THREE THEORIES OF CREATIVITY AND SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATIVE STORY WRITING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

by 1269

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INTRODUCTION

There is new interest in identifying and developing creative potential today. Reasons for this emphasis are many and varied as ". . . genuinely creative adaption seems to represent the only possibility that man can keep abreast of the kaleidoscopic chance in his world" (1, p. 64). First, creativity is important for reasons of individual personality development and mental health. Torrance feels many later problems may be traced to unused creative ability (2, p. 131). Tensions, maladjustment, and personal breakdown may result from repressed creativity. Second, an increase in leisure time now invites more use of our creative abilities (3, p. 142). Third, creative thinking has been shown to be important in acquiring knowledge and applying information to personal and professional problems (4, p. 32). Fourth, utilization of creative powers appears to be a factor in vocational success; commerce is concerned with developing creative abilities because new ideas bring an increase in profits, goods, and services (5, p. 7). Finally, society requires inventiveness for solving such problems. The government is interested because of the physical power and political influence derived from creative ability. The future of our nation, and of civilization, may depend upon our use of creative talent (6, p. 3). Education is

interested in creative ability as all of the above are concerns of the schools.

It is a commonly held belief that most all individuals are born with some creative potential. Osborn stated,

> Creative talent is normally distributed--that all of us possess this talent to a lesser or greater degree--and that our creative efficacy varies more in ratio to our output of mental energy than in ratio to our inborn talent. (7, p. 15)

Heredity probably determines the upper and lower limits within which we can develop our creative abilities but ". . . the gap between an individual's innate creative talent and his lesser actual creative output can be narrowed by deliberate education in creative thinking" (8, p. 191). This then becomes part of the educator's responsibility, to help develop and increase creative thinking, to provide a chance for each individual to express his creative ability and not to expect all to be equally creative.

Long ago Plato advised, "What is honored in a country will be cultivated there" (9, p. 142). Consequently, if children are to value creative learning and thinking we must reward this kind of achievement. Today we may be moving in this direction for perhaps at no other time in human history has there been such general recognition that to be creative in one's everyday activities is positive good (1, p. 70).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this report is to 1) present some background material for better understanding creative ability by briefly reviewing three theories of creativity selected by the writer; 2) consider the creative process and some conditions that influence creative behavior; and 3) collect ways of stimulating creative story writing in primary children by studying the literature on creativity in the Kansas State University library.

A Definition of Creativity

There is disagreement about what constitutes creativity, perhaps because there are different types of creativity. Consequently, there is no universally accepted definition of creativity. Thus the writer will examine some of the definitions of creativity that have been proposed.

Almost all definitions include the element of novelty or rearrangement of existing knowledge either to the individual or to society in general. Smith stated that creative process is the manifestation of the ability to relate previously unrelated things. He defined creativity as "sinking down taps into our past experiences and putting these selected experiences together into new patterns, new ideas or new products" (10, p. 4). Torrance defined creative thinking as the "process of sensing gaps or disturbing, missing elements; forming ideas or hypotheses concerning them;

testing these hypotheses; and communicating the results, possibly modifying and retesting the hypotheses" (2, p. 16).

Creativity has been explained as "curiosity in action" (11, p. 180) and as "proper new association of old ideas" (12, p. 166). Others advocate that only ideas that are different and better be called creative (13, p. 128). "Adventurous thinking," shown by "getting away from the main track, breaking out of the mold, being open to experience" has been classified as creative (2, p. 17). Others stipulate that the work must be acceptable as tenable, useful, or satisfying by a significant group of others at some point in time (14, p. 86). The difficulty with this definition is that evaluation is a subjective judgment and will fluctuate with social values; it seems better that creativity not be dependent upon social judgment.

Some definitions of creativity stress the importance of interaction with the environment. Rogers stated that "creative process is the emergence in action of novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand and the materials, events, people or circumstances of his life on the other" (1, p. 71). Interaction also is stressed by May who stated that creativity is the encounter of the intensively conscious human being with his world (15, p. 68). He questioned whether we can correctly speak of the "creative person" for creativity is not

just a subjective phenomenon. Fromm claims that "creativity is the ability to see (or to be aware) and to respond" (16, p. 44).

Other authorities believe creativity signifies growth. Tumic sees creativity as an esthetic experience which is to be distinguished from other experience by the fact that it is self-consummatory in nature (17, p. 106). For the average man, he thinks this is subsequent to status-striving. Marksberry stated, "creativity is the dynamic of all life" (6, p. 4); it is the way an individual approaches the problems and incidents in life. Creativity is the tendency to growth or self-perfection; the on-going realization; the fullest development of an individual. Rogers thinks creativity is synonymous with health; the fulfillment of potentialities as a human being, or self-realization. Maslow calls "self-actualizing creativity" the result of an integrated, healthy personality. Primary creativeness (which comes from the unconscious) is a kind of intellectual play, permission to be ourselves (18, p. 96). Stoddard believes creativity is a phenomenon that appears along a continuum of personal and social growth. To be creative, in short, is to be unpredictable; it is to be decidedly suspect in the world of affairs. The creative aspect of life is rightly viewed as action (19, p. 183).

The Creative Process

Stages of creative thought have long been identified, but four characteristics seem basic--preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. These need not be experienced in this order as they are not self-contained, but often overlap, each depending on the other until they merge into a creative product.

The creative processes used in different fields are thought to be basically the same kind of thought processes. Some authorities believe creative processes are indistinguishable from ordinary problem-solving processes except for their traits of novelty, persistence, and high motivation and vague, unstructured problems (20, p. 66).

The first period of creative thought is preparation directed at examining and clarifying a problem; collecting relevant information and materials; and attempting to organize it. It is a period when new ideas are acquired by drawing on past experiences, reading, observing, discussing, and communicating with others. It may involve both deliberate and non-deliberate mental activities as ideas and associations change rapidly.

Kneller divided this stage into two phases: the "first insight" when an individual first senses a problem, deficiency, need, or "impulse to create," and the second phase when a thorough investigation of the idea is made

(21, p. 48). He limits preparation only to the exploration done to discover the possibilities of the first insight. Direction and purpose is given to preparation from this first insight.

Others consider long-term preparation as all of life's past experiences. The immediate period of preparation begins when "a desire strong enough to trigger activity" is felt (6, p. 18).

The length of the preparation may vary from a few minutes to years, depending on the nature of the problem, the individual, his knowledge, skills, and habits. This stage often is accompanied by an unpleasant feeling of doubt, perplexity, and frustration (22, p. 11).

If insight (an idea which leads to the solution of the problem) does not result from these activities, a period of incubation may follow. Incubation is the interval of time between when a person completes preparation and the time when a good idea appears. It is a relatively inactive conscious period, but ideas are maturing through unconscious activity. During incubation the idea spontaneously returns at intervals, although the person may have consciously quit trying to solve the problem. It is this recurring idea that is modified and accepted as the solution in the third stage of illumination. It is believed the truly good ideas come late in the total production (8, p. 191).

The kind of activity engaged in during the incubation and the length of the stage varies for different people and for the same person on different occasions. The length of incubation is affected by the type of problem an individual is trying to solve, the nature and intensity of his emotional reaction to the original stimulus, his personal habits, and his manner of living (22, p. 21).

Incubation is often characterized by preoccupation, frustration, and extreme restlessness with feelings of inferiority (6, p. 18). The periods of preparation and incubation may not be so distinct as these stages imply; they are often interwoven, incubation being apparent while preparation is continuing. Incubation, whether apparent as a separate period or not, occurs in the creative process. Some authorities say that inspiration cannot occur unless the unconscious mind has caused new relationships to develop (21, p. 51). Preparation and incubation end when illumination occurs (23, p. 195).

"The moment of illumination brings the process of creation to a climax" (21, p. 53). From the unconscious reorganization of previous experience, the raw material, comes an idea with a definite form--illumination, insight, and inspiration. The solution, "hunch," or "subliminal uprush" appears suddenly, spontaneously, and with a feeling of certainty and confidence. This state of inspiration is

an involuntary act, not directly under control of the will. "The decisive idea has the way of appearing when the mind is passive and even contemplating nothing is particular" (22, p. 32).

Typically an emotional reaction ranging from pleasant contentment to exaltation accompanies inspiration. These feelings of success and accomplishment are followed by intense activity to record the idea. This stage is generally of short duration, lasting most frequently moments, though it may be prolonged into hours.

The final phase of the creative process involves elaborating, correcting, perfecting, verifying, and evaluating. Simon calls this the "process of consolidation" (24, p. 52). The results from the period of insight must be validated against external realities. This is the time an individual must step back and view his work as a third person--checking, testing, criticizing, and refining the solution. Communicating the idea is also involved in this step. Many creative insights are lost at this point. Verification, like preparation, is fully conscious. "Intellect and judgment must complete the work that imagination has begun" (21, p. 56).

THEORIES OF CREATIVITY

As there is yet no universally accepted theory of creativity, the writer shall briefly review three theories that contribute to the general understanding of creativity. These views by no means encompass the entire field of creativity, but the writer feels they do represent distinct and significant theoretical positions.

