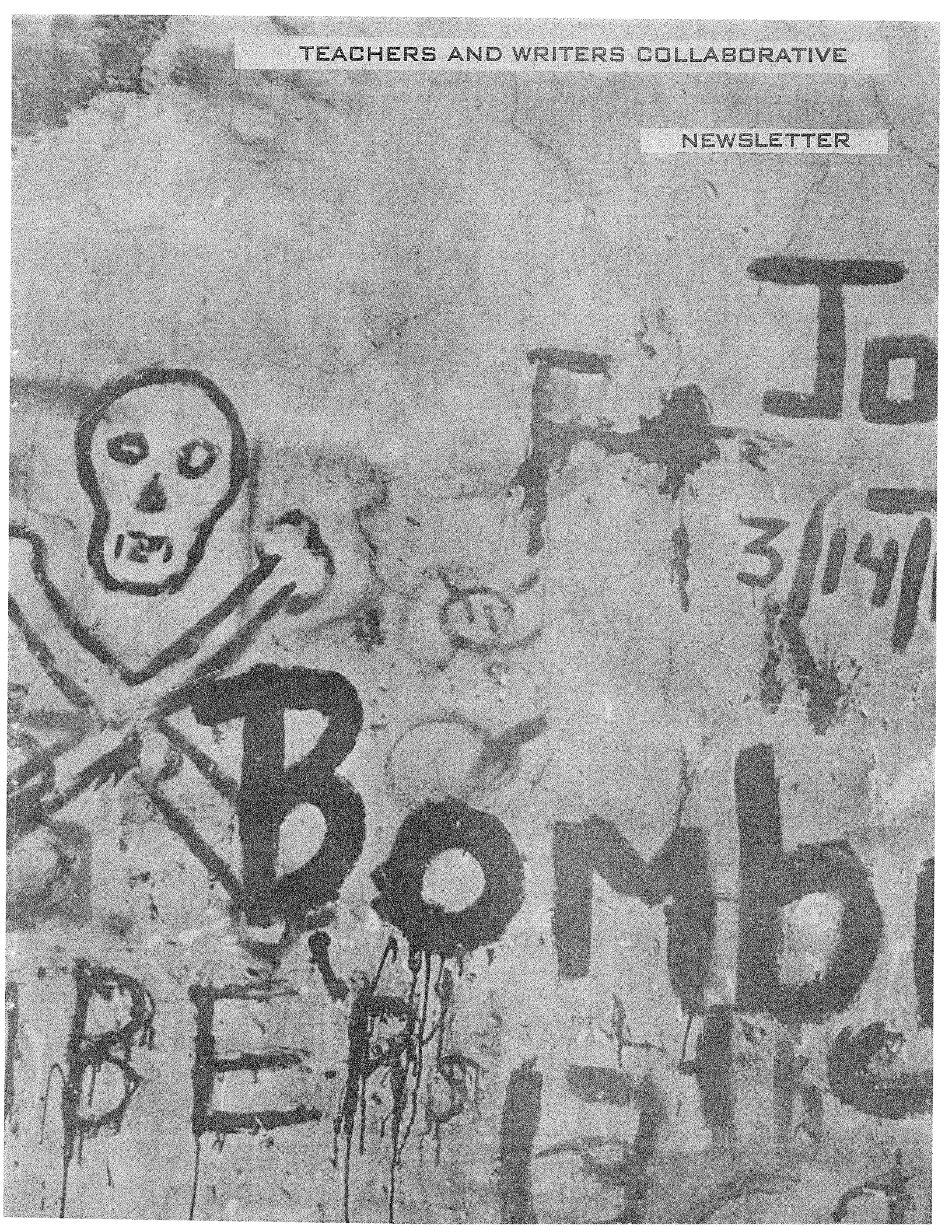


TEACHERS AND WRITERS COLLABORATIVE

NEWSLETTER



Teachers and Writers Collaborative is a government funded project whose purpose is to involve teachers, children and writers in the creation of an English curriculum that is relevant to the lives of the children in schools today.

In order to accomplish this, we have developed three interrelated programs:

- 1) Writers in the Schools. A variety of writers (both well-established and relatively unknown) go into public school classrooms at the elementary, junior high and high school levels and work directly with the children in these classes. An adjunct of this program is a series of Saturday writing classes conducted by writers and open to teachers as well as students. Each writer submits a detailed report, or diary, of the sessions he has conducted.
- 2) Teacher Training Seminar. A teacher training seminar, led by writers, has been developed in conjunction with the production and preliminary testing of curriculum materials. Ideas and materials presented to the seminar are tried out by these teachers in their classrooms, and the results, including the teachers' diaries and the children's actual work are then returned for further discussion and elaboration in the seminar.
- 3) Development of Curriculum Units. Beginning with a unit on fables, which grew out of the work of Herbert Kohl and which emphasizes the use of fables to engage the imagination of children and to encourage them to write, the Collaborative has developed a working structure for the production and testing of further units. The raw materials, ideas and themes of these units have their source in the programs described above (as well as ideas initiated by the Collaborative staff) and are then developed into trial units through the Seminar. These trial units will be used and evaluated by a larger group of teachers throughout the country before they are published for general distribution.

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TEACHERS AND WRITERS

COLLABORATIVE

APRIL NEWSLETTER

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APRIL 4, 1968

war war
why do God's children fight among each other
like animals
a great man once lived
a Negro man
his name was the Rev. Martin Luther King.

but do you know what happened
he was assassinated by a white man
a man of such knowledge as he
Martin Luther King
a man of such courage
to stand up and let a man hit him
without hitting back

yes-
that's courage
when you fight back of course you're brave
but do you think you yourself can stand up
and let someone beat you
without batting an eyelash
that takes courage.

shot him down
that's right
one of God's children

well you can count on a long hot summer
one of our black leaders has been killed
murdered
down into the gutter.

I will long remember this dark day.

it's funny it's so you can't even
walk out in the street anymore
some maniac might shoot you
in cold blood.

what kind of a world is this?

I don't know.

by Michael Goode
age 12



Note from Zelda Wirtschafter

On April 4, 1968 Martin Luther King was assassinated by a white man in Memphis, Tenn. * That night, Michael Goode, a 12 year old Negro student, wrote the poem * on the preceding page.

"April 4, 1968" is a concrete affirmation of our hope and ultimate goal for the teaching of English, i.e. that children should find in the English classroom a place where they can confront their immediate concerns openly and honestly and begin to explore these concerns both through their own creative expression and through contact with the larger literary culture. Words are a powerful tool for dealing with experience. It is this sense of creative power over one's environment--both the world of inner experiences and external reality--that we would have the English classroom communicate to children.

Martin Luther King's assassination produced nationwide feelings of guilt, violence, and hatred--passions so basically American that they are part of every child's experience. Yet for too long now, the English classroom has failed to reflect such basic concerns, because many teachers and parents believe that children should be "protected" from the "unpleasant realities" of life. But what kind of protection is it that leaves children unprepared to confront real issues? The fact is that while our schoolrooms are filled with empty platitudes and mindless vignettes of middle-class life, children are learning through direct experience that the great "self-evident" truths proclaimed in the classroom do not reach beyond the schoolroom walls.

"What kind of a world is this?" Michael Goode asks in his poem. This question and its corollary--What kind of a creature is man?--must form the hub of classroom discussion and all subsequent activities.

In confronting these issues, English teachers, perhaps more than other teachers, have a wealth of material to draw from. Literature has always dealt with the conflicts of men, their dreams and failures. At this moment in our national history, the Negro's experience and cultural insights, as expressed in a growing body of creative work, are centrally relevant to the American experience. Black and white children (and their parents and teachers) ought to be hearing the voice of America's young Negro poets, novelists and playwrights; their work must form an integral part of school curriculum.

Dr. King taught us that the real problem confronting our nation goes far beyond the Negro's struggle for civil rights. The problem lies in white America's failure to root out the racism, poverty and violence which are embedded in our society like a cancerous growth, and which must be destroyed if the nation is to survive. These are not easy matters to face with children. It will require teachers of sensitivity and courage. But if we do not begin this reeducation both at home and in school, the time will soon come when no parent, black or white, will be able to protect his children from the ugly consequences of our long racist history.

*

(Michael's poem was brought to our seminar by his teacher, Terri Bush, who has contributed regularly to the Seminar, and who has been attending, along with her students, the Saturday classes conducted by June Meyer.)

INTRODUCTION

Throughout our first year of operation we have been constantly hampered by lack of sufficient staff and funds. The specter of non-existence has affected every aspect of our program. Despite these problems, we have managed to carry on a number of programs which, though limited in scope, represent a promising beginning. Each of these programs could be more effective and we are only now beginning to see the directions in which we should move. Unfortunately, all of these activities will come to an end in the next month, and we do not know at this moment whether Teachers and Writers Collaborative will continue next year or not. We have submitted a proposal for support to the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities for next year, and will continue to seek additional financial support from private foundations.

During the past three months, additional writers and schools have joined our writers-in-the-schools program. Maroa Gikuuri, an African folklorist, began working with two sixth grade classes in lower Manhattan, using an oral story-telling approach as a bridge to writing. Poet Anne Sexton and teacher Robert Clawson were hired by the Wayland, Mass. school system to continue their experimental English class at the Wayland High School. June Meyer and Peter Sourian have continued to conduct weekly Saturday classes at the Church of the Open Door in Brooklyn and the Community Resource Center in East Harlem respectively. These classes, which are open to teachers as well as students, are not geared to turning out "professional" writers, but provide a milieu in which the participants are stimulated, encouraged, and helped to articulate their thoughts and feelings through engaging in the creative act of writing.

A working draft of our unit on Fables has been produced by Herb Kohl, and is currently being revised by a group of teachers in California under his direction. The teachers who participated in our initial Seminar sessions have continued to meet once a week on Fridays to explore new curriculum ideas which they have tried in their own classrooms.

