, counting out the time for each shot. We cut a three minute scene to fifteen seconds.

Here's the story that we planned for the film, which we titled "The Midnight Dance". It is night. Joanne is lying in bed, asleep. The dolls are sitting around her. The clock strikes twelve, and the dolls around her slide off the bed and gather on the couch, where they look at a book with photographs of dancers. Joanne rolls over in her sleep, and the dolls freeze with fear. But she doesn't awaken. The dolls move onto the floor, where they do a Busby Berkeley dance together; seen from overhead, they move their legs and arms in unison to create star patterns. Then, the clumsy doll accidentally kicks a ball, which wakes Joanne up. She rubs her eyes, but rolls over and goes back to sleep.



The dolls all crawl back on the bed. In the morning, Joanne turns off the alarm and gets out of bed. Then one of the dolls winks to the camera, which ends the film.

It seemed like a pretty good story. It was not too complicated, able to be communicated visually, and had a beginning, middle, and ending. It used different kinds of animation, and had a variety of angles and shots. But most important, it was personal to Joanne.

We met one Sunday to do the shooting, but the light meter battery was dead. Rather than run around trying to find an open photo store, we talked about other days for the filming. We decided to shoot it during school, and to bring small groups of students and teacher aides to Joanne's apartment to help. Then, later in the week, these people could help teach the rest of the class how to animate. We patted ourselves on the back. This was a much better idea than working alone. I was lucky that Joanne was open enough to feel comfortable learning things right along with her students.

We went over the storyboard again. We marked the shots that involved animation with a big "A," and multiplied the time, in seconds, by eighteen, so we knew how many clicks each shot would take. We had all the props and the equipment. If we could get permission to take the students from school, we would be set.

Permission was granted. I was a little nervous that first day. I was responsible for five people who were going to shoot their first animation. There's so much time and energy that goes into animation! If the film somehow got ruined by a technical problem, how would they feel? I had to make sure that nothing could go wrong. After an initial flurry finding extension cords, we were ready to film. Paul wanted to run the camera first, Tami was going to read the storyboard and count clicks, and the rest of us would be animators. I showed Paul how to focus the eyepiece on the camera, and we set up our first shot, of Joanne in bed, as a test. Things looked good. We animated the title. Joanne had cut out



green letters for "The Midnight Dance," and two dozen successively smaller circles from the same paper. We filmed the title on the coverlet at the end of the bed, animating the letters coming together in a bunch, and the circles in the same place getting smaller and smaller until they disappeared. Things seemed to be going smoothly.

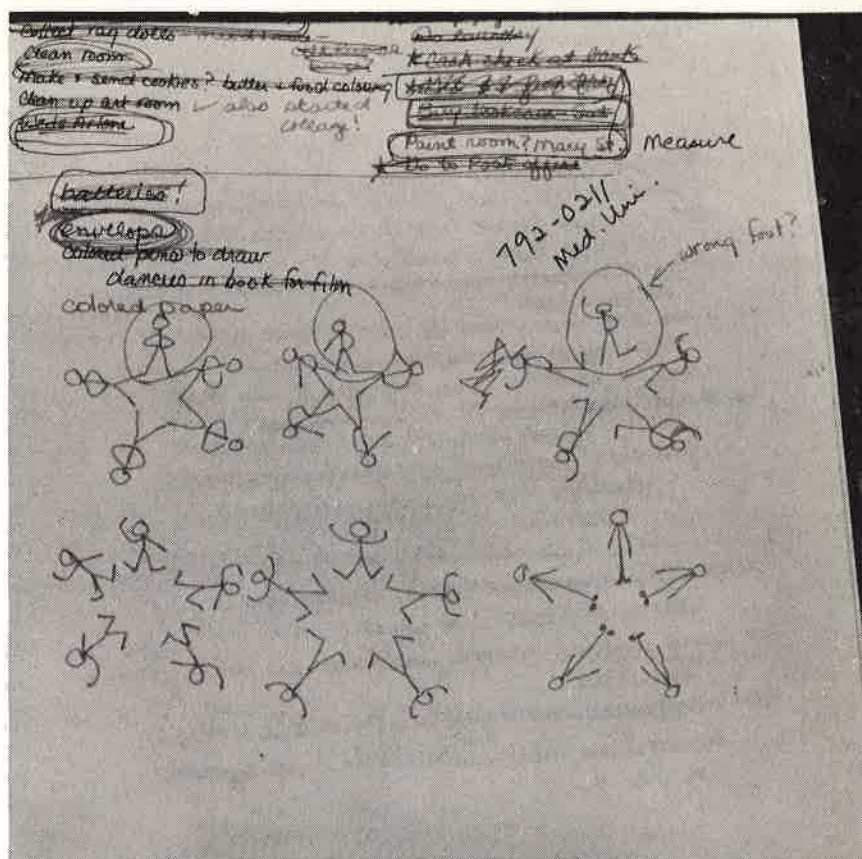
When we were animating our first big scene with the dolls, I was pre-occupied with the feeling that something might be wrong. I checked the camera, the lights, observed the scene, and kept trying to think of what I had forgotten.

"Isn't this scene going a little fast?" Joanne, the body on the bed, asked. It certainly was! We had only clicked thirty-six times (two seconds), but we had already moved all but one of the dolls off of the bed. We animated her moving slowly from the bed to the floor, which was a nice touch in the final film, and established our "slow" doll. I guess sometimes mistakes can work to your advantage.

We shifted responsibilities often within each crew, so that every person was able to run the camera, count clicks, and animate. I did the lighting for the film. Joanne supervised the storyboard, and I supervised the technical aspects. I kept asking the students, "Do you have an idea how this is going to look on film?" Most of them could, but a few were just blindly following directions.

We worked with four different crews of people, fourteen people in all. Each group of students worked differently. Our first group was quiet, patient, and worked harmoniously together; another group kept taking tea and cigarette breaks. The third group worked hard, but noisily, and the last group giggled, clowned around and left the set whenever the activity lagged.

Most of the students were extremely patient and worked hard on the film. We changed things from the storyboard, and kept an open atmosphere for suggestions, soliciting advice. Different students got involved in the dialogues concerning possible changes.



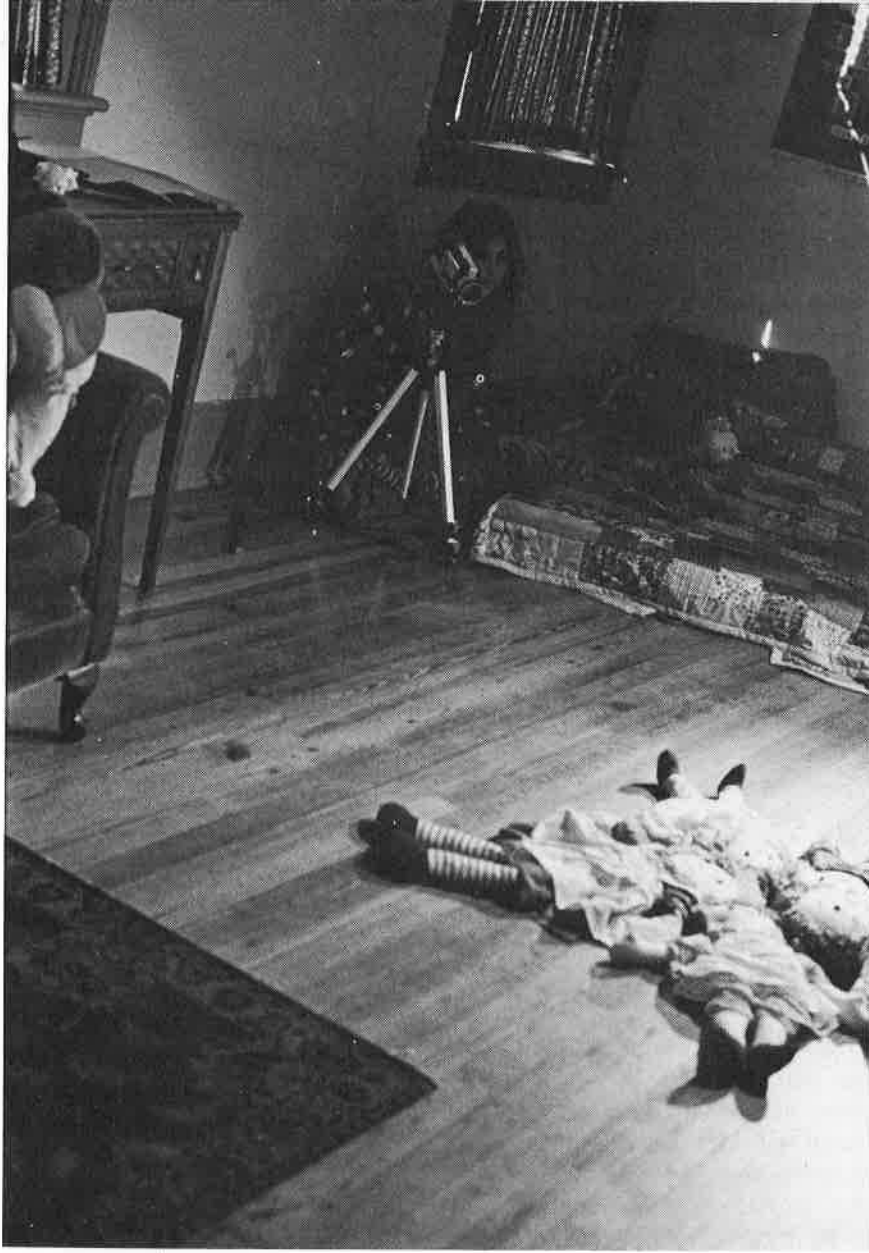
We made an important change in the film that morning. We decided that when Joanne woke up (because the clumsy doll kicked the ball) that she would be dressed in her rag doll costume, adding to the dream-like fantasy of the scene. The group that helped shoot this scene was amazed by the costume, and by Joanne wearing it. Two of the girls, Toby and Dawn, were especially excited by it. They tried on the wig, laughed, made faces, and talked in funny voices. They had a lot of fun with that costume, laughing at themselves and their teacher. In the next room with the spare camera, they were filming an animation with themselves modeling the costume, until we begged them to come back and help us.

It took us fourteen hours, two full school days, to animate the three minute film. At the end of the shooting, we couldn't think of any mistakes that we had made. That's unusual for a student animation. Someone always kicks the tripod, clicks the camera while a hand is still in the frame, or knocks over the lights! I think the shooting was calmer because we left school. We had very few

distractions, and we worked at a pretty even pace.

The crew from "The Midnight Dance" helped Joanne and me lead a workshop for the rest of the art classes, where students made short animations using clay, popsicle sticks, magazine pictures or drawings. "The Midnight Dance" had been a clearly defined, structured film. Now we had moved to doing more spontaneous animations. The students taught each other, and worked together well.

Other animation projects were starting up quickly at Freedom Road. Several students borrowed cameras and lights to film at home on weekends, animating toys, neighborhood children, and packing crate boxes. And at the school, a group of students planned another lengthy, scripted animation for a film called "To Lift A Loft." The history teacher, Doug Cowden, was working with several students building a loft in the history classroom, and one of the builders wanted to have someone film the construction. A student suggested using animation, and the idea snowballed. More and more students



joined our noisy discussion as we brainstormed ideas for the film, laughing at some of the possibilities. After an hour of planning, a group of students took over the project. Some of these students had worked on the rag doll film, but most of them had learned animation through the classroom workshop.

After a week, "The Midnight Dance" film came back from the lab. I anxiously unreeled a little of it, afraid that there would be no images! But the frames on the film looked bright and colorful. We invited a few friends for our "premiere." Joanne popped popcorn, and I set up the projector for the three minute film. We smiled as we watched it. The animation was smooth, and there were no mistakes in the film to require editing. Joanne was a convincing actress, and looked great dressed as a rag doll. We began talking about music for the film, and one friend suggested that we send it off to the lab and have prints made of the film before screening it again. I hesitated. It would be good for the kids to see it now, rather than wait a week for the film to come back from the lab, but each time we showed it, we were taking the risk that the projector would scratch or chew up the film. I had just thrown away a part of an animation that I had shot because a projector had scrunched and scratched the film very badly during a screening. We talked about it, and decided to send it back to the lab to make a print.

Meanwhile, there was lots going on at the school. The films that the students had shot in the workshop came back, and some were very creative: a little clay man jumped into a martini glass and bubbled to the surface, clay figures rolled around, ate each other, and bled red clay on the



floor. This film gave the "Loft" filmmakers several new ideas.

There was a lot of diverse activity. Joanne was encouraging classroom projects which tried new forms of animation, several students were continuing with their photography projects, and animation was going strong. Some of the students had begun doing live-action and video work.

When the film "To Lift a Loft" came back from the lab, it caused a lot of excitement. Much of it looked like Keystone Cops, with students zipping around, carrying lumber, pounding nails. A student pounded a nail into the wood with her nose, students slid around the floor in chairs, and a student jumped off the loft and twirled around in the air for a full five seconds before falling to the ground, exhausted. When two students came to pick him up, he disappeared. There was lots of good energy in the film, and lots of animation magic.

