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# The motivation of written language in grades four, five, and six

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

The motivation of written language in  
grades four, five, and six

by

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First Reader - Dr. Donald Durrell

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THE MOTIVATION OF WRITTEN LANGUAGE  
IN GRADES FOUR, FIVE, AND SIX

Introduction The purpose of this study is to gather into one paper a variety of activities and means which provide interesting and functional motivation for children's writing in the intermediate grades.

The paper has been written in three divisions - prose, poetry, and utilitarian writing. Each section seeks to provide concrete means of motivation for the particular type of writing. The material has been gathered from children's and teachers' textbooks and from educators' periodicals.

Written language offers opportunity to the teacher for a rich, varied program if she is willing to keep alive to the possibilities available for it. Language in the traditional meaning of the word would imply twenty minutes a day of drill-separated from any other phase of the school work. However, Strickland states, "Authorities who have made extensive surveys both in this country and in England appear in agreement that English cannot be taught in a separate period divorced from content and actual need." <sup>1</sup>

Children have needs for written communication even in their earliest years. They, like adults, have a desire to seek information, share information, entertain, and preserve their thoughts. Writing in the school program should meet these needs and not stifle them.

With patience and insight teachers can promote effec-

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1. Ruth Strickland, The Language Arts in the Elementary School, (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1951), p. 260

tive communication in children. Chase lists four requisites for good writing:

1. Something to write about
2. Time and helps for thinking
3. Opportunity for writing
4. An interested audience to read what is written <sup>2</sup>

The methods presented in this paper have been chosen with the foregoing ideas in mind in order to provide ideas that would be enjoyable as well as profitable in the language program.

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2. Naomi Chase, "Skills in Speaking and Writing," Intermediate School Portfolio, Association for Childhood Education International, Washington, D.C., 1954



Chapter I  
PROSE WRITING

Fundamental Sentence Skills Acrostics are a good means to get children word conscious before they begin writing. One teacher has the children use their own names as a starter. Here are some of her results:

B ig	L ittle	A dele
E nergetic	Y ellow	D id
R aw-boned	O bedient	E nough
G irl	N umbskull	L anguage
F ound		L ast night
E lizabeth's		
L ost		
D og		

The first was the teacher's own last name, and she worked out the acrostic before the children tried any of their own. 3

After the children had tried one-word acrostics the teacher then showed them how to write a rhyming acrostic like this:

W stands for Washington who fought to make us free  
A is found in greatness- begins ability  
S stands for standards of work and of play  
H is for the hero we honor today  
I is for independence for me and for you  
N is for never for name and for new  
G is for govern- they elected him chief  
T is for trials beyond all belief  
O is for over- those black days are past  
N is for the nation. He built it to last

In order to teach descriptive writing a sentence building game could be used.

1. Start with a small sentence such as:

The boy threw the ball

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3. Annabelle Bergfeld, "Creative Writing Project," Elementary English Journal, 23:157-160, April, 1946

2. Tell "who" threw the ball by using names of boys and girls in our class.

Sam threw the ball.  
Jane threw the ball.

3. Now tell what ball.

Jack threw the volleyball.  
Helen threw the basketball.  
Tom threw a baseball.

4. Now tell where.

Jack threw the baseball through a window.  
Tom threw a basketball through a basket.  
Jane threw a volleyball over the net.

5. Now tell "when". Put "when" words first.

Last evening at practice Jack threw the basketball through the basket.  
Yesterday on the playground Jane threw the volleyball over the net.  
Yesterday on the field Tom threw a long forward pass.

6. Now come back to "boy". Tell what kind of a boy. Use a color word if you can.

The boy with the red hair threw the baseball across the plate.  
The girl in the red dress threw the softball wildly toward the batter. 4'

This same idea could be expanded many possible ways.

The word "threw" could be changed to heaved, tossed, pitched, etc.

To begin their stories children might be given starter sentences. A beginning sentence should incorporate imagination, action, and suspense so that many different solutions and ideas might stem from it. Here are a few samples of the type of sentence that can be used.

1. The smile on my face changed to a look of fright when I opened the door to admit the first guest.
2. With a whoop of joy, Roberts slid down the banister and landed with a thud in the midst of the group.
3. Mary gazed with despair at the torn flounce.
4. Growling deeply, Ruff darted past me into the underbrush.
5. "What shall we do?" I groaned. "We're locked out."
6. "Quick, Hide behind the curtain!" Roger whispered.
7. "Listen!" Did you hear someone at that window?"<sup>5</sup>

Another type of starting situation is found in a sentence such as:

If I had my choice of all the makes of automobiles I would choose a \_\_\_\_\_.

First sentence starters can also be copied from a book on the grade level of the child.

Another means to initiate children's writing would be to have the teacher choose a subject. She writes six to eight descriptive phrases on the board and has the class guess the topic of the phrases. After having guessed and discussed the topic, the children could then write a story on that subject using the phrases if they wished to.

Students will oftentimes offer what to them is a complete story but to the teacher is only an outline of a story. To use this story the teacher can say, "You have a wonderful outline for a short story." She can then read some popular short stories to the children so that they might see how authors expand their lead sentences. Finally she can read a lead sentence from a book and have the children expand it. After they have done so and read their development of the sentence, she can then show them how the author did it. When they have caught the

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<sup>5</sup> Wilbur Hatfield, E.E. Lewis, Emma Besig, Gladys Borchers, Junior English Activities, Book III, (New York: American Book Co., 1940), p. 49

idea of expanding sentences into descriptive paragraphs she can then show them how to do it with their story outline.<sup>6</sup>

By asking questions you can help the children to use their imaginations for each phrase they write. Try to ask questions that will further the description and plot. A child can often easily expand and perfect a story after a teacher has given him a few helps in the beginning. When a child brings up a story that tells everything in four sentences, say to him, "This is a good story, but I think we could tell even a bit more." Then ask the child questions such as, "What was he doing when he found it?" "Did he look happy or sad?" "Where was it found?" "Was it a light or a dark room?" "Whose idea was it to look there?" What did he do after he found the key?"

Instead of using first sentence starters a teacher might give an interesting title to the children to work from. The title "A Story About Coal" would arouse little interest with children, but stories on a unit of study about coal would be greatly enlivened if written from these angles:

A Story by a Mining Mule  
Down into the Deep Mine  
Dangerous Thrills in Mining  
What Two Quakers Found  
Black Diamonds

After studying about the colonies, titles such as these would stir an interest in stories:

Long Shaft, the Arrow  
My Life as a Knife Sheath  
A Log from a Fort  
Miles Standish's Sword

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6. Thomas Robinson, "Putting Flesh on Story Skeletons," Elementary English, 25:212-214, April, 1948

The Last Handful of Meal  
 The Autobiography of a Wooden Leg  
 The Story of the Sampler  
 The Tale of a Trencher <sup>7</sup>

Children can be helped to write if the teacher shows them the various possible beginnings for stories. Applegate gives a good list of ways to start stories.

1. With conversation to set the stage for action
2. With the end of the story then going back to the beginning
3. With the middle of the story; then to the actual beginning
4. A characterization of the chief character or characters
5. A summary paragraph to tell the point of the story
6. With description
7. With time or place or circumstances
8. With telling the story according to time sequence
9. With a question
10. With just enough of the present action to catch the interest and then go back to the first of the story
11. With the background for the action <sup>8</sup>

Examples of varied beginnings are numerous, but some of which could be shown to the children are these:

Early one day in July  
 On a dark, winter night, cold and windy  
 Three years have gone by since  
 When I was ten years old  
 At twilight, just at the close of a warm spring day  
 In the very month of May  
 It was toward evening of a crisp day in autumn  
 One eventful afternoon lingers in my memory  
 In the days following the hurricane of 1938  
 At exactly six o'clock on the day before the Fourth  
 For three memorable days in December <sup>9</sup>

The description of a character might provide motivation

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7. Margaret Messick, "Enjoying Compositions,"  
Elementary English Review, 17:25-26, January, 1940

8. Mauree Applegate, Helping Children Write,  
 (Scranton: International Textbook Co., 1949), p. 103

9. John Treanor, "Telling the Time in Stories,"  
Elementary English, 24:237-239, April, 1947

for a story. After hearing the teacher describe someone the children can then try to place that person into situations which they feel fit his character.

The following points listed by Applegate will help to have varied descriptions in the stories.