This third Newsletter of the Teachers and Writers Collaborative is devoted entirely to teaching ideas and tactics which have been culled from the many diaries we have received from the teachers and writers who have been working with us. They represent some of the ideas and materials with which writers and teachers have been experimenting, and suggest possible directions for future curriculum development.

Our fourth and final Newsletter which will be issued in June, will be devoted to a summary of this year's activities and to our plans for the future.

Writers Participating in Collaborative Programs

AIJAZ AHMAD is a Pakistani poet who has published poetry and novels in Urdu. At present he is poet-in-residence at the Experimental College at Fordham University.

JOHATHAN BAUMBACH, born in New York in 1933, has published one novel, A MAN TO CONJURE WITH, and will publish a second, WHAT COMES NEXT, in 1968. His book of critical reviews, THE LANDSCAPE OF NIGHTMARE, came out in 1965. Mr. Baumbach is a member of the Board of Directors of Teachers and Writers Collaborative and is currently teaching at Brooklyn College.

BILL BERKSON is a poet whose work has appeared in Paris Review, Poetry, Big Table, Evergreen Review, and other magazines. A volume of his verse was published in 1961 called SATURDAY NIGHT: POEMS 1960-1961. Mr. Berkson was an editor of Art News for three years. He is now teaching literature and writing at the New School.

VICTOR HERNANDEZ CRUZ, a senior at Benjamin Franklin High School, has published one volume of verse entitled PAPO GOT HIS GUN. His work has appeared in Evergreen, ANTHOLOGY OF BLACK POETS, and in numerous other publications. He has been interviewed by Books Inc. and Down Here. A second book of poems, PITMO will be published by Random House next winter.

BOB CUMMING graduated from Harvard University in 1957 and won a Marshall Scholarship to Oxford. He was literary editor of the Harvard Advocate and the Oxford Isis, and these magazines published his short stories and articles. Mr. Cumming directed the North Carolina Fund Mobility Project, and currently teaches freshman English at City College, New York.

MAROA GIKUURI was born in Kenya and is a Ph.D. candidate at New York University. He has a strong interest in African folklore and has been invited to schools in Vermont and in New York City as a storyteller. He is compiling an anthology of folklore of the Kuria tribe in Kenya.

LOUISE GLUCK at 24 has published poetry in many magazines and anthologies including The Nation, Poetry, The New Yorker, Mademoiselle, and the New American Review. Her first volume of verse is forthcoming with New American Library.

DAVID HENDERSON was born in Harlem in 1942. His poetry and writings have appeared in Poems Now, The East Village Other, New Negro Poets, USA!, Where is Vietnam: American Poets Respond. A volume of his own poetry, FELIX OF THE SILENT FOREST AND OTHER POEMS, recently was published. He is editor of Umbra magazine and teaches writing at City College.

NAT HENTOFF, a frequent writer and lecturer on jazz, is a staff writer for The New Yorker. He is the author of JAZZ LIFE, OUR CHILDREN ARE DYING, and JAZZ COUNTRY, a novel for teenagers.

CLARENCE MAJOR, born in 1936, has printed articles and poetry in many publications, including New Left Notes, American Negro Poetry, and Where is Vietnam. His volume of poetry, MUSIC OF A SAD ROOM, will be published shortly by the Olivant Press. He is an associate of Journal of Black Poetry, and of CAW, NYC

JUNE MEYER is a poet and free-lance writer with a special interest in urban planning. Her work has been published in Esquire, The Nation, Liberator, and other magazines, and her poems appear in New Jazz Poets. Miss Meyer lectures in English at City College.

MARK MIRSKY graduated from Harvard in 1961 and published his first novel, THOU WORM, JACOB, last spring. His stories have appeared in Mosaic, Identity, and Ararat. Mr. Mirsky teaches at City College and is a member of the Board of Directors of Teachers and Writers Collaborative.

LARRY NEAL was born in Atlanta, Georgia, educated at Lincoln University, and did graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania where he holds M.A.'s in English and Folklore. Besides teaching English, he has worked with adolescents in improvisational theater. He has been published in Liberator, Negro Digest, Journal of Black Poetry, Tulane Drama Review. He is co-editor of BLACK FIRE (an anthology) which will come out in the fall, 1968, and author of CHANGES: SOCIAL HISTORY OF BLACK MUSIC, to be published this summer by REI.

GRACE PALEY's book of short stories, THE LITTLE DISTURBANCES OF MAN, was first published in the 50's and will shortly be re-issued by the Viking Press. Parts of a novel recently appeared in the first volume of the New American Review. Mrs. Paley is presently teaching at Sarah Lawrence and is a member of the Board of Directors of Teachers and Writers Collaborative.

ANNE SEXTON began writing poems in 1957 and has since published in Accent, Harper's, Hudson Review, The New Yorker, Partisan Review, Tri-Quarterly, and other magazines. She has published three volumes of poetry, the latest of which, LIVE OR DIE, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1967.

PETER SOURIAN was born in Boston and graduated from Harvard in 1955. His work has appeared in various periodicals and he has published three novels, MIRI, THE GATE, and THE BEST AND WORST OF TIMES. He is assistant professor of English at Bard College.

CURRICULUM UNITS

Many of the Curriculum Units we plan to develop have their origins in the sessions writers are conducting in classrooms.

We visualize curriculum units as consisting of a portfolio of materials focussing on a particular topic, and including accounts by teachers of their classroom experiences (both successes and failures), as well as the writing of the students themselves. Instead of a model "lesson plan," each unit will contain a number of different accounts by teachers who have used the same materials in their own styles

The diaries in this section show the beginnings of possible units on "Insult and Praise," "The Dream," "Collective Novel," and "Verse Forms."

I explained to them carefully that next time we were going to write for a long time, and that they had to have a lot to write about as far as what these characters would do was concerned. When they heard that if we each wrote five pages there would be a one hundred and fifty page book about Eddie and Miss Booker they got very excited, and asked questions about when it would be published, and how much money they would get for it. I told them I didn't know, but that we had to make it as good as it could be first, and then think about all that.

March 11, 1968

Today everyone in the class spent the first half-hour writing a first adventure of Eddie and Miss Booker, the two characters we had invented last time. I reminded them before we began that they should think about Eddie (and Miss Booker), and that what he would do and the kind of adventures he would have would be based on what he was, what he liked, etc. I talked to them about the cartoon character Mr. Magoo, who gets into all kinds of adventures because he can't see very well. This example seemed to help them understand motivation etc., and what I had in mind. For the first ten minutes or so they had difficulty settling down to write, but after that they all became involved, and most wanted to keep writing, but I stopped them so that we would have time to make up two new characters. These were Eddie's dog, Dick, who is a German Shepherd who protects his master and can do a whole series of impossible tricks, including doing the boogaloo. The other character we invented was a police chief, Chief Candybar. He is thoroughly inept. He trips over his holster, he is scared of robbers, he doesn't know how to shoot his gun, and he loves candy bars. I explained to them that next time we would have four characters, and they would be able to write more complicated adventure stories with them all involved. They were excited about the possibility of their book being "published", and I told them that if they all wrote well, it would be, and they would get copies.

EXCERPTS FROM EDDIE AND MISS BOOKER: THEIR ADVENTURES

Eddie and Miss Booker was ugly. They was a secret people.

One day Miss Booker told him she was going to fix him up. The first thing she did was give him a bath than buy him new cloth than comb his hair nice than she buy him sunglasses he began to look handsome.

She kissed him and she had no lipstick on and he fell down because her lips make a person sleep for five minutes.

Eddie was like Miss Booker and on Monday morning he saw Miss Booker and asked her would she like a flower so he give her a flower. And a music too. And so they are marry.

COLLECTIVE NOVEL

Lenny Jenkin is a writer who is working with a sixth grade class of Chinese and Puerto Rican students with limited English in a public school in lower Manhattan. The class is developing a collective novel "sideways." The following is his account of what they have done, including some of the students' entries:

March 4, 1968

We have begun a novel. It's tentative title is "Eddie and Miss Booker: Their Adventures." We began by making up a character. I explained to the class that we were going to write a long book, which would be a combination of everybody's work. The first thing was to invent a leading character. This was done by my going around the room and asking one kid after another questions about the person. This was also done by the "inside" method, first asking about the physical appearance of the character, and then about his likes and dislikes, his personality, is he nice or mean etc. The character they invented in response to questions of mine like "Describe his face" "Is he healthy" "How tall is he" "What kind of thing does he like" etc. etc. turned out to be somewhat of a monster. His name is Eddie. He is nine feet tall, has green skin, and wears clothes and shoes made out of green paper. He is a mute, is redheaded, and is missing an arm. He is a thief, and although he is married and has a large number of children, he also likes to "get girls". The group was fairly good at being able to fill in details, and some were very anxious to add to the portrait free-hand. There were others who would not respond to questions like "What color hair does he have?" except with an "I don't know." I could not make these few understand the idea. There were one or two girls, as I went around the room, who simply did not understand my questions, and I assume that it is because they have as yet (they are Chinese) very little English.

When we had completed the character, we began on his place of residence. They were not nearly so fantastic where this was concerned, as the initial response to "Where does he live" was a New York apartment at a very specific address. They took off quite soberly from there, giving him a filthy three rooms and orange crate and cardboard furniture. As another character, they invented Miss Booker. This was apparently the name of a real person the kids all knew. It took a while for me to make them understand, and with some I was unsuccessful, that the Miss Booker we were inventing was not necessarily the same as the one they knew. They would keep bringing up the real Miss Booker's characteristics even though opposite ones were already on the blackboard for our character.

Everyone Eddie gets next to seems to be missing their wallets.

Eddie was a crook and so was Miss Booker. And their enemy is Chief Candybar.

One day Eddie and Miss Booker hit a little boy in the face to take his ice cream. Chief Candybar came after Eddie and Miss Booker. The chief ran after Eddie. Miss Booker was scared and ran back to the house. Eddie bit the chief in the leg. The chief ran away. So they were planning bank robbery but they need a strong dog. So they went to the A.S.P.C.A. to get a german shepherd. They name him Dick. On the day of the robbery they put Dick in a box. When they got to the bank they let Dick out and Dick started to bite the bank manager. The chief came with a dog catcher. Eddie, Miss Booker and the dog get out of town and went to New Jersey. They live there for a year and the dog and Eddie and Miss Booker lived there happy until their next adventure.