The rag doll film returned, and we showed it to the classes. The students who had worked on the film were excited about it, and screened it over and over, looking at the part where they did the animation or the camera work. Praise was high among the "in" group. Doug, the history teacher was taken with the film, too; he had loaned us some of those dancing dolls, and was surprised to watch them moving. But Joanne and I were surprised by the reaction of the other students. Although some students liked it, several vocal boys dismissed it as being "corny," and, of course, not as good as the loft film. There was a feeling of pride and competition between the two groups of filmmakers that surprised me, as if they felt that only *one* good film could be made at the school.

"To Lift A Loft" was the more popular of the two films. This made sense, as the loft film was more personal to the students. It showed the school, themselves, and their friends in a comic way. And it was more of a *student* film—there was very little teacher input during the shooting.

The films shown together are a good pair. The loft film is fast paced and funny. The rag doll film is more quiet, with a complete story line and richer visuals. And when shown to other groups of students and adults, "The Midnight Dance" is usually the more popular film (especially with younger students who still have dolls or toys). The film begins slowly, with the shots of Joanne and the dolls, but during the first animated shot of the dolls leaving the bed, there is a visible rise in interest. "How do they do that?"

I usually toss the question back to the audience after the film, "How do you think they do it? Any guesses?"

"String."

"That's a good guess, but it's not string..."

"Motors?" "Compressed air?" "I know, I know—they have this blue hand!" (which is like the news, where they chromakey different images behind the newscasters.) The answers, like these, are often good guesses. They recognize that the objects are somehow being manually manipulated. (Students have a harder time guessing when the animations are of people or of drawings.) Not more than a handful of the students I have worked with knew about animation. Maybe that's why it is such a powerful project to do in the classroom.

As a classroom project, though, animation has its drawbacks. It takes a lot of time to shoot, and if not

handled carefully, students can be upset with the results, "It's too short! It moves too fast!" There is a delay in feedback, as you have to wait for the film to be processed. If you run into a technical problem, it's terribly discouraging, because of the time it takes to reshoot a sequence.

But it's a fine art form, full of potential for fantasies, dreams and desires. It's easy to do. It relates in a very obvious way to popular media, but has possibilities apart from the style and form of it. It can be a long term project, or a one-time experience.

Many of the students at Freedom Road continued making animations throughout the school year, both at school and at home on weekends. Most of the animations were of themselves and their families. After a month, a group of students made another large scripted film, this time using costumes and make-up, which animated themselves in a race. Two months after I had finished my residency at the school, a group of students made a film which convinced me that animation-making had been important to them. With very little teacher involvement, they planned and shot a film, for new students, which demonstrated how to do an animation.

Deanna Morse would be glad to provide additional information about the S.C. Arts Commission's Film programs. Some of the student films and videotapes are available on a rental basis. For more information, write: Deanna Morse, Filmmaker-in-the-Schools, S.C. Arts Commission, 16 Charlotte Street, Charleston, South Carolina 29403. □

Reaching a Level

by Claire Calhoun



TEACHERS
LOUNGE

Teaching is challenging in the classroom, but it is more challenging in the teachers' room. As one of my education professors, a nice clean old man, said: "*You have to reach a level.*" I and my seventh grade reached a level rapidly. We were the worst seventh grade in the school. In fact that is why they were mine. I was a new teacher, and they had been given to me because they were left over after all the experienced language arts teachers were given the classes for which there was hope.

Our principal believes that if you look at the cumulative record and find out that your students are slow, you will teach them as though they are slow, and they will remain slow. Therefore nobody saw any records, and diabetic or epileptic children were an unconfirmed possibility until around December, when somebody had an attack or fell in a coma, and the faculty started to mutter about why weren't we *told*, and then we got the records. This happened every year. The principal was right about teaching them as if they were slow. What he had not foreseen (along with the gradual day weakening the will) was that if I did not know that they were slow I would try to teach them as though they were average, and they would remain slow. I did. They did. I dutifully issued the spelling books, with words carefully gathered by a

devoted reader of Longfellow and Louisa Mae Alcott. I gave them the transformational grammar books, which would have been easily understood by any graduate student in logic or systems engineering, and had transformed its authors from mediocre professors into very well paid authorities, and many a failing publishing house into a lucrative business. I gave them the novel that all the seventh grades were reading. It had been chosen by a director of curriculum, who, has a child, played cowboys and indians on the dusty streets of a small Colorado town. To have us all reading about homesteaders and ranchers must have given him a sense of continuity.

Other people's seventh grades were learning to spell. Other people's seventh grades were on Chapter Three in the linguistics books. Other people sat in the teachers' lounge and said how well their seventh grades were doing and I believed them, and walked around nervously spilling my coffee and wondering why nobody in my class could remember that there is no "a" in the word "definite," although most of them could spell "persuasive" if I dictated words from the spelling book in order, and did not complicate things by asking what the words meant. When I realized that nobody understood any of the words from the spelling book, I

levelled with them.

"Look, guys," I said, "if you have not learned to spell in six years of school I cannot make you learn." They looked shocked. Nobody had ever told them that they could not be forced to learn.

"We will have no more spelling tests if you will all learn to spell 'definite,'" I announced. The boys cheered. Some of the girls groaned. They liked spelling tests, for which they could memorize, and about which they did not have to think. Spelling tests meant security.

We agreed to try to learn to spell some of the words we used every day, like "definite" and "friend." I sent Ricky to the board to write "friend."

"Fiend," he wrote.

"That word is 'fiend'," I said brightly.

"What is a fiend?" asked Bill, the one kid in the class who knew what a fiend is, and who is in the class because he throws rocks because his parents are divorced and he is mad, and not because he is *slow*. It is Bill who read stage directions one day, "He is screwing in a light bulb on the front porch," "He was SCREWING? (in) A LIGHT BULB???? on the. front PORCH????"

"A fiend is a creature from Hell," I replied incautiously, instead of telling him to look it up and bring in a report. There were loud cries. I had

said a dirty word. I wondered if that nice clean old man who taught Education 101 knew more than he had let on about self-defense. I should have realized that when he said that sending them to "look it up" and "bring back a report" (and if it was the kid's second question that week you could make it a "written report") helped what he referred to as "the learning process," what he meant was, you can avoid a lot of trouble for yourself if you send them to look it up.

The cries resulting from my unintentional blasphemy brought the teacher from across the hall to my door, which she closed. She did not even slam it. She just looked dirty at us and closed the door. I looked at them. They looked at me.

"There is no such thing as a dirty word," I stated haughtily. "Spell 'friend,' Robert."

"F-E-I-N-D," he spelled.

We were not doing well with our reading either. Nobody read the assigned material.

"Didn't you read the chapter, Joseph?"

"No."

"Why?" I asked. I really wanted to know. By this time we were, if not quite allies, at least not enemies, because Across-the-Hall had looked just as dirty at me as at them.

"I can't read," Joseph said.

"Ok," I said. I believed him. "I will read the book to you if you will promise not to go to sleep, and I will explain the words you don't know as we go along."

I explained words like "buckboard" and "corral" and "chuck wagon!" It took a long time to get through Chapter One.

All the other seventh grades progressed. Their teachers said so. I started murmuring that there must be something that I wasn't doing right like, these kids, I mean, they don't KNOW anything. I was beginning to talk like them. The principal said, "It is an average class."

It wasn't the class, it was the people in the class, I pointed out. I mean, like, look at Donna. Look at Joe. The principal admitted that it was a "slow average" class. I translated. This

meant they were just above developmental. Development meant intellectually disadvantaged. Intellectually disadvantaged meant retarded.

"Really," I said, "they are just one step above developmental. I mean, like, they can't read very well." (I was beginning to feel that I should defend them, and not admit that they could not read at all.) The Principal looked at me.

"They are below average," he said, "and if you can teach them that for every right there is a responsibility and that they must register and vote when they are older, that is about all you can do."

"You gotta be kidding," I said. "I mean, look at the country. Don't you think we're in enough trouble without having below average vote? I mean, like, we ought to try to keep them away from the polls."

The bell rang. Released, he looked at me.

"You're kidding," he said. I knew what he meant. I had better be kidding.

Still, they were all I had, my seventh grade. They tried. And I tried. One day I succumbed to a teachers book club record. According to the teacher's guide, the lame had walked and the ears of the deaf been unstopped at the mere sound of the song "Love Everybody Right Now." I played it for them. It was greeted with mixed silence.

"Speak to me, guys," I pleaded. "I am up here all alone. Do we like it?"

Across-the-Hall, alarmed by the quietness, came over to see if we were dead. I closed the door, firmly.

"Well, is it easy to love somebody?" I asked.

"My father says he hits me because he loves me," volunteered Ricky.

"My father twists my arm when he goes down the cellar stairs when I am coming up," said quiet Laura. She had not spoken before except to spell "persuasive" when we had spelling words.

"Take a piece of paper for a spelling test," I said hastily. Jim did what, in another, would have been described as raising his hand. He thrust it forward as far as it would go, and

followed it with his body, so that he was horizontal from the knees up, and made small, desperate, animal sounds.

"Yes, Jim," I said nervously.

"Speaking of paper," he settled back adenoically, "my grandfather had a paper mill, and when we went on our vacation..."

I had forgotten that when I asked last week if anybody had ever seen a rock-bound coast (the coast is the part of the land near the water), Jim had told us about his vacation: daily mileage, decor and menu of each meal his family had eaten during their vacation in Holiday Inns from Ohio to California, and had finished by admitting reluctantly that the coast he had seen had not had any rocks. But, on the way back...

His stories produced in me the effects being studied by psychologists who observed people floating in the dark in warm water, who rapidly lose their sense of orientation. Why was I hearing about a man with one leg who had worked in his grandfather's paper mill, but his grandfather was dead? I was confused. I had to get a hold of myself. A frantic glance around the room revealed paper on desks. A spelling test, I remembered.

"The first word, please sit down Jim," I interrupted him, "is 'definite', D-E-F-I-N-I-T-E, there is no 'A' in this word."

"You spelled it for us," they cheered.

I recouped. "That does not mean that you will all spell it correctly," I said.

I was right. After all, I was the Teacher. If I had not always been right, somebody else would have been the teacher. Five of them spelled it wrong, and three others spelled it wrong-with-an-A but nobody spelled it wrong-with-two-A's.

That day in the Teachers' Room, I said smugly, "I am so pleased with my seventh grade. Their spelling is showing marvelous improvement."

The principal smiled with relief. Across-the-Hall looked kindly at me. From now on, I decided, I would have the best seventh grade in the school. □

The Memories of Kindergartners

by Phillip Lopate

How do little children think? What are they thinking *about*? What is a five-year-old's notion of a story, or a joke? How detailed are the memories of kindergartners?

These are some of the questions we wanted to investigate when we began to work in the kindergartens. This year there are three all-day kindergartens in P.S. 75, sensitively and patiently and well-taught by Olga Ikaris, Mary Compton and Vicky Rios, with Norma Matusewitch, the popular cluster teacher. They graciously allowed us to come into their classes and take down the stories their children told us. When I say "us" I mean myself and my three assistants—two former P.S. 75ers, Hannah Brown and Jessie Vorsanger, now in junior high, and Debra Sklarew, a student-volunteer from Hampshire College. Together we formed a Kindergarten Group which met regularly to read aloud the examples we had collected and discuss what worked and what didn't work and where to go next.

Since kindergartners are mostly too young to have mastered the act of fluent writing, our method was to take dictation from them. But there are as many methods of taking dictation as there are teaching styles. One might be very direct and ask a child a question and write down his or her answer and then ask another question. With any luck, the child will take off on his own after awhile. Or one might eavesdrop. But even so, it is impossible to write down every word the children say: choices must be made on the spot about what is less or more interesting, more worthy of being recorded. That gets us into the whole area of the recorder's artistic prejudices and sense of anecdotal form. Also, there were things we definitely wanted to know. We asked them, for instance,



what they remembered about their younger days, what it might have been like inside their mother's stomach, what they wanted to be when they grew up, what happened when they were good or when they were bad and so on. In short, we are not claiming that the pieces in this booklet represent any scientific or systematic collection of the "natural" utterances of small children: they are, rather the result of an interaction between kindergartners and older recorders, impure but interesting nevertheless.

They do tell us a great deal about the kinds of experience children of that age are thinking about. Who would have anticipated, for instance, that lunchboxes and teeth should be so much on their minds? And there are lovely insights into the kindergartners' perspective, as when one child, in retelling *Little Red Riding Hood*, reports the detail that the wolf had shoes that didn't need to be tied! One cannot help but be charmed by these expressions; some of them are really and truly "Songs of Innocence." Yet others seem heavy with pain, and may shock people by their preoccupation (already) with loss, abandonment, death, punishment, violence, TV characters, and so on. My only answer is that we can learn about their mental life only if we don't come to it with too rigid a sense of what should be in it. By listening to all of it—the sweet and the ferocious, the positive and the negative—we may be able to respond to them more compassionately in the future. Besides, we cannot jump to the conclusion that the words which both age groups use have the same precise flavor: that "death" to a five-year-old means the same as Death to an adult. We know so little still about children's interior lives.