1. Simple statement of fact - Bob's lazy
2. Describing how he does things
3. Telling an episode to prove a point
4. Telling how little of his work is done
5. Comparing him with other lazy persons or slow things
6. Using synonyms of the word
7. Telling what he is not
8. Repeating what the other characters say about him
9. Repeating his own characterization of himself 10

If one child devises an interesting or favorite character the other children in the class might write more incidents about the character. This type of writing could lead to the writing of a book if the class really likes to write.

Subjects To Write On A series of lectures on painting in a California high school led to the writing of "brush-stroke" descriptions of classmates, teachers, and friends. With this idea the child is asked to write eight to ten phrases to describe someone. These are then written neatly and posted on the bulletin board for classmates to guess the identity. <sup>11</sup>

This same idea might be used with a new class at the beginning of the year, especially if the children are not familiar with everyone. They might choose one classmate whom they know

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10. Applegate, op. cit., p. 37

11. C. M. Power, "Correlating Creative Writing and Other Fine Arts," English Journal, 23:195-202, March, 1934

and write a short paragraph about him. Then the class would try to guess whose description it is, thereby getting acquainted.

To help the children write descriptions teachers can work out with the class groups of words to describe the person, expression, or scene. For example a nose might be long, aquiline sharp, pointed, inquisitive, tip-tilted, etc.

"A patter of feet on the stairs and there stood Georgine, her face looking like a molasses jar. Her dress was torn at the hem, and I knew that her mother would not have to dust the floor, for by judging by Georgine's dress, it had already been done. She stood there with one shoe off and stockings ready to leave her legs any minute. Looking at me with her big brown eyes she said, "I'se all weady to go downtown." 12

This paragraph might be read to the class to help them understand that pictures of people can be created with words. After they have heard some read and found examples of descriptive pictures of people in books, they might try to write some original descriptions of people and things they know. The following suggestions might be offered for descriptions:

1. A boy after a fight
2. A little child making mud pies
3. A player after a hard game
4. A boy who had just won a prize
5. A girl in a masquerade costume
6. A person caught in the rain
7. A weary hiker
8. A "tough" guy
9. A street cleaner
10. A child speaking a "piece"
11. A little girl or boy all dressed up 13

Help the children to list details that create a single impression. For instance, write about the hustle and

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12. Hatfield, op. cit., p. 370

13. Ibid., p. 380

bustle of a Saturday night business section or of the close of the ballgame. Here are some more to try:

1. Approach of a storm
2. A new (or very old) car
3. A spooky house
4. A traffic jam
5. Crowd on a bus
6. Children just let out of school
7. Crowd on New Year's Eve
8. Crowd at a circus
9. Circus parade
10. Rainy-day scene
11. Park on Sunday
12. Street scene downtown just before Christmas
13. A room decorated for Halloween, Thanksgiving, or Christmas party. <sup>14</sup>

Sound effects make good descriptions if children are taught to listen. Keep a chart or list of sound words such as boom, buzz, smack, clang, sizzle, swish, thump, fizz, snort, hiss. Using these words have the children try to write descriptive sentences about a fire engine, a fire siren, foghorn, ambulance, old car, footsteps, call of a bird, dry twigs, meat frying, barnyard fowls, stable sounds, water running, meat or apples roasting, ducks or geese on a pond, patter of rain on the roof, coffee cooking in a percolator, or the sound of windshield wipers. After the children have become used to using picturesque words in sentences they will then want to incorporate these words into their own story writing. <sup>15</sup>

Incidents and Material Devices A file of pictures with an appeal in subject or tone should be part of every teacher's materials. Pictures that show either action or feeling

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14. Ibid., p. 390

15. Ibid., p. 397



can be used effectively for motivating writing. With a story-telling picture the following items might be discussed with the class previous to any writing:

1. Guessing what's happening in the picture
2. Characterizing the people and suggesting possible names for them
3. Deciding what events might have led up to the present action
4. Guessing at the various ways the stories have turned out
5. Finding words to describe the scenery or to express the background of the picture
6. Finding words to express the feelings and actions at which the picture hints
7. Suggesting a few appropriate titles <sup>16</sup>

If a picture is one that shows emotion or feeling the children should discuss events in their own lives that have produced the feeling which the picture displays. For example if the picture depicts the grandeur of the mountains, the children might tell when in their lives they have felt small and insignificant in comparison to their surroundings or they might tell about the places they have visited that have impressed them as beautiful, vast, awesome, etc.

Numbers five, six, and seven of the list suggested for story-telling pictures might be used effectively also with a picture that has much emotion or feeling. Using either of these types of pictures, a child should learn to read into the picture a story or a description which is suggested by the picture and should not just tell what is in the picture.

Newspaper Articles The children can be taught to see in the newspaper those articles which could be easily turned

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16. Applegate, op. cit., p. 60

into a story. The following paragraph is an example of an article that could be turned into an exciting story.

Innsbruck, Austria, June 10. "Feeling he was going to faint and go over a cliff, Paul Seidel, mountaineer climbing the Speckkarspitze yesterday with a comrade, Rudolf Rieder, commanded his friend to sever the rope which held them together. Rieder obeyed and the heroic mountaineer toppled 900 feet to his death." 17

As with the pictures the article should be discussed before writing. Except for number one, each of the points of discussion of pictures could be used to build an interesting story around the newspaper article.

Curious Articles Jensen reports that she displays items from her various trips. Specimens, stalactites, stalagmites, stone flower formations, fossils, trap door spider's home, petrified wood, abalone and other shells, cones from giant trees, and galacial balls are among the articles she has brought to class. She tells the children about the object and the place from which it has come. On the following day she gives opportunity for the children to volunteer to retell what she has told them. She then asks them to write a short story of what they have been discussing. 18

This same idea could be further motivated by asking the children to watch for interesting items on their trips and then have them tell the background of the article to the other children. Many children will also be able to bring in items

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17. Paul Harry and Isabel Kincheloe, Units in English, (New York: Lyons and Carnahan, 1940), p. 379

18. Anna Jensen, "Composition Can Be Interesting," Elementary English, 25:312-319, May, 1948

which friends or relatives have sent to them from various parts of the world.

A further means of motivation writing by the use of objects would be to bring into class an object with which the children are not familiar. Place the article in a prominent place with a placard nearby which states that the teacher doubts that anyone can identify the object. Invite the children to refute your doubts by telling you in writing what the curious object is.

With this same means of a curious object the teacher might disclose in what line of work the device is used and ask the pupils to tell how it is used in that occupation. After writing how they think it is used let the children plan a time to read their ideas to each other. After having done this, one child, who has been let into the secret previously by the teacher, reads what he has found out that the object really was after having looked it up.

Incidents Used As Motivation Hook in his book gives a method of teaching observation. Two girls were asked to learn a prepared script. They did so and then rushed into a classroom, picked a letter out of a basket containing papers, and began to argue and fight over it. The teacher quieted them and then ushered them out of the room. After they had gone the teacher explained to the class that this had been staged to test the power of observation of the class members. The children were asked to record as accurately as possible all they could remember of

the incident, including the conversation. 19

In using this idea a couple of children could write a little script and arrange with the teacher to stage it before the rest of the class.

To make the child aware of the story possibilities in the commonplace happenings a teacher might have a child write a paragraph on what he did that morning from the time he arose until he reached school, or she might choose to ask the children to write about one incident of the morning in detail. Many of the happenings in school life could also be woven into interesting stories if they were discussed and enlarged upon.

Conrad proposed that a teacher offer suggestions of things that children might do. After the child has done one of these things let him try to express the thoughts that arose in him or the mood or feeling it gave him. Some suggestions might be:

1. Sit one half hour watching the swans in the park
2. Search over a meadow for a stone as round as a marble
3. Get out the first book you ever read and read it through
4. Spend twenty minutes listening, trying to identify all the sounds you can hear
5. Go into a vacant house, an empty church, or your attic and just sit quietly
6. Seek for a plant, or a rock, or an insect that is strange or unusual, and note carefully the surroundings from which it came. 20

To creat enthusiasm for a coming trip to a museum

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19. J. N. Hook, Teaching of High School English, (New York: Ronald Press Inc., 1950), p. 260

20. Lawrence Conrad, Teaching Creative Writing, (New York: Appleton-Century- Crofts Inc., 1937), p. 38

mimeograph some stimulating question on things the children will see during their visit. Ask them to write answers to the questions and then have them read their thoughts to the class before taking the trip. In the museum as they listen to the guide and watch the displays they will discover the correct answers to the questions.

After the trip is over let them re-answer the questions and again share their answers with the class. Interest will be high in answering them the second time because of having learned their errors in the first set of answers.