One day Miss Booker fell down and broke a window and she cut her hand with the glass. And Eddie said she cut her foot too and the face. She said help help help. When Chief Candybar came to the house Chief Candybar said I call the doctor and you get some band-aid for her face. The face is the important thing, Chief Candybar said.

And Eddie ran to the bathroom and get some band-aid and in that moment the doctor come with the ambulance and chief candybar tell him to fogat the band-aid he said!" And Eddie ran back again. And chief candybar said!" you want to go to the hospital too. Ah? Eddie? And he said!" yes chief candybar I want to see Miss Booker.

Eddie tryed to get a taxie no taxies will stop. Eddie said I have a friend that will take me his name is John. They ran to John's house and he took them to the hospital. They ran in the nurse said to Eddie boy you really need sargery I got to call the doctor. No, not for me, for Miss Booker. She's in this hospital the nurse said room B-G 7th floor. They ran up to the 4th floor and got tired and walked the rest the way up.

Three weeks later Miss Booker came back to the house and Eddie said!" Good good Miss Booker came back. And Miss Booker said!" I dont know how can you tell me that Eddie. I dont going to wash any more windows I promise you Eddie I promise you.

Mr. Jenkin joined our Teachers' Seminar one Friday and talked about the Collective Novel. One of the teachers in the Seminar tried it with his 9th grade English class in an East Harlem High School. The following is an excerpt from his diary:

March 12, 1968

I recalled to the class that they had not completely enjoyed all the stories we had read in class during the term. Today we would remedy that situation by beginning our own collaborative novel. By asking lots of questions, (as per the procedure outlined by Lenny Jenkin at the seminar last Friday) we began getting a physical description of a character. It was understood that the answer each student gave--the characteristic he supplied, would have to be adopted as part of the character by the whole class. I asked each student a specific question. After we created the main character, we used the same technique to create a secondary character. Here are the questions and the two characters we created:

<u>QUESTION</u>	<u>CHAR NO. 1</u>	<u>CHAR. NO. 2</u>
sex	female	male
age	21	30
looks (face)	pretty	handsome
height	5'4" (orig. 3")	5'8"
weight	110 (orig. 10 oz.)	135
eyes	grey	
hair	white	
skin	black	
clothes	raggedy red dress	
	see-through blouse	
likes to do	eat horse-meat; prostitute, push drugs; Jewish (?)	sex maniac
residence	cave	
name	Mary	Peter

Each was assigned to write an incident involving these two people--remembering their characteristics must be brought out in the stories. Here are a few of the results:

Peter And Mary

It was a dull day the sky was pale and the waters were as still as a marble table. Peter was a mine worker looking for gold. Till one day the mine broke in and the men were trapped in the mine. Peter

was the only survivor. So he made what was left of the mine his home. He was very lonely and was going crazy cause he hadn't seen a female in a long time. And was only thirty years old.

Now while all this was going on at the bottom of the hill on the top lived a Jewish nigger who was a prostitute way back from the city. She had white hair and grey eyes. She used to be a drug pusher. She eats horse meat and lives in a cave. She wears see through clothing real light clothing because the climate is very hot. She is 21 years old and her name is Mary.

One day Peter felt that he couldn't stand it any longer being alone. So he started to wander up the hill looking to see if he could find someone. Suddenly he spotted a cave. He was excited and anxious to find out what or who was living in it. He went in and found a woman lying on the floor. He went crazy he couldn't believe his eyes. It was a woman. He slowly crept up to her not trying to wake her. When he got closer to her he stared at the see through clothing she had on. And before he could touch her she woke up and screamed when she saw him. He grabbed her and told her not to be frightened by the way he was acting because it was that he hadn't seen a woman in a long time. They lived together in the cave and in a few weeks he was so skinny and weak he couldn't stand up by himself.

(No Title)

There was this Jewish girl in this building. She was 21 years old she had green eyes, white hair and a red raggedy dress. She was a prostitute and was waiting to see if she would find a man that could give her more money. So she goes upstairs and meets this sex maniac and tells him I will give you a piece of you know what if you give me a hundred dollars. And he says OK. So she goes to his room and takes off her clothes then Peter lays her in the bed and she tell him that it was good and he keeps on doing it to her. Then she gets tired and says that it is enough but she doesn't know that he is a sex maniac man and he doesn't want to gett off of Mary. She starts pushing him and pushing him and he cuts her face. And she start bleeding and she tells him you're going to pay for this. So she went and got the police but by the time she came back with the police he had been gone and left this note-- I knew you was worth this, so I left you 10 bucks so you could buy yourself some drugs--.

March 14, 1968

We read some of these in class, though some were reticent about having them read--self-conscious about the language and subject matter. We had a discussion and decided this was fine in its place. The next assignment is to create individually a new character and write an incident involving the new character and any one of the first two.

INSULT AND PRAISE

Mark Mirsky has used "Insult and Praise" with both college and high school English classes because it's one of the most immediate ways to get at the rhythm in language. As he puts it, "...we ought to recognize that certain rhythms underlie speech, and therefore writing, and it is by getting at a really strong rhythm, getting the student to feel it, to make his writing express it, that you will begin to move him along the road naturally, or to use the gardener's phrase, you will start him growing "organically" to good writing. The rhythm will move him along, in many cases, irresistibly.

"We often find language most important when we want to hurt someone, or help him. So I begin a class with a simple assignment with myself as the subject, the receiver, although to use the structuralist's phrase, it is a dedoublement: it refers back to the student. Insult me, praise me, a few pages of both, based on an hour of damaging personal questions I allow the students...Then on to literary objectives: using the same rhythm, insult and praise a story, the writer of the story, a poem, a play, a movie, basing the criticism on subjective impressions."

At one of our Teacher Seminars, Mr. Mirsky illustrated his point by asking each teacher to insult and praise him. Some examples follow:

Mark Mirsky is mean. He cares more about Mark's literary experience than he does about what his students are experiencing . . . His "Letter to Papa never to be Mailed" is a kind of bullshit instant analysis . . . Does he really want our \$25 an hour?

Cordially,
a critic

how can i praise or insult you
who are nothing to me . . . or perhaps
you are an empty wind who roars
around in the name of helpchild and
echoes and roars in a room full of
paper and leaves

Leaving nothing for children
or helpchild but a room
full of empty papers
and full
ashtrays
and
Bostonian cahrs
in Hahrvad
yahrds.

how can i insult you when you
come to help helpless uft
members--we sit mute and
you tell us our lackings
and godamnit you have accused
us of pouring emptiness into the vessels
of captive, human beans and oh damnit
you're right

everything is un-gym opedie
with your help

Mr. Mirsky then retaliated as follows:

The moment I walked in I felt the snotty hostility of this group. They obviously do not want to relinquish their roles as teachers and so as long as I try to lead discussion I find myself surrounded by ballsy illtempered people, ready to jump on me and put me down. I can't see a single one of them ever allowing a student to shine forth on his own.

An extraordinary group! I was amazed by the independent, sharp points of view going around the table as I entered. What an achievement to get them to listen, even for a moment. And what is one of my ideas was actually to prove useful. My God, here I am in the center of a small band of the revolutionaries in the New York City School System.

Ah, the shade of Che Guevara!

Following Mark Mirsky's seminar for teachers, Lila Eberman, a participant in the seminar and a teacher at Benjamin Franklin High School, tried Insults and Praises with her 10th grade class. These were some of the results:

I know a teacher who beat the draft by not wearing a deodorant at the induction center. He was ready to try other drastic ways if the first one did not work. He was ready to change his sex or marry Lyndon B. Johnson. He was going to send in his place a poor spic who could not afford to go to college and his whole family if necessary.

Luis

You fat overgrown slob. That's not all I think of you. I'm start- to get fed up with college bound crap, Mr. Dodo. You think you own me well go to H-E-two sticks and don't open your mouth to me, or you'll kill me with your bad breath. Is that the way you killed all those commies in the Korean War? Huh Microscopes? You big ape. With that face you can do a better job of scaring than Frankenstein. You can scare the ex-lax out of Frankensteins Mother cops! Sorry I forgot she's your mother too. You son of a female dog I can't stand your guts. Forget the rank, step aside fairy. Let's slug it out even if you crush me with your potbelly stomach. C'mon c'mon.

Pena

Man that is a body, mm luscious, all even too. When I come in that class I feel like jumping at her if I see her in the classroom. I don't know but some how the lord helps me and holds me back. I look and my eyes penetrate that scrumtious body. I look at every feature on that body. I remember them too. I could even make a map or draw a diagram of her body. Oh man, and if I ever saw her in a bathing suit my eyes would dissolve. You can see all her muscular body. Someday I try and get a hold of her, Someday. And when I do there won't be no left overs or scraps.

Edwin

DREAMS

Through work he has done with Dreams in his writing class at Brooklyn College, Jonathan Baumbach became interested in developing a curriculum unit around dreams that can be used on the secondary school level. This diary of a session with a 12th grade class at Abraham Lincoln High School records the direction he would like to take.

February 28, 1968

Grace (Paley) and I went back to Lincoln today for our second visit...Nine of about thirty-five had done the dream assignment we gave them. I read one of the "dreams" aloud and asked the class to talk about it. A girl questioned the assignment, said she was only interested in a dream if she knew the person who was dreaming it and had reason to be interested in that person. I tried to explain as much for myself as for the class why I had asked them to write dreams...Dreams interest me, I said, are important to me. Why? Because they are at once devious and unguarded. Give us the truth in mysterious and sometimes witty disguise. I talked about how one feels the need to censor real feelings that are socially unacceptable. In the process one cuts oneself off as writers (as people) from whole pieces of one's experience. Dreams are coded messages from the hidden self. One way for a writer to get closer to himself. Are revelatory. The mystery of them intrigues me as reader--how to get at their secret, how to read them.