Many pieces start off with realistic reportage, then take a quarter-turn somewhere, into wish fulfillment. The line between fantasy and reality is very narrow. Yet oddly enough, as my associates and I learned, the transition into fantasy cannot be prompted that easily from outside: it is a line that they cross of their own free will. When I asked one boy who was playing with a toy truck, "What could this truck say if it started to talk?" he answered unblinkingly, "Trucks can't talk," as if he were explaining an ordinary fact to an idiot. When Hannah asked a boy, "Where does the car go?" he answered, "It goes on the street of course." Like a good, law-abiding citizen. There are distinct boundaries to their play-world, which they seem quite comfortable in inventing and then respecting. An outsider like myself learned he could not presume to conjure up or pre-empt at any given moment this imagination—which is what makes kindergartners so dignified and also so unpredictable. After awhile, one gave up planning anything in advance and simply submitted to the ebb and flow of kindergarten life. Hannah Brown's verbatim transcripts of Ms. Compton's class give an excellent, observant portrait of that funny world, where conversations are a series of Chekhovian misconnections, non sequiturs and soliloquies, and each kindergartner speaks out of hypnotic self-involvement. What is surprising is how much they do listen to each other. They are just beginning to get a sense of appropriate and inappropriate response. The language play of the jokes and riddles is particularly interesting in that it shows a connection between the development of a sense of humor and an understanding of logic. And some of the children knew

exactly what they wanted to tell us, and were already quite conscious little story tellers.

Piaget says at one point in *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* that the child of four to six is "unable to tell a story verbally in the right order, or reconstruct at will a sequence of events." I am not so sure that this is so, since some of the children were quick to correct us when we had got their dictation in the wrong order and read it back to them. To be honest, after working in a kindergarten for several months I am not sure of anything any more—barely even my own name. But it has been a fascinating experience. I hope this first collection is taken as only the beginning of researches that could, and I hope will, go a great deal further.

Selections from "The Memories of Kindergartners"

My grandfather is light brown and a little dark brown. I like him. He takes a lady to Hoboken and they go there at night with my uncle to clean up. I like to see in the window in the car. I open the window and look out. I see some cars driving by. I like being in buses best because of all the windows. There's a little opening and I can see out.

If I could take a bus anywhere I would take it to the bus station. Sometimes I sit...I just sit down.

—Elisa

These two dummy boys punched me in the face. They started being mean to me. They thought I was so ugly and they wanted me to die. So they started beating me up. It took a long time for me to die. They kept on beating me up but I didn't die because it didn't hurt my bones. I kept hiding from them. I have some good secret

hiding places in the park. They have lots of ants and bugs and insects in them, and they have poison spiders. The poison spiders don't bite me—I don't know why. Maybe if you are bad to them they bite you. Then the boys came and they wanted to punch the poison spiders but the poison spiders didn't die. The poison spiders bit all their fingers. And that's the end.

—Bianca

I was born with a cord in my belly. And know what? It was so fun when I was in my mom's belly. It got hotter and hotter and I couldn't breathe. Then she went to the hospital to get me out. When I came out I got some air.

Last year in Brooklyn my lights blew out. My mom, I, my friends, Rachel, we were about to take a bath. The lights blew out again. We had to sleep naked. We slept in a sleeping bag. And know what? It was so fun.

—Aaron

—I wanna tell you something. One time my father drank so much and he was drunk and he fell asleep in the living room with all his clothes on.

Q.: What was it like?

— I don't know. I haven't tried it.
Anonymous

It's a long time before you die. Everything has to die. People go around and dig and find skulls, and they say, This is the skull of a man.

We saw skulls at the museum. There was a huge dinosaur skull. The bones are white and they're right on the dinosaur's side.

When you're still alive you don't die. You turn into dust when you die. Everything in you turns to dust.

—Nalim

A Choo-Choo Track Dream

I was on the train. And my mother went on a different train. I was going to the circus, and I didn't know where to go. And I took the right train that my mother took. And I got off. I fell down in front of the train. The train was coming, and it stopped. My mother got me out of there. And that was how I found my mother. All of the men came and picked me up. They took a ladder when the train was starting to go, and I climbed fast. It went Stsss.

—Eugene

I have a brother. He's two years old. When I go to the playground he goes to the playground, and my momma comes with us. Whenever I get something my brother gets it too and that makes me happy. Because I don't want him yelling what I have.

—Gian-Carlo

When we were little we were twins. When we went to the animal zoo, Corinna put me back before the elephant could get me. I remember Mommy was having four babies. My mother was carrying Danette on one arm, and me on the other arm.

My mother spanked us when we did bad things. We jump in the bed. And we make believe that's a pool.

Mommy sees me walking slowly when it's time to go to bed. And then she carries me to bed.

At my birthday, Mommy said, "When Jesus comes, I'm going to have another baby!"

—Darlene and Danette

I was born June and June was a hot year. I was a boy. And my mother was married already.

I remember playing with my best friend when I was two. I used to play with my toy gun. When we were one we used to play with our pow-pow guns. We didn't use sharp scissors, we used those round-headed scissors and went pow-pow.

—David and Danny

Every time when my father comes home from work, I am like a monkey. I jump all around and over my bed. I work with my father on the choo-choo train track. I make the train stop. I raise my hand and say, "Stop, can't you see I'm working?" It'll be very dangerous if the baby falls on the track.

—Ricardo

I want to wash dishes when I grow up. I want to sweep. I want to be a busdriver and a father. I want four kids. They'll be named Anthony, Adrian, Naomi, and Ricky. If they don't want to do nothing, they don't have to.

—Adrian

When I grow up I want to clean. I love cleaning.

—Suzanne

When I grow up, I want to be a garageman. And I want to be a doctor. When some get died I will fix them up. You know, what doctors do to the people. I will give them vitamins.

—Diego

When I grow up I want to speak and speak like a President.

—Franklin

My mommy cried when my baby brother's head was bloody. He hit his head on something. He almost needed a stitch in his head but he didn't.

I hate my brother. He got up late and couldn't get dressed. And I was tired and had to get dressed.

My brother got fatter and fatter and fatter. He's got a baby in his tummy and a baby in his nose. That's why he's fat.

—Jessica

A Dream

There was a fire in my building. And then my father went into the army because he didn't want to stay in the fire. Then he came out after awhile because he was going to get shot. I was in the fire and I was rushing to wake up everybody and get out. But I saw the keys in the door. And I took them out. Everybody was sleeping in their clothes. My father grabbed his wallet and my mother grabbed her pocket book.

That's the end.

—David

The Yankees are the best. The Dodgers are teeny-weeny people. They're very tiny. The Yankees will just step on them.

—David

I was a girl baby. I was in my friend's house when I was a little baby. There were five candles. Now I'm five and now I don't cry. If somebody pulls my hair I don't cry.

—Pei-Pei

My father works up at Columbia University. he works with computers up there. It's a machine that you put papers with. He works with his boss. His boss likes him.

—Katie

I have a grandfather. His name is William too. He looks like a monster because he crashed his car. He was okay. My mother had an accident and they hit. She had to wear a neck brace, but she didn't die. She won't die.

—William

Drama and Composition in the Classroom

by Dr. Steven Urkowitz



For a year and a half, at Baruch College of the City University of New York, I taught several remedial English classes which included among their basic texts two plays by Euripides, Shakespeare's *King Lear*, and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Because the experience of working with these plays was so successful for the students and enhanced my own involvement in remedial teaching, I thought I might report on some of the organizing principles of the course, some of my own preparations and expectations for such a course, and some of the practical details of organization and classroom management that I believe might be adapted by other teachers.

The remedial task, I felt, in reading, writing, and studying was to find ways to connect the material being taught to the experience of the students. I wanted the involvement to be something richer than the conventional formula of reading and discussion, followed by writing the answers to a series of questions cleverly articulated by the instructor.

My choice of plays was dictated by my feeling that students respond best when they are presented the best possible material, works that I myself found exciting. Earlier efforts, when I tried to use "socially relevant" literature, got tangled up in confusions of social identity and definitions of relevance. My students came from all over New York City. They included Korean sophisticates, Haitian villagers, Chinatown tough-guys, and a few mainland Chinese kids who had marched in Peking with the Red Guards. There were Harlem black kids, Bedford-Stuyvesant black kids, and Caribbean Island black kids. My

Spanish speakers included those born and raised in New York City, one from Madrid, one from Peru, and one, whose first language was Tagalog, from the Philippines. Most came to school on the subway, but one girl often came late because she had trouble finding a parking space for the Cadillac.

Beside the disparate backgrounds of the students there was another reason for discarding "relevant" material. I realized that the stuff that was supposed to be most relevant to my own background—I'm a Jewish boy from the Bronx—didn't excite me enough to inspire me to study it seriously. If that was the case for me, then certainly it might very well be true for people in my classes.

I chose Euripides' plays because I liked their ferocity. My first choice was *The Bacchae*, and the second was his *Alcestis*. They were both available in an inexpensive University of Chicago paperback edition. I chose *King Lear* because it makes me weep when I read it, and because I was trying to work on a doctoral dissertation focused on this play. And I chose Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* at least in part because Baruch College is mainly a business school, and the students might find Miller's thoughts "relevant." As it turned out, this was the least effective choice. I felt that using these plays in basic courses was justifiable. My students had richly complex experience to draw upon which they almost never thought about when they came to deal with academic work in college.

The most important part of my planning for the semester was outlining for myself the goals I wanted the classes to achieve. I wanted the

students to acquire skills in reading complex language, and the ability to write clearly and effectively about their own experience in relation to the plays. Perhaps most important, I wanted the students to come away from the work with a feeling that they had come to grips with some of the major issues of our culture—a process which I expected would certainly be exciting.

I began the semester's work with introductory writing assignments, using the free-writing approaches of Ken Macrorie, described in his text, *Telling Writing* (Hayden, 1970). First, students wrote for three or four ten-minute sessions without stopping to puzzle over spelling, grammar, or punctuation. They realized, often for the first time, that writing can come quickly if it is seen as transcribed thought or speech. I think too many students, especially in remedial classes, endow their writing with an artificial permanence, as if they're carving in stone. In high school, and on exams in college, the first draft is almost always the last. Pressure to compose an error-free first draft seems to block a natural flow of thought. Inhibition rather than ignorance leads to most of the grammatical tangles that the frightened writer generates. To encourage students to lay out their thoughts quickly, and to develop a good-humored acceptance of the need for a raw first draft, I tell my classes tales of my own grim experience growing up as a bad writer, and I convince them that many professional writers develop elegant writing from possibly clumsy first drafts. After initial resistance, the students produce writing that's both alive and interesting enough to merit the labor of refining.

But free-writing is only a beginning. For long compositions, such as case histories or character studies, my students go through a carefully planned process of writing and revising. First, I have them compose a rough draft of the whole piece. Then they insert paragraph breaks whenever they can find a new event, or issue, or psychological action. At this stage, new paragraphs may have to be written, long paragraphs may be broken up, and new sentences added to beef up very short paragraphs. Next, students simplify and polish their sentences, one by one. Then they clarify diction, strengthen verbs, and cut unnecessary words. Finally, they go over their manuscripts for details of usage, spelling, and punctuation.

If students are encouraged to write about their own interests and experiences, will they learn the hard tasks of revision, refining and presentation? Mine did.

Before we began work on the plays themselves, I had the students write up examples of dialogues that they overheard in the course of a day. This was an exercise in listening and transcribing, and in appreciating the issues involved in writing plays. I suggested that they look for particularly dramatic exchanges involving conflicts, moments of greeting, or moments of departure. The students quickly grasped the essential limitations of the encoding process.

The first activity in relation to the plays themselves was a quick lecture that I gave on the shape of the Greek theatres and the sense of involvement of an entire community in a theatrical enterprise. Then I quickly ran through the plot of the first play, Euripides' *Alcestis*. I had a real sense

of urgency while doing this, because the students had to know the shape of the story that they were going to get into. The important quality of the play isn't its surprise, but rather the carefully articulated experience that is structured for the viewer or for the imaginatively alert reader. My synopsis of the play self-consciously moved between formal poetic diction quoted from the dialogue to a Bronx street-talk recapitulation of actions and speeches. I reported, and I translated, and I offered my own excited run-through of what I feel is one of Euripides' outrageously daring dramatic plots.

Then I sent the students home with the admonition that they should read the entire play in a single sitting. The writing assignment that I gave with the first reading was to report, as simply as possible, the experience they had when they attempted to read through the entire play at once; what they did, what they felt, how successfully they accomplished the reading, what was most satisfying and what was most frustrating. Almost two-thirds of each class was able to finish the play at a single sitting, usually in one-and-a-half or two hours. Responses were all favorable; plot summary had been absolutely necessary as a guide to what was going on. The students were confused and disturbed by the play. They tried to find easy answers where none were given, but they liked the play.

Next, I began a series of assignments designed to introduce play production in the classroom. I asked each student to select and prepare for reading aloud in class a single speech or part of a speech of ten to twenty lines. I carefully outlined the techniques of dividing up a dramatic speech

according to the "actions" found within it. It is crucial to know in a dramatic speech, for example, who is being addressed, where each sentence begins and ends, and what motives might underlie each sentence or each action.