The following questions suggested by Jensen are the type of questions that might be used.

1. What are Rubber "Hams"?
2. Why do cocoanuts have three "eyes" on the top?
3. How did Indians make glue?
4. Why do the Eskimos wear masks sometimes?
5. To what country would you go to hear Concert Pigeons?
6. Ever hear of cannon balls growing on a tree?
7. What bird is called a standard bearer? 21

Another means of using trips to motivate writing would be to have the children write an account of their trip and send a copy to the other children of the same grade in the city.

The teacher might have the children tell orally the next day what they liked best, what impressed them most, what surprised them most, or what new thing they learned. After they have told about this one thing they are then asked to write about this one part in three to five sentences.

Imaginative Stories Sentences such as these could be used to stir the imaginations of the children:

"Is there a house in your neighborhood with drawn blinds and a garden overgrown with weeds? What might its story be?"

"Perhaps hidden in the side of a gorge near your home is a cave. What happened there?"

Folklore provides a good basis for imaginative stories. Some of the folkloré books that could be read to the children are:

North and Northwest

Babe the Blue Ox- Paul Bunyan  
Famous Idaho Potato

Johnny Inkslinger  
Pacing Mustang

West and Southwest

Celebrated Jumping Frog  
Fin MacCool

Pecos Bill  
Sam Bass  
Kemp Morgan

Windwagon Smith  
Golden Daves

East and Northeast

Captain Stormalong  
Joe Magarac  
Jonathan Slick

Sal of the Erie Canal  
Mike Fine  
Ichabod Paddock  
Ethan Crawford

Central Region

Febald Febaldson  
Little Brown Bulls  
Johnny Applesed  
Big Bear of Arkansas

Three Ravens  
Jim Bludso  
Jim Higgins

South

Big Foot Wallace  
Casey Jones  
Uncle Remus

John Henry  
Boll Weevil  
Tony Beaver

Other collections of folklore:

Tall Tales from the Travels of Baron Munchausen  
by Rudoly Raspe

Tall Stories by Lowell Thomas

Tall Tales of the Southwest by Franklin Meine

After reading folklore to the children try to create some local folklore. Say to them, "Look around you. Look for

someone or something that is larger, keener, taller, or faster than anyone or anything for miles around. Is there a lone tree standing in a field or a mysterious opening into a dark cavern? Is there a rock like the Great Stone Face in New Hampshire that stirs your imagination? Is there a fireman in your city known for courage, skill, and strength? Is there a game animal such as an old bear which for years has defied hunters to catch him? 22

Have the children select a factory worker who has won local fame, an event that makes use of the skills of a trade, a farmer who ploughs the straightest furrows, the strongest logger or rigger, or a keen animal. Then have them carry this character through one incident which is far beyond believing.

The following examples were written by children after listening to folklore stories.

#### How Mount Hood Was Made

One time Paul Bunyan was digging a mill pond 2480 feet wide and 4480 feet long. It took him only three minutes and two seconds to make it because his shovel was so big that it covered from here to here. Paul made one mistake--he threw all the dirt in one pile and it made a big mountain. They named it Mr. Hood. This mountain still stands in Oregon.

#### How Paul Bunyan Made the Great Lakes

One year when Paul was a boy it got so hot that all the rivers dried up. The only way to keep cool was to go swimming. The only place that Paul could go swimming was in the ocean, and he didn't like to go there because the sharks tickled his feet. He had to do something so he made a shovel and scooped out five swimming holes which we now call the Great Lakes.

### How the First Volcano Came to Be

One day Babe was playing when she was scared by Johnny Inkslinger's red pencil and she started running. She didn't look where she was going and she ran right into a mountain. The mountain was so mad that it blew its top. <sup>23</sup>

Other imaginative stories might be stirred from the children after the reading of Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories. The children might want to tell:

How the Katydid got its name  
 Why doughnuts have holes  
 How the pig got its curly tail  
 How the rooster got its comb  
 How the pine tree got its cones

Proverbs can be illustrated and a story written to go with the picture. Some that could be used are:

Haste makes waste  
 Look before you leap  
 The more haste the less spend  
 A stitch in time saves nine  
 Penny wise may be pound foolish  
 Honesty is the best policy <sup>24</sup>

Holidays and Seasons The holidays and seasons can provide stimulating motivation for writing if handled in a unique way. If the holiday at hand is Halloween, the children can watch for colorful words as the teacher reads them a short Halloween story. After reading the story to them, the teacher can then make a list on the board of the words which the children had chosen from the stories. This might be a typical list.

#### Names

ghost	goblin	pumpkin	gnome	jack-o-lantern
witch	cat	spirit	spook	broomstick

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<sup>23</sup>. Frances Baker, "Helping Children to Write Creatively," Elementary English Journal, 29:94, February, 1952

<sup>24</sup>. Hatfield; op. cit., p. 405



Action Words

hooted	screamed	swooped
flapped	shuffled	crouched
mumbled	creaked	shivered
whimpered	rattled	crackled

Descriptive Words

weird	fiendish	undulant
spooky	untidy	foaming
terrible	glaring	skinny
gibbering	uncombed	mournful

After this list has been completed the children can then incorporate these words into their stories. <sup>25</sup>

Sentences such as these can be listed on the board to use as starter sentences:

1. My black cat's shining up his whiskers
2. There's a cobweb swinging in the attic
3. That old broom down in the cellar
4. Pumpkin grinning in the cornfield

Books and Writing Books provide an interesting source of motivation for story-writing. After reading the beginning of a story to the class, say, "Now you have heard the way the author started this story. How would you like it to end?" Give each child ample time to think and plan an ending, and then have him write the conclusion as he would like it. After each has done what he wishes with the story, have them read orally. Following this let them hear how the author concluded the story. Some books of short stories from which stories could be gleaned for this purpose are listed here.

<u>Story Parade Blue Book</u>	- Cadmus Books-Winston, 1936
<u>Red Book Story Parade</u>	Winston, 1937
<u>Green Book Story Parade</u>	Winston, 1938

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25. Anne Haspers, "Talking and Writing About Halloween," Elementary English Journal, 65:86, October, 1955

Story Parade Treasure Book - Winston, 1946  
Time for Fairy Tales - Arbuthnot - Scott Foresman  
Time for True Tales - Arbuthnot - Scott Foresman

If the teacher wishes to read a longer story which has the possibility of many endings, these books are recommended:

Atwater, Richard and Florence, Mr. Popper's Penguins  
 Bishop, Claire, All Alone  
 Brink, Carol, Caddie Woodlawn  
 Coatsworth, Elizabeth, House of the Swan  
 DeAngeli, Marguerite, Door in the Wall  
 Hunt, Mabel Leigh, Little Girl with Seven Names  
 Hunt, Mabel Leigh, Miss Jellytot's Visit  
 Jamer, Sandra, Silver for General Washington  
 Marshall, Dean, Long White Month  
 Mason, Miriam, Young Mr. Meeker and His Exciting Journey to Oregon  
 Murphy, Frances, A Nickel for Alice  
 Orton, Helen, Secret of the Rosewood Box  
 Pauli, Hertha, Lincoln's Little Correspondent  
 Frynelle, Diddie, Dumps, and Tot  
 Rietveld, Jane, Nicky's Bugle  
 Schrank, Joseph, The Cello in the Belly of the Plane  
 Slobodkin, Louis, Mr. Petersand's Cats  
 Stafford, Kay, Ling Tang and the Lucky Cricket  
 Strong, Phil, Honk: the Moose

Perhaps the teacher would prefer to read the whole book to the children. In this case she could then have them write incidents which could have taken place in the book but did not. For example in the story of Dr. Dolittle the children might write what happened in the Kingdom of the Jollinki when the King and Prince Bumpo discovered how they had again been tricked. Perhaps they can devise another scrape in which Tom Sawyer or Huck Finn could have found themselves. A sixth grade class might want to write the first interview between the doctor and Benn Gunn after hearing Treasure Island.

Another means of using books to stimulate imagination for writing is to have a display of book jackets. Before reading any of the books to the class let them examine the pictures on

the jackets and discuss what they think the story is about just from seeing the picture and title of the story. Let them write their stories next, and then read the book to them.

For variety, films could be used the same way as books. Show the beginning of a story film to them, and then let them conjecture the ending. Again after they have written their ideas show them how the author thought it should end.

Story Boxes are used in many rooms to give the children opportunity to write at any time. If the child wants to write and let only the teacher see the story at first, he can slip it into the box for her to read.