Grace read a student dream dealing with the funeral of the narrator's mother. It was a more interesting piece than the first and class discussion was excited and alive. I asked about the line: "My father didn't even get a good hug once."--why the narrator (apparently a girl) had made such a curious observation. The class tended not to want to see that the girl was doing away with her mother in the dream, was frightened of the prospect of having her father to herself, was by implication blaming her father for her mother's death. I had the sense that they knew (had known) some of the things I was saying, but felt constrained not to talk about them. (It takes awhile for a class to loosen up, hard to establish a relationship on a one hour a week basis, though this group at Lincoln especially trusting and warm.)

The dream written by high school student and read back to the class by Grace Paley:

It was my mother's funeral. I was sitting and crying. Hoards of people came and comforted me. He came and gave me the greatest hug and it was the best thing I had ever felt. More people came.

--Poor thing.

--Poor baby.

--Poor thing.

More tears. More great hugs of sympathy. My father didn't even get a good hug once.

--The poor kid.

--What will she do?

--Do you need help?

--Anything you want. Don't forget.

We carried out the coffin. Teary-eyed I ran off to a secluded part of the forest. He came. He kissed me! He told me not to worry. That he would always be there. Madame Bovary all over again. We returned together.

More people were milling around.

--I feel so sorry for you. You know I knew your mother so well.

Mother?

Dream written by a college student of Jonathan Baumbach at Brooklyn College:

I'm climbing. A rough, dark tunnel encloses me, with only a pinhole of light ahead to guide me. I keep crawling, more frantically now, but the pinhole remains the same size; I'm getting no closer. I dig into the rough, earthy walls, in a frenzy. I must get out. I call for help. Suddenly the pinhole gets closer. The light, blinding, brilliant--I can't stand it. I wrap my arms about me, clutching the ribs of my back. My head sinks down. The pinhole and I are one. I slowly unravel and start running. I run down the street into the playground. I hear distant laughter. It gets louder, louder--one continuous laugh. It doesn't stop. It becomes deafening. Little girls in lace dresses with golden tresses, swing back and forth. Mouths open in laughter, hair flying, back and forth they swing in slow motion. Little boys, in rattling suits of shining gold armor, go up and down on see-saws, in machine-like rhythm. They almost meet the swinging little girls, when in the air. Back and forth, up and down, little boys, little girls, meeting, together. The action gets faster; the music gets louder. I spin around in circles.

The children abandon their playthings and joyously dance around me. I sink down into a crumpled heap. All movement stops. The children melt and fade. Their bodies become a sea of color and just a sea. I'm on a beach, or am I? At one end of the beach stand the tombstones. The water licks the stone and quickly wears it away. Up rise shadowy, formless, jellylike corpses. They dance in what might grotesquely be called a circle. I seem to remember something like this happening before. I am reminded of the children. I am horrified. "No, death, no," I scream. I run, fall, start digging in the sand. I see a pinhole in the sand. I look into it. I see a tunnel and feel myself falling down and down.

VERSE AND VERSE FORMS

Often a child who is reluctant to write poetry will get into it by first experimenting with puzzle-like poetic forms, such as the Haiku and Cinquain.

Lee Bennett Hopkins, Senior Consultant for the Bank Street Educational Resource Center, introduced cinquains to a group of teachers and writers at one of our Friday seminars. It is a non-rhyming verse form invented by Adelaide Crapsey, an American poet of the early twentieth century who is best known for her volume, Trudeau's Garden. The cinquain has five lines, containing twenty-two syllables broken into a 2-4-6-8-2 pattern. A teacher from Benjamin Franklin picked up on the idea, and found her 10th grade students extremely receptive to cinquains. They wrote the following:

Freedom
Springs to the door
Peeps through to see who's there
Pins in her hair, I cry out
It's me!

Jacqueline

Pictures
They tell your looks
Tell the truth about you
They tell if you are ugly too
Say cheese!

John

Drunkard
How dry I am
Nobody knows how dry I am
I feel fine because I am high
Hiccup!!!

Rosanna

A girl
walked down the street
Danny gave her a wink
And now a voice breaks the silence
"Daddy!"

Jenaro

The street
Nice place to be
Every minute is hell
Heaven to people like myself
It's great

Luis

The street
People hang out
In heat they wave and shout
They meet with knives that talk about
The street

Louis

The street
In the summer
It's like a desert beach
It's hot, it's loud, it's riot time now
Watch out.

Radamese

The street
In the winter
It's cold there now, baby
There aint no heat, and you can't sleep.
Cold, man.

Radamese

The street
Kids play near streets
Cars go by loud and tough
Bikes love to roll down the street fast
Swinging.

Edwina

Junkies
They use needles
Some get high every day
They get high and nod in the street
Dopie

Ronald

Extending from this, children can be encouraged to make up their own verse forms--some children have done it spontaneously, as did Elijah Montgomery, a 7th grade student from Sands Junior High School in Brooklyn. His poems appear below:

EIGHT

EIGHT IS A NUMBER.
EIGHT IS A SOUL NUMBER.
EIGHT IS A GOOD NUMBER.
EIGHT IS A LUCKY NUMBER.
EIGHT IS NEVER THE LAST NUMBER TO PICK

HOME

A HOME IS A PLACE TO LIVE
A PLACE TO DIE
A PLACE TO CRY
A PLACE TO SLEEP AND EAT
AND DO HOMEWORK.
AND WORRY ABOUT HOW YOU GOING CLEAN.

SEA

Sea is a place to sail
a place of love
a place to fish and swim.
The sea is a garden of beautiful and ugly
And big fish and little fish.
Sometime fish can be dangerous to people.

SATURDAY CLASSES

Two Saturday Classes, one taught by novelist Peter Sourian at the Community Resources Center in East Harlem, and the other by poet June Meyer at The Church of the Open Door in Brooklyn, have been meeting for six months now, and will continue until summer. Both writers feel that it was only after the first fifteen weeks that the children, who are primarily from ghetto communities, really began to produce. Since then, the out-put has been almost overwhelming, and June Meyer's group is now publishing a weekly magazine of their writings.

We have included here excerpts from June Meyer's diaries over a period of seven weeks to give a sense of the changes and development that occurred in her class, as well as examples from the students' work. The class is composed of approximately 12 to 25 students, ranging in age from 9 to 14.

Excerpts from June Meyer's diaries:

January 13, 1968

This week I brought an enormous variety of records and books. Again, the kids mainly liked Langston Hughes--reading his stuff with their lips silently moving. The Pictorial History of the Negro in America fascinated a new member of our group, Sharon. She wrote an awkward thing about Lincoln. But the point is that she was moved to try to write something. The turnout was not what we'd hoped, but enough to make the effort worth while.

One of the other new kids, Veronica, wrote in an almost illiterate style. However, Terri told me Veronica had never even attempted to write before this morning. She will come again...

January 20, 1968

At their leisure, and as they feel intermittently inclined, the kids wander to the phonograph and also over to the books and look through them. At least half of the kids spent a noticeable amount of time reading from the books I brought. There is a hungriness that is very clear.

I had the kids write under the title: "I AM"--it could be about themselves, or someone they know, or an invented personality. Anyhow, a story on one side of the paper. And a poem or song on the other. That was the assignment. We got back about an 85 percent return on the request, which was exhilarating, to say the least.

The kids are now writing confidently, and eagerly and with a lot of style. Those who gave me straitjacketed stuff, first time around, I then asked to write about I WILL NEVER BE. That change of angle worked...The kids were obviously proud of their accomplishments. And a kind of coherency has begun to emerge...Nobody wanted to leave. "Is that all we going to write today?" An hour and a half on the weekends begins to make a difference. And the obligations, on our side, increase.

During the week, more and more kids write on their own--poetry and stories and dreams--and bring them.

January 27, 1968

It looks as though we've really got something together. Fourteen kids showed this morning along with the happy sunlight.

As said last week, I had planned to continue with the I WILL NEVER BE compositions. And that's what happened. The kids wrote a great deal, possibly more than any previous time...These days sessions are difficult to terminate much before two hours. Nobody wants to leave...

A kind of pattern has been emerging: first the kids sit around looking at the books I bring, then they read copies of the former week's work, and then they undertake the day's assignment. Meanwhile, there is an enormous amount of noise and music.

Today, however, a few kids complained about the interference from noise and I eagerly complied by quieting the piano and substituting a long-play recording of jazz for the rock and roll 45's. This seemed to help during the major, creative thrust...

February 17, 1968

As promised the last Saturday, I produced two yellow folder covers and a heavy amount of lined paper for Linda and Miriam, respectively; they both had expressed interest in writing their own books. So this was the equipment they required. Linda and Miriam seemed pleased and quite entirely serious in their determination to become authors of lengthy substance...

The kids' seriousness increases, steadily. Thus, the background prop of phonograph music has become an annoyance for several, and the music has been limited--in volume and in the period of playing allowed--by the kids.

March 2, 1968

The intentness of their work was extraordinary. Those students who have been working on books have now written so much that Terri and I have split the amount of typing--quite beyond the typing done by M. In addition, some kids have begun to write "books", on their own. It all means hours of reading. And I felt a bit harried--turning from one manuscript to the next while trying to provide prompt response to their work of the moment.

There are now four books in progress. I.E. Over twenty pages long! Each. At this point, as much writing or more, takes place between Saturdays! In addition to all of this, Linda proposed we officially determine a newspaper staff. So this coming weekend we will hold elections and proceed to publish a newspaper. I wish we had a camera for the staff to use. I wish we had a typist, and a publisher for their writings. I wish everybody could read the forceful, clear and morally pivotal ideas troubling these children. I wish I could give everyone of them a beautiful tree.

Samples of students' writing (ages 9-14)

I AM a Bubble Gum

and people always bite and chew me and when ever they get tired of me they throw me on the ground and other people step on me. I'm sure you wouldn't want to be me.

Sherrill

I AM a nut

i was born in the South while the civil war was going on i was being raised. I was hoping that the north would win so the south wouldn't have any slave to pick me off the nut trees and eat me.