I had the students write brief introductions for their readings, placing their speeches in a dramatic context (very simply), and then describing the initial action, the people addressed, and any dramatic turn or change of address within the speech.

I asked the students to read their rehearsed passages to the rest of the class. The seats were arranged around the perimeter of the classroom, so no one had to get up or come to the front of the room to read. We all listened, as politely as possible, and I offered no criticism of any kind for any of the readings. Simply by hearing how the more successful readers held the attention of the class, even the most frightened readers were getting something from the experience.

For the next part of the project, I divided the class into four "production groups," and I made each group responsible for a quarter of the play we were then considering. I appointed one person in each group as the "director," though perhaps the students themselves would have done a better job choosing their own leaders. In any case, the students held rehearsals of their sections outside of class hours. The director, who in the Greek plays usually took the role of the leader of the chorus, and the chorus members practiced together until they could match one another's rhythms pretty easily. The "named" actors worked with the director, together seeing that they understood all the

words and the actions that they were expected to read.

For some readers these tasks were very easy, for others the job was either too difficult or at first not sufficiently interesting. At the first classroom performance, several readers came in unprepared and they had to try to fake their way through the material. This proved to be a chastening awakening to some readers. Few came unprepared more than once.

Part of the written preparation that I required for the readers, whether as members of the chorus or as named characters, was to find some connection between the action in the play and some happening in their own lives. I illustrated the kinds of possible connections from my own experience, and I went to some of the examples quoted by Ken Macrorie in his *Telling Writing*. Ultimately everyone was able to make meaningful associations between things that *they* had seen and done and thought of and the displays of action, thought, and character that they saw in Euripides' script. The value of making these connections was primarily in getting the students to see the characters as familiar human beings in familiar situations rather than as artificial creatures in a contrived play. Once the Chorus was identified as a group of people much like any contemporary group of friends, then their motives, actions, and dramatic changes made sense.

After the production groups had rehearsed the play, usually for one or two hours, I did some careful cutting so that the entire piece could be read in a single hour-and-a-quarter class period. Then we read it.

The experience was extraordinarily satisfying for everyone. We had a few

problems with people cutting class on the crucial day, but each major role in each group's section had also been prepared by an understudy. There was strain, there were certainly odd lilt and rhythms reminiscent more of Taiwanese Mandarin than fifth-century Greek, but we had done the play. It sounded like a play, and it felt like a play, and it felt good. As the term progressed, we followed the same procedure with Euripides' *Bacchae*, and Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The next semester, with the same group of students, we began with Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, but we went on to work with more conventional prose texts and different kinds of classroom activities.

The students who had initially suffered real pain at their inclusion in a program labelled "remedial" were genuinely proud that they had engaged themselves in the difficult tasks of reading, rehearsing, and performing classic plays.

Other teachers in other forums have described how they have been able to generate staged readings and memorized performances of plays in their classrooms. Initially, I had hoped to be able to do a similar job with my remedial classes. As it turned out, my accomplishments as far as final products might be measured must be considered modest. But in an important sense, I succeeded and the classes succeeded beyond all conventional expectations. The activity involved, excited, and encouraged a group of people who usually feel cut off from, bored by, and alien to the mainstream of academic enterprises. And, I must admit, it was fun for me.

What of the writing the students produced as a result of this work on classroom production? We had been

working steadily on the writing exercises from Macrorie's *Telling Writing*. One of the assignments which I gave during our work on *King Lear* was to find a connection between anything in the last scene of the play and something in the students' own experience. Here is one example:

The last scene in King Lear reminds me of when my mother died. I was eight years old. At the same time my father almost died too, because him and my mother made a little promise. It was, "If I die first, I'll take you, but if you die first, you take me."

The day my mother died she almost took my father with her. He said that when he first passed over her he felt something going through his body, and he went out of the room to get something. When he came back he passed over her again. Then he felt the same thing, but stronger. He sat in a chair, and all of a sudden he fell asleep, and he started to sweat, and he heard the cop [who was there] saying, "Look how that man is sweating," but he heard the cop saying it from far away. My father was really dying; my mother was keeping her promise, because my mother loved him so much. God didn't let her take him with her. I'm very glad, because if my mother would have taken my father I wouldn't of been where I am now.

In the last scene, Kent says something very similar to this piece of writing. He said, "I have a journey, sir, shortly to go, My master calls me; I must not say no."

I myself never understood Kent's speech in this way before. Clearly,

this student's parents, who came from a village in Puerto Rico, shared beliefs, that were close to Shakespeare's experience in sixteenth-century England. I know I never heard anything like this in the Bronx, but as soon as I read this paper I felt that this is what Shakespeare had in mind when he penned Kent's lines.

Another student wrote:

The last scene really shocked me. It wasn't the fact that Lear, Cordelia and her sisters had died. It was the way the play ended. It's a question I ask myself. Why? Why must it end that way?

Probably I ask the question because of the environment that surrounds me, and all the influence people have over other people's way of thinking.

I remember looking at historical romance pictures on the TV set. The ending of the picture was the common ending, where he inherits the throne, she gets married to the prince who was forbidden to go to his own castle. The ending is that fairy tale imagination given to us by a cold and hard society which hides its true facts behind this type of false.

Shakespeare opens your eyes to this false imagination, showing you the world the way it really is. Not the way it is presented to us behind a screen.

The student's own sensitivity to the experience of the play, his resourceful use of his experience as a person in the world, and his apprehension of the high purpose of the drama all spring from the combination of a rich writing experience and an equally rich dramatic experience in a remedial program.

Not all the responses from students were uniformly encouraging. I know that growing hurts, and I know that I myself still weep when I read through *King Lear*. Preparing the play, rehearsing, finding points of identification between your own soul and the soul of Kent or the Fool, Cordelia or Regan, or the Duke of Albany and King Lear himself proved to be a pleasure for some but a terrible strain to others.

One student did not write a final paper for me, but he gave me a letter instead, and I will end my report by relating it to you. The man who wrote this was a small, handsome, black gentleman, about fifty-five, enrolled in my night school remedial class. The letter is dated May 15, 1975.

Mr. Urkowitz, I am learning from your class how to be open. My first few months with you I was able to go into my past and remember most of it, and up to the week of the Easter holidays it did not bother me. I have come to the conclusion that I had suppressed most of my past because my life has not been an easy one.

By remembering my past as I do, now that you have caused me to, I find that I am sometimes depressed because of things that have happened to me or members of my family. I find it difficult at this time to write about my experience as related to that of King Lear's.

In trying to remember an experience that would relate to a character in the play of King Lear I find that I can relate to a few from my past experience, but as stated above it seems to depress me, and above all I am not ready to reveal that part of my past at this time.

And he ended his letter saying, "Thank you for listening."

The last speech in *King Lear* contains these lines:

*The weight of this sad time
we must obey,
Speak what we feel,
not what we ought to say.*

Students in my remedial courses evidently learned that they could indeed speak what they felt; they learned also that they could command attention by what they had to say; and they learned that many of the things that they very much wanted to say were the weighty subjects of some of the most important examples of the world's literature.

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Music for Everyone

by Clifford Jay Safane

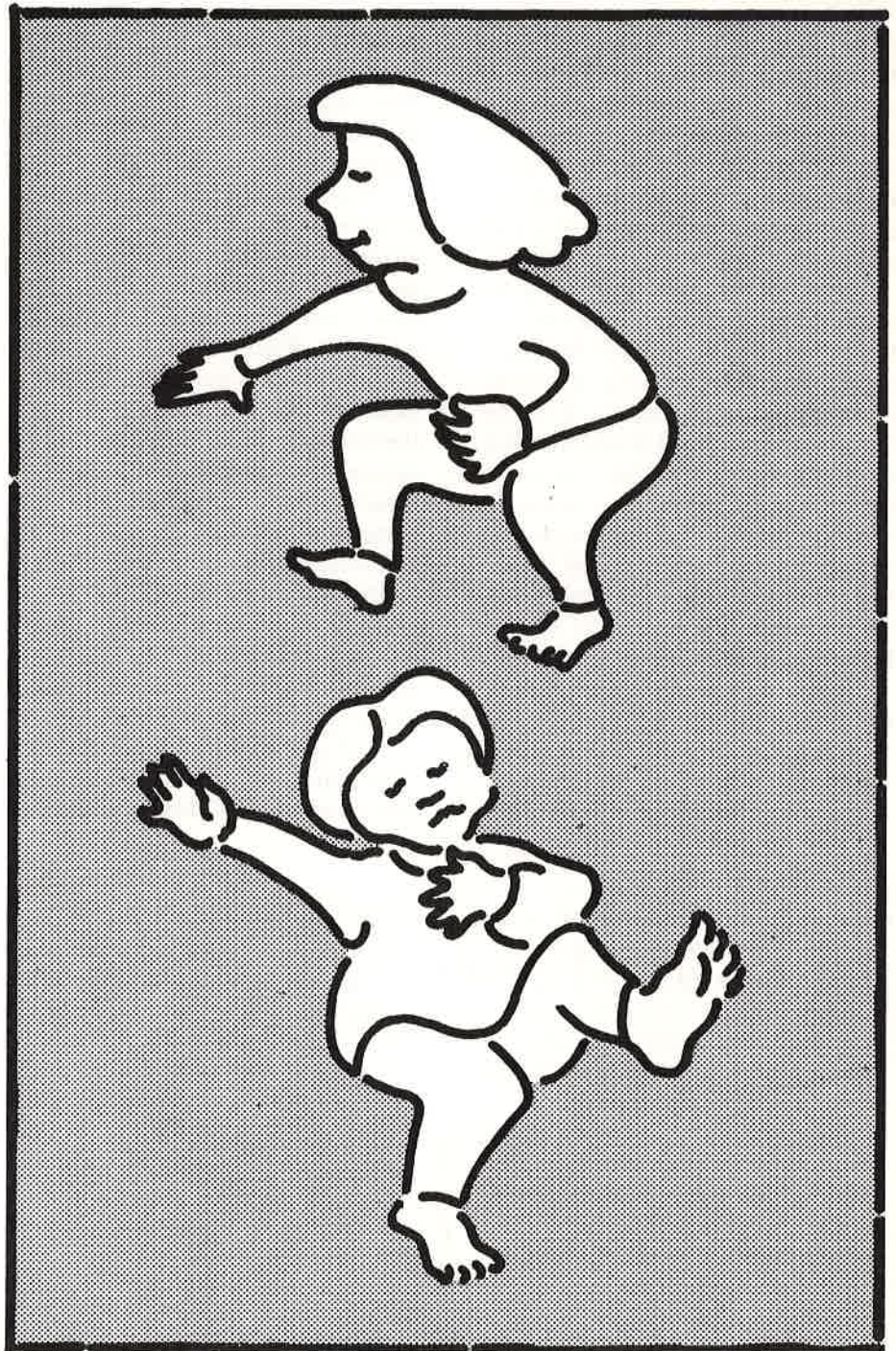
Everyone responds to music. We clap, sway and dance to its rhythm. It can make us laugh or cry. It can take a group of friends and make them feel closer to one another. It can bring together a room full of strangers. Music is a universal language and experience.

Keeping this great communicative ability in mind, I had two goals in teaching music to elementary school children. First, I wanted them to experience music rather than use it as background noise. Second, I wanted to use music as a liberating force. My time in the classroom showed me that while young children have a tremendous amount of untapped creativity, many of them exhibit self-consciousness. At an early age, they are already afraid of failure and new experiences.

Good music defies categorization; children will usually respond if it is presented with love and imagination, and are given the opportunity to experience jazz, folk, classical, and other types of music for themselves. Passive spoonfed or "ram it down their throats" approaches are not effective as they do not allow children to experience music as sensory, emotional, and intellectual experiences.

Although my main concern at P.S. 48 in Queens, N.Y. was teaching song writing, I was also involved with movement and ear exercises. Both activities drew the children into the music as well as gave them some general listening skills which also helped them in their composing.

Movement is an excellent introduction to feeling music and expressing emotion. It is one of the best ways to obtain initial success with children of



duple figures

triplst figures

Example 1

differing musical abilities. Children usually find movement a pleasurable experience. Many mornings, the children would ask me if they would be dancing that day. The feeling of their bodies bending, twisting, and moving around was obviously a powerful and exhilarating one.

On several occasions, I tried to create a link between movement and the expression of a specific feeling. I would begin by playing different types of music on the piano. Slow and fast. Loud and soft. I would then ask the children to tell me how the music made them feel. Soft music reminded some of sleeping. Loud, low pitched sounds made them feel scared. Music in a minor key was sad or frightening, while sounds in a major key evoked happier responses.

I then asked the children to physically demonstrate the feelings that they had just verbalized. The results were varied and impressive. Sometimes, they created patterns by them-

selves. Other times, they combined their efforts into a single creation. They might form a large snake-like line and move around the room, clapping along to the music.

I found that it was important to encourage the children when they moved around. Creative twists, leaps, and other gestures tend to feed upon themselves, each one having the potential of growing into something new. It is the initial impetus that is most difficult to cultivate. I would therefore make a point of voicing support to the children, especially those who were shy and had been somewhat reluctant to participate. Encouragement gave the children confidence; they took part in the exercises with enthusiasm, crying out different movements of self expression.