Another type of story box which could be employed is one from which the stories are taken out rather than put in. The teacher has put into the box slips of paper with phrases such as "fell-flat, face like a lion, I trembled all over, my worst scare, ghost, snake, hair stood on end, a hair-raising yell, hightmare, telephone rang, it was all over." On a certain day get the box out and let each child take one slip and tell what the phrase on his paper reminds him of. These stories are to be given orally, but if any child has an especially good story or is reminded of anything while his classmates are talking, the story could then be written down.

Story Hour One hour a week devoted to the reading and enjoyment of each other's stories will do much toward inducing children to write. This of course would be on a voluntary basis, but giving opportunity for any child who has something to contribute to share his story with his classmates.

If a copy of all of the stories is kept, the children

may request to hear a story long after it has been read for the first time.

A child may have found a story in a book that has proven particularly interesting to him. During the story hour have him read part of it to his classmates and let any that want to write an ending to it for themselves.

## Chapter II

## POETRY

An Atmosphere for Poetry "Please write a paper on the atomic bomb!" would be no more baffling for an intermediate school child than the assignment which so often confronts him, "Today we are going to write some poetry."

The beginning of all poetry writing lies in hearing quantities of good poetry. There is poetry that children will "endure" and poetry that they will "relish." If many poems that they like and enjoy are read to them before the subject of writing poetry is mentioned, they will not have an aversion to the idea of writing it.

If the teacher takes delight in reading poetry the children will take an equal delight in hearing it. However, the poetry must be of interest to the children and must be read in an atmosphere of relaxation. As well as creating an informal atmosphere by the display of poetry books of all types, use pictures, paintings, and records to further set the stage for the enjoyment of the poetry.

Read Helen Keller's Midstream and Footfalls for sensuous verse. Acquainting children with child writers like Marjorie Fleming, Helen Douglas Adam, Hilda Conkling, and Nathalia Crane will interest them as they learn that there are some famous writers who began their writing careers as children.

Even if a child's attempt at writing poetry seems very feeble, the greatest possible spur for the child will be the encouragement from the teacher to go on writing.

Stimulating the Writing of Poetry Poetry cannot be produced if there is no desire for it, neither can children create poetry if there is no awareness of the things around them. Applegate suggests that to get the children conscious of their surroundings that the teacher guide them in a "Tour for the Senses." 26

Take a hike on different mornings to search out different smells and then discuss them with words such as acrid smells, wet moldy smells, aromatic smells, clean smells, or pungent smells. The first assignment could then be to have the children think of one smell that they like and have the class put these together into a poem beginning and ending with such a line as "I like smells." Two typical lines might be:

I like the smell of my sister's perfume - it's  
just like flowers.  
I like the smell of the basement on washday -  
it's so clean.

After having completed this, ask each child who wishes to write an original poem to write one about all the smells which he likes best. For a class which is in the beginning stages of writing a teacher might choose the best lines from each child's poem and put them into one poem.

The same ideas can be carried out with the sense of sound or sight. Have the children think of the sounds they like - the ticking of a clock, the patter of rain on a roof, or the sound of the wind in the leaves. Have them watch out the school windows for a few minutes and then tell all of the things that they saw. With either of these senses the same type of poetry

can be written as was suggested for the sense of smell.

The idea sheet suggested by Applegate is another means to help children in the beginning of poetry writing. The teacher reads to the children a few thoughts that could be the spark for an original poem. Some of the things which could be suggested after a unit on airtravel are listed here.

Say to the children, "If you have no ideas for a poem these may help you."

1. You are making a test flight before you receive your wings. How do you feel? How does the plane look and feel? What thoughts are you thinking?
2. An airplane is like a bird. What does it remind you of? In what way?
3. There are many children in the airplane family. What are their names? Where do they live?
4. You are up in the clouds on a mission over a foreign land. It is a beautiful morning. All at once you see enemy planes coming toward you. What do you do? How do you feel? What happens?
5. I wonder how things look to an airplane far up in the sky. <sup>27</sup>

Poetry may come as the result of a unit of work but without the idea sheet. The following poem was written by fourth graders after a social studies unit.

Great Spirit send us rain.  
 Our people are starving and in need of grain.  
 We have not had rain for many a moon.  
 Great Spirit send us rain.  
 We've offered our corn and we've offered our grain.  
 Great Spirit send us rain.  
 We are weaving blankets for you too.  
 Great Spirit send us rain.  
 Silver bracelets with turquoise blue  
 These, Great Spirit, we offer you.  
 Three fine sheep and a new born lamb,  
 The best we have in all the land  
 Great Spirit, send us rain.

Great Spirit, send us rain,  
Great Spirit, send us rain. 28

Holidays and Special Events Another opportunity for the children to have a subject to write on lies in using holidays and special events. However, to write a poem just because it is Columbus Day or Thanksgiving will not produce good poetry, but if the children know that these poems will be used in a program, will be posted for display, or will be used in some other way, they will be enthused and more likely to produce satisfying results. The same type of motivation as was mentioned on page eighteen for holiday story writing can also be used for holiday poetry writing. After the children have acquired a feeling for the words which would be useful in a certain type poem they will find it easier to write.

Children's Gripes, Fears, and Wonders Children, as well as adults, like to air their gripes. Another suggestion offered by Applegate is to have the teacher read the "Plaint of the Camel" by Charles Edward Carryl to the children. After a discussion of their own gripes have the children write a poem or a song about one of their gripes.

Because children's greatest fears and wonders are very real to them, therein lies a fertile field for poetry writing. Discuss with the children the fact that everyone has something of which he is afraid and that it is not the sign of a sissy or a coward to possess these fears. After talking together about these fears children will often see that what they thought was peculiar to them was in reality a fear or wonder shared by many other



boys and girls. Also these discussions will bring to light the fact that some of these fears are needless and some perhaps have good reason to exist. When the class members have had ample opportunity to think through their own particular fears or wonders ask them to put their feelings into a poem which will be confidentially kept by the teacher.

Particular Types of Poetry After children have become accustomed to thinking of poetry teach them some negro spirituals. When they have acquired a feeling for the message and mood of the spirituals ask them to try to write an original spiritual based on their own home chores. The best of these can be chosen for the class to try to put to music.

Read many lyric and narrative poems to the children and then begin to read ballads to them. When they have heard many ballads, read a folk tale to them which could be made into a ballad. After working with this type of poetry for some time have the youngsters look up the history of their own community which dealt with love, adventure, or tragedy and attempt to make a ballad based on local history. These could also be written about war heroes, pirates, or famous people.

Poetry can be created very successfully from hearing Aesop's Fables or other stories with a moral. Following are two samples of poems written by children after hearing this type of story.

#### The Ant and The Grasshopper

Some ants were busy drying grain one day;  
A woeful grasshopper came along that way.

"Oh, neighbors dear, give me some food, I pray;  
I'll pay it back to you another day."

"Last summer did you store your food away?"  
 "I had not time," he said; "I sang all day."

In scorn they cried, "You sang all summer long?  
 You may dance in time to that same song."

Remember when your little tasks you shirk,  
 That he should never eat who does not work.

#### The Hare and the Tortoise

The hare and the tortoise once had a race,  
 And the fox was the referee;  
 The tortoise went off at a very slow pace,  
 When the signal came, "one, two, three!"

The hare, he stopped to take a nap,  
 And by him the tortoise stole;  
 Just then the fox gave the hare a hard rap,  
 The tortoise had reached the goal.

The hare went home with a downcast face,  
 And the fox did laugh, they say;  
 The hare he hated his disgrace,  
 And the tortoise went his way.

This same suggestion can be used for proverbs and familiar sayings such as those that were referred to on page eighteen.

A very entertaining way of creating a good attitude toward poetry writing is to let the children enjoy composing limericks. Explain that a limerick always has five lines and a definite rhythm pattern. Read many to them and they will soon catch the idea and will begin to write. Untemeyer's Singing World provides many examples of limericks. The following is an example of a limerick that might be used to begin limerick writing.

There was an old man of Nantucket  
 Who kept all his cash in a bucket.  
 His daughter, named Nan,  
 Ran away with a man.  
 As for the bucket, Nantucket.

One teacher aroused an interest in poetry by reading to his class "The Defense of Fort McHenry." He then told the children about the author of "The Star Spangled Banner" and challenged them by saying, "Too bad we're not famous poets so that we could write poetry." It's a good thing we have these famous people to write poetry or there wouldn't be any." As he wanted, his class told him that you didn't have to be famous to write, and those of the class that had written any poetry then voluntarily told about it.