Structure of the Intellect Theory

J. P. Guilford has emphasized the intellectual aspect of creativity, believing that intellectual abilities determine what an individual is able to do; but he also says motivation and environment opportunities help to determine what he will do.

Guilford has suggested a "structure of the intellect" theory which presents intellectual abilities in a cubical model. His 120 components of the intellect, of which 47 are known (3, p. 153), are classified according to (1) the kind of content (materials) used; (2) the kind of operations that are performed upon the content; and (3) the type of product (information) involved. As Guilford stated, "Thus, it appears that each primary, intellectual ability represents a kind of crossroad or intersection of a certain kind of operation, applied to a certain kind of material, yielding a certain kind of product" (3, p. 155). Creativity fits into the

framework as an operation (10, p. 48). Operations are divided into two main groups--a small class of memory abilities and a larger one of thinking abilities (21, p. 39). The latter is subdivided into three categories of cognitive, productive (divergent and convergent), and evaluative factors.

Using factor analysis, Guilford has found personality traits of creative thinkers that differ from traits of other thinkers. The majority of these factors fall into the category of divergent thinking. But other abilities outside the divergent thinking category also make contributions. The factors of redefinition in the category of convergent thinking, sensitivity to problems in the evaluation category, and transformation abilities are used in creative thinking. An outline of the operations most used in creative production would show:

I. Cognition abilities used in discovering, recognizing, realizing, becoming aware of, familiar with, or conscious of information.

II. Memory abilities involved in retention, remembering, acquiring or distinct or thorough knowledge of, learning thoroughly.

III. Productive thinking factors involved in the use of information.

  A. Divergent thinking concerned with a variety of solution, independent, constructive, creative, liberal, inquiring thinking.

    1. Fluency of thinking abilities concerned with fertility of ideas.

a) Word fluency calls for symbolic units.
b) Ideational fluency is the ability to produce semantic units.
c) Associational fluency involves production of semantic correlates.
d) Expressional fluency is concerned with forming symbolic systems.

2. Flexibility of thinking abilities.

a) Spontaneous flexibility calls for production of semantic classes.
b) Adaptive flexibility is the ability to produce transformations.

(1) Figular transformations.
(2) Symbolic transformations.

3. Originality involves the factor of producing semantic transformations.

4. Elaborations call for divergent production of implications.

a) Semantic implications.
b) Figular implications.

B. Convergent thinking that leads toward a restricted answer, "right" attitude, behavioral norms.

1. Redefinition involves a freedom from "functional fixedness" and produces transformations.

a) Symbolic transformations.
b) Semantic transformations.

IV. Evaluation requires decisions about the goodness, suitability, and adequacy in what is cognized or produced. It calls for critical thinking, assessing, selecting, comparing, judging, deciding.

A. Sensitivity to problems concerned with evaluation of semantic implications.

Although the aforementioned are the most obvious factors related to creative thinking, many of the other intellectual abilities play an important role. But in an oversimplified way creative thinking involves divergent thinking to see problems in a different or new way. Then convergent thinking follows to bring the pieces together and find steps to a solution. According to Guilford, creativity as a mental process is not a single process, but rather a grouping of related abilities.

Psychoanalytic Theory

The psychoanalytic theory advanced by Freud has influenced much thinking on creativity. The self has a tripartite division into the id, ego, and super-ego. The id or unconscious has been described as a "cauldron of seething excitement" (25, p. 262) and operates on the pleasure principle seeking gratification for its impulses. The ego or conscious is our dominant and purposive sense of self which keeps watch on our impulses and acts as an uneasy broker between the id and the super-ego (pressures of communal discipline upon the self). There is no sharp dividing line between the id and ego. The latter often rationalizes in order to dignify the instinctual drives of the id.

All people have creative potential whether they express it or not. The origin of creativity lies in

unconscious conflicts and the solution to these conflicts also arises from the id. If the id's solution threatens the ego it will either be repressed altogether or will emerge as a neurosis caused by the fear that the instinctual drives might erupt. If the solution produced by the id is agreeable to the ego, ego-syntonic, this reinforcement of the ego makes possible "achievements of special perfection" or creative behavior. Creative thought is the result of interplay between the "rational primary process (id) and "rational secondary" processes (ego). Both are necessary as behavior produced by the ego alone is always rigid and habitual, and when unconscious impulses elude the ego altogether the products may be highly original but have little relation to reality (as in dreams and hallucinations).

So creativity and neurosis share the same beginning--conflict in the unconscious--but differ in ways they reduce the tension from this conflict. The neurotic person relieves the emotion from unconscious conflict through neurotic symptoms which are substitutive gratifications for the rejected impulses. The creative person discharges the energy from this conflict by relaxing the ego's control over the id and accepting the "free rising" ideas of the unconscious. The creative person is able to relax his ego and give play to the creative forces of his unconscious without fear of losing his control. To the non-creative person, unfamiliar and

imaginative ideas may be seen as undesirable and suppressed.

Creative thought is related to childhood play and day-dreaming through these "freely rising" ideas and fantasies. Indeed, much of creative behavior is considered a continuation of and substitute for childhood play. Also, much of the material on which a person draws to solve unconscious conflicts, material that later becomes the substance of creative production, tends to come from the experiences of childhood. The creative person is characterized as enjoying play with ideas. Freud believed this trait to be the result of early childhood libido (erotic tendencies) being sublimated into curiosity (26, pp. 92-3). Creativity might be considered a recapitulation of childhood play and investigation.

Today the idea that a creative person must be emotionally disturbed is generally rejected. Many disturbed persons are considered creative but such people are thought to be creative in spite of their neurosis, rather than because of them. The opinion is that they are producing below the achievement they would show without the disease; neurosis accompanies or causes a degraded quality of their creativity; they are on the downgrade or pseudo creative (they may have brilliant ideas but because of the neurosis do not realize them) (27, p. 248).

The neo-Freudians continue to believe that both creative and neurotic behavior arises from childhood experiences. But instead of contending with only the conscious and unconscious, they add an intermediate psychological process, the preconscious. The preconscious differs from the unconscious by becoming conscious easily and under common conditions (26, p. 93). It has the highest degree of freedom attainable by any psychological process and this freedom causes the neo-Freudians to name the preconscious as the source of all creativity, rather than the unconscious. Kubie stated: "The contribution of the preconscious processes to creativity depends upon their freedom in gathering, assembling, comparing and reshuffling of ideas" (28, p. 37). In other words, the process of free association.

As these three psychological processes operate concurrently the freedom of the preconscious may be hampered by either thought, rigid because of the conventional association of ideas, or unconscious thought rooted in deeply repressed conflicts and impulses and even more rigid. Creative thought results when the ego voluntarily withdraws its energy to enable better control later (regression to infantily modes of thought in service of the ego) (26, p. 97). When the ego is relaxed it is then possible to recall the preconscious, but also possible for id energies to distort the preconscious. Unconscious material may be brought into the preconscious

when parts of the id are cathectic by ego energy. The creative person, according to the neo Freudians, is one who can draw more freely on his preconscious than others.

Perceptual Theory

In contrast to psychoanalytical theory, E. G. Schachtel believes creativity results from openness to the world and a greater receptivity to experience. There are two basic modes of communication between the individual and his world of objects. Autocentric (subject-centered) perception emphasizes how and what a person feels; sensory qualities fuse with pleasant or unpleasant feelings. There is little or no objectification. An individual reacts primarily to something impinging on him, though he may have brought the contact about. In the allocentric (object-centered) mode of perception the individual usually actively approaches the object. There is objectivity; the emphasis is on what the object is like, reality.

Generally the autocentric perception of infancy and childhood gives way to allocentric perception in adolescence and adulthood. During this change or metamorphosis, a secondary autocentricity develops. This is characterized by perceiving objects as how they can be used for some purpose, or avoided, to prevent pain and displeasure; Schachtel uses the term "objects-of-use." There is fear and avoidance of

everything new that might disturb secondary embeddedness in a closed pattern (usually a combination of the culture, social group, and the person's routine of life) (26, p. 113). It is necessary to develop secondary autocentric perception to provide for personal needs but if it dominates all perception it may lead to stagnation in a closed, autocentric world. Today this stagnation tends to take the form of an alienation of man from objects and from his own sensory capacities; he no longer encounters objects themselves, only the labels designated by his society (29, p. 238). The child learns these "labels" and acquires these "patterned" experiences through the process of socialization (26, p. 116). The danger of a culture is in closing the child's openness to the world, replacing his original approach to objects; yet, culture enriches the object world to a degree never attainable by an isolated individual (29, p. 237). Creativity, then, is the ability to remain open to the world, to remain capable of allocentric perception. Seeking security in a world of secondary, socially-shared autocentricity results in being closed to experience.

This openness toward objects is shown throughout the creative process. "The main motivation at the root of creative experience is man's need to relate to the world around him . . ." (29, p. 241). Other needs may influence the creative experience, but without the basic need to

relate to the world or openness toward the world, the experience will not be creative.