Ear training was another important part of my work. I was interested in developing the children's ability to concentrate and listen to what they

Example 2

teacher:

(11 claps)

possible responses:

were hearing, whether it was distinct pitches, rhythm, or every day sounds. I began this part of my teaching by having everyone close their eyes and try to guess what sounds I was making. I used common sounds like walking, jumping and yelling—as well as those a bit more unfamiliar—chalk scraping on the blackboard, a window shade being pulled down, and water running from a faucet. After the children had identified all the sounds that I had made, I would ask them if they could think of any additional ones.

Once the children were sensitive to sound in general, I introduced them to pitch discrimination. Initially, they had great difficulty distinguishing high from low. I believe that this was due to their lack of concentration. Thus, I had to develop their ability to focus on what was being played. This was attained by my demonstrating that high was up and low was down. I would first walk very tall, and follow it by moving around on my knees. I would then go to the piano and play a high note and a low note. Eventually, the children began to understand the difference. I could then proceed to play more than two notes consecutively, as well as having the pitches spaced closer together.

All of these activities and exercises led up to teaching composition, the focal point of my work. I worked with two types of pieces, those with lyrics and music, and those just with music. Since I was only working for ten sessions with children who lacked a formal music background (normally needed to compose and notate melodic and/or harmonic structures), I mostly concentrated on rhythm pieces and lyrics with rhythmic patterns, to which I added chords.

The first group of rhythm compositions were of a call and response type. I would clap a rhythm using duple and/or triplet figures (example 1) which the children would clap back to me. (When in this particular situation I chose the rhythms to be clapped, it is possible for one of the children to be the leader.) If they got it right, I would proceed to another rhythm. As their ability to reproduce my clapping increased, the rhythms

Example 3

$\text{♩} = 72$

Music

$C7(\#9)$

(piano or guitar rhythm)

Mu-sic makes me want to dance

$F7$ $C7(\#9)$

Mu-sic makes me feel in a trance Mu-sic makes me glad Mu-sic makes me sad

$F7$ $C7(\#9)$

Mu-sic makes me cry Mu-sic makes me high Mu-sic makes me hap-py

$G7$ $F7$

Mu-sic makes me slap-py Mu-sic makes me smile Mu-sic makes me sly

$C7(\#9)$

Mu-sic makes me want to sing Mu-sic makes me feel like spring 5|77

Words and Rhythms by
Students of Ms. Bowen
Music by Clifford Jay Safane

became more difficult in terms of added length, complexity, and non-repetitive patterns.

A variant of the call and response pattern found me clapping a rhythm and having a child answer me with the same number of claps but using a different rhythm (example 2). Such pieces involve the individual using his/her own creativity and power of concentration to determine how many claps are to be used. However, such an exercise should not be performed until one can reproduce what the teacher claps.

At this point, the children and I began to compose even more complicated rhythm compositions, using free rhythms and various sounds. Such pieces teach the concept of form and some of its components including repetition, variation, and contrast. First, we decided that the types of sounds we would use would be clapping, stamping, whispering, and laughing. I divided the class into four groups, each one responsible for making one of the four sounds. I then stood in the center of the room and pointed to a group to make their

sound. Only the group or groups that I signaled could respond, and for only as long as I pointed to them. (The sounds' order can either be improvised or written out.) It was necessary for the children to always be looking at me if the composition was to have clarity and an audible form. Once they were able to do this, I would let one of the children conduct.

Songs with lyrics were even more difficult to compose since they use rhyme, meter, and music—concepts and skills which my students lacked,

Example 4

Batman

$\text{♩} = 126$

Bat-man swing-in in the gar-bage can Spi-dea-man swing-in on the fly-ing pan

Su-per-man fly-in un-der wa-ter Ac-qua-man fell out the

door Won-der wo-man went through the floor Pop-eye the Sail-or-man

(Oop, oop) lives in a doll-house Rob-in swing-in on the

win-dow sill - The Jok-er sat on the mill - The Six Mil-lion Dol-lar Man

sat on his head and broke his bi-on-ic The Fonz he is cool

Pot-sie, he is a fool Bat-man and Rob-in beat up the Pen-guin

God-zil-la sat on on egg The moth-er came and broke his

head Ma-gil-la Go-ril-la sat on the mir-ROR

Words and Rhythm by Geneva Saunders, Keiser Edwards,
 Aaron Burchette, Kengeyeta Dantzer, Milton Mejia
 Music by Clifford Jay Safane

and which time did not permit me to teach them. Therefore, in order to give them the experience of composing songs, I had the children talk their lyrics to harmonic progressions which I wrote. I call these compositions "chant songs."

One of the most important factors in song writing is to find a subject matter that motivates the children to write lyrics. Comic books, television, and movie characters, and feelings are all good subjects. For example, I had my children complete the sentence "music makes me _____." When someone accidentally rhymed

"music makes me cry" with "music makes my Fly", I explained that this rhyming scheme was sometimes used in song writing. I then asked if they could give me more rhymes, either with the words they had already given or by using new words.

Once we had the lyrics, I began playing a repeated rhythmic motif on the piano. I asked the children to read their words to me, and they unknowingly rhythmically set their text to what I was playing. I notated their work (examples 3 and 4) and we then performed the compositions.

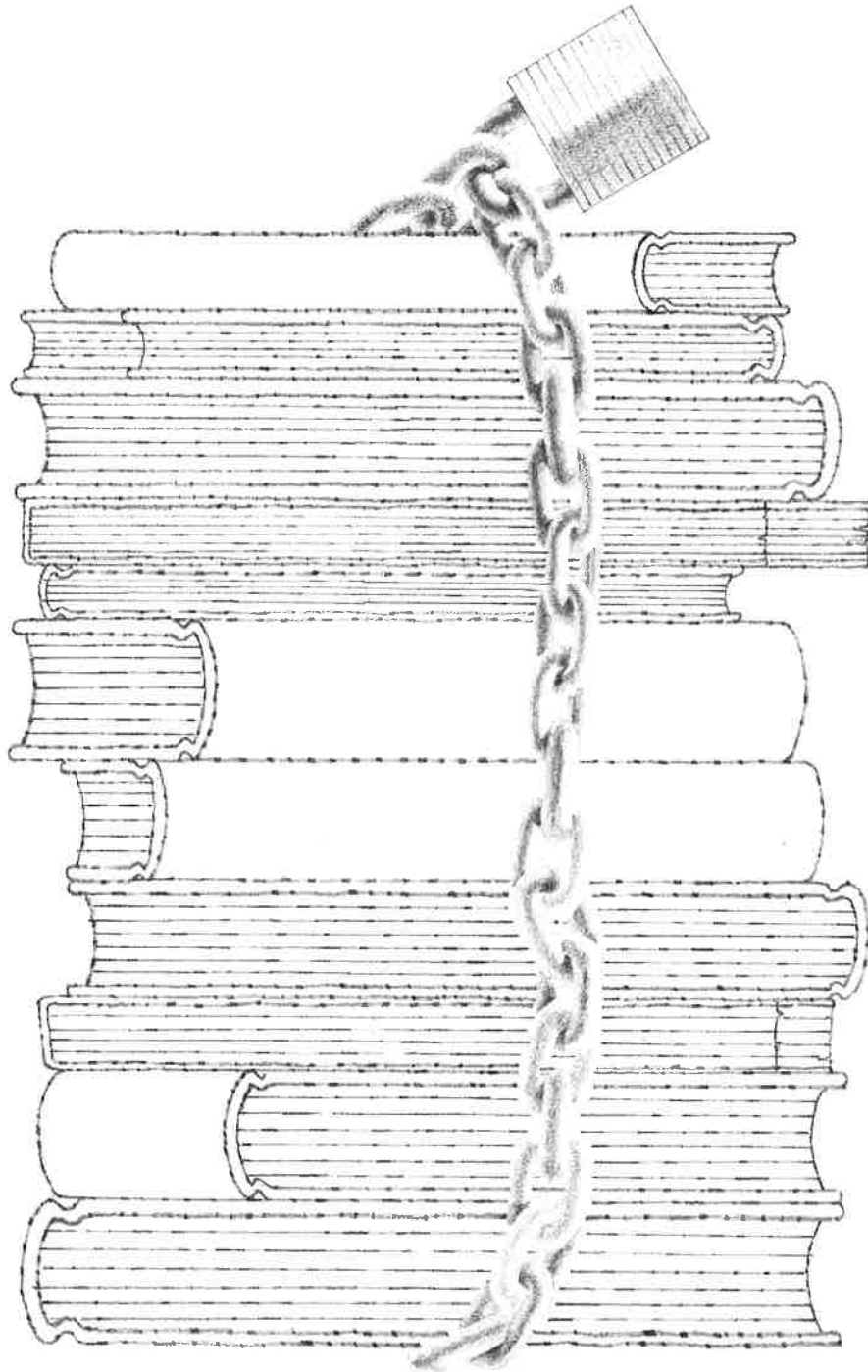
To live up to our full potential, we

must be aware of our bodies—i.e. total senses—and minds. Music—through listening, moving, performing, and composing—can provide this. It can involve our total selves, and perhaps free us so that we can begin to explore parts of ourselves that we previously were not aware of. Some of us may achieve a greater degree of musical proficiency, but this does not really matter. What is important is the act of discovering ourselves.

Music is for everyone, not just the professional. □

Usage and Abusage: Teaching Grammar Without Textbooks

by Marie Jean Lederman



Like all teachers of writing, I have strong biases about the teaching of grammar. Bias number one: I teach grammar. Bias number two: I believe that the notion that students must somehow "learn grammar" before they begin writing is false; therefore, students in all my writing classes, remedial and non-remedial, write essays all term. Bias number three: I do not use grammar texts. Grammar texts are de-codable primarily by those who already know how to speak and write Standard English. They confuse "trick" questions on minor points of grammar with those real mistakes that our students do make, obliterating the line between what is very important in Standard Written English and what is less important. My main objection to grammar texts is that they utilize "canned writing"—similar to the use of "canned laughter" on television. I have the same objections to dead writing as I do to dead laughter. This leads to bias number four: I only use material written by students in that particular class to teach grammar. This writing is not "canned"; it is very much alive, having been written, generally, within the previous week or two.

I teach not only "grammar" but every aspect of writing from student writing. This makes my teaching of grammar an integral part of my teaching of writing. I make a conscious effort not to separate the teaching of grammar from the rest of what goes on in my writing classes, either by using special texts for it or by devoting special units during the term to it, or separate periods during the week. The teaching of grammar and the teaching of good writing are *not* separable activities, and using separate time periods and separate texts to "teach grammar" helps re-

inforce the notion, already firmly planted in our students' heads, that they *are* separable.

What I am describing is simply an alternative way of dealing with grammar in our students' writing—a way of teaching grammar without using grammar texts. Let me be specific. I am going to discuss the use of this method with one of my remedial writing classes at City University of New York.

My first assignment was an in-class essay on any topic. After I had read these papers at home, I sat down at my typewriter and picked out sentences which contained miscellaneous errors in Standard English. I made an effort to get sentences from each of my students' papers and to get at least one kind of error which they, as a class, were making. I typed the sentences exactly as they appeared in the students' papers, except for spelling errors; I try not to reinforce incorrect spelling by copying misspelled words on these tear sheets.

When we met for the next class I returned the papers and distributed this sheet. I asked the students to take the sheet home and try to make corrections on any sentences which they thought were incorrect. If they couldn't see the error, of course they would leave the sentence alone. In addition to this assignment, I gave them their next writing assignment. We had read a New York Times article dealing with the sudden advent of three television shows which had heroes/heroines who were both ethnic and single. Their assignment was to watch one of these three programs and to write an essay discussing the reality or unreality of the program as each of them perceived it.

The next time we met we went over the first tear sheet containing sen-

tences with errors from their first writing assignment. This allowed me to begin to get some idea of what kinds of errors my students were capable of picking up and correcting and what kinds of errors confused them. This gave me my direction for future teaching. I collected the essay on the reality or unreality of the television program. In addition to making comments on each paper, I decided to pick out two kinds of sentences for use in class: run-on sentences and sentences which contained subject-verb agreement errors.

Meanwhile, their next writing assignment was to compare and contrast two characters from two of these ethnic/single television programs. This assignment was given on a day when we talked about ways of setting up a comparison-contrast paper. When I read this set of essays I saw that some students were still confused about the use of the semicolon to divide run-on sentences. I duplicated a list of their sentences which contained this error. I also decided to use some of their paragraphs from this assignment to work with on topic sentences and paragraph development.

As the start of this one term suggests, I try to vary my procedures with these tear sheets. Students always take the sheets home first and so have time to make corrections. I spot-check in class to see who has made corrections and who hasn't. After we finish working with a sheet together, I sometimes ask a student to go up to the board and write a sentence of his or her own, unpunctuated or with whatever errors we've just been discussing. Then I ask another student to go up to the board and correct it.

For additional feedback, I sometimes duplicate representative sentences from our sheets and ask stu-

dents to correct these in class. This serves as a kind of quiz. Although I don't give the students grades, I do, again, get some idea of who is noticing errors and who isn't. I don't grade the tear sheets because, ultimately, I'm not interested in whether or not students can make corrections on isolated pieces of paper. The real feedback comes from their essays. When a student who has been making a certain kind of error stops making that error, I have my feedback. If the student continues to make the error, I know that I need to work with the student individually in conference. After the conference, my assignment to the student is to go home and write a paragraph including some sentences which illustrate that the student has understood what we have just done.