The teacher then did "Everybody Says" by Dorothy Aldis, and "Hickory, Dickory, Dock" with the class in choral reading just to get a feeling of rhythm and words.

Following this he read them many stories with suspense, action, and excitement to stimulate them to the writing of poetry. They did write poems and wanted to save them for an anthology. <sup>29</sup>

Using Children's Poetry Children's poetry can be used in programs for the class, for other classes, for an assembly program, or even for a Parent Teacher program.

Another useful idea to be used as a program is that of a simple skit or play. One teacher read the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" to a sixth grade class, and then the children wrote a simple play based on the poem. This could be done from stories, events, or material studied in the social studies. History is especially adaptable to the writing of simple plays. Have the children choose one incident and use their imagination to expand

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29, Chuck Reasoner, "No Tune From the Hickory Stick," Elementary English, 29:326-330, October, 1952

it into a play.

After the whole class has done the preliminary planning choose committees to write the play, cast it, and furnish announcers and music for it. Whether it is a poem or a play that the class has written the piece will have much greater value for the child if he sees it used and enjoyed by other people.

The one main purpose of poetry is enjoyment, whether it be the reading or the writing of it. To increase the children's pleasure in their poetry some teachers have planned weekly or even daily poetry periods. The children read the poetry that they like or have written and the teacher reads poetry to them.

Poetry can be easily and attractively displayed on bulletin boards, library tables, and on posters. Illustrations that accompany poetry will enliven these displays.

Encourage the children to enter contests for advertising which are offered by various companies. This writing of jingles, slogans, etc. will prove to them that language is useful—especially if they are successful in a contest.

If for any reason the class is giving a gift to someone, instead of purchasing a card have the children write their own verse to accompany the gift. This can then be made into an attractive card to send and will make the class feel more a part of the giving.

This idea just mentioned could also be used in writing notes to absent children. Why not put the new in the form of a poem sometimes for variety and spice?

Teachers often wonder how they should judge a child's

poem. Applegate believes that a poem should be judged for its honesty, originality, thought, form or words, rhythm, and simplicity.<sup>30</sup>

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30. Applegate, op. cit., p. 86

## Chapter III

## Utilitarian Writing

Letter Writing Because the letter is so frequently used outside school, it is perhaps one of the most important phases of writing to be taught within the school. However, teachers should learn to make less distinction between "in-school" and "out-of-school" letters. Any letter which is important enough to the child to be written is worthy of time in school in which to write it and receive help in doing so.

Pen pals is perhaps one of the surest ways to build a good attitude toward writing letters. There are numerous ways in which to obtain addresses of children to correspond with. The headquarters in Washington, D.C. for the Red Cross will supply addresses of pen pals for children.

The United States Office of Education recommends these following agencies, but there is a slight charge for each name supplied.

International Friendship League  
40 Mount Vernon Street  
Boston, Massachusetts

Foreign Correspondence Bureau  
Post Office Box 150  
Newton, Kansas

Caravan of East and West  
132 East 65th Street  
New York, 21, New York

There is also the possibility of having the children of a certain grade correspond with children in the same grade in another school, city, or state, or with one of their classmates who has moved or is out of school for a period of time.

Numerous opportunities can be found for writing

letters, a few of which have been listed in the following group.

1. Writing letters to relatives living in distant places to obtain addresses of children in that area.
2. Writing to aunts, grandmothers, and other relatives who would carry on a correspondence with the child.
3. Writing a steamer letter to a classmate who might be crossing the ocean during the school year.
4. Writing to a community member who cannot get out of the house but would enjoy receiving and answering mail.
5. Writing to children who are confined to their home or to a hospital.
6. Obtaining addresses of children in a specific area so that letters might be written to them preceding a study of that section in social studies.
7. Having the children in one seacoast town write to children in other towns along the same coast.
8. Having the children in a town such as Plymouth, New Hampshire write to children of a like age group in Plymouth, Massachusetts to compare towns and learn why each was named Plymouth.

One teacher had his class form a letter-writing club.

After much discussion about the name of the club, "Round the World in an Envelope" was chosen. They had letter heads and envelopes printed using the school address. The children wrote friendly letters to children in all parts of the United States. A large map of the United States was put up and each time a letter was sent a red dot was placed on the spot to which it had been sent. When an answer was received a blue circle was placed around the dot. Many of these letters started a long-lasting correspondence. 31

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31. Harry Tate, "A Class Project in Letter-Writing," Elementary English Review, 16:93-96, March, 1939

Thank-You Letters The thank-you is one of the most used forms of letters, but even at that it is not written too often my most people. The following sincere thank-you note might be read to the class in the beginning of thank-you-note writing to show the tone a thank-you-note can possess.

11-8-46

Chattanooga Tenn-

To the Girls and Boys of the English classes Lookout Jr. High School I want to say there was a package sent out by these C\_ hopping to make some one happy and in that pack- there was many good things to eat some of this some of that showing the minds of the different ones and yet Each one had the same mind to make some one happy on thanksgiving Day and you did. and by the advice of Miss Edner Hilley that one turned out to be M---C---and this little note is to Sho you how hard I am trying to say thank you all. I see I can't find words to prove how thankful I was and what joy it Brought to my Hart May Godd Bless you all an I know he will for he said as much as you have done it unto the least of these my little ones you have done it unto me I thank you again and again I am

M-----B. C-----

This note was written after the students sent a basket of fruits and vegetables to a needly negro lady, 32

An ideal time to begin the thank-you-note would be as soon as school opens in the fall. Many of the children will probably have spent part of their vacation with a relative or friend to whom they should write a note of thanks. If they have not done this, they have no doubt been the guest of a chum for a day at the beach or on a picnic. This type of thank-you-note can always be written too after Christmas and after a birthday.

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32. Ruby Wagner, "An Effective Thank-You Letter," Elementary English, 25:114, February, 1948



Besides this type of thank-you-note children should learn to write a note of thanks after someone has extended a courtesy to him. If a parent has taken time to chaperone a group of children on a trip, or has helped at some school function, or has done something for the class, time should be taken to teach the children that there again is call for a thank-you-note. This can also be taught after a speaker has taken time to come to talk to a class or after a business concern has kindly allowed the class to visit the establishment.

Most children will receive their training in the courtesy of writing letters in school; hence teachers should remember that "it is important that the children become sensitive to the situations in life in which a letter should be written in the interest of good taste and actual need." <sup>33</sup>

Letter of Invitation Letters of invitation can be written to children in another class inviting them to be guests at a program or a special event.

Instead of always sending notices of coming school events home on a mimeographed paper the children could each write a personal letter inviting his parents to attend the function. This could be done for assembly programs, class plays, or even PTA events.

A letter of invitation can be sent to a person who is to be asked to speak to the class. There are numerous opportunities for inviting speakers, but mentioned here are a few that might be considered.

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<sup>33</sup>. Paul McKee, Language in the Elementary School, (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1939), p. 172

A parent or local citizen who has an interesting hobby

A parent or local person who has visited some country or state being studied

A community worker such as a fireman or policeman

A businessman of the city whose work would interest children

A public official who could relate the place of the school to the work of the community

This type of invitation falls under both the category of an invitation and a letter of request.

Other types of request can be effectively taught in school. One of these is a request to visit some business establishment, museum, or other public building. Instead of always having the teacher make all arrangements for class trips, let the children write the letter requesting permission to visit a place.

Letters of request are often letters seeking information. These inquiries might be sent to places the family might be considering for vacation, to a place the class wants to visit, to a person who is an authority on a certain subject, or to another school to ask how a certain project was carried out.

Children can also be taught community responsibility by observing the things in a community that could be bettered. One group of children requested that an unsightly area of their neighborhood be improved. They wrote their letter to the city officials, and not only did they receive a reply, but they saw the eyesore turned into a small park. 34

There is copious material that elementary school children can write a letter to obtain. This material can be

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34. Muriel Crosby, "Factors That Influence Language, Growth," Elementary English, 30:34-40, January, 1953

secured in connection with social studies, science, language, art, or any other school subject.

There are various books published to list materials for which children or teachers can send. Some of these are listed below.

Guide to Free and Inexpensive  
Teaching Materials  
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Guide to Free Films  
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Guide to Free Slides  
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

John Hancock Insurance Company of Boston produces numerous pictures on various subjects which are available without charge.

Each chamber of commerce has free advertizing material on its city or state. Bus, train, and airline companies all produce advertizing material which can be obtained for the asking. Also children might write to the local business firms of the city for samples of what is made near their own home.