Sign: Mr. Strange

(Anthony)

I AM

I am would you believe a fox. Sometimes I wish I wasn't born. In fall creatures that walk on two legs come along with sticks that kill people of my race. There sticks eject rocks which kill. These creatures kill each other with their sticks and rocks that explode on contact with something. Also these freaks are called human-beings. I personally hate this sort of thing. I am what humans would call a peace lover. Now I will relate one of my adventures. I was coming out of my den in search of food. It was a beautiful day by my standards I thought no sign of a human yet. I walked into a field in search of prey. Suddenly a rock whizzed right past me, that was a close one. More bullets homed in on their target which kept dodging them. I felt myself blacking out---the human had shot me! When I woke up I found I was adopted by a human. How I miss my former life. My address is Henry Hudson Parkway, Riverdale.

David

I AM a playboy

Well my title name I got was Mr. Playboy. Well, here in Sands got this name by the people in my school or class. Well when the teacher strike was on we had two beautiful girls to watch us well. Me and Paul was talking about them. Then Paul told Justice and Deborah and then Justice came and ask me to kiss her. Then when the news got out Queenie got the news and she started to like me. She kissed me several times. They said yeah Lee got two 9th grade girls. Now I am going to ask Queenie to be going with me.

Leon

I WILL NEVER BE

I will never be a tree because a tree is the most beautiful thing
that you will ever see--it is tall dark and brown with its leaves
all over the ground

It's something I would never be so all I can do is dream dream
dream and wish it was me

I will never be a wall
Because a wall is so big and tall
And people would write on me like I was nothing at all
And people would lick and dirty me just like they do
All that why I shall never be
Something so big and tall like a wall

It shall come a day when the world shall die
It shall come a day when no man shall stay alive
It shall come a day when the stars shall start to cry
It shall come a day when there no one to lie
It shall come a day when I shall be gone far far away
And that day will never be so far away

Linda

I'VE SEEN ENOUGH

I've been through Africa
I was there when Solomon was claimed king
I was best man to Cleopatra
I've seen the death of a million men in Japan
When that treacherous bomb was dropped
Surely I can say I've seen enough
What more proof need I tell you?
Must I tell you that I bore the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified?
Jesus Christ! I tell you surely
I've seen enough

Chris

MY LIFE

My life is just a dream
That wonders all the time
Sometimes it goes into a shell
But it is hard to come out
My life My life
What have I done to you
You've wasting away
What shall I do?

Shall I dream
Or shall I scream
What shall I do
My life My life.

Juanita

TODAY

I'm having fun today dreaming up my wishes
Today I'm going to be a singer
Singing for G.I. guys
Today I'm going to clean
Sweeping the dirt under the rug
Today I'm going to do a recipe which
Will turn into burnt up thing.
Today I'm going to do a lot of things
But I don't know where to start.

JUNE

June is the month that all prisons close. And weary warrents go home til September. It's the month to be happy and gay and to forget the prison life. It's a time to forget all troubles, miseries and to sleep forever. But there is one June--nobody can change her.

My month is August. It's the day when all of the world looked up to me as their leader. It means that someday I may become President. The first lady ever to become President. But one thing about it--I was not the only one born in August.

Juanita

TACTICS

In reading through the diaries and journals kept by the writers who work for the Collaborative, we have culled ideas or "tactics" for getting children to write. We feel that such tactics could be used by any teacher (i.e. they are not dependent on the personality of the writer who originated them) and within the context of most any writing lesson. The pages in this section show a sampling of these.

VARIOUS EXERCISES WITH COLOR

COLOR LISTS

(Lenny Jenkin, from his diary of sessions with a 6th grade class)

"...they made a short list of everything they could think of that was red. I asked them if anyone had put down a red banana. When they said no, I asked them to remember that for next time and we would talk about it.

(The following week, Mr. Jenkin began his class with color lists.)

"I read back to the class the lists they had made of red things last time. Some kids had written impossible things (red clouds, red trees, red fingers, etc.) I reminded them of the red banana we had spoken of. We talked about how you couldn't see these things outside, but only inside your head..." I.E. the relationship between real and imaginary things, and the validity of images that exist only within one's head as well as perceptions of what is around you.

COLOR OBSERVATION

(Aijaz Ahmad, from a talk he gave at a Teacher Training Seminar)

On the last day of Mr. Ahmad's week of writer-in-residence at the Pennsylvania Advancement School, he took his students for a ride in the country (it was snowing). One asked what's the difference between a poet and anyone else? Mr. Ahmad answered by asking, "How many colors do you see?" "Two--brown and white." Then Mr. Ahmad asked the same thing of a teacher. "Four," he answered. Mr. Ahmad pointed out at least ten colors in the landscape--"That's the difference in a poet, he sees more."

THE COLOR OF LOVE

The following diaries describe a writing session taught by three teenage members of What's Happening, a bi-monthly literary magazine published by a group of New York City high school students and supported by Teachers and Writers Collaborative, to a fourth grade class in Harlem.

On February 23rd, three writers from What's Happening, (Jamie, Carmen, and me) conducted a writing workshop with a fourth grade class. The topic was... "What Is The Color Of Love?" Some pupils started laughing when they heard the topic...but after we said they could write whatever they think it is...began the pencils of eager fourth graders.

At the end of the writing, Carmen read aloud all of the articles. Some articles contained four letter words. Some of the pupils were upset about this. Their teacher explained to them that they shouldn't get upset, four letter words are placed in a poem or something because the author feels that it must be there. And that she is sure that we (Jamie, Carmen, and me) use four letter words, in some things that we write.

I was surprised to hear the articles of these fourth graders. The contents of each one was beautiful. I never expected fourth graders to write like this. Some of the pupils had wonderful imaginations, if they continue to write they'll be very good. I was glad to have helped in the workshop with the fourth graders at P.S. 166.

written by Sharón
(What's Happening staff member)

We cruised the room; encouraging some and spelling out words for others. We didn't know what to expect but the kids didn't let us down. Some of the pieces handed in had thoughts and expressions I would never have imagined a fourth-grader to be capable of...I think the kids learned a great deal about being honest with themselves and in their writing.

written by Carmen M. Martinez
(What's Happening staff member)

The teacher of this class noted the following:

It is my feeling that first as strangers and second because they are obviously not "teachers"--the WH staff were able to communicate to the kids the idea that they could really be free to use those words which they usually keep out of school but which freely came to them in connection with the idea of love. As a result several of the children used four letter words which really upset other members of the class...However, the end result was very constructive because we were able to discuss both the question of being honest about what you want to write and the question of how one can develop a vocabulary which can give expression to the same ideas in other modes of language.

Some responses by 4th graders to "The Color Of Love" assignment:

"What is the Color of Love"

The color of love is certainly any
color like red and black or yellow and
blue and the color of Love can be Pink
or green. and blue is for kiss and pink
is for love and yellow is for the happiest couple in the world.

Andrea

"What is the Color of Love?"

My love color is red Because
red is color of my blood.
And I love the color of blood
because my blood is red
And I love Blue because
the daylight is blue.
I love the color pink is
the color of the big big
tall circuses of United States of America.
And Orange is best color
Because the biggest house
of them all are
Big that the big house
EMPIRE STATE BUILDING. And
I love my hard red love.

Charles

Pink is the color of love
because when you kiss someone you turn pink
sometimes. The color of love is like a Pinkest color.

If you love someone you either kiss them in the lips or Fuck them.

Edwin

ON IMAGINING TO BE SOMETHING YOU'RE NOT

This note from teacher Bob Clawson explains an assignment he and poet Anne Sexton gave to their senior class at Wayland High School (Mass.):

"The assignment was this: You wake up and you're something in the refrigerator...Then we decided to have our crew write on this challenge: 'I woke up as a giant insect.' We followed that with Kafka's 'Metamorphosis,' and then a reading of Jeff Brown's Flat Stanley. After that, we had them write these papers. Next, we asked them to write about waking up in a medicine cabinet, then waking up as an old man or an old woman, then waking up as a member of the opposite sex, their age. The class got traumatic.."

The stories that follow represent the general quality of writing that the idea provoked:

I am the oldest item in the refrigerator, and have been here for more than 1000 days and nights. I live on the same shelf as the migratory eggs and butter. My throne is on the highest shelf overlooking and ruling my kingdom. I rule over the stately cheese, the showoffish mustards and ketsups. The sophisticated olives, pickles, relishes, those tide-like juices, milks and containers of drink. The polished sandwich meats and also the uncultured bacon. As I look down, down, into the depths of my domain I see the middle-aged near-dawn half-used leftovers. And then finally into the ghetto where the "fresh" vegetables are kept, the wilted lettuce, the moldy cucumbers, the stringy celery and the deflated green peppers. I, I the Horse Radish, rule over the land. For I am the eldest and I have seen more and I am the wisest, therefore I am the one who is good enough to rule. The day will come when I will pass away, but I rest assured that when that day comes another one of my kind will rule after me.

Russell

I woke up one morning very cold. I could not understand why. I assumed that the sun had not come up yet because everything was pitch black. I strained to see my watch but I could not find it, I could not even feel my hand or my arm. They were gone. I wondered if I had any legs for I could not feel them, lacking hands. Here I noticed that hands were more important than legs because you need hands to feel legs. Trying to sit up the feeling of a cold plastic bag came across my face. Just then I heard a loud noise and a flash of light appeared. Frantically looking around I saw that I was a piece of celery and was being kept in a refrigerator. A hand approached me and clasped me among four other delicacies. We were then placed on a plate where I observed what was going on. The kitchen was familiar, it was our kitchen. I could see my mother scurrying along preparing the meal. Just then my father came in and sat down in front of me. Looking down I could see the reflection of me in his eyes. I was rather tall and the top of me looked like Paul Bruce's haircut. That's all there was, hair and trunk. My father picked me up and I tried to yell, but there was no sound. I tried to move but there was no movement. His mouth opened and half my trunk was engulfed. The pain was unbearable. Another bite and my head was the only thing left with Bruce's lousy hair on it. I thought to myself, I have been decapitated from the bottom up.