According to Schachtel:

> The quality of the encounter that leads to creative experience consists primarily in the openness during the encounter and in the repeated and varied approaches to the object, in the free and open play of attention, thought, feelings, perception, etc. In this free play the person experiences the object in its manifold relations to himself and also tentatively tries out, as it were, a great variety of relations between the object thus approached and other objects, ideas, experiences, feelings, objects of imagination, etc. (29, p. 241)

Perceptions may range freely or be focused upon a particular object, idea, or feeling. The early stages of the creative process, like primary processes, are "free wandering." Then an individual begins to focus more and more on a particular area or object. He uses a variety of approaches in his thought, senses, and motor behavior to connect it with other experiences. Thus his relatedness to the object is intensified and he becomes more open (aware) to its different aspects. This may contribute to a person's gradual growth and experience, or crystallize in insights.

Schachtel thinks that the blindness, which is in all of us to varying degrees, probably is due more to the intrusion of an already labeled world upon our sensory and intellectual capacities than to the repression of the libidinal impulses as Freud claimed. Schachtel argues that thought, phantasies, play of senses, and motor functions are

conducive to openness, giving a person many contacts with the world and reality; they are therefore progressive, not regressive. But in many people the culture and social group soon close the mind so they encounter only the same familiar objects.

The essential difference between psychoanalytic and perceptual concepts is that where one sees creativity as due to discharge of id energies or tension reduction, the other believes it is due to tension-seeking, "openness in the encounter with the world" (26, p. 116).

CREATIVE WRITING

A Definition of Creative Writing

What is creative writing? Much controversy has been raised over this question. One author stated that "unless a child merely copies down the words of someone else, all his writing is creative" (30, p. 137). Creative writing has been described variously as the original efforts of a child which represent an extension of his thought processes (31, p. 16), activity which transfers mental pictures into written expression (32, p. 1), and the releasing of feelings through the medium of words (33, p. 280). Some authorities distinguish between purely personal writing with spontaneous, subjective expression and utilitarian writing for the purpose of learning technical skills (31, p. 2). Both are necessary parts

of a balanced curriculum. For this paper, creative writing will be defined as "free writing with the emphasis on originality of content and style" (32, p. 1). However, the writer is not as concerned with defining creative writing and the forms it may take as with getting children to write and to enjoy their efforts.

It has been said that creative writing cannot be taught, that teachers can only "help children to release the creativity within them that seeks expression" (34, p. 6). We can furnish guidance, motivation, and some of the materials with which to build, but the children are the builders (35, p. 237). It is that "guidance, motivation, and some of the materials" with which this paper is concerned.

Benefits from Creative Writing

The benefits children can derive from creative writing are many and varied. Creative writing is valuable because children must look at their environments and experiences, and these are thus enriched by their perceptive vision (36, p. 256). Language abilities tend to improve as children search for skills to make their thoughts understandable to others. As in all creative expression, a series of choices must be made as children try to produce their thoughts in writing. They must first think what they wish to write and organize their experience into an orderly sequence. Then words that

convey their meanings most effectively must be selected. As children search for words to fit the details of their experiences, they observe, discriminate, and improve their vocabularies. These words must then be arranged into sentences and sentences into paragraphs. The teacher is thus provided with an opportunity to discover those children talented in writing and the need for instruction of specific skills. Also, a sensitiveness to and appreciation of good literature is encouraged.

Since creative writing cuts across ability levels (37, p. 7), it can help pupils discover their own capabilities and self-awareness, and provide opportunities for self-discipline. By knowing themselves better, children also gain more understanding and respect for other's personalities, problems, and adjustments. Writing may provide recognition, a way of becoming an accepted member of the group, and a feeling of accomplishment (32, p. 3).

Therapeutic benefits result when children learn that writing their inner thoughts and feelings is a socially acceptable way of reducing pressures, tensions, and worries (38, p. 114). Children should learn that having strong feelings and expressing them is acceptable (39, p. 9). It may also provide the teacher with clues to children's behavior. Using the disguise of their characters, children reveal thoughts that would not otherwise be exposed (31, p. 7).

Story Writing Readiness

Success with creative writing depends upon the conditions within the classroom atmosphere and the children. Children are extremely sensitive to the emotional and social climate of a classroom. A sense of security and being accepted gives children the confidence to express themselves. Conditions that tend to free children to give vent to their ideas and feelings are: a permissive atmosphere which is relaxed, friendly, and cooperative; where there is mutual respect and understanding; where children are valued for their differences and a wholesome relation exists among the children; and where, during creative writing, original ideas, unique and individual efforts are valued above all else.

In a nurturing classroom there is a relaxed teacher-child relationship. The children know the teacher is interested in them, and they can trust her to appreciate their efforts (40, p. 440). An approving smile, friendly words of praise or encouragement, an exclamation of surprised appreciation encourage children to feel secure and successful. The teacher must see that children are interested in and respect classmates' efforts and ideas. Children need assurance they will not be laughed at, criticized, or given too much attention either by the teacher or other children (41, p. 239). Nothing can be more inhibiting to creative

effort than an unenthusiastic comment or ridicule (39, p. 80).

Also inhibiting to creative endeavor is the rush and pressures in the daily classroom schedule. Although children find security in a certain amount of routine, occasional deviations are welcomed (40, p. 438). A flexible schedule and freedom from pressures are conducive to independent thinking (41, p. 234). Creation is a slow business and needs an unhurried, quiet time. Before writing, children need time for thinking. The children and teacher should suggest and discuss ideas, allowing time for listing ideas, recording picturesque words and phrases, creating sensory images, and writing whatever the children appear ready to express. This will help to eliminate the difficulty children often experience with first sentences (30, p. 139). Such a preparation period encourages all children to participate in creative writing. Giving time to activities associated with creative writing, such as sharing what one has written, provides an incentive to write and enables classmates to listen to efforts similar to their own. With beginning writers, sharing of efforts is very significant and is often the most important value guiding their efforts to write (42, p. 57).

If original ideas are drawn from the unconscious, then a rich environment conducive to more intense sensory experiences would help feed the source of ideas. Sensory

awareness, emotions, and imagination is the "stuff" out of which children create (43, p. 223). Life is "stuff"--children must kneed it, shake it, poke it, punch it, smooth it, and fondle it (39, p. 5). Torrance found younger children, especially boys, did more creative thinking when allowed to manipulate objects (44, p. 15). Children need wide and varied experiences in which to observe, participate, and discuss for they are dependent upon their sensory impressions of experiences for materials with which to write (35, p. 233). It is only as children build an abundant store of ideas and vivid impressions that they can express themselves creatively.

The school has the responsibility of providing an environment rich in opportunities, pictures, books, films, trips, and varied materials to create; for providing a curriculum rich in opportunities for exploring and finding out, as well as for thinking about, talking about, and digesting (6, p. 41). Creating cannot be done in a vacuum; it grows out of the fullness of experiences and the urge to share these experiences (41, p. 240). The best experiences are real, but so facile are children's minds that vicarious experiences are almost real to them (38, p. 118).

It is usually necessary to do more than give children opportunities for experience. Most must be encouraged to be observant (37, p. 12). Only vague impressions may result if

children are not helped to appreciate and understand the experience through discussion and explanation (40, p. 439). Comments or questions while savoring incidents can lead to thoughtful discussions: "How does it make you feel?" "What does it remind you of?" (6, p. 42). The teacher may exchange ideas, stir the imagination, extend children's knowledge and background. She can use audio-visual aids, literature, develop charts and cooperatively written experiences, and let children dictate impressions.

While children are participating in sensory experiences, they may constantly talk about what they are seeing and doing. The younger and more immature children are, the more they need to talk what they experience in order to clarify their thinking and put it in proper order and perspective with all the rest of their experiences (35, p. 233).

A writer must first be a "seer" (34, p. 56). Creative writing makes children sensitive to the world about them and aware of their experiences. They begin to value their experiences and amplify their range. They develop more sensitivity to the world, and their experiences tend to be of improved quality because of their more discriminating observations. Divergent thinking is applauded as pupils are encouraged to explore, discover, and express themselves freely and spontaneously, as they learn by trial and error, take risks, and profit from their "failures." In the past

"there has been too much passive acceptance and too little of active producing" (39, p. 3).

Children need a wide variety of experiences with literature before recording their own experiences, either real or imaginative. They must first enjoy stories and poems before they can create (41, p. 240). A wide variety of experiences with literature will enrich ideas and vocabulary. Through listening to literature, children become acquainted with the structure of stories, plots and plot generalizations, and different points of view. By far the most effective source of word learning other than the environment is wide reading (45, p. 8). With such a complementary relation between literature and writing it is of crucial importance that a teacher read daily to the children. Provisions also can be made for children to share their daily readings. The reading by the teacher should be enthusiastic and filled with feeling. Pieces selected for reading should cover a wide variety of literature suited to the interests and needs of the children and often pieces could be selected for their aesthetic value. At the same time, children can be encouraged to acquire good listening habits by listening and discussing the stories read aloud. The teacher should help children to realize what makes good writing by appreciating good things when they appear, and through sharing with the children their own stories and listening to stories

and poems written by other children. During the reading of these stories, mention may be made of parts that are especially well written. Such stories not only provide good examples and help appreciative listening, but also encourage the desire to write (6, p. 43).