If the children are going to undertake a project for which special material or equipment is required, have the class write the letter to the person concerned requesting the material rather than making a verbal request which will more than likely be forgotten or refused.

Encourage the children to watch for ads in magazines which offer free material. Have them bring the ad to school to write their letter of request.

Letters of Condolence and Apology Perhaps the two most difficult types of letters for adults or children to write

are those of condolence and apology. When situations arise in school which make either of these necessary use the opportunity to teach their use. If the relative or friend of a classmate or teacher dies, use this time to show the class how to write a simple letter of condolence. Explain that cards are available but are not as personal as a note.

Strickland notes two examples of opportunity for teaching the use of a letter of apology. A little girl's dog killed the cat of a neighbor who was not at home. The little girl obtained the address of the neighbor and wrote a letter apologizing for what had happened. Another instance was that of a boy who broke a window while the owner was away. Here again the boy took the opportunity to write an apology to the owner of the house, offering to pay for the window. <sup>35</sup>

Letters to Famous People Children have heroes and love to write fan mail. If the child has a favorite radio, television, or film star, or an admired athlete, help the child to write a letter of praise to the person. Perhaps the child likes a particular book or series of books. If the author is still alive have the child write to the author and tell him why he liked the book. After one teacher had read a story to the class it became a favorite and they wanted to know if there were any more books like it. The teacher knew that the author was still alive so she had each child write a letter telling what was important to him about the book. It was a great day when the teacher walked

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35. Ruth Strickland, The Language Arts in the Elementary School, (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1951), p. 270

into the room carrying a letter from this famous person.

Imaginary Letters The last category of letters to be mentioned here is that of the imaginary letter. These should not be imaginary in the sense that they are ordinary letters written to some imaginary friend, but they are actually imaginary in character.

One letter of this type is that which results from the reading of a book. If there are two characters in a book who have very definite personalities, have the child compose a series of letters which might have been written between these two people.

A similar type of imaginary letter stems from studying historical characters. Carry on a correspondence between two people that lived during a particular period in history. These might take the form of letters from a little girl during the Civil War to her soldier daddy. Two of the class members might like to write letters to each other in these personages. These might also be letters written to a cousin who has moved West during the westward movement from a cousin who is still living on the eastern seacoast.

Hatfield suggests for another type of imaginary letter that the teacher have the child write a humorous account of a trip to the "Land of Nowhere." This might be spelled backwards and become "Erewhon" as Samuel Butler once put it. If the children can draw have them illustrate their letters with stick figures.<sup>37</sup>

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36. Lucy Nulton, "Eight Year Olds Tangled in 'Charlotte's Web'," Elementary English, 31:11-16, January, 1954

37. Hatfield, op. cit., p. 69

The book Marjorie Daw by Bailey Aldrich is a book which tells a story by a series of letters. Read the book to the children and then have them write a series of letters to tell a story.

The Compleat Letter-Writer is an old book which demonstrates all types of letters. Prepare a modern model-letter book with samples of all types of letters along with the rules for writing letters.

Many books are available for the motivation of letter writing. These books contain either interesting letters or material on letters.

Alcott, Louisa, M. Little Men  
Alcott, Louisa, M. Little Women  
Alcott, Louisa, M. Rose in Bloom  
Bishop, J. B. Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children  
Carroll, Lewis, Selections from the Letters of Lewis Carroll to His Child Friends  
Center, Stella and Saul, Book of Letters for Young People  
Chesterfield, Phillip, Letters Written by Lord Chesterfield to His Son  
Cheney, Edna, Louisa May Alcott; Her Life, Letters and Journal  
Collingwood, Stuart, The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll  
Colson, Elizabeth and Chittenden, A.G., Children's Letters  
Connor, Eva, Letters to Children  
Dagliesh, Alice, Roundabout  
Driggs, Howard, The Pony Express Goes Through  
Epler, Percy, Life of Clara Barton  
Harding, Maude, The Children's Own Book of Letters and Stories  
Hewins, Caroline, A Traveler's Letters to Boys and Girls  
Keller, Helen, The Story of My Life  
Overton, Jacqueline, The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson for Boys and Girls  
Steward, Elinore, Letters of a Woman Homesteader  
Taintor, Sarah, and Monro, Kate, Book of Modern Letters  
Taintor, Sarah, and Monro, Kate, Handbook of Social Correspondence  
Tappan, Eva, Letters of Colonial Children

After having read one of these books such as Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children have the children write a pen sketch of what kind of man he was by quoting from his letters. This could also be done with Louisa May Alcott and others of the books mentioned.

Newspapers As diversified as the many kinds of letters that can be written so is it with school newspapers. Papers can be either the project of one class or a school project.

If the paper is to be the work of one class it might be published each month and sent home to parents. Divide the class into committees to be responsible for each part of the paper. Some of these groups would be reporters, editors, layout committee members, art workers, typists, (or in elementary school someone to see that it gets to a typist or is written by hand), and and a distributing committee. In the event that there are no duplicating facilities available Applegate suggests that there be two copies hand printed and sent from family to family at home or from room to room in school.<sup>38</sup>

If the paper is to be a school project the pupils in the sixth grade can do the writing and publishing, while the reporters from each grade acts as newsgathers. After receiving written contributions from each room the upper grade can edit and arrange them for printing.

Pupils will wonder at first what there is to put into a school newspaper, but it will not take long before their problem is to decide what can be left out. Articles on units studied, room

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38. Applegate, op. cit., p. 118

or school decorations, community or school happenings, new pupils, hobbies, extra-curricular activities, report cards, playground events, safety, news, messages to parents, and class trips can all become news articles. An opportunity lies in the school newspaper for publication of original stories, poems, and short book-reviews.

Heineman reports that her class wrote a daily newspaper on the blackboard. One half hour was given each morning planning the layout of the paper on the board. With two classes cooperating in the project, the newspaper always included one main topic, one humorous incident, and one current event. After the story had been written on paper it was copied on the blackboard layout. When the completed paper was written on the blackboard one member of the class rewrote the paper and pinned a copy on each of the two bulletin boards in the cooperating classrooms.<sup>39</sup>

One sixth grade teacher tells of a successful venture in editorial writing that was initiated by the posting of pictures depicting various facial expressions. The teacher and class cooperated to list under each picture adjectives which would describe the picture.

The children then hunted at home for picturesque and persuasive ads using descriptive words and tried to use these to describe the people and objects in the schoolroom.

Crossword puzzles were done in school to give practice with synonyms, and then these mimeographed papers were handed out.

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39. Alma Heineman, "A Daily Class Newspaper," Elementary English Review, 23:311, November, 1946



Underline your opinion and give some good and meaningful reasons to support your viewpoint. Write them in paragraph form.

1. In my opinion physical education (is a very important) (is not a very important) part of the school program because....
2. The workmen in the halls are disturbing the classroom activities. I think a good solution to this problem would be....
3. Social dance lessons (should be) (should not be) included as one of our physical education classes because....

Following this the teacher read some professional editorials to the class in order that the children might discover their lack of reasons to substantiate their viewpoints in their original editorials. After discussion they decided that the following points were necessary in a good editorial.

Timely subject	Catchy title
Real opinion	Important to all
Reasons for opinion	Gramatically correct
Central idea	Interestingly written
Good beginning and ending sentences	

One morning this teacher announced to the class that the previous evening he had just "happened" to meet a college senior who was editor of the college paper. He said that he had taken the liberty to invite the senior to come to speak to the class.

The college student came and told the class about editing a newspaper and then answered their many questions on writing.

After this visit their bulletin board was covered with daily editorials with a sheet of paper beside the bulletin board listing the catchy titles found in professional editorials.

By this time their enthusiasm was high, and they were ready to begin writing their own editorials.

Their first step was to divide into committees. One group composed a thank-you letter to the guest editor, and a planning committee decided what to do with the editorials after they were written. They settled on the following four procedures to make use of their editorials.

They would publish some of them.  
They would post some on their school bulletin boards.  
They would read some over their local radio station.  
They would sponsor a contest for fifth to eighth grades.

Because they were going to sponsor a contest they again divided into committees and the subject committee listed the following topics as editorial possibilities.

Need for recreation centers or playgrounds  
Service in a local department store  
Good sportsmanship  
Korean War  
George Washington  
Responsibilities connected with care of pets  
Hazards at high rate accident corners

Titles entered in the sixth grade contest were:

Are You Pals with Your Pet?  
Necking at the Movies  
Clerks Versus Customers

The invitation committee issued personal, oral invitations to all the fifth through eighth grade classes in the city to cooperate in the contest, and the publicity committee made posters giving information about the contest.