Brad

STORY TELLING

Maroa Gikuuri is a folklorist from Kenya who is working with story-telling in two 5th grade classes at P.S. 33 in New York City. Carole Scherling, a graduate student in writing at Sarah Lawrence, accompanies him to keep diaries and record stories that the children tell.

February 15

Gikuuri spent the first part of each hour trying to elicit fables from the kids--suppose you wanted to explain, he said, how the world began--how would you do it? Or why man stands on two feet instead of four. Your own way, he said, not necessarily the Bible's way or the way you've been told, but out of your own head. Of course, they didn't understand that last statement at all...but they were eager to give explanations. "God made light" or "God was lonely and so..." By that time a student or two had caught on though, and they'd turn around and say "No, no not the Bible." One boy carefully explained that a piece of the sun had broken loose and gone swirling through space and then it had to be explained NOT the scientific explanation but an imagined one.

February 21

The next week, Gukuuri asked the kids to tell him the stories they had thought up. They're told below. The class was good, I think--they seemed to get excited about telling stories. Even some very silent kids spoke.

WHY A RHINOCEROS HAS A ROUGH SKIN One day the Rhinoceros had a cut on his back and he was by a lake or a river and he rolled down on the river and he rolled over in the sand and he kept scratching and scratching till his skin got so rough.

THE FIRST MAN ALIVE There was this man and he saw this hole on the map. And he went to this place and not only did it make a hole in the map it made a hole in the ground. And he saw this thing and he called it My Pet. The pet made holes all over the map. And the man went out and fell in a hole.

February 28

Gikuuri had asked last week that the kids find a picture of a hyena and he begins by asking if anyone found a picture. One girl has and Gikuuri asks if anyone can tell how the hyena came to have spots.

A boy raises his hand. One hyena had spots cuz there came horse and things to the jungle and they wanted camouflage. The panther rolled in the mud and you couldn't see him at night. The hyena went to the panther and said he wanted some camouflage. The panther took him to the mud pond and put his paws on the hyenas back and gave him spots and then you couldn't see him so well.

And why the Uakari has a red face:

"There was this gorilla that ate too much. He hadn't eaten in three days and he was hungry and he saw this cannonball and he tried to eat it and it got stuck and his friend had to punch him in the mouth to get it out and his lip got all swollen and his nose bled and his face got all red"

One little girl told a story that I couldn't hear. She put hands over her face and was terribly embarrassed--and the story was all about how the little uakari was embarrassed.

Another girl tells how the giraffe got his long neck from getting caught on a tree and having to stretch his body down while his head is caught on a branch.

"I got an idea from her" a boy says--now they seem to be listening to each other because this happens frequently, one story suggesting another.

HOW COME THE GIRAFFE IS SO BIG Once the giraffe ate too much and he didn't want to get fat and he hung by a branch and put his feet off a cliff but then his neck got long but his feet were still short and his stomach was fat so his friend pulled at his legs until he got bigger.

These stories were written in a follow-up session conducted by the teacher, who said that some of the children had not written so well or easily before:

HOW THE RABBIT GOT HIS SHORT FLUFFY TAIL Once there was a little rabbit who did not have a fluffy white tail. All his friends laugh at the poor bunny. So one day while his brother was sleeping he ran away. He said he was sick to his neck of people laughing at him. At night he was going to bed and he prayed to god to give him a fluffy tail. He was dreaming that he was putting mud on his back-side and suddenly he got a fluffy white tail and as white as the sky. And he woke up. So he tought of this carefully. Soon he tried it and what do you know it came true. He grew a very very fluffy tail. Soon after this had happened he decided to go back to the little village to show all his friends his new tail. The other rabbits wonder what could have done such a beautiful job. So one of the rabbits said where did you get such a tail, the little rabbit answered and said in the mud pile.

HOW THE RABBIT GOT HIS LONG EARS I think he got his ears from his mother 'n his looks from his father but if he was little he would have little ears but if he have little ears like a little dog he would not be a rabbit but I don't think he have ears like a dog or a cat or a rat.

INTERVIEWS

Conducting interviews both with one another and with strangers can be a way for children to learn how to observe details and collect facts, then to interpret them.

June Meyer, in her Saturday class:

"Today I told them, speaking to groups of two and three at a time, we will practice interviewing people. The first thing is to think about the kind of information you want, then the best five questions to ask that will give you what you need. The kids interviewed each other, intently, and would come to me, one by one, with a list of facts--height, weight, color of eyes, etc. Then I would ask them, on the basis of these facts, to write a description of the person. They did. I think the second part of their work quietly clarified the importance of questions. Often the information they had would not yield a particularly interesting description.

I told them this was practice for an interview they should conduct, during the week, of some grownup nobody else knows. The mailman, the grocery clerk. A teacher. The janitor. Etcetera."

The children interviewing one another:

Name: Michael R.
Grade: 7
Weight: 75
Height: 4' 2"
No

Don't like school
Don't have a reason why don't like school

8 brothers - he has two younger brothers

First school 287
Second 307
Next Sands
191 Sands Street

I am interviewing Michael R. I first met Michael when he walked in. He is in the 7 grade. His weight is about 75 pounds. His height is about 4'2". He doesn't like school. Why? Don't know why. He has eight brothers, no sister. He has two brothers younger than him. He has attended several schools. First 287, second 307, third, Sands. He lives at --- Sands Street. He doesn't like being interviewed.

Linda

It was decided that the interviews the students conducted "on the street" would be included in the first issue of a newspaper they were planning to publish.

From June's diary of March 9

"The kids went on with interviews and descriptions of people. Then we held elections of the newspaper staff, and voted in a title for the newspaper, namely: The Voice Of The Children. Mainly, the paper will present people who interest our group. A camera will have to be bought. Three of our newly formed executive staff sat discussing news assignments to be distributed, immediately, and to be fulfilled by this coming Saturday...

The following interviews appeared in the newspaper.

MR. ANTHONY H....

by Chris M.

Special to THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN
BROOKLYN, March 16 -

He is 15. His home is at -- Fleet

Walk, Brooklyn. Color, black.

Weight, 120. Height, medium.

Occupation, Student Treasurer of
School. School, Westinghouse.

Job, Student body guard.

What he plans to be, either

Treasurer of the U.S.A. or body-
guard for President.

Political peace, Kennedy.

Not married on holiday, non-

drinker, Beer, Colt 45. Bright,

full of ideas, altogether regular
person.

GINA M.

by Linda M.

Special to THE VOICE OF THE CHILDREN
BROOKLYN, March 16 -

Today on a Saturday morning I am
interviewing Gina M. She was born in
Brooklyn Hospital and now lives at --
Carlton Ave. She has 1 sister and 2
brothers. Her age is 12. She attends
Sands J.H. and is in the 7th grade.
Her hobbies are boys and girls. Her
complexsion is black, her hair is
black, her eyes is black, her weight
is nothing and her height is 5'1".
She plans to be married in the future
and to get a job as a beautision. She
plans to have two kids, name Richard
and Linda (boy and girl twins)

The Person I'm interviewing is Juanita B.

Where were you born?

Jamaica, W.I.

How long did you live there?

'Till two years old.

What do you think of New York?

It's all right, but she would want to find out how Jamaica is.

What she's going to be.

A teacher.

How come you want to be a teacher?

If you go to the school, why not give other people a chance to learn what I learn.

Today I felt like talking to someone, so I sat near this girl. We both smiled and then we began to talk after it was over. I found out who the girl was. Her name was Juanita B. Juanita is one of my favorite names. She was born in the West Indies, a place I always wanted to go to. She only lived there for 2 years. She thinks New York is alright, but she would like to find out more about Jamaica like I would of Puerto Rico. Her opportunity is to be a teacher. She told me that why not teach people what you learn. That's a good answer, isn't it?

by Miriam

Anthony H.

Do you have any girl friends? Yes, he has 8.

Do you want a job? Yes.

Do you like basketball? Yes.

Did you ever have a black eye? Yes, 2.

He is a stupid playboy that is always getting mixed up with girls. He is always getting fired on his job. He was a third grade dropout. He played basketball with his mother when he was 17 years old. He got his black eye from one of them eight girlfriends.

by Charles

SIMILES

Carole Scherling, a young writer and one of our Sarah Lawrence fellows, has been working with a special 9th grade class of "non-readers" at Benjamin Franklin High School:

March 1

This Friday we talked about T.V., leading into commercials and trying to have them write their own ads...At first, we just spoke of T.V. in general, about the programs they like, then about the different commercials. Why they are written--how they're written. I came to realize that, while they knew that ads try to sell things, they didn't understand how--i.e., the use of gimmicks, humor, double meaning, symbols. The discussion we had was nice, not "teachery." Time ran out and we spent the last few minutes trying to write ads. They seemed to think it would be fun to try to sell "teacher", and two people did that.

ADS:

SCRUBBLY BUBBLY

When you wash you dishes with scrubably
bubbly I will guarantee that you nose
will fall off.

TEACHER

a teacher for sale he cost a penney his
name is Mr. Meth is chip buy him before
is to late buy him He look like a horse
You could use him as a horse

March 4

After working with commercials I wanted to go into working with similes...This is the way it went: first I put 2 commercials on the board--one using a simile, or comparison, the other not. "Cola tastes good. Buy some now." "Cola tastes like a whole mountain stream of refreshment." I asked which one was better and why. The kids had absolutely no trouble in pinpointing the fact that the comparison gave a stronger idea of what's meant. So we talked about how comparing two things clarifies and intensifies meaning. Using my new revelation--that things have to happen right in the classroom...I tossed a fuzzy scarf from person to person and asked for descriptions. (One response: "The scarf felt like a rough sheep skin.")...When we were done with this I finally said, "now write your own." There was some grumbling but the whole lesson had come comparatively easily to everyone and I really like the writing that happened today.