Children can learn to appreciate the tools of description, such as alliteration, onomatopoeia, similes, and metaphores, although these need not be so labeled (32, p. 2). Literary taste develops gradually, and during the primary grades the teacher's standards tend to serve as models (42, p. 23) although children can begin very early to build independent standards for the evaluation of their work.

Oral composition is a pathway from the passive enjoyment of stories created by others to the active enjoyment of children's own efforts (47, p. 143). A prerequisite for creative writing is a rich, broad program in oral expression and a sensitive, meaningful program in reading (46, p. 143). As children tell or read their creations, they are hearing themselves say what they think. This speaking of material furnishes the preliminary steps that eventually lead to story writing (31, p. 31). Verbal rehearsal gives young children faith in themselves and their ability to use words to make a picture. It also provides opportunities to relate ideas to one another. Hearing their own stories helps children clarify their ideas and organize them into logical sequence

(39, p. 21). Writing depends upon the thought processes developed during oral expression as the quality of children's written language is similar to the quality of their speech (37, p. 5). In the primary grades, abundant experience in oral expression may be more important in the development of writing abilities than the actual writing itself.

Another advantage of oral composition is the small amount of physical effort involved. One of the greatest difficulties for beginning writers is the physical job of getting the material on paper (35, p. 233). Many ideas soon fade in the effort of physical labor. According to their individual development, children will eventually reach a point when they wish to record their own stories. However, the whole story need not be done independently. The teacher can simplify the physical labor by permitting all or part of a story to be given orally, allowing pictures to tell the story, letting children tape or dictate stories, or any device the class and teacher can invent. If, during individual dictating sessions, the teacher acts as the secretary, a typewriter will enable more children to participate during a session. One of the essential accompaniments of dictating experiences is the reading aloud of the products (31, p. 96). Unless a child specifies a story is private, all stories should be shared. Stories should be shared only a few at a time and during a period when the children are relaxed and

in a receptive mood. As stories are shared, the teacher can emphasize bits of writing that will help raise story standards.

Evaluation of Creative Writing

While guidance in creative situations consists largely of stimulation, enrichment, and appreciative responsiveness to the children's efforts, the teacher need not refrain from making helpful suggestions (48, p. 257). Comments should draw the children out, help them clarify their thinking, and aid them in expressing their meanings (49, p. 266). Especially in the beginning stages of composition, children need a minimum of evaluation that deals with their ideas and feelings (40, p. 442). It is the message that is the most important item for consideration.

Teachers should not be overly concerned with errors, for if children are growing in their writing ability they will make errors (30, p. 140). If necessary, errors can be corrected at another time (46, p. 158). Correctness, choice of wordings, and organization are means--not ends. The teacher should not focus on them. If the importance of the correct form is minimized, there is less danger of stifling the "creative spark," especially in very young children (32, p. 10). "The very wildness of spirit which runs away with ideas and takes them on untried paths takes them away

also from the narrow roads of approved grammar and spelling" (34, p. 10). One author stated that quality, being mostly a value judgment and differing among individuals, is not too important at the elementary level (46, p. 159). Of what value is a neat, correct paper saying nothing? Children's lack of maturity, experience, and vocabulary makes it especially difficult for them to express themselves, and the red pencil marking of errors only tends to increase the insecurity already felt by many youngsters (32, p. 10). It is well to remember that "a child writing creatively is experiencing a great deal that can never be evaluated by looking at what he puts on paper" (42, p. 71).

Taking time to set the stage for creative writing through rich readiness activities pays off. Creative writing depends upon children's perception of their environment in images and ideas that can be expressed. Creative writing depends upon verbalization. Creative writing depends upon literacy (32, p. 4). Maybe only a few children will start, but creativity is contagious. In every phase of creative activity, seldom will all children create at the same time. "As a matter of fact, creative writing is really only for some of the children some of the time" (39, p. 16). Those not participating go about their business.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

Working with Sensory Experiences and Descriptive Words

"Perhaps the greatest thing a teacher can do to help her children write stories is to teach them to see" (34, p. 56). Children cannot create out of a vacuum, but out of the fullness of experiences and the urge to share their experiences (41, p. 240). The teacher may be a source of ideas, but she is most effective when she helps children tap their own resources through looking, touching, tasting, smelling, hearing, doing, and discussing (42, p. 58). Early in the year, the children's sensory world may be expanded by helping them to respond to sensory stimuli. Some of the following suggestions may be helpful in focusing attention on sensory impressions.

> To help children recall sensory experiences, the teacher may suggest that children contribute to a list of things they would see (hear, smell, feel, taste) at: a circus, the swimming pool, movie theater, the barn, etc.
>
> A sensory tour of the school may be taken. Each child is asked to try to see, hear, feel, and smell autumn. The group can amble slowly, stopping occasionally to discuss impressions. Is the playground the same in September as in January? In May? Are the trees the same? The air? Are noises louder on a rainy day? After returning to the classroom, responses to the walk can be written down. Similar procedures for other seasons can be followed.
>
> An open-window tour from the classroom can be taken, where children stand at the window looking, listening, and breathing deeply. Afterwards the class may discuss and write about the scenes, sounds, and smells, both the beautiful and the unpleasant.

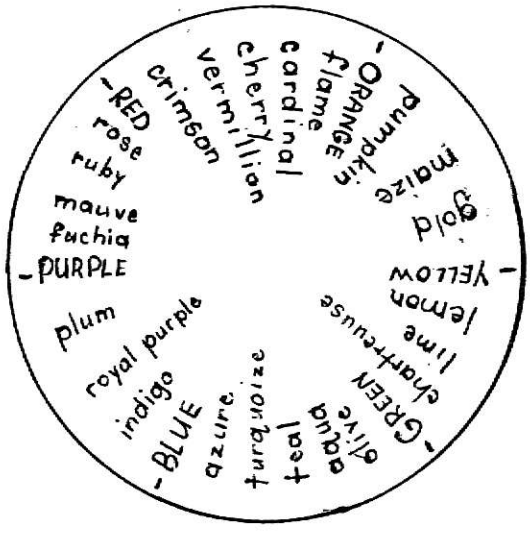
Another time children may share their thoughts while watching clouds on a sunny day, a cloudy day, during a thunderstorm.

The special charm of holidays may be taken advantage of. Children may tell how special days affect them, how they feel and think on these days, the sights, sounds, and smells they expect with the different holidays. Appropriate words for Halloween, Easter, vacation, etc. may be found.

Sensory images may be correlated with color words to draw out vocabularies. When color words are introduced, the class can focus on a specific hue. The teacher may invite the children to form images and thoughts about this color. "Black is . . ." The teacher should not hesitate to draw out more creative thinking in such activities.

Color and taste may be discussed. Which is the children's favorite: cherry red, lemon yellow, chocolate brown, licorice black, blueberry blue, lime green, grape purple, orange orange? Why did they choose that color?

The children may be asked how certain colors make them feel. Do some colors make them feel better than others? Which color would they choose if they were buying a new . . .? A color chart, like the one below, might prove useful in such activities.



Music can be used for many sensory experiences. The teacher may play music and let the children sway and dance to show how it makes them feel. Or the children may paint to music to show how it affects them. At another time, children may enjoy writing the thoughts that music brings to them. A wide variety of music can be used from such classic selections as "Grand Canyon Suite," "Nutcracker Suite," "The Hungarian Rhapsody," "Danse Macabre," "Flight of the Bumblebee," "Bolero," "The Stars and Stripes Forever," "Under the Double Eagle," to overtures from Broadway shows, Tijuana Brass selections, and some of the modern "pop" tunes.

The riddle game, "What am I?" works well with most any sensory impression. The children may take turns describing their favorite impressions while the class questions them to encourage more accurate descriptions.

A basket of fruit may be brought to class. Words that describe the look, feel, smell, and taste of fruit may be put on the chalkboard. For example:
taste--sweet, sour, bitter, spicy, juicy
looks--yellow, round, like a ball, lopsided
feel--smooth, bumpy, cool, soft, like leather
smell--delicious, sweet, mellow, tangy, over ripe

Prior to another writing period a food-tasting session could be arranged with children bringing the sample items. The teacher can encourage the class to think in terms of sweet, sour, smooth, crisp, spicy, bland, smoky, greasy, etc. The class could identify tastes as:
salt--salty, briny
sugar--sugary, sweet, candied
water--bland, tasteless
lemon or vinegar--tart, bitter
unsweetened chocolate--dry, biting, bitter
cracker--crispy, salty, doughy

The teacher may ask the children to describe a favorite food so others will almost be able to see and taste it. Perhaps someone else does not like this food. He may describe it also.