At the close of the contest a committee of judges, composed of teachers and students, judged each editorial according to the age of its author. When the decision for each age group was finally reached, the children of the city all waited anxiously

to hear the winners announced over the local radio station, WLBK. A tape recording of the program was made, the winners were photographed at the radio station, and the winners' editorials and photographs were displayed on the bulletin boards.<sup>40</sup>

Applegate offers two other means of arousing an interest in writing a newspaper. The first of these would be to publish a "Paul Bunyan" paper each year. Take the most outstanding articles and events from the regular paper published monthly or the outstanding happenings that would be in a paper if there were one, and rewrite each piece of news until each article is no less than a "tall tale."

The second idea is to have a historical newspaper correlating with the pupils work in social studies. A typical article of a sixth grade Athenian Newspaper was called "Attention: People of Athens."

"The blind poet, Homer, will recite another of his famous poems Sunday when the sun is high. It tells of Ulysses and how he wandered for ten years trying to find his way back home."<sup>41</sup>

Enthusiasm will run high for a newspaper if it is efficiently produced so that the burden does not become too great on any individual or group of children. The youngsters will find ample news and will enjoy reading of their own doings. One school made a practice of distributing their paper to the neighborhood to promote good community spirit.

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40. Jess Beard and Corinne Schumacher, "Editorial-Writing in the Sixth Grade," Elementary English, 29:280-287, May, 1952

41. Applegate, op. cit., p. 166

Booklets One of the greatest joys to a child is to keep in writing what is his own work. Booklets of all types give opportunity to each child in the class to make a permanent record of some phase of the schoolwork. There are as many different types of booklets that can be compiled as teacher's and children's imaginations can contrive.

The class will have to decide early in the year which booklets would be of most value for them and what part each child should have in the making of the various books. A beautiful penman can be valuable for the writing, an artist for the decorating, a clever writer for the composing of captions and articles, a good planner for the layout of the book, and an overseer to see that the parts are coordinated. Beware lest these become too burdensome by having one child responsible too often or for too much of the booklet.

Types of booklets After a simple production of the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" one class decided to compile what they called a "Festival Book." This was an account, in a large illustrated booklet, of their production which showed costumes, speaking parts, scenery, preparations, and anything else that was in any way connected with the planning of their play.

In the fall ask the children to bring in good scenic or story-telling pictures. After a discussion of each picture have the donor write a short description of his picture and place this along with the picture in a booklet.

Perhaps the children would like to make a notebook illustrating our national holidays. This would contain descriptions of the way in which Americans celebrate each holiday, the origin

of each holiday, customs in connection with the holiday, and typical illustrations or pictures of the holiday. The same idea could be used to correlate with the social studies by having a booklet made on some country which the class is studying.

The Canadian holidays are as follows:

British Empire Day - May 24  
Dominion Day - July 1  
Thanksgiving - second Monday in October  
Remembrance Day - November 11  
Boxing Day - December 26  
The King's Birthday

The Latin American holidays are as follows:

Mexican Independence Day - September 15  
Cuban Independence Day - October 10  
All Saints Day - November 1  
Feast of Epiphany - January 6

Booklets can be compilations of the children's work throughout the year. They might be a collection of sea stories written by the class members, a collection of ballads, original stories of all types, or original poetry. It could be a collection of the best stories of the year with a copy made for each child to take home in June.

Other types of books which can be compiled are those on units of work, science experiments, trips taken, speakers invited, points of interest in a city or state, or a book which tells "Who's Who in Room \_\_\_."

This paragraph was taken from a fifth grade Special Topic Book.

"John said that he read that there were different kinds of iron ore. No one in the class knew anything about them. We asked John to try to get some samples of iron ore. Miss Synder helped him. We sent a letter to several towns in Minnesota and Michigan where iron ore is mined. We got samples

of six kinds of ore from Mr. M. E. Smith of the Public Schools of Hibbing, Minnesota." 42

A fourth grade decided to compile a recipe book.

#### How to Can Tomatoes

"Scald well-ripened tomatoes  
Skin the tomatoes, cut them up, and boil them a short time  
Sterilize the jars, rubbers, and caps  
Fill the jars clear to the top " 43  
Add a teaspoon of salt to each quart and seal."

This type of book could be made to tell the explanation of any process - projects, handwork, or decorations.

Autobiographies To inspire children to write their autobiography acquaint them first with some of these.

Autobiography of Lincoln Steffins  
Story of My Boyhood and Youth by John Muir  
Story of My Life by Helen Keller  
Tramping on Life by Harry Kemp  
Jews without Money by Michael Gold

In order to keep the autobiography within reason for a child do not try to have him write his life's history in one complete story. Suggest that he limit his scope to the writing of one episode at a time. These episodes might be family, school, or neighborhood experiences. Applegate gives these headings for the separate episodes:

My earliest memory	My new dress
My best (or first) friend	I was so embarrassed
My first day at school	I was all mixed up
The one I loved most	My happiest day 44
My first trip	When I was sick 44
The pet I love	

Always with the writing of autobiography assure the

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42. McKee, op. cit., p. 193

43. Ibid., p. 194

44. Applegate, op. cit., p. 71

child that his writing will be kept private if he so desires. Then after all of the episodes are written these could then be put into booklet form.

Book Reports To make too heavy an assignment for each book read would be to discourage a child's pleasure reading. However, a short book report is usually an enjoyable task for a child. For a class just beginning to make book reports sample book report forms should be where the children can see them. Reports which have been written, if placed on display, will help classmates to choose the books which they wish to read. These should contain the title of the book, name of the author, and a simple statement about the book. These could be kept either on index cards in a file box or in individual reading record notebooks where each child would have access to them at all times.

French reports that she conducted a book report project by dividing the children into Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday divisions. The groupings were made according to reading ability with the excellent readers in the Monday group down down to the poor readers in the Friday group. She changed the groups frequently, however, so that the pupils were not made aware of the groupings.

For each book read the child made out a short reading record on a small card. The group of the day sat in a small circle and each child told of the book he had read, after which the group discussed the book.

After each group had had a discussion it was decided to make a bibliography of books on certain subjects so lists were prepared from books that were available in the library.

Each week one group was responsible for advertizing books on the bulletin board. This display included book jackets, a display of book jackets, reading records, original picture drawings, and book lists.

As a concluding activity the children prepared a book in which each pupil could advertize one book. When each child had written the account of a book, high school students typed these to be put into a booklet.<sup>45</sup>

If there is no library program in a school, children in the upper grades will become interested in books if they are allowed to organize a library program with the books which are available. They can gather all of the books, decorate the room to be used as a library, prepare an alphabetical listing of the books for a file, and with the aid of the teachers, place the books in the approximate grade and interest level. A program can then be planned whereby the children of the school can use this library with the older children acting as librarians.

In a school where there is an established library the older children can help the librarian by reading the books bought for the younger children and then writing a short review or caption for an exhibit of younger children's book week. This would provide a means of getting the older children to write for a useful purpose.

Clubs Hatfield suggests that clubs be formed in the elementary school around some hobby or interest that children already have. His first step would be to frame a constitution.

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<sup>45</sup>. Opal French, "Guided Free Reading in the Classroom," Elementary English Review, 14:28-29, January, 1937



This could be the combined work or committees such as a by-law committee, program committee, social committee, and publicity committee. These committees compose the lists of rules, duties, or functions of their particular committee, and another committee then takes all of the separate committee information and compiles it into a booklet containing the rules for the club.

It would be the job of the program committee to plan and print programs in advance. These two samples give an idea of the way a year's program might be planned.

October 1 - Initiation  
 October 15 - Legends of the Rhine- told by club members  
 October 29 - Highways and Byways of Germany - guest speaker

#### Garden Club Program

November 6 - Satisfactory House Plants: talks by members who will exhibit some of their own plants  
 November 13 - Visit to Ward's Greenhouse, with an informal talk by the florist  
 November 20 - Care of Houseplants - talks by members  
 November 27 - Cactus Gardens - A talk by Mrs. Henry Thorpe  
 December 4 - Arranging Winter Bouquets: Demonstrations by various club members  
 December 11 - Club party - games, music, refreshments  
 December 18 - How Some Flowers Got Their Names; stories by club members  
 January 8 - Joint meeting with Science Club - Showing Film  
 January 15 - The Flower Shop - an assembly play<sup>46</sup>

Teachers may prefer to divide the room into clubs of different hobby interests. In this way each club would operate as a single unit with fewer members.