Sometimes I divide the class into small groups of students who are making a particular kind of error; I assign a group leader who doesn't make this error and let him or her work with the group. I distribute appropriate tear sheets to each group, and make myself a resource person to each group. Again, the feedback is to have the students create sentences which are correct and which embody the rule that they have worked on during that period.

What are the benefits of using student writing and small groups to teach grammar? First, they give students the opinions of their peers. Often our students think that their teachers are being "picky" and deliberately obtuse when we tell them that something is wrong with a sentence or paragraph or essay. There is nothing like peer pressure to convince the author that something must be done to a sentence, paragraph, or essay because *real* readers, other students, are confused. For example, a student wrote:

Esther Rall (Florida) playing the part of the mother to Jo Jo, Thelma, and Michael, and the wife to James, is a very understandable mother and wife, she's a housewife willing and ready to do anything she can to satisfy her husband and her children; She's always teaching her children that a wrong never makes a right and a right way is always equal to a right, by doing this they will not go astray in the wrong direction but the right way.

The members of the class were quite vocal about their difficulties in following the idea as it is written; they insisted that the student revise it into several sentences. After the class worked on this, they found that the ending was repetitive and decided that it should be chopped off because the student had said the same thing twice.

This brings me to a second benefit of using student writing. Even though the use of tear sheets may lead you to think that grammar is still being taught in a vacuum, in actual practice it doesn't work out that way. Because I do all of my teaching throughout the semester from my students' papers, my classes get to know that writing is to be tinkered with. They begin to understand that there are some corrections which "must" be made and others that could be made—if the author happens to agree. We are concerned here with grammar as an integral part of writing. What I am trying to get students to see is that revision is necessary for many reasons. One reason may be that, in Standard Written English, the sentence is simply not grammatically correct; another reason may be that, stylistically, the sentence or paragraph or essay would be more effective and stronger

if some changes were made.

Students always offer suggestions for revision, and when they do this they are discussing *writing*. Unlike sentences or paragraphs out of grammar texts, the examples we use were written by themselves or other members of the class. They have a genuine desire to be helpful to each other. For example, in her first essay one student wrote: "In the year 1955 a baby girl name _____ was born, her birth place was in Bronx, New York at St. Francis hospital, she was the only darky in that ward at that time, so therefore there was no mix up." The class appreciated the irony in that sentence, chuckled, and then proceeded to correct the errors in the sentence. Another example of student feedback is the class response to a paragraph which was written by another student: "Bernadette Sanis (Thelma) is the daughter of James and Florida, her attendance in school seems to be half way perfect." Of course the class noted that this was not a paragraph but a sentence with incorrect punctuation. However, they responded with appropriate laughter to the phrase "half way perfect."

This procedure teaches, directly, how to proofread and revise one's own writing. We do, together, what each student needs to do at home when he or she has finished a first draft of a paper. I try to teach students that in the initial, creative first draft they should not think about spelling, punctuation or anything beyond getting out and on paper what is floating around inside their heads. However, revisions of this first draft must be made. After an initial cooling-off period, the student must go back to the paper and look at its structure and details as critically as we do in class.

Discussions of vocabulary, levels'

and appropriateness of language, "hip" versus Standard English—all grow out of the use of their writing. These discussions do not come in any preordained sequence. I don't make assumptions about what students must know before they start writing. I believe that students learn to write by writing, and writing again. Students learn to write when they have an audience that they want to reach and something that they want to say. They learn to improve their writing when they discover the reasons for their failure in communicating clearly and effectively.

Our class time is limited. I have no time to concentrate in these classes on anyone's writing but my students'. This is not to say that we don't use literature, films, and television assignments as springboards for ideas and, sometimes, to discuss ways of organizing and structuring these ideas. However, the bulk of our time is spent discussing the students' writing.

Does this procedure make for additional work for the teacher? It depends. If you are a good typist, it can take as little as five or ten minutes after you have finished reading and indicating corrections on a set of papers. Then it takes whatever time it takes in your school to have the material duplicated. However, it works best if you throw everything away at the end of the semester and start again with each new class. Even if students can be counted on to keep making the same errors, I don't use material from one semester's students with the next. Like the examples from grammar texts, the material has become "canned." Doesn't this mean more work? Yes, but I believe there is compensation in the level of student interest and, ultimately, it makes learning—and teaching—easier.

In addition, duplicating examples from the class can save individual

conference time. If you have already discussed three of a student's run-on sentences in class, you don't have to go over them again in conference, unless you believe that the student is still having trouble. If you break the class up into small groups with different sheets, you can work with one group on a particular problem instead of doing it separately with each student.

One of the objections of my colleagues to this business of not using grammar texts is that it makes the student too dependent on the teacher, not to have a grammar book in which to look up rules after he or she leaves your class. I suppose that I'm jaded, but I don't believe that students look up rules in grammar texts when they write for other classes. However, to meet this objection there is nothing wrong in asking your students to buy a grammar text, as long as it's cheap and it is a text that students have some remote chance of understanding when they're alone at home.

However, I have seen real abuses of grammar texts when I visited composition classes. Some teachers who believe that students can't write until they have "learned" grammar, and this is especially true in our remedial and corrective classes, may spend much or all of the term working with the students in class from the text or workbook; their assignments at home are from the text or workbook. This is not only "canned writing" but "canned teaching." It becomes easy to fall into this workbook-assignment-workbook correction habit. Time goes by in class with relatively little planning or thinking on the part of the teacher. Students come in and go through the motions. Very little writing gets done, and what writing does get done gets talked about even less—and then, generally, from the standpoint of "correctness."

Another abuse in working with

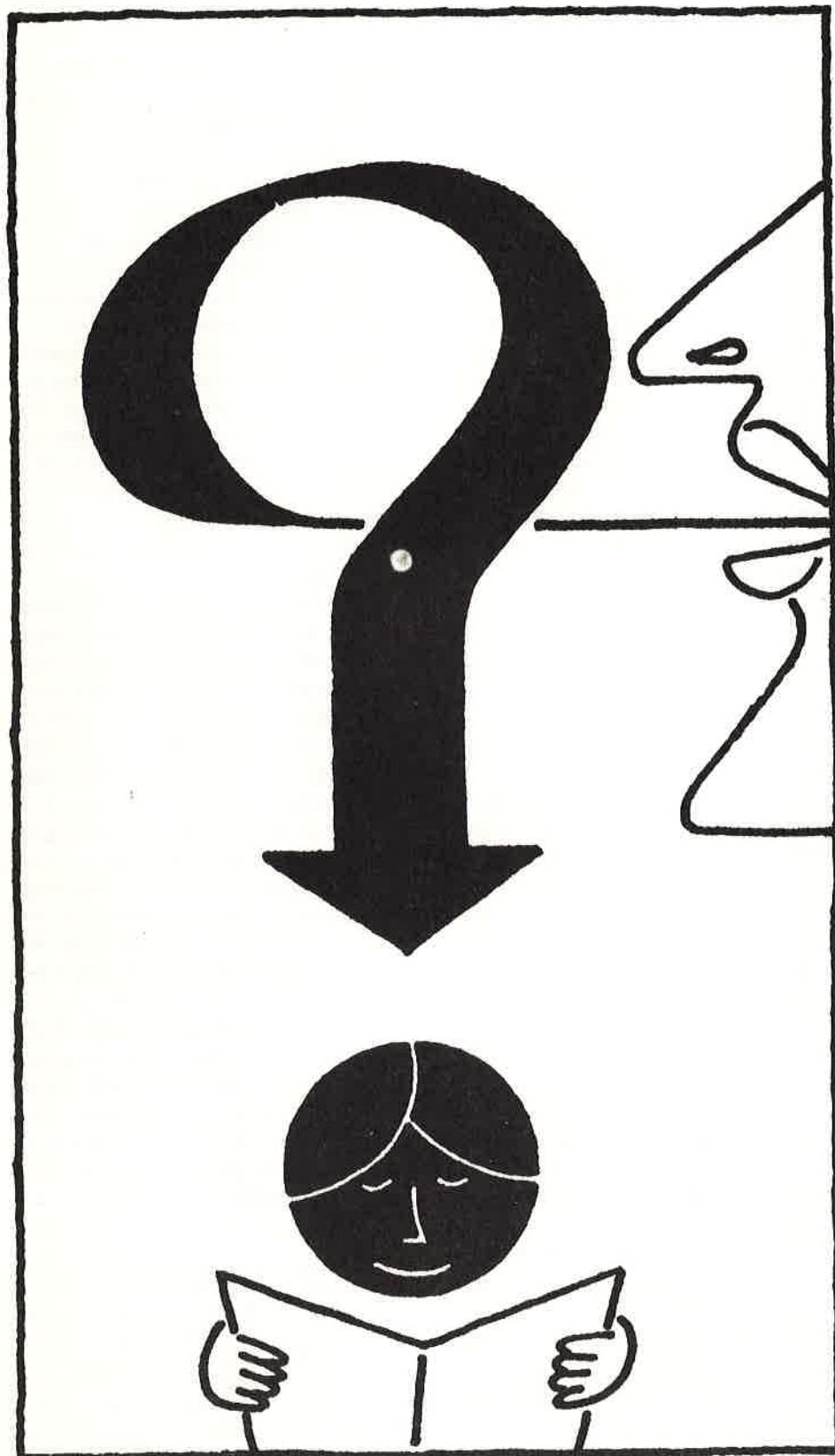
grammar texts is the tendency to assume that, because the text is organized in a particular way, the material should be taught in that order. Often the order is the word, sentence, paragraph, essay. This assumes a sequence of learning that is untenable with college students. This may be the order in which language is acquired, but it is a dangerous sequence to accept in dealing with often-bored adult learners. Once the teacher has assigned a text, there is always the danger of marrying it and staying married to it, at least until the term is over. It is this kind of overuse of grammar texts that I object to: a usage that all-too-easily becomes "abusage."

What goes on in our writing classes should have an element of unpredictability about it, should be spontaneous, because that's what good writing is. I think that many of us dislike composition classes because of their "sameness." I believe that this "sameness" is created—by us. It is created because we use the same texts semester after semester with our students—the same texts and the same assignments. Then we complain because composition is maddening. We owe something to our own sanity because, aside from everything else, sanity is an absolute condition for effective teaching. If writing, revising, playing with sentences and paragraphs and essays doesn't excite you as a teacher, then you are going to have trouble teaching students that this is the nature of writing. □

'Usage and Abusage' was originally published in *Writing As a Liberating Activity Newsletter*, Issues 9 and 10, Spring and Fall 1977. Reprinted with permission of Marie Jean Lederman and the copyright holder, Richard Gebhardt, Editor, *WBA Newsletter*, Department of English, Findlay College, Findlay, OH 45840.

Using Questioning as a Tool in Reading

by Rose Katz Ortiz



Having at times had difficulty reading with comprehension, I decided to observe what I do when I *do understand* what I read.

I noticed that I naturally ask questions about the text, more frequently at the very beginning of a book or passage than later on. When I had to read something that didn't interest me, I could acquire and maintain an interest by deliberately forcing questions. The hunt for the answers was what kept me engrossed.

I also noticed that I was almost constantly engaged in asking questions in other situations. For example, when meeting people, I had many questions about them: Who are they? What do they feel? How will they act? I also asked many questions during a movie or show. The ones I asked at the beginning were easier to catch, since those were the ones that pulled me away from something else and put me in contact with what was in front of me.

I didn't need to learn how to ask questions. I was doing that quite naturally, and only needed to be alerted to the fact that I asked them. Once I was aware of this activity, I could ask shrewder questions.

Now, while reading, I often hold a pencil and paper in my hand and make a mark whenever I notice myself drifting off, or not understanding what I am reading. The sooner I catch myself, the less I have to reread. When this is not enough to bring me back or put me in touch with what I'm reading, I ask questions.

I thought that if questions occupied so much of my time, the same might be true for other people.

In a remedial reading class I taught at Staten Island Community College, some students reported having difficulty remaining interested in their

textbooks and paying attention in their lecture classes. Reflecting on my own difficulty in similar situations, I engaged them in the following exercise.

I asked them to respond to the statement, "I do not talk to Jackie Green," which I had written on the blackboard. After reading it, they started asking questions which I recorded directly under the statement.

Why don't you talk to him?
What did he do to you?
Who is he?

After a few questions they stopped and waited for my answers. I didn't answer; instead I encouraged them to ask more questions. They continued until there were about thirty.

Did he upset you?
How long have you known him?
Do you know him?
Is he deaf?

After that point, I asked whether they often ask questions. Their responses varied. "All the time." "Rarely." One man, John, said, "I don't ask questions because I'm shy and I'd feel nosy asking questions." I asked whether he had ever asked questions silently. He said that he didn't know and that he had never given it any thought. I asked whether he would risk sounding nosy if he asked questions silently. After thinking a moment, he said, "No, no one would know."