Another time the teacher may invite the class to think of a list of foods and phrases to put on the chalkboard. Typical replies might be sweet as candy, sour as a pickle, salty as popcorn. Encouraged to think of better

ways of describing food, children might come up with something like:
peanut butter--Do you like it plain or lumpy?
Do you like it smooth or crunchy?
Do you like it sticky or runny?
Attention might be given to such various items as a lime, ice cream, toast, medicine, potato chips, gravy, nuts, water, etc.

To encourage tactile sensations, children may be asked to bring items from home and make a feel chart. Items might include: cotton, ice, feathers, spider, cactus, tree bark, rocks, etc. Each item can be discussed from the viewpoint of how it feels and what it reminds them of. Terms that could be used include: cold, hard, pliable, velvety, elastic, rubbery, smooth, grainy, wet, prickly, fluffy, scratchy, etc.

Another time items can be passed around such as a sponge, popcorn (popped or not popped), stone, marbles, a rubber band, sandpaper, fruit, velvet, yarn, etc. Children could touch the items with closed eyes and afterwards describe them in terms of what they "seemed to be."

For a variation, an object can be hidden in a large paper sack. Each child in turn feels the unfamiliar object without seeing it, and suggests, "It feels like a . . . because . . . . Afterwards, children can share impressions and display the object (a coconut in the hull, eggplant, empty plastic bottle, small wooden animal, pumpkin seeds, etc.). At this time the children might enjoy hearing The Blind Men and the Elephant by John Godfrey Saxe.

After the class has had some experience with feeling words, the teacher may encourage them to tell the feel of cold water splashed on their face, a skinned knee, running in the sand, giving a valentine, losing a favorite possession, etc.

The teacher can bring a "sound box" into the classroom. Different objects (an eraser, safety pin, small ball of twine, marbles, etc.) can be placed individually in the can and shaken. The children then describe the sound and guess what the sound maker is.

A class book on sounds can be made. The teacher may turn off the lights and ask the children to close their

eyes and lay their heads on their desks. Sounds heard either on the street or in the school may be listened to. The teacher can draw attention to some specific sounds: "I hear the clock. What does it say? How does it sound?" Later, children may find pictures of people doing things that make noise (blowing horns, sawing, flying airplanes, etc.). The class can look at each picture and think of the noise that would be heard, then discuss each pictured action.

The teacher may ask the children if they can feel sound. If not, how do they know when a heavy truck is passing, when it thunders, when an airplane is taking off? Can the children see cold? What do they do when they read a thermometer? The class can then discuss the difference between seeing, hearing, and feeling.

To develop a sense of smell, the class may discuss smells such as: flowers, perfume, skunk, onion, spices, etc. The teacher and children can bring aromatic objects to class and contrast their smells. Children can be encouraged to become more aware of environmental smells by discussing: the aroma of mother's baking; the smell of bleach, soap, and ammonia when mother washes; the strong smell of gasoline when the car tank is being filled; the smell of tar, gum, and candy. The class can talk about some of the more subtle smells: the air after a rain, lilacs in the rain, autumn bonfires, perfume that ladies wear, cooking food, a florist shop, etc. The teacher can help the children describe a certain smell as:
orange--fragrant, sweet, fruity
onion--sharp, strong, pungent
baseball mitt--leathery, musty

The class may discuss smells and what they expect to see that goes with smells. Children may then enjoy naming or drawing pictures of things that have sweet, strong, sharp, or pleasant smells.

Writing picturesque descriptions depends, to a large extent, on the response to sensory impressions and the children's awareness of these phrases in what they read or hear. The teacher should be alert for situations that will help

children build better vocabularies and encourage them to see mentally as they see visually.

A class notebook of unusual and apt words and phrases that children use in their writing and talking may be kept. Before words are put in the notebook, they may be placed on the corner of the chalkboard. Also put on the chalkboard may be action words that the class has observed that day: dribbling a ball, shuffling along, etc. The children will enjoy dramatizing these words for more precise meaning.

The teacher, with the children's help, may compile a special notebook with colorful, descriptive words that tell about us (people), words that express sights and feelings, words with noses (smells), etc.

Pictures can help clarify words and their meanings. Increasing sizes or deepening shades of colored paper may be used to dramatize shades of meanings. For example, a large dog picture may be placed on light yellow paper, a great dog picture on a deeper yellow shade, and a mammoth dog picture on a gold shade.

Food pictures can be mounted for description. Suitable items could include a fresh cherry pie, a steaming meat dish, and a cool salad. The children may tell what the meringue on a pie looks like, how a fish dish smells, etc. After the discussion, descriptive captions can be put under each picture.

Another time pictures of pets could be placed on the bulletin board with typical adjectives such as: playful, annoying, mischievous, dignified, innocent, loving, sad, discouraged, and anxious. The class can discuss the pictures and match them to the words. Also, the children may pose with the same expressions. Children would enjoy describing the motions of a pet as he runs to greet them, catches a mouse, plays with a ball, sleeps, stretches. The class together can decide the words that tell the exact action and then act it out. The feel of a pet can also be described as fluffy, sleek, rough, wet tongue, etc.

Animal pictures can be displayed and the children may think of adjectives to describe each one. They may also compare each animal with a noun, as: "He's a regular policeman." Cats and wild creatures, faces of old men

and women, babies, or adolescent youths may be used. Under the pictures the teacher may place such captions as: How would you describe this grandmother's face? Can you find words to describe this sunset? What is the exact expression for the look on this boy's face? This picture reminds me of . . . .

Another activity could be translating pictures into words. A picture could be described in a word picture or action sentence. The reverse procedure would be to draw a picture from words. Such words as summertime, chocolate, mountains, cowboy, playground, vacation, elephant, blizzard, roller skates, etc. could be used.

Children enjoy working with word pictures. The teacher could read some examples and then have children make their own. "She gave me the radar look." Looks are eloquent, describe one you have seen. "The baby frolicked like a puppy." Describe the way a human baby or baby animal plays. "My father looked as limp as a newspaper that had been out all night." Describe a tired person's looks.

The teacher can invite the children to use words to make a color picture of fall, a feeling picture of spring, an action picture of winter, a sheer enjoyment picture of summer.

Another time the children might try to write word pictures to the kind of music that comes out of each musical instrument.

Working with similes often helps children develop better word pictures. The class could keep lists of similes which they add to. Headings might include: as loud as, as soft as, as happy as, as sad as, as bright as, as sleepy as, as short as, as stern as, as muffled as, as pointed as, as dark as, as slow as, as high as, as dull as, as rough as, as straight as, as crazy as, as black as, etc. A good way to begin children working with comparative ideas is to compile a list of some old stand-bys:

pale as a ghost
red as a beet
green as grass
old as the hills
quiet as a mouse
busy as a bee
hungry as a bear

dry as a bone
black as ink

The teacher can then encourage children to find better comparisons to make word pictures. The teacher may help children to understand comparisons better by asking them to make a fat dot, make a fatter dot, make a still fatter dot, etc. The class could then compare the dots and discuss why they could continue making fatter and fatter dots.

The teacher can help children compose similes by asking what things remind them of, what things sound like. She may present similes in sentences to help children describe things: my red sweater is like, his open mouth was like, the clouds today were like, he heard a tiny sound like, Ann's hair is yellow as, the room was as noisy as, the hot sand felt like, last night the wind sounded like, rain tastes like, I'm proud as a peacock when, I'm slow as a turtle when, the word jumpy reminds me of, what is fast as lightning, what is smooth as silk, etc. Or the teacher may ask children to use comparisons to describe how they feel when: they go barefoot, are sick and cannot go out to play, go high in the air in a swing, wake up on a cold and frosty morning, get the giggles and cannot stop, have studied and done well in school.

When working with comparative ideas, children could be asked to compare things in a topsy-turvy world:

Which weighs more, a cough or a sneeze? Why?
Which is louder, a smile or a frown? Why?
Which is thinner, day or night? Why?
Which is heavier, mountains or an ocean? Why?
Which is tougher, yellow or purple? Why?
Which is sweeter, rain or July? Why?
Which is louder, a smile or frown? Why?
Which is angrier, the kitchen or living room? Why?
Which is quicker, black or yellow? Why?
Which is louder, going to sleep or waking up? Why?
What takes up more space, pain or a pickle? Why?
Which is faster, a table or a chair? Why?
Which lasts longer, ice cubes or cookies? Why?
Which is quieter, a knife or a whisper? Why?
Which weighs more, a scream or a bag of potatoes? Why?
Which is deeper, an enormous hole or loneliness? Why?
Which is healthier, a carrot or a sunny day? Why?
Which is rounder, honey or jam? Why?
Is 3 funnier than 4? Why?

Is mud sneakier than midnight?
Which is crisper, winter or celery?
Which color is surprise? Why did you pick the color you did?