The other type club is that in which all the members of a class participate. Different interests in this kind of club are cared for by having programs varied enough to reach all members

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<sup>46</sup>. Hatfield, op. cit., p. 98

of the class. The program committee can receive written suggestions for programs from the class members and thus organize the year's program according to the various suggestions.

This type of club would do much in the way of committee work because each member of the class should have an active part in some phase of the club. With all club work there will of necessity be much writing of plans, suggestions, activities, letters to speakers, records of meetings, and committee reports.

One phase of a club's program might be the responsibility for opening exercises each morning. The club might plan a short program to include the telling or reading of stories by class members, individual or group singing, interesting demonstrations, or any other item which would be profitable. The planning of this program and making out of the final copy each day would provide another opportunity for the children to use writing in an interesting manner.

Some books which teachers and children may find helpful in the organization of a club are:

1. Broome, Edwin C. and Adams, E. W. , Conduct and Citizenship
2. Goodrich, Lawrence - Living with Others
3. Henry, W. H. F. and Seeley, Levi - How to Organize and How to Conduct a Meeting
4. Stern, Renee - Clubs, Making and Management
5. Wines, Emma and Card, M. - Come to Order

Tied into the workings of a club program are many other types of activities which are useful for the motivation of writing. One of these reported by Smith is a hobby show which was used as a culminating project. Each child brought in something which he had made and posters and booklets describing how each object had been made were in evidence all around the room. Letters

which had been written in order to obtain material for the hobbies were also put on display. Stories of famous men and women who had the same hobbies were also posted. Letters were written to invite guests to the program, and each child participated by telling about his hobby.<sup>47</sup>

Bulletin Boards Allowing children the freedom to decorate a bulletin board and giving them a few basic hints on how to do it will provide sufficient motivation for any writing connected with the task.

The following suggestions are listed in order to lend variety to these displays.

Under a display of pictures children can place captions and questions. Under a picture of the first Thanksgiving these might be written.

Where have you seen this picture before?  
Can you tell the story of it?

Under a spray of colored leaves-

I found these in the woods. <sup>48</sup>  
What tree did they come from?

To attract attention to the board Denno suggests the following types of lead lines.

A question - It's cold, but how cold? How do plants grow? Can you tell? Do you know?

A direct statement - The dairy farm helps us.  
Weather in our valley. Share with me.

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<sup>47</sup>. Dora V. Smith, "American Youth and English," Elementary English Review, 14:28-29, January, 1937

<sup>48</sup>. Zenos Scott, "The Bulletin Board in Language Teaching," American Childhood, 18:13-14, November, 1932

A short crisp remark - Don't look! Tick, tock!  
Stop! Goodness! Here we go! <sup>49</sup>

Besides this type of writing for bulletin boards children can post the following types of material.

Directions and suggestions for class activities  
Health, safety, and building rules  
Rules concerning care of books  
Posters telling interesting things about certain books or stories  
Pictures, stories, and poems all on one theme

Another type of display reported by Mortensen was a Robert Louis Stevenson bulletin board. The board was completely covered with pictures connected with Stevenson, including pictures of Edinburgh where he grew up, the Pacific Isle where he lived, illustrations from his books, and a portrait of him. These were accompanied by explanatory captions and stories. <sup>50</sup>

Applegate suggests that each week on the bulletin board an original comic strip be posted. This would be the work of three children- one for ideas, one for art, and one for a story underneath. <sup>51</sup>

Notetaking If used wisely notetaking has a definite place in the elementary school curriculum. In teaching children to take notes coherently one is teaching the skill of thought organization.

Besides the areas of social studies and science, where notetaking has most frequently been taught, there are numerous

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<sup>49.</sup> Raymond Denno, "Our Children Plan the Exhibits," Instructor, 65: 20-21, January, 1956

<sup>50.</sup> Louise Mortensen, "A Robert Louis Stevenson Bulletin Board," Elementary English, 31:275, May, 1954

<sup>51.</sup> Applegate, op. cit., p. 73

other means of learning to take good notes.

1. A story to be dramatized
2. Trips to be taken
3. Reports of experiences
4. Materials to be bought for projects
5. Work to be completed
6. Main points of material read by teacher
7. Minutes of a meeting
8. Notes on short selections
9. Enlarging notes of insufficient detail<sup>52</sup>

During a lively discussion stop and ask the pupils to formulate their arguments or thoughts on the subject into writing.

A similar idea would be to have the pupils record what has been accomplished during a lesson and what they would suggest for the following day's lesson on the same subject.

When a problem arises which needs attention, discuss it with the class and have them tabulate the important points. After each has completed his list choose the important points from each list and compile these on a chart. Some of these charts might be:

#### What Good Citizens Do

They help each other  
They do not laugh at another's mistake  
They take turns  
They do not do to anyone else what they  
would not like done to them

#### Free Activity Time

We each choose something to do  
We do not waste materials  
We keep our voices low  
We finish the things we start  
We do not walk around to see what others  
are doing<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>. McKee, op. cit., p. 290

<sup>53</sup>. Bernice Chappel, "Are You Using Pupil Made Charts?"  
Grade Teacher, 73:48, April, 1956

Unit Work If utilized to the fullest extent there are innumerable opportunities for teaching written language in unit study. With planning and imagination the written work connected with unit study can teach most of the fundamental skills of writing.

The following two cases will offer many suggestions concerning the varied types of writing which can be incorporated into one unit of study.

In the first, Gillett reports that in a unit on pioneer history these language situations arose.<sup>54</sup> The children discussed and recorded the questions which they wished answered during their study and from this listing was compiled a topical outline of the subjects to be studied. Next the class made a list of the facts which they already knew about pioneer life and wrote letters to people who might be able to answer their questions.

When the actual study began, listings of committees and materials needed were made and the work of each committee was outlined. As the study proceeded, summaries of procedure and information learned were recorded in a booklet. Included in this also were summaries of their reading, topical outlines of the oral and written reports, and a financial report.

As the unit progressed various trips were planned, and objectives for each trip were listed before the trip was made. Three types of letters were written for each trip contemplated. The first was written to the place to be visited asking for the opportunity

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<sup>54</sup>. Norma Gillett, "A Correlated Curriculum in Composition," Elementary English Review, 14:80-86, March, 1937

of visiting; a second was written to each parent to secure permission to go on the trip; and the third was a thank-you letter written to the concern to which the visit had been made.

Also stemming from the unit was a short dramatization based on the factual material. The children wrote original stories and poems about pioneer life as well as stories to accompany pictures which were on display.

An assembly program was planned as the concluding activity of the unit. After the class had arranged a program letters were written to invite parents and those who had helped with the study. Writing captions, labels, headings, and legends for graphic aids used during the assembly were other ways written language was used.

A project reported by the Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of the Teachers of English also gives ideas on how to give children a worthwhile project to do while teaching written language.<sup>55</sup>

A supervisor wrote to a class explaining that in her office were magazines from which she felt many pictures and articles could be filed for reference use. She asked if this particular class would be interested in carrying out a project of getting these into a file. The class discussed the matter and decided to undertake the project. A letter was written telling the supervisor of their decision.

The children kept a diary on their three eighty-minute

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55. Language for Today's Children, Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of the Teachers of English, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc., 1954), p. 283-301

pupil-teacher planning periods. Following this they discovered that it would be necessary to find out from the teachers in the school what subjects would be most beneficial in each grade. After accomplishing this they made a complete listing of the desired topics.

Their next step was to send a letter to the supervisor requesting that she come and give them a lecture on the way which she desired the pictures to be mounted. The supervisor complied with their request, and after recording her suggestions, they formed committees for sorting, clipping, mounting, and filing. Each committee consisted of a chairman, co-chairman, and a board of advisors.

A daily diary recording the activities of each group was kept.

January 22, 1951

"Today we worked for one hour. Group one examined "Science News Letter" magazines. They reported that the magazine has many articles on astronomy, forestry, and animals. Group two examined "Weekly Readers" of the third and fourth grade level. Group three looked at the "Fortune Magazine" for pictures."

Lists were posted in all rooms stating which copies of magazines were needed to complete a series or which second copies were needed in order to use the both sides of a page. Children and teachers from all grades then tried to find these copies for the project.

At the completion of the project most phases of written language had been incorporated into functional use. The children had written bulletin board notices for teachers and pupils, articles for the school paper, diaries, charts, alphabetical lists,



letters, and captions for pictures. Thus the unit does provide multiple opportunities for motivating written language.

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