I asked the students whether there was anything they'd like to know about others in the class. They all looked around at each other and gradually started giggling. I told them to ask silently any question they wanted to and to count the number they asked; the laughter increased.

I asked, "John, is there anything you want to know about me?"

Chuckling shyly he said, "Yes." He relaxed when I said, "I don't have to answer, but you can still ask." Everyone had a turn at asking a question of me or of anyone else in the room. No one was obliged to answer, though everyone did except for me, demonstrating that it was possible to ask a question even when no answer was forthcoming.

Following this activity, I asked whether it was ever possible to get answers without asking questions. This question started a debate between those who thought it impossible to get answers without questions and those who thought that because we are constantly bombarded with information, asking questions isn't required.

Some of the discussion took the form of questions which I put to the class: What state of mind must one be in in order to receive information? Is being bombarded with information enough to penetrate the walls of a closed, unquestioning mind preoccupied with something of greater interest to it? Must one be in an "open" or curious state of being in order to receive information? Must one be in an open state in order to be aware that one has received information? If in a curious state, is it possible that asking questions happens so automatically that it is difficult to catch oneself involved in such an activity? When one is in a closed state is it possible to force an open state by deliberately asking questions? How does one know whether one is in an open state?

The discussion went on for some time after which I gave the following assignment. Sometime between now and our next class choose a portion of a day and during that time try to observe yourself very carefully to notice

whether you find yourself asking questions. If you do, jot them down.

As the students gathered their belongings to leave the room, I could hear them sharing the questions they ask when they get up in the morning:

What time is it?
What kind of day is it?
Who left the cap off the toothpaste?
What's for breakfast?
Do I have my key?

"Boy, I really do ask a lot of questions!" said one woman as she walked out the door.

The following session, students brought in their lists of questions. Most people observed only five minutes of their day. This short time was enough for them to see how many questions they actually generated. The students who seemed most affected were those who had not realized how much of the time they actually are asking questions.

For John, a student who worked nights and came to school during the day, the awareness was particularly valuable. Up until this point he had often come late to class, missed a number of sessions and was uninvolved unless I asked, "John, are you with us?" My prodding was almost always required in order for him to become engaged. Once he became involved, however, he was one of the most active participants in the class. John seemed to need an outsider to pull him out of his daydream or internal discussion so that he could relate to what was happening outside of himself. Now he discovered that he could play the role of the provoking outsider by asking himself questions. This technique was not available to him before, simply because he wasn't aware of it. His homework list of questions read as follows:

What is my day going to be like?
Do I want to do something today that I didn't do yesterday?
What are my communications going to be like with other people—good or bad?
How will I feel if I miss my class today?
Am I going to pass all my subjects this term?
Who is going to talk first today in Rose's class?

Questioning Focuses Attention

John was the first one in class that day. He was immediately more involved than I'd ever seen him. This was the only assignment he had turned in all semester. When I asked for feedback at the end of the session, he talked about how changed he felt by the questioning exercises. He said that he'd become much more involved in his other classes as well. "As long as I remind myself to ask questions, I participate in what's going on; otherwise I'm off somewhere thinking about something else—unless the class is very interesting. But a lot of times I'm so involved in what I'm thinking about, that I don't find out if it's interesting and before I know it the class is over. When I ask the questions, I care more about answering them. I just have to remind myself to ask the questions."

Others in the class reported that before these exercises they weren't aware of how much of their time they spent daydreaming or talking to themselves. These students have a tendency to confront school in a passive mode. To them it is usually, "This is boring," and rarely, "I'm not interested in this class." The questioning exercises enabled them to begin to realize that they have control, that they can choose what to focus their attention on.

Often there is competition between the external environment—a book, a

lecture or a conversation—and one's internal voice or fantasy; or there is competition between two or more external activities. One must choose between these competing alternatives. This decision making process, usually unnoticed, becomes obvious when the competition between alternatives is stiff—for example, when the same type of energy or attention is required in order to attend to two opposing choices.

You may, for example, be engaged in a highly charged internal discussion attempting to sort out a problem, when suddenly it's 6:30 and time for the news. You may turn your radio on to the news and find that ten minutes later you've missed the first half. Or you may, while reading a book, be thinking about a party you went to; after turning ten pages you have no idea what you have read. Provided that you have noticed, you can make the effort to abandon your private discussion and become engaged in the news or the book.

The key here is to be cognizant of the competition, to be aware that you can involve yourself in the activity that has priority. When that activity coincides with your desires, your involvement will seem effortless. When it does not coincide—for example, when your assignment for work or school competes with something else you would rather do—you will need to work more actively.

Another exercise I did with the class was to give them the first sentence of a short story. I wrote it on the board and did not tell them that it was part of a story. I asked whether they had any questions to ask. By now they were so good at asking questions that their notebook pages were filled in no time. I then handed out the story. After they spotted the sentence, I asked them to read the

story and note how many of their questions had been answered.

My purpose in assigning this exercise was to illustrate that asking questions was not only a technique for focusing attention but for clarifying the material one is reading or hearing. Both functions of asking questions—attention and clarification—are crucial in order for comprehension to take place.

The students' involvement in the piece was dramatic, as was the discussion which followed. I had them read aloud the questions which were answered by the text. Students asked for proof when they disagreed that a question was in fact answered. What became apparent was that some students answered questions without consulting the author. So aside from helping the students center their attention on the story and its meaning, the exercise aided them in sorting out what they had read into the story and what was actually there.

By now I knew that I could assign more challenging reading material. I gave the class the following sentence about which they asked questions: "Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war in which the Peloponnesians and the Athenians fought against one another." When they were sure they understood this sentence, they went on to the next sentence in the material. It too required that they ask several more questions to insure that they were comprehending. They continued this activity throughout the passage, questioning and answering.

Reading was turning into an active process which involved a dialogue with the material—curtailing the battle between daydreaming and reading. Instead of trying to read and not daydream, they were involved in a new activity that facilitated compre-

hension. How much better it was to generate their own questions at the moment they found something obscure than to read until the end, not having the slightest notion of what they had read!

Questioning Exercises

Following are some exercises which can provide students with an opportunity to become aware that they ask questions and to transfer their ability to generate questions to the activities of reading and writing.

1. Write the first sentence of a short story, an essay or article on the chalkboard or on a piece of paper. Ask students to write at least ten questions about the sentence. Then have them read the piece and write or be prepared to tell which, if any, of their questions were answered.

2. Choose a difficult passage, preferably nonfiction. Have students ask questions for each sentence or for the first sentence of every paragraph. Have them read the entire piece and be prepared to write or tell which, if any, of their questions were answered. (You might suggest that among their questions should be, "Do I understand this sentence?" or "Am I clear about the meaning of this paragraph?" before going on to read more.) If they have questions which are not answered by the text, they may find the answers elsewhere. Discuss this possibility with them. As another exercise, arrange for them to seek answers by consulting other sources.

3. Tell a story aloud, stopping in the middle of an exciting part. Record your students' responses.

4. Choose an exciting story which you are quite sure will interest your students. Direct them to read it silently and observe whether they ask any

questions. Have them put an "X" whenever (if ever) they notice themselves asking questions. Have them discuss their experiences.

5. Give students the first sentence of a prose piece. Don't show them the rest of the passage. Ask them to write as many questions as they can about the sentence. Then have them write a prose piece in which they answer these questions. Afterwards have them read the original piece and ask them to compare the content of their writing with that of the original. (This strategy helps students become aware of how much of themselves they bring or can bring to a piece of writing.)

6. Hand out a comic strip without words. Ask students to figure out the story from the pictures alone, paying particular attention to the things they say to themselves while trying to figure out the story. When they have finished, ask them to report how they got the story. They may be tempted to tell the story, but if you focus on how they got it, they may find that asking questions about the designs or pictures was integrally involved in the process, and something they can use when reading print.

7. Using pictures:

a. Hand each student a photograph or picture of a person. Ask them to write as many questions as they can about the person in the photo. You might say, "Who can write thirty?" Some may struggle to get ten. For these students it might be useful to hear other students' questions. Next, have them write a paper in which they answer as many of the questions as they can.

b. Have students switch pictures and questions and write a paper in which they answer the other person's questions.

c. Do the exercise again giving students different photographs of dif-

ferent people. Have them compare paper number 1 with paper number 2. Ask them how they account for the differences (provided, of course, that there are some).

d. Do the same exercise using pictures of places, objects, events.

e. Do the same exercise looking at real people, places, or things, having students answer the questions for themselves rather than having the observed person answering (that can be another exercise). The two papers can then be compared.

8. Have students write as many questions as they can about a particular social issue. Then ask them to write a paper in which they answer these questions. In this exercise you might encourage them to consult a source other than themselves.

Asking questions can be a valuable way to focus one's attention on a particular subject. It also serves to clarify meaning. Unfortunately, in schools, at home, at work, on TV quiz shows, most emphasis is placed on "the answers," "the best answer," "the right answer." Thus, the importance of "the question," "the best question," and questioning in general, is neglected. The asking of questions by students is, in fact, often discouraged by teachers who, when finding themselves short of time say, "That's a good question, but we must get on with the lesson." Yet, questions as well as answers are an integral part of one's own learning. This connection between questioning and learning is blurred when questions are considered the private domain of the teacher, the tester, or the textbook writer. □

This article first appeared in the *Journal of Reading* (November 1977). It is here reprinted with permission of Rose Katz Ortiz and the International Reading Association.

The First Poems of Gerry Pearlberg

by Alan Ziegler

WEARY SUN

*a bluebird lets the
weary sun rest on its wings
and carries it swiftly
back to the sky*

—Gerry Pearlberg

Gerry Pearlberg was in my after-school poetry workshop at Wagner Junior High School in Manhattan. A ninth-grader, Gerry came to the first session because she thought it was a short story class. When she found out it was poetry, she was unsure about staying. She didn't write poetry, had never connected with it. Thankfully, she decided to give the class a try.

For the first couple of sessions I ran the group through several exercises. Gerry was shy about her work but was an intense listener. Then we discussed association in poetry—what Robert Bly calls “leaping”—and Gerry handed in the following poem:

STAPLING MY FACE

*india ink babies crawling on my linen.
roaches disfiguring apples. smoke making my
eyes sweat, lashes falling out.
not noticing beggars clad in chinese silks, nor
the windmill drowning in the tide.
passing the buck. paper dolls running the
casinos of vegas.
dogs barking. city. city. valentine dates and
purple hearts. tell that to the G.I.'s.*

Gerry was fascinated with the use of the unconscious in poetry, so I encouraged her to pursue fantasy and dream-imagery; I talked about the power of language to *create* experience. I introduced the class to Russell Edson's use of the fable approach, and Gregory Orr's and Charles Simic's poems that imbue inanimate objects with souls.

Gerry took off on her own, writing at home, not dependent on classroom “assignments.” She wrote magical poems, each a unique world inhabited with such characters as porcelain monkeys; satin sheets; a huge, hollow black egg that when killed gives birth to millions of tiny vengeful eggs; and a dust speck that contains an engraved picture of the poet as an embryo. Gerry created unnatural environments, yet the actions within them reflected internal logic; her poems were comprehensively strange. They were bright with imagery (“false teeth rest/ on a chair/ grinning

like a/ piece of death”), and most of the poems had metaphorical implications:

THROUGH WHICH THE NIGHT WIND BLOWS

*A bronze statue of a man
stands high on top of a mountain,
one hand raised above his head.
In it he holds a sword that punctures passing clouds,
sending them whizzing out of sight.
His body is tall and muscular
and the shimmering of the bronze is
like the glistening of sweat in the sun.
He has no eyes,
there are merely empty black sockets
through which the night wind blows
whistling and echoing.*

The poems came in fistfuls. Since I was only in the school one day a week, we began meeting during her lunch period so we could have more time to talk. One afternoon Gerry came in with nothing—her first bout with writer’s block. Don’t worry, I told her, I’d gone for far longer periods. Perhaps something is brewing. A couple of weeks later she came in with another batch and handed them to me with her usual, “I don’t know if these are any good, but....” One of the poems dealt with the frustrating disappearance of her muse and its resuscitative return:

POETRY AGAIN

*flying high, sweeping
dusty air
in screaming dives and swoops.
spiralling up
and down
again.
boldly heading for luna.
he glitters in dying pine
in crackling branches—
summers gone
memory-dim.
grey bird
depresses the sun into
gold.
fluttering down to
earth to rest
powdery wings
and to open and
close them*

*rhythmically to the heartbeat of the
wind and
make surprise flights to heaven
and
back.*

Eventually, I felt it would be good for Gerry to get some of her poetry closer to home. I told her that as much as I loved her fantasy poetry, I thought she should also try writing about the physical spaces around her. I introduced her to David Ignatow’s work, and she went, on her own, to hear Ignatow read. I asked Gerry to take a walk around her neighborhood (Manhattan’s Upper East Side) and look through her poetic telescope to observe things that might be missed by the naked eye. The following are excerpts from a long poem called “Notes of an Individualistic Society”:

*
*suntanned men sitting up at
the pool on the roof.
super sized sun tan lotion bottles,
new, easy squeeze caps.
tinted glasses,
white, dried out feet
perched up on plastic
reclining pool chairs
that get hot in the sun.*

*
*old lady dwarf
stretches her hand
through the barbed wire fence
tender vittles dinner for
cats in the junkyard.
then goes upstairs for alpo meal.*

*
*too torn up jeans
run in the night.
sandy hair sticking
to forehead with bloody sweat.
grey sneakers
patting the cement swiftly.
joint hanging from sweet lips.*

Throughout the year I exposed Gerry to poems that had influenced me, and shared my own work with her. Gerry added new overtones to her poetic voice—irony, wit, whimsy.