Summer is like a bridge because . . .
A barrel of water is like an animal called a . . . because . . .
A triangle is like a . . . because . . .
Snow-topped mountains are like . . . because . . .
A dentist's drill is like a . . . because it sometimes must hurt you to do its job.
A sandwich is like a . . . because . . .
A magnet is like fishing bait because . . .
When watching a popcorn machine work, what kind of weather are you reminded of? Why?
When does the sea look like chocolate pudding?
A steam roller is like what animal?
A picket fence is like a dragon tail because . . .
When would a dictionary act like animal tracks in the forest?
A blade of grass is like . . . because you can cut it down and it will grow back.
A coffeepot is like what animal?
An elephant is like what machine?
What plant is like a ladder?
An eye is like what part of a house? Why?
A vacuum cleaner acts like . . . because . . .
An egg beater is like what living thing? Why?

Tell what kind of person you are by using comparisons:
Your friends think you are . . . Teachers? Parents?
What animal are you like? Why?
What number acts like you? Explain.
What kind of weather is like you? Why?
What flower has things about it that reminds you of yourself?

When working with metaphors, the teacher can challenge the children to remember all they can. Some of the following may be contributed: a pin head, saw teeth, a shoe's tongue, the neck of a bottle, an ear of corn, a head of lettuce, the eye of a needle, table legs, clock hands, chair arms and back, the foot of a ladder, the mouth of a river. The class also may discuss eyelids, the bridge of a nose, roof of a mouth, arch of a foot, etc.

The teacher may introduce idioms to children to enable them to make more precise word pictures. After children have clarified the meanings of idioms, they delight in drawing pictures of them. Some that children might enjoy include: a sharp tongue, tickled pink, in the doghouse, in the soup, on pins and needles, talking through their hat, a swelled head, beating around the bush, staking on thin ice, not out of the woods yet, a dog in the manger, etc.

At another time children may think of all the idioms they can that refer to certain parts of the body, such as:

face--face up to, face to face, a long face, to their face.
head--go to their head, keep their head, lose their head, in their head, put their heads together.
eye--to be all eyes, see eye to eye, keep their eye out for, a sight for sore eyes, to catch someone's eye.
heart--break the heart, by heart, get to the heart of, take heart, have their heart in the right place.

Or children may select someone they know very well and describe them. The teacher may encourage children to tell not only what they look like, but what they are like inside. Are they kind? brave?

The class may pretend they are hiding along the street watching hundreds of boys go down the street. A sentence such as, "The boy went home" may be taken and changed to show the different boys as they went home. To describe the different boys and the way they went home, the class may use a different adjective for each boy or a different word instead of "went" (galloped, shuffled along, marched, etc.). A discussion of situations which require certain kinds of walking may follow. Still another day the class may picture the kind of home each boy was going to. Children would also enjoy dramatizing the different boys going home to contribute explicit details of the characters and actions.

After reading a story a chart with the names of characters in the story may be made. The children may then find adjectives to describe them.

Descriptions and names lead naturally into synonyms: what else can we call it? The class can discuss how names help describe a person. A boy might be called: Jeff, a pet owner, kid, dear, stupid, a pest, a bully,

a friend, etc. The class may enjoy blowing "word bubbles." Each group is started with a word and they then blow their bubbles larger by giving synonyms for that word. Words that could be used include: big, little, sad, fast, mad. Afterwards, children can dramatize the shades of meanings (walk--step, stride, march, trudge, tip-toe, stroll, amble, etc.).

Children especially enjoy making nonsense names. They might combine animal names, such as a kangerooster, and then draw the animal. The child or someone else may tell a story about the kangerooster, give it a first name, tell how it got its name, what it does, how it came to be, etc. Or nonsense names may be a combination of a descriptive word and the animal's name. For example: a flion (flying lion), snelephant (could be a sneezing or snoring elephant), a crabbit, sloctopus, etc. Children might also decide what the nonsense animal said (Gorkork? Blek? Grak?).

Another time the teacher may encourage children to think up nonsense words to describe the way things sound to them. Some of the objects they may enjoy making sounds for include: a washer, a vacuum cleaner, snore, fire siren, pencil writing on paper, drinking a soda, an airplane, bee, light switch, cat getting into a trash can, a dripping faucet, a dog late at night, drum, etc. To familiarize children with words that sound like what they describe, the teacher could read examples from The Wind in the Willows, or poems such as Galoshes by Rhoda W. Bacmeister, The Land of Storybooks by Robert Louis Stevenson, The Bells by Edgar Allen Poe. The teacher can invite children to bring in onomatopoeia examples they find from stories, poems, comic strips, etc. Some of the following might be found: whisper, crash, roar, coo, squeak, murmur, yell, boom. rustle, purr, jingle, snarl, giggle, scream, sizzle, swish, click, peep, hiss, etc.

The class may be encouraged by the teacher to use descriptive language to make sentences more interesting. But she should also stress that the goal is to improve what the sentence says, not just make it longer. The class might work with such sentences as: We saw a child. A man went into the store. The boy went walking. The rain fell. These sentences could be changed as the following:
The snow is on the tree.
The glistening snow is on the tree.

The glistening snow hung heavily on the tree.
The glistening snow hung heavily on the branches of the tree.
The glistening snow hung heavily on the branches of many trees in the forest.

The teacher can challenge children to be specific about what they mean by: a happy time, something frightening, ordinary, unusual, funny, unbelievable, beautiful, dangerous, imaginative.

Words such as "good" and "nice" are "tired words." The teacher may encourage children to think of better words to describe: a cake, a man, baby, party, bath salts, fudge, etc.

The teacher may ask the class to create impressions from one word. For example, what is sadness? Sadness is being left alone. Sadness is a birthday cake all gone. Sadness is crying. Such abstract nouns as happiness, excitement, love, frustration, etc. can also be used. Or the teacher may ask the children their associations with emotionally-colored words such as: cozy, school, success, etc.

The teacher may present a noun, such as snow, to the class. The children then think of all the adjectives they can to describe snow, and then select the one they like best. The same procedure may be followed with other descriptive words.
A thing or person word--snow
A descriptive word--lacy
An action word--swirling
How does it make you feel--peaceful

The class can discuss ways to make objects vivid to the listener. Some of the items described might include: a feather, bar of soap, apple, tar, pinched finger, a line of clothes on a windy day, the best drink you ever tasted, a blanket on a cold night, a laugh, sneeze, and yawn. Abstract words such as polite, luck, beauty, friendship, responsibility, curiosity can also be discussed.

Either orally or in writing, the teacher can help the children describe: the exact color of the lake, the faint green mist of the new leaves, the song of a robin or wren, the song the wind howls around the corner at night, the feeling in the pit of your stomach when you

are going up in an elevator, when you know you are going to be punished or when you are going to the doctor, the muffled sound of footsteps on a snowy day, the feel of walking on soft grass or crunchy pebbles, etc.

Children may describe objects from an unusual point of view, such as: how would the world look if you were a bird, how would the grass look if you were a worm, how would trees look if you were a giraffe. The class may describe, "The world as seen by a . . . (doorknob, basketball, school desk, pencil, child's coat, arithmetic book, light bulb, etc.). The teacher can encourage the children to stress how the object feels, how it is treated by people and other inanimate objects, its frustrations and pleasures. Another time children may describe an article inside and out as if they had X-ray vision.

Objects around the room may be described by children as they view them through colored cellophane, a paper towel roll, a magnifying glass, etc. Also, things can be described as seen from various angles: upside down, standing on a chair, from underneath, etc.

One child may begin, "I am thinking of a word . . ." As the child describes his word, the rest of the children draw what he is describing. Questions from the class will encourage accurate descriptions. Another time the child may answer only "yes" or "no" as the children call out descriptions of objects he could be thinking of.

For amusement, children might describe people's actions in a Topsy Turvey Town where everyone does the opposite of what he is told. For example, if someone told them to come in, what would they say or feel in this town?

With partners, children can make "crazy creatures." Each child writes a description of some creature, imaginatory or real. Then they exchange papers, and the partner draws the creature described. This is an excellent way to encourage children to give accurate, precise descriptions.

The teacher may have the children make definitions of common things, such as a chair, turkey, flower. The process of defining a bed might include:
bed--a piece of furniture. (How about a chair?)
bed--a piece of furniture in a bedroom. (How about a dresser?)

bed--a large flat piece of furniture on which we usually sleep at night. (Getting closer.)

Folk takes have picturesque speech. The teacher may ask the class to take an expression such as "the pot calling the kettle black" or "eating high on the hog" and try to say it better in modern style language.

Another time the teacher may gather from the class slang expressions they have heard. Some of the expressions that mean "she is the nicest person I know" might include: she's all gold, she's tops, she's the cream in my coffee, etc. Again, the teacher can encourage children to find better ways of describing this person.