SIMILES

a crying Baby is like a cowboy picture on T.V.
A test of lemon feels like if you kissed a girl who ate onion
the car is like a tunnel of death and the tunnel is like the
tunnel of love
a yellow crayon look like a sun
the electric chair is like a boat to the future

REWRITING CONVENTIONAL MATERIAL

This approach was used spontaneously by Herbert Kohl as a way of freeing up the student's imagination through parody and mockery. During a summer workshop conducted with Eric Mann and a group of students from Newark, Mr. Mann kept extensive journals of the classes. Following is an excerpt from his diary describing the final session:

Herb began the lesson by showing the class the cover of a new book he had written. The book cover was a photograph of wall "graffiti". He asked the students if they thought such a book would be used in the public schools, and the students dutifully replied that it wouldn't be because it was "too cool". Herb asked, "If they won't use a book like this, what kinds of books do they use?" Willie and Tiny said simultaneously, "Dick and Jane" with a tone of voice that expressed both genuine distaste and a desire to please Herb and me. (It's sometimes difficult to elicit honesty from students who have been encouraged to be dishonest for so long. Often, radical teachers mistake the conformity of students to an anti-establishment norm for genuine liberation.) Herb was really turned on, dropped whatever plans he originally had for the lesson, and said, "O.K. If you don't like Dick and Jane let's write our own Dick and Jane." His enthusiasm was contagious. The sentences came forth quickly. "This is Dick." said Tiny. "What kind of Dick?" said Willie. At first the kids were laughing hysterically and the adults were incredulous. Within seconds the entire room was filled with laughter. This is the story we wrote: (See following page)

OUR DICK AND JANE

AUGUST 29, 1967

THIS IS DICK.

WHAT KIND OF DICK?

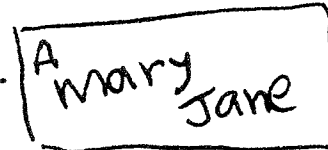
A BOY NAMED DICK.



THIS IS JANE.

WHAT KIND OF JANE?

A MARY JANE. BOY DO THEY TASTE GOOD AND LAST LONG.



I WONDER WHERE THEY LIVE?

THEY LIVE IN A CARDBOARD BOX ON WASHINGTON STREET.



Help! Help!
The house is on
fire!

I DIDN'T KNOW THEY COULD AFFORD A TV.

DICK WAS PLAYING WITH MATCHES AND THE HOUSE CAUGHT ON FIRE. SOMEBODY

CALL THE FIRE DEPARTMENT QUICK BEFORE MARY JANE MELTS.

"YOU BAD BOY, I TOLD YOU NOT TO PLAY WITH MATCHES," SAID JANE.

HE SAID, "AW SHUT UP, YOU AREN'T MY MOTHER. WE BETTER GET OUT QUICK OR
ELSE I'LL BURN AND YOU'LL MELT."

DICK JUMPED OUT THE WINDOW AND JANE MELTED INTO PEANUT BUTTER.

Eric Mann's diary continued

I was quite surprised that the students maintained the image of Jane being a candy bar throughout the story. It was a good joke in the beginning of the story, but I had assumed that later in the story the kids would forget and Jane would revert to a little girl. The students continued the image of Jane as an animated candy bar, which was surprising considering the story was written by eight people.

When Tyrone said, "Oh shut up, you aint my mother" Herb asked, without indicating any aesthetic or moral preference, "Which one do you want, 'You're not,' or 'You ain't'." Tyrone thought for a second, and then replied; "You aren't."

Willie gave the last sentence. He originally said, "Dick jumped out the window and Jane melted." Before Herb was able to finish writing the sentence on the board Willie added, "into peanut butter." Willie's interest in making his work as expressive as possible was very encouraging and was reflected in the work of the other students as well.

We then began to take turns reading the story out loud. The first and second time the story was read there was a contagious sense of pride in the group. The story hung together well. It was funny and we had done it ourselves. By the third reading, however, Tyrone's monotone reflected our growing sense that the reading was an exercise. I said to Tyrone, "Why don't you read the story with greater expression? Why don't you read it like an actor? Try to read it like you were a general." I was thinking out loud. I had started out trying to encourage Tyrone to read with more expression, and had stumbled upon the idea of acting out the story.

Tyrone read the story in a uniformly gruff tone, but seemed to enjoy his imitation quite a bit. I then asked Brenda to read the story as if she were a drunk. Brenda is a delicate, beautiful girl with perfect diction and excellent reading skills. In between giggles she gave a great imitation of a drunk, including intentionally mispronouncing words.

Next, Wyla volunteered to read the story as if she were the grieving parent of the late, melted Mary Jane. Her heart-rending melodramatic reading of the story was an impressive performance and brought forth hysterical laughter from the class.

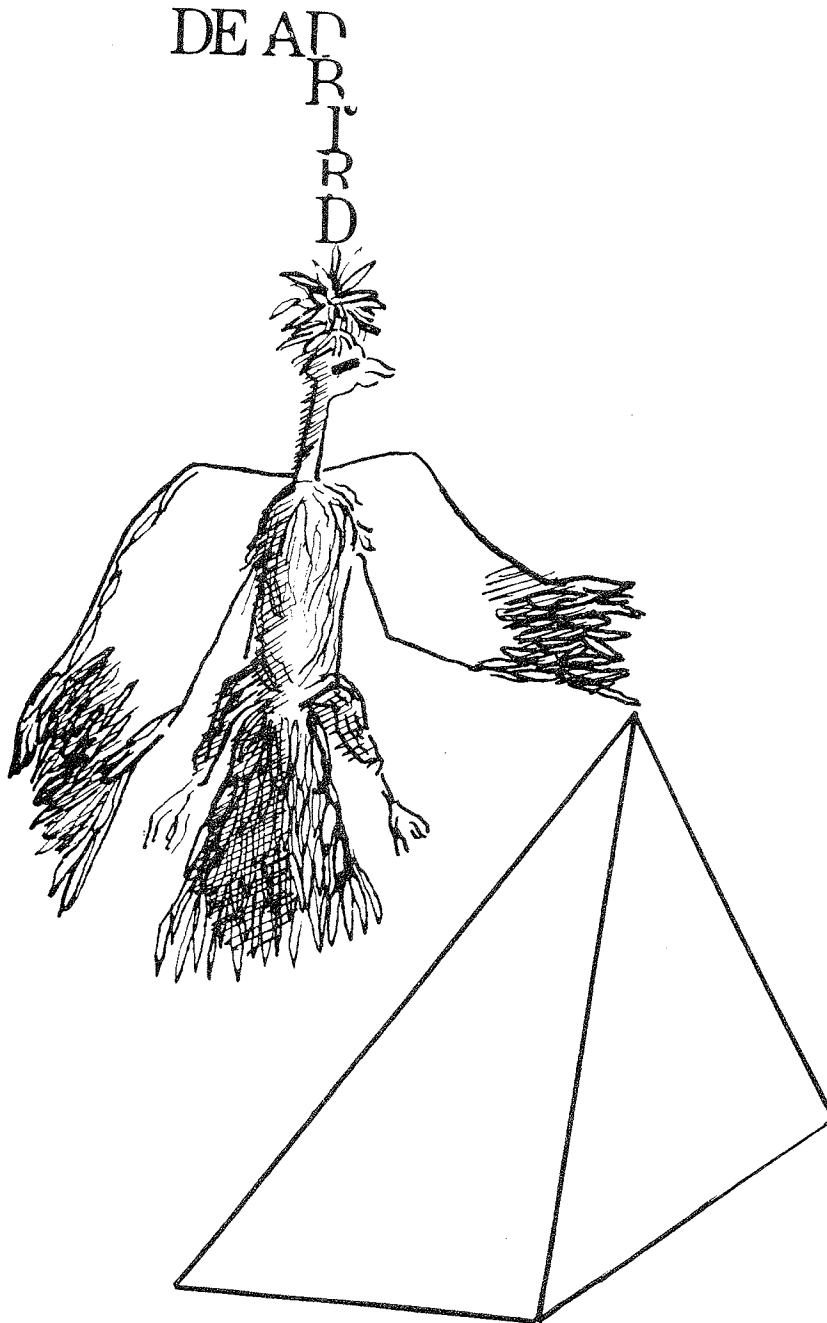
Walking down to the cafeteria afterwards was like a lockerroom celebration after a big football victory. No one had been grading us. No one ended the last class with even a verbal evaluation of the summer. It was unnecessary...

I was overwhelmed by a sense of accomplishment. I had done a lot of talking about the potential of kids when they're really "turned on," but, without realizing it had come to doubt my own ideas. But here it was. No theory, a real thing.

VISUAL MATERIAL

The material in this section consists of concrete examples of the use of photographs, newspapers, and drawings by writers and teachers associated with the Collaborative. Some of the ideas mentioned in the last Newsletter such as the Bestiary and the drawings of "hustlers" are being experimented with, and the results will be included in the next Newsletter.

Sources to trigger ideas in writing may come from the outside or from the inside. A child will be inspired by a photograph to write prose or dialogue.



In working with fables, for example, one must be able to visualize the animals and know about their habits and peculiarities in order to make real characters out of them. Herb Kohl writes from California: "There are teachers here (Berkeley) using the Bestiary to get their pupils thinking about animals (and animal metaphors) in new and fresh ways. The 'dead bird' has had quite an impact - kids trying to draw a live bird and a dead bird, trying to write about the differences..."

In the work of Linda Margolin's students the appearance of the page forms an integral part of the meaning. June Meyer uses a visual device to inspire the children to write. These processes are somewhat akin to concrete poetry.

from the Bestiary by Joan Jonas

Linda Margolin, teaching a sixth grade in Brooklyn, found that in order to explain the idea of autobiography to the children, it helps if the teacher first demonstrates the lesson with herself as the subject. In this case the children were to write about some important events in their lives. She wanted to make it clear that events are different from an autobiography in that each one is self-contained, so she first made a list of events in her own life. She then drew a web and put the words around inside the web. She also showed the class examples of similar things that other children had done. The children then wrote down events in their own lives that they considered important. After that they made drawings describing and containing the words. A book was made called Days of Our Lives.