BREAKING THE LAW

*I love to break the law,
it shatters in slow motion
and bounces,
then lies still*

POEM

*this black ink tastes good,
but it could use some mustard.*

Gerry began to write some ambitious verse—poems in several sections. Here are two excerpts from a long poem called “Cycle.”

III crucifixion of a myth

*i reach a pointed mountain top,
and upon it,
punctured through the middle
and limp with legs dangling and
eyes rolled out of sight,
is a centaur.
the limbs are still,
yet within
the hoof
the echoes of hoofbeats are heard.*

*

*suddenly they explode into view:
two apes,
one from the east, one from the west.
one has a red band wrapped around its body
and carries a bayonet.
the other is completely naked and carries
a small stick.
they do not fight,
as i would have expected.
the sun rises and takes its place
beside the
moon.
the clothed ape,
silhouetted in the sun,
stands erect and raises its arm to the sky, holding
the bayonet to the sun.*

*the other ape, silhouetted in the moon
crouches beside its neighbor.
it hunches in a fetal position,
rolls into a ball and shrinks
in proportion to the moon behind it shrinking.
until it,
and the moon
are both too insignificant to be bothered with.
they are balloons of time and each is an extremity
of progress.*

I began to look to Gerry for feedback in my own writing and talked to her about the joys and frustrations of being a writer. Someone had responded to her first poems with, “You’re not this talented.” I pointed out that as important as feedback is to a writer, one has to maintain a certain distance from praise and criticism—and this comment seemed to be both. Some people paid special attention to Gerry as her reputation as a writer got around. Gerry’s internal and external worlds were expanding.

Teachers & Writers published a book of her poems, *Night Quiver*, at the end of the school year; Gerry participated in all stages of the book, including a visit to the typesetter. I sent the book to a well-known poet, who responded: “My goodness, a book at 14; ... I hope she’s a strong girl as well as being talented. At 14 she’s got a long way to go, and most of the journey she’s got to be able to make herself.” I thought about this—what had I gotten her into? Or, more accurately, what had I helped her get herself into? Whatever it was, Gerry seemed to be the better for it, and so were the increasing number of people who were enjoying her poems. It is true that part of the “journey” she will have to make herself, but there will always be teachers, friends, other poets, and—perhaps someday—students, who will travel along with her. And in moments of solitude there will be language.

What was my role in Gerry’s growth as a writer? It was not as a catalyst, for I also changed; I learned a good deal about the creative process from Gerry, and have used her work with many other students. I have no need to quantify the amount of influence I’ve had on Gerry, or guess whether or not she would have written like she has if I had not been her teacher. It is wrong for a teacher to wear an exceptional student like a medal, but it is usually false modesty for a teacher to dismiss his or her role by saying, “All I did was give the student an opportunity.” What really matters is that certain connections took place, and those connections continue to reverberate.

Gerry and I ended our formal relationship with the close of that school year, but we have stayed in touch through the standard procedures—phone calls, letters, and occasional get-togethers. She went on to high school and spent this past summer living in a teepee at a summer camp in Vermont, where she wrote poems influenced by her country environment. They exhibit a strong sense of place, and a fusion of the mystical and close-at-hand. Some excerpts:

*Six reddened teepees stand still
glowing uniformly
bright like spaceships
or giants' hearts*

*Within this huge silent creature we sit
staring up through the center
from where the sun, sky, and rain meet
with the internal.*

*Like the spiraled eye of god, this
opening seems unending
as it watches us in our sleep*

...

*This wilderness has a spirit,
a soul that slides from the inner earth
like a snake made of mist
that tangles itself in the trees
and gets caught in the branches of my heart*

...

*By the fire
you are silhouetted by the
dancing orange discs of
heat that
stare like little wild eyes from within the wind*

...

*I feel the fist made of leaves
in my stomach
clenched over a pearl of rain.
Like a droplet of water
from a swamp, you drink the rain
from me
and hold my spirit
like a firefly in a bottle.
The coals of the fire
pulsate:
square hearts that beat in silence. □*

Plugs

MORE NUCLEAR POWER STATIONS has been called a thriller and science fiction. It is also a rare documentary film that gives us an inside view of the nuclear power industry as it functions in today's society.

The film, which was produced by a Danish filmmaker, tracks the nuclear fuel cycle from power station to reprocessing plant to waste storage. It is a tour which takes us through atomic facilities in Germany, England, France and Belgium. Available from Green Mountain Post Films, Box 177, Montague, MA 01351.

WRITING IDEAS FROM HELIKON. Collected by teachers and writers of HELIKON, a non-profit program of community workshops and publications to encourage self-expression through writing: \$3.50 per packet, and indicate grade level. In-service workshops in conjunction with the packet are also available. Write The Helikon Writing Program, 36 Pine Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540, or call (609) 924-5782 any weekday morning.

MORE FILMS KIDS LIKE is the long-awaited successor to the original volume edited by Susan Rice. The new work, edited by the director of the Children's Film Theater Project, is the product of two years of testing recently released short 16mm films with children from two to twelve years of age. The 200 films selected for annotation in this volume were those found to be most successful in the testing period. Taken together, **MORE FILMS KIDS LIKE** and **FILMS KIDS LIKE** (ALA, 1973) include 400 annotated listings of child-tested films released between the 1950s and 1976. Available from: Order Department, American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

Teachers & Writers Publications

THE WHOLE WORD CATALOGUE (72 pages) is a practical collection of assignments for stimulating student writing, designed for both elementary and secondary students. Activities designed as catalysts for classroom exercises include: personal writing, collective novels, diagram stories, fables, spoof and parodies, and language games. It also contains an annotated bibliography.

THE WHOLE WORD CATALOGUE 2 edited by Bill Zavatsky and Ron Padgett (350 pages). A completely new collection of writing and art ideas for the elementary, secondary, and college classroom. Deepens and widens the educational ground broken by our underground best seller, the first *Whole Word Catalogue*. Order two copies and get a free subscription for a friend.

IMAGINARY WORLDS (110 pages) originated from Richard Murphy's desire to find themes of sufficient breadth and interest to allow sustained, independent writing by students. Children invented their own Utopias of time and place, invented their own religions, new ways of fighting wars, different schools. They produced a great deal of extraordinary writing, much of it reprinted in the book.

A DAY DREAM I HAD AT NIGHT (120 pages) is a collection of oral literature from children who were not learning to read well or write competently or feel any real sense of satisfaction in school. The author, Roger Landrum, working in collaboration with two elementary school teachers, made class readers out of the children's own work.

FIVE TALES OF ADVENTURE (119 pages) is a new collection of short novels written by children at a Manhattan elementary school. The stories cover a wide range of styles and interests—a family mystery, an urban satire, a Himalayan adventure, a sci-fi spoof, and a tale of murder and retribution.

TEACHING AND WRITING POPULAR FICTION: HORROR, ADVENTURE, MYSTERY AND ROMANCE IN THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM by Karen Hubert (236 pages). A new step-by-step guide on using the different literary genres to help students to write, based on the author's intensive workshops conducted for Teachers & Writers in elementary and secondary schools. Ms. Hubert explores the psychological necessities of each genre and discusses the various ways of tailoring each one to individual students. Includes hundreds of "recipes" to be used as story starters, with an anthology of student work to show the exciting results possible.

JUST WRITING by Bill Bernhardt. A book of exercises designed to make the reader aware of all the necessary steps in the writing process. This book can be used as a do-it-yourself writing course. It is also an invaluable resource for writing teachers.

TO DEFEND A FORM by Ardis Kimzey. Tells the inside story of administering a poets-in-the-schools program. It is full of helpful procedures that will insure a smoothly running program. The book also contains many classroom tested ideas to launch kids into poetry writing and an extensive bibliography of poetry anthologies and related material indispensable to anyone who teaches poetry.

BEING WITH CHILDREN, a book by Phillip Lopate, whose articles have appeared regularly in our magazine, is based on his work as project coordinator for Teachers & Writers Collaborative at P.S. 75 in Manhattan. Herb Kohl writes: "There is no other book that I know that combines the personal and the practical so well..." *Being With Children* is published by Doubleday at \$7.95. It is available through Teachers & Writers Collaborative for \$7.00. Paperback \$1.95.

TEACHERS & WRITERS Magazine, issued three times a year, draws together the experience and ideas of the writers and other artists who conduct T & W workshops in schools and community groups. A typical issue contains excerpts from the detailed work diaries and articles of the artists, along with the works of the students and outside contributions.

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This special issue of the *Newsletter* presents some of the experiences of writers working with film and video. These articles explore the connection between drama, as captured by these media, and the writing process with which we attempt to familiarize children. We hope to convey to the reader some sense of how film and video, major art forms of our time, can be used in the classroom to expand the understanding of arts in general.

- Film History Course—A Diary
Phillip Lopate
How to Live Without a Father:
The Making of a Videodrama
Theresa Mack
Notes on Fiction Scripts for Film
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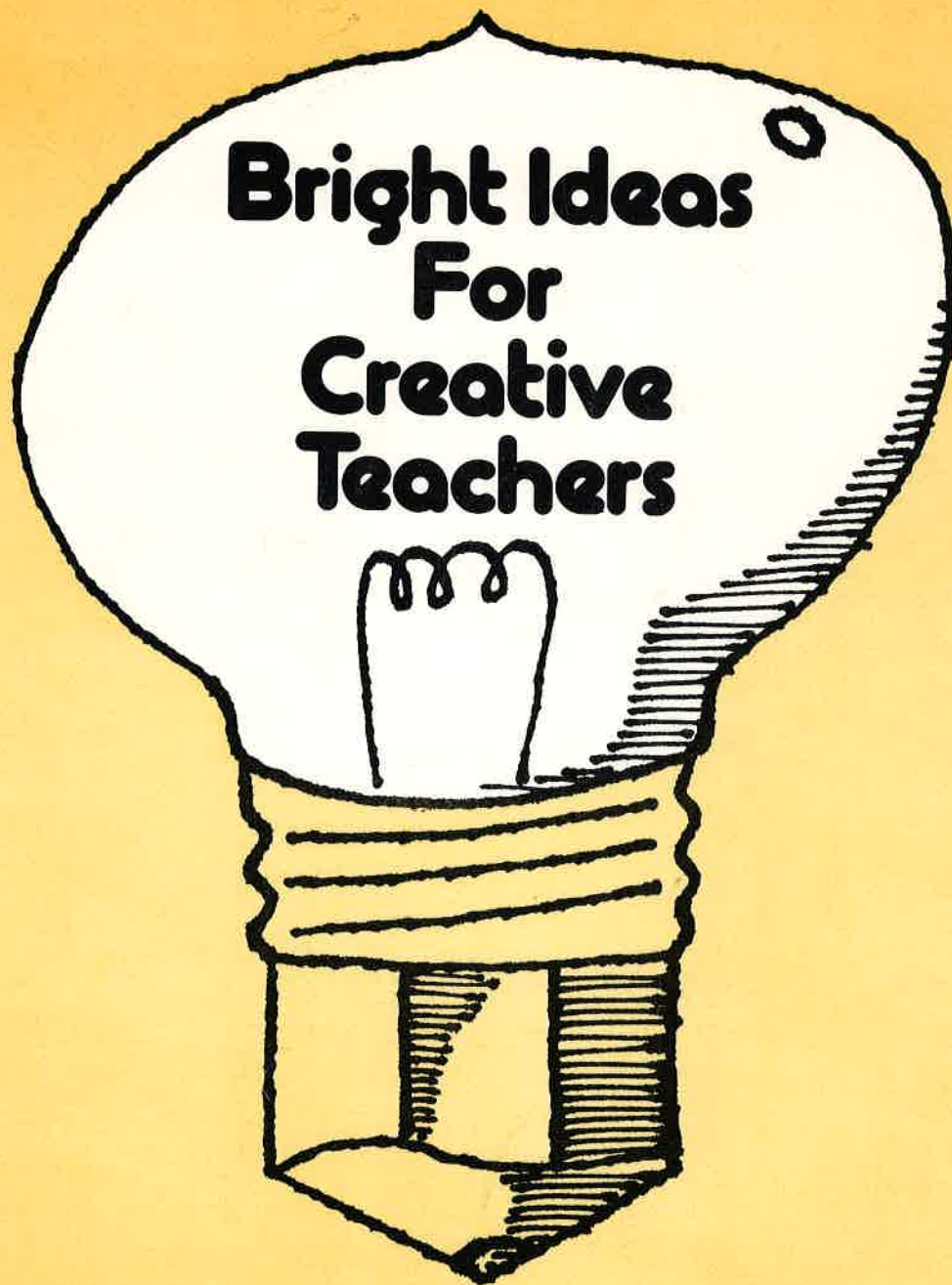
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