The teacher can draw attention to a specific object and then ask children to describe it. The item could be either a common or an unusual one. Children might find it helpful to draw the object before describing it. To stress the importance of specific cases rather than abstractions, the teacher could ask: Which of these terms is most specific:
a lady, that lady, Mrs. Wilma Jones
the dog, that collie, that collie in the street

Children might enjoy developing a chart, such as:

1.	2.	3.	4.
girl	a girl in my class	the girl who sits behind me	Mary Nelson
pet			
house			
car			

Characterization may begin as a class project as this is often a difficult step for younger children. Familiar characters or a combination of realism and imagination seem to make invention easier (31, p. 87). Ordinary characters

may fall into conventional molds, but half-fanciful characters often set the imagination to working. The teacher can help the children understand various ways it is possible to "create a character" by taking an example (Mary is happy) and building until Mary appears as an interesting and special person. Some ways that show how happy Mary is may include:

a. A simple statement of fact--Mary is happy.
b. Describing how cheerily she goes about her work.
c. Telling some incident that proves she is unusually happy.
d. Comparing her actions with other happy people or animals.
e. Using synonyms to describe her.
f. Letting her express her reason for her happiness in her own words.
g. Using other people to bring out her happiness.
h. Telling something she does or how she reacts.
i. Telling what she is not.
j. Repeating what others say of her (34, p. 104).

An unhappy Mary could be created, or a strong man, a lazy boy, a proud hen, a foolish girl. Selfish, honest, silly, grumpy, wise, greedy, a good sport, and talented are all adjectives that could be characterized. Below are some other ways of preparing and working with characterizations in the classroom.

> The class may think of all the words they can that describe people. Lists can be made of "these are ways" words. These are ways people feel: jolly, lazy, foolish, discouraged, puzzled, bored, exhausted, abused, disliked, loved. These are ways people look: wrinkled, proud, clever, kind, mature.
>
> Have the children describe how they feel when: they get a present they like, someone calls them stupid,

they are praised for something they have done, they want a drink of water, they lose their movie money, they hear a noise under their bed at night, when they see the first snow of the year, when tomorrow is their birthday, when they are reading a good book, etc.

The teacher may ask children to explain how they feel when they are: refreshed, weary, fatigued, exhausted, concerned, anxious, apprehensive, uneasy, etc.

Another time children may describe how they move when: they are late for school, their leg hurts, they are looking for something small on the floor, they are tired from running, after they have been hiding in a small place, etc.

Children may be encouraged to describe the characteristics of a person or animal through telling a story about him. Instead of children saying, "Our baby is clever," such a story would show how clever the baby is.

Story Starters from Books and Stories

"How can you actually get children started with a writing project? There are, no doubt, as many ways as there are teachers and children" (37, p. 17). Almost any experience can be used to stimulate creative writing (45, p. 31). Many situations and experiences in the daily program can be utilized for stimulating creative writing. When a teacher is needed to supply children with ideas, the most effective ideas will be the ones that lead children to their own experiences and interests (42, p. 58). One authority gives the formula of interest plus experience plus vocabulary equals writing (45, p. 8). Strickland believes elementary school children should be encouraged to do as much creative writing as they are willing to do (49, p. 269).

Every opportunity should be provided for children to write and express themselves. Children, particularly those who are less mature, need help with putting their ideas into words (37, p. 26). They need practice in relating their experiences before they can talk freely about their ideas. Children should have frequent opportunities to share their experiences. Perhaps a time could be provided each day for them to share and write ideas. They should be encouraged to share ideas, impressions, and attitudes, as well as news, during Show and Tell. A "story chair" can be designated during the early primary grades so much of the children's writing activities can be oral. The teacher can set aside a time for creating by issuing a daily invitation to write (38, p. 117) or scheduling a "reading or writing" period (42, p. 56). A writing corner separated from the rest of the room can provide incentive for writing in children's free time (6, p. 40). Word folders may be kept that contain words for a story. One folder might contain a picture of a zoo and underneath many zoo words. Some folders might have each individual word illustrated and have no large picture. Bulletin boards can encourage children to write by presenting intriguing titles, first line starters, or interesting objects. Boxes with story beginnings and endings, plots, or characters may be made available for the children's use. A bag for "trapped ideas" may hold ideas until children have

time for pursuing them further. Individual dictation can be taken in the "writing corner." Class dictated stories can be written on experience charts or the chalkboard. These can then be duplicated for each child's individual creative writing notebook. Perhaps a large class storybook of the children's dictated stories can be made.

Story starters can appear from anywhere: pictures, murals, bulletin board displays, books, book jackets, stories written by both adults and other children, common experiences such as night and mud, classroom activities, roller movies, pantomines, puppet shows, unusual combinations of objects, etc. "A teacher need not worry because she lacks ideas" (34, p. 2).

Here are some suggestions for using books to motivate creative writing:

> Sharing the creative works of others, such as Suess, Klein, Bridwell, Munari, and Sendak will often trigger spontaneous class activity. After reading and discussing Ipahr's Calico Jungle, children may want to make their own calico book.
>
> A day may be designated as Dr. Suess Day and children can make Dr. Suess animals and write Dr. Suess stories.
>
> A dramatic reading of the nonsense poem "Jabberwock" from Alice in Wonderland may be given. The class can then discuss and illustrate the Jabberwock and its adventures.
>
> The teacher may begin talking about fears after a story has been read in which someone was afraid, such as Bears of Hemlock Mountain by Alice Dalgliesh, or Boo, Who Used to be Afraid of the Dark by Munro Leaf. She may tell of something she used to be afraid of as a

child, giving details of just how she felt about this fear and tell how she got over it. The class might then discuss: what I'm afraid of, why, how I feel, what I imagine when I'm scared, what I do to fight my fears.

After reading some of Kipling's "Just So Stories," the children can experiment with myths to explain otherwise unexplainable events: why rabbits have short tails, why the turtle has a shell, why the earth rotates, why there are four seasons, why fire burns, how the butterfly got its name, etc.

After reading fanciful tales, such as The Wish Tree by John Ciardi or Nine Magic Wishes by Shirley Jackson, children would enjoy making their own wishes. Tall sheets of paper could be made into a class wish book in which the children could paste their stories.

Children may select a favorite nursery rhyme and write it as if they were telling the event. Or a nursery rhyme can be chosen and the situation be changed: what if Jack didn't have an ax when the giant was climbing down the beanstalk?

Children often enjoy rewriting stories. And To Think I Saw It On Mulberry Street might be rewritten in terms of a street in the local community with a new set of made-up "sights."

Children also enjoy hearing stories by authors of their own age group. Collections of children's writing can be found in They All Want To Write, Slithery Snakes and Other Aids to Creative Writing in Elementary School, and books written by Mauree Applegate.

When book jackets of stories children are unfamiliar with are displayed, children can make up stories from the titles and pictured action. Later the story can be read aloud by the teacher. Or before reading a story the teacher can have the children tell what the title makes them think of. After a story has been read, children can compare stories and chuckle at the differences.

While reading a story that is unfamiliar to the class, the teacher may stop at a crucial point in the story and ask what the children think will happen next. They may discuss what each character might do and why they think

he might do so. Differences in the children's conclusions will demonstrate the differences in thinking.

As the teacher reads a good book or parts of a story aloud, the class can stop to enjoy colorful phrases. The wonderful words that are used can be discussed and then the class may try to use them in their own conversations. Word lists can be made after the story is finished. In Bambi, words might be listed that tell how the animals went through the forest or meadow (skipped, sprang, dashed, ran swiftly, rushed, etc.). The children can then dramatize the words to show the different shades of meaning.

After a story has been read, children can be asked why they think the story turned out the way it did, how they felt about the characters in the story and what is likely to become of each one. Questions that the children would like to ask the characters may be written on the chalkboard and the children can speculate on the answers that the characters would give them. Or the children may be divided into groups that view the story from the different characters' viewpoints. For example, in a story about a goat in the grocery store, the class could be divided into thirds. One group then would decide what the goat told his nanny when he got home, another what the storekeeper told his wife, and the third what the boy told his mother.

Children often wish a story would continue. After reading a story, the class may enjoy writing a sequel to the story, or perhaps a complete new adventure about one of the characters. These can then be compiled into a class story book.

When reading a story, the teacher may challenge children to find five words that describe, or five words that answer who, when, or where. The class can then discuss words that could be substituted in the story without changing the meaning. For example, in The Three Bears, children could think of words to use instead of too hot, too soft, just right, etc.

Another time a familiar short story with color-keyed blank spaces in place of adjectives can be distributed. Each child or group of children can be given three slips of different colored paper on which to write descriptive words. One color describes which one, another color what kind and the third color how many. Children then

take turns supplying adjectives for the story. The procedure could also be used with other parts of speech.

A class notebook of excellent words and phrases found in children's reading may be kept. Page titles may include: color words, action words, feeling words, imaginative phrases and specific words that can be used for general words (examples for said--exclaimed, shouted, informed, sighed, mumbled, etc.). A notebook of unusual descriptions could also be kept. Children might hunt for words and phrases that establish a mood (such as finding all the expressions in a passage that tell it's a grey day both outside and in the minds of these children). A special notebook about trees which contains ways to describe them in all four seasons, in twilight, at night, etc. might be enjoyed. Every once in a while, the teacher could read aloud from these books.