One gets an idea about the child and the feeling he has about his experience in the drawings. There are, obviously, a great many ways to draw one's life. For example, in the first of the two stories on the following pages, a child fuses opposite kinds of experiences (the flowers towering above the children's shelter). There is also the possibility of a circular story in which there is no beginning and no end. One child used the face of a clock as a form. Events can either be isolated and contained or continuous and sequential.

Lenny Jenkin says something in one of his diaries about teaching:

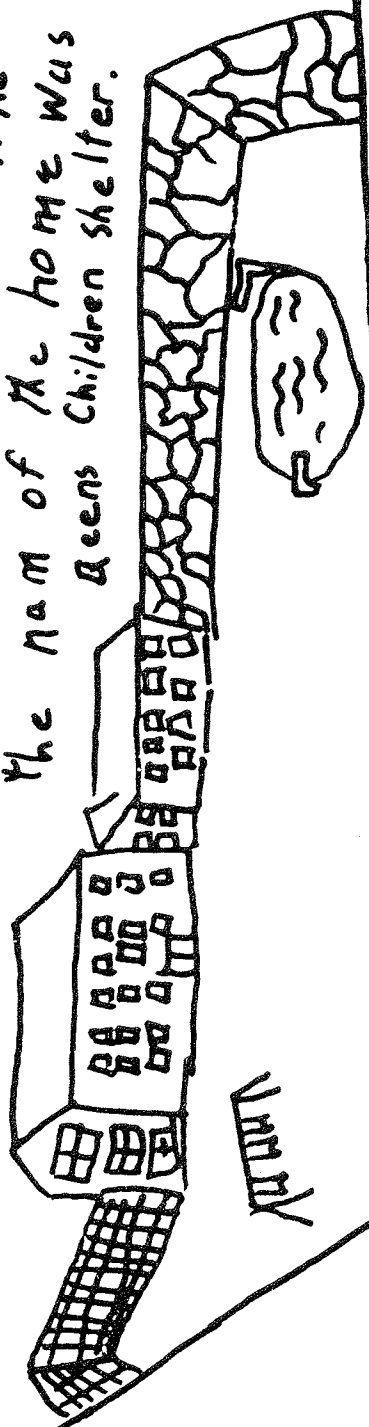
"I showed them on the blackboard how the hastily scrawled sentence 'I live in a house' means both 'I live in a house' and 'I am in a hurry'. I then gave the opposite in a carefully written version of the same thing. They were able to see that this showed that the person lived in a house and was careful and neat. Then I drew a line, like the scrawl, but not containing words, that was in a hurry, and a line that was careful, fat and slow. I connected the ideas of writing and drawing as a way you can say things, and discussed how things would mean differently if they were placed differently on a page. Using a stop sign and a cross I showed them how two signs can combine to make a third..."

Examples from Days of Our Lives follow.



I was in a home for kids wene I was fire years old. I was there with my brother. this is what the home looked like

The nam of the home was Beens Children shelter.



my brother and I use to go hunting out in the woods. We use to go hunting for Rabetts.

I started to breathe
on July 14, 1955

at 6 months
I began
to fight

at 3 years I
begin to go
to country

I was born
in Dominican

In Dominican
I lived on
a hill

and I moved
from the Hill
and went to live near
the sea

I use to go and
bathe in the
sea
Every morning

at five I use
to raise sheep
and go to school

I use to go to
school
and give the sheep
water

at time I
End up
here

In Dominican
I live in a house
like this



when I used
to live on the
Hill I used to go
down

The Hill to
school and I
used to come
home to eat

because
children
never used to eat
in school

and I happen
to miss my
country

Aubrey Lerons

The use of a scrim (here a piece of paper with holes cut by the children) enables children to focus on certain details in a picture or an article that when isolated might suggest a story or poem. In this game of chance, the eye sees details more easily, and in the selectivity of the scrim a point of view is perhaps more easily arrived at. In the illustrations only one element is used but when each hole exposes a different detail then the combination would form a new story or poem.

This method was developed by June Meyer in a seventh grade class taught by Terri Bush at Sands Junior High School in Brooklyn. The following excerpt from June Meyer's diary describes the process:

Terri Bush agreed to ask the kids to bring a photograph, article or editorial from the Daily News, to class. On the board I drew a page and marked rectilinear slits inside it. I drew a second page and marked circular shapes and a triangle shape inside it. If the student intended to work with an article (words), he should cut slits according to the first model. If he intended to work with a photograph (imagery) he should cut circles and the triangle shape from his construction sheet.

I began circulating among the students and tried, showing two or three at a time, to explain the project. By moving the slit-sheet across a column of print, the eye would naturally focus on isolated phrases, a heading of two words, etc. Whatever word or words caught their interest, in this fashion, they should hold by not moving the construction scrim anywhere else, and use those words as the spring into a story of their own making.

As for the photographs, by sliding the second-design construction sheet across the whole frame, the eye would naturally focus on isolated aspects of the full photograph that would, themselves, equal a new, newly suggestive photograph. When they came upon a new-photograph, in this way, that appealed to them, they should hold it by not moving the construction sheet any further, and write about their now determined illustration.

My idea, apart from hoping to provide them with fun, was to demonstrate how seemingly fixed, pre-determined writings and illustrations, may be manipulated so as to yield creative possibilities for them.

Next time I take a class at Sands, I want to try this again, but with better preparation. I would like to get hold of old National Geographics and relatively recent Christian Science Monitors and cut these pages so that they would more nearly suit the dimensions of the construction paper scrim.

Then I shall ask them to write whatever they choose answering the newspaper hole 5:

Who What When Where Why
plus: So What?

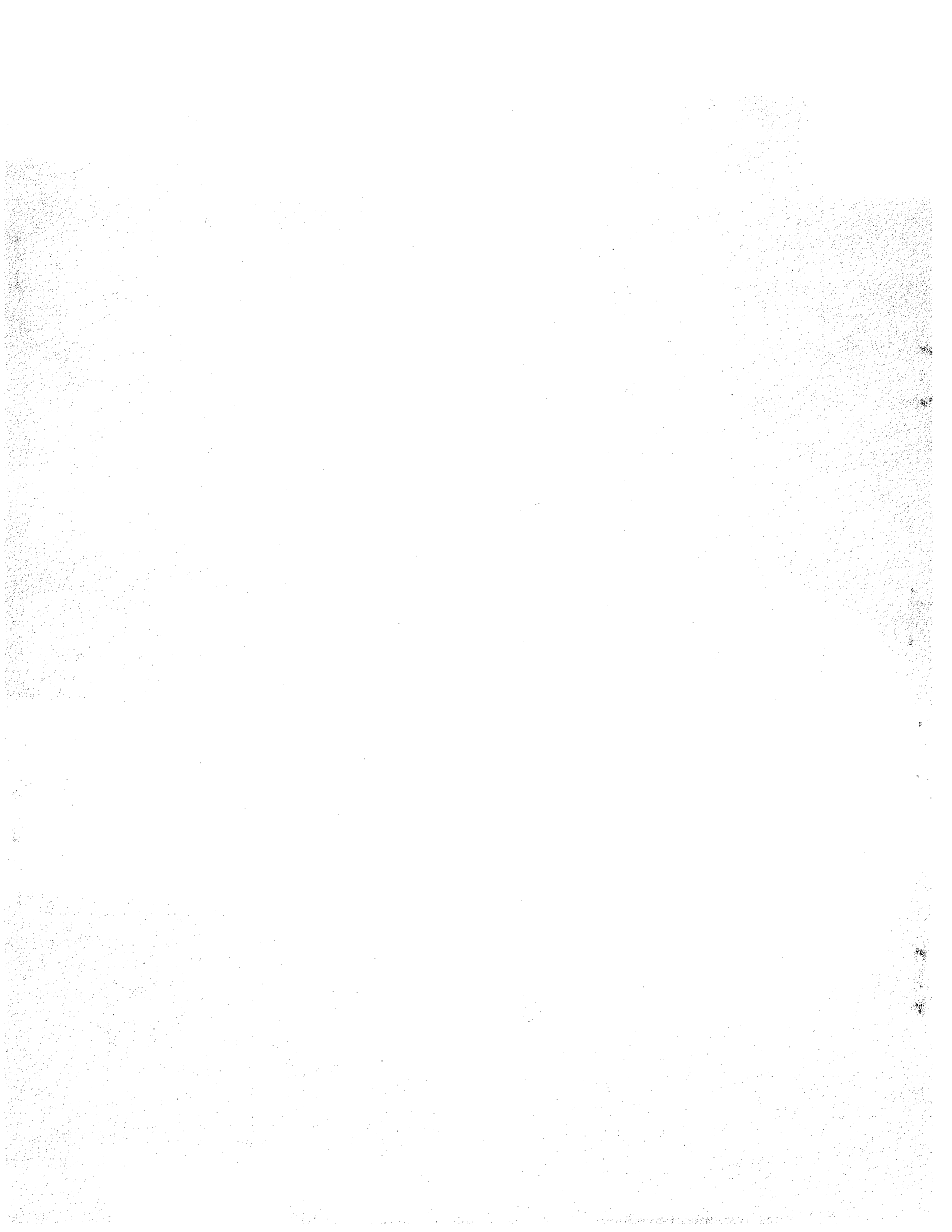


the end of January
girl will be standing in New
to the statue in the picture is Pablo
For years Picasso had dreamt of making
them. Now Mr. Allan Emil, a New
36-foot version of Picasso's statue. The
great Sphinx in Egypt.

Cancer

This picture is no mainly about a man
smoking it is about people getting
cancer

Richard Butts



GUE

Taste

Bitter, Sour, Salty is a matter of opinion. To some people bitter may be salty or salty may be Bitter. How come this happens? Do you know? Is it because they are meaner then others? You could ask a doctor but they don't know? All they will say is people have different taste buds.

The same thing goes for color why are people dark and some light, does that change taste? Can you tell how you can make your taste the same as somebody elses? (let me know).

Jerome Holland



Bitter

Sour

Salty