Story Starters from Pictures and Objects

Pictures and drawings represent one of the most often used techniques for motivating creative writing (50, p. 204). However, some authors feel pictures should not be used as a stimulus because they tend to direct children to look outside themselves rather than think about their own experiences and see possibilities for writing in their everyday doings (6, p. 41). Many stories can be developed from "reading" a picture. Some of these include:

a. Guessing what is happening in the picture.
b. Characterizing the people and suggesting possible names for them.
c. Deciding what events might have led up to the present action.
d. Guessing at the various ways the story might turn out.
e. Finding words to express the feelings and actions at which the picture hints.
f. Finding words to describe the scenery or express the background of the picture.
g. Suggesting a few appropriate titles (34, p. 60).

A good beginning activity may involve displaying a large picture before the class to provide stimulation of ideas, demonstrate the author's right to name characters as he pleases, have events develop as he wishes (divergent thinking), provide an opportunity for the class to make lists of descriptive words for the picture, and give the teacher an opportunity to observe the class.

Reproductions of famous pictures can be used to stimulate writing. The teacher should select pictures that children would find appealing. An example might be "Twittering Machine" by Paul Klee. Children could speculate on all the things that this machine could do, what sounds it makes, how it works, where it came from, imitate what it does, etc. Children may write about the feelings a picture gives them or the thoughts they think the artist may have had while creating a picture.

Children's love for the comic strips may be capitalized on for creative writing. Favorites, such as Nancy, the Flintstones, Peanuts, Family Circle, Dennis the Menace, etc. could be discussed by the children. Then a child or group of children could write an episode for an especially good one. Children also enjoy writing different captions for cartoons. Another time children may write their own original stories in the comic strip form, using "balloons" for quotations.

A silent film or part of a film run without sound may encourage children to write stories. Children may be asked what they think happened to cause the action they saw, what they think will happen next, etc.

Old magazine pictures may be used in various ways to stimulate writing:

> Children may use old magazine pictures as illustrations for their stories. After children have written their stories, each is mounted on a larger sheet of paper with the pictures. A class story book can then be made. Or, after this activity has been repeated several times, individual story collections may be made.
>
> A class story book can be made from studying a magazine cover picture. The class may discuss what they are thinking in the picture, what they are saying, etc. The teacher may write down questions the children have about the picture. Time should be taken to write lists of interesting words and phrases which describe the people, animals, and circumstances. Captions also can be made for the picture.
>
> Another time children may select a picture from a magazine and tell why it appeals to them. Other children also may discuss the picture. Children may choose a picture and pretend, "If I had a . . .," "If I was a . . .," etc.
>
> Children enjoy writing riddles about pictures. The picture may then be pasted on the back of the riddle sheet. Or children may elect to write their own advertisements about pictures they find.
>
> Children can be given incomplete drawings and then they may make a picture based on the given lines and shapes. A story or caption about the completed picture may be written.
>
> *Daffy-Doodles* are a variation of incompleted drawings. The teacher may give each child a different shape (or letter of the alphabet) made with colored markers. After the drawings have been completed, children may give each one a title or tell a story about each.

Children can be asked to trace around their scissors, hands, footprints, etc. and make something from that shape. From these pictures children can then create stories, titles or captions.

Another type of abstract picture which children enjoy using is the inkblot. Each child interprets what he sees in the blot or what the shape brings to mind. Children also like to make their own inkblots.

Abstract pictures can also be made from things children see in their surroundings. As an example, children might illustrate the various things they see in the clouds, branches of a tree, etc.

Scribble pictures which the children make in 30 seconds are interesting to work with. Afterwards, the children need time to decide what they have drawn and tell a story about it.

With an opaque or slide projector, "fuzzy pictures" can be made. The projector is kept unfocused so only vague shapes and indistinct color areas are shown. The children can then decide what they see or what it reminds them of. Gradually the focus can be changed and the process repeated.

Both familiar and unfamiliar objects are often used to motivate writing. One author suggested that when the teacher uses pictures and objects to help children get ideas flowing, that she first ask for a few descriptive words, get answers to a few questions, or mention a few things her imagination tells her (84, p. 34).

Here are some ways objects may be used to stimulate creative writing:

These objects may be used to intrigue the class: a pair of baby shoes, a candle, a school trophy, a bar of soap, a shovel, toy truck, catcher's mitt, a well-chewed pencil, a bird cage, a well-worn billfold, plastic flowers, a silver dollar, an autograph book, an old family Bible, roller skates, a welcome mat, a doll buggy,

red bandana, an alarm clock, a battered suitcase, seashells, seeds, straw figures, a box of buttons, an old shawl, a snail, a horseshoe, a bag of old shoes, one worn mitten, a horse bridle, sleighbells, Christmas ornaments, empty candy wrappers.

Inanimate objects can be given life with students playing the role of a pencil, book, picture frame, traffic light, etc. Children can imagine the feelings of the chosen object, describe the activities of their day and their reaction to people. They could write sentences telling what the ball might say when it is bounced, what the lamp would say when it is turned on, what the chair would say when someone sits on it, what the flower would say when someone sniffs or picks it, etc.

Boxes of every color and size imaginable could be brought to class. The teacher may have the children decide which box they think a story is in and decide on everything that could fit inside that box.

Another time the teacher could bring a sealed bottle containing a note to class. Children can speculate on the contents of the note, its origin, etc. Then the bottle may be broken and the note read to the class.

Large footprints can be cut from construction paper and attached to the floor, walls, and ceiling. Children can speculate about who left the prints and why. Stories can then be written on a large footprint.

Suggested Story Titles

Titles can offer interesting possibilities for stories, although care must be taken that they are neither trite nor lacking in appeal. A large enough selection to interest all children should be provided, but the number of titles given should be limited so as not to confuse them. Tiedt suggested listing three titles, discussing the possibilities for a story in each, and then letting the children write (50,

p. 201). A comparison of stories will demonstrate the many approaches to one topic and the difference in individual thinking.

Here is a list of possible titles children might use:

What Mother Forgot
The Count-Down
Why the Turtle Has a Shell
He Hurried Too Fast
How I Feel in the Dark
Happy Birthday, Billy
What the Animals in the Zoo Don't Like
Nancy Knew Best
My True Story
The Year Santa Claus (Easter Bunny, Jack Frost, etc.) Was Lazy
I Was a Pine Seed
The Secret
Walking Home in the Rain
Who Is Afraid of Thunderstorms?
The Fire Engine
If I Could Fly
The Bear That Wouldn't Growl
A Ghost Goes Hunting
What A Dinosaur Did One Day
A Knock at the Door
A Day to Remember
What I Do First Thing in the Morning
What I Think About Winter
An Important Date
The Shocking Surprise
A Surprise for My Family
The Hot, Hot Day
The Day I Was Homesick
A Make-Believe Story
My Own Wish
September and Leaves
Why the Hen Was Sad
Leftover Turkey
This is the Funniest Person I Know
It Happened Only Last Night
The Day I Went to the Moon
Money of my Own
Things I Want to Change
I Wish I Had Another Name
The Day I Went To the Circus

What Are Shoes For?
Shadows
The School of the Future
What I would Do if I Were Elected Dog Catcher
If I Were A Caterpillar
What A Color Means to Me
My Jog Into Mars
Sounds I Hear at the Beginning or Ending of the Day
Some Things that Would Happen If All the Clocks Stopped Working
The Adventures of a Cloud
The Story of a Well-Worn Shoe
A Trip on the Magic Carpet
What My Big Sister Thinks of My Little Brother
Sounds on a Black Night
Dear Santa Claus
"Ouch!"
What Is Seven?
What I Think My Favorite TV Character Likes to Do
How I Feel About Walking Barefoot in the Mud
The Day My Pet Skunk and I Went to Town
The Little Child Who Didn't Want to Grow up
The Beach
It Was a Backwards Day
All About Being Stubborn
Curious George Came to my House
If I Were Living Long Ago
This Morning it Rained Cats and Dogs
If I Were a Kite
Happy the Unhappy Hippo
The Robot Who Cried

Ridiculous situations can challenge children to write. Some of the titles might be:

There Was a Googlesnoz
I Found a Thing-a-Ma-Jig
The Day I Met a Gugklehead
In the Buckbrig House
Three Miles from Nillypoo
Don't Forget the Trolofasts
The Snolofu Who Wouldn't Smile

Suggested Story Beginnings

Story beginnings can vary from words, phrases, and sentences to the more complete unfinished story. Children

often have difficulty with the first sentence, and with developing interesting beginnings and endings, because young children tend to think of the story as a whole (30, p. 139). To overcome these obstacles, the teacher can be prepared to supply ideas (either orally, from beginning and ending boxes, or in other ways). The teacher may often suggest general ideas, but children should be encouraged to decide on their own ideas as often as possible. Story starters also can be made up by the class or copied from library books and short stories. Children may find some of the following helpful in beginning stories:

I wish I had a couple of brothers.
There I stood in the middle of all those people.
One night I had a strange dream.
The sudden flash of a bright shooting star raced across the velvety black sky.
There was a giant living in the castle on the hill.
Jane had a little kitten.
Everyone was helping in some way with Thanksgiving dinner--except Andy Fredericks.
Imagine taking a journey backward through time.
There was one thing Joey wanted more than anything else in the world.
It rained and rained and rained.
I expect it has happened to you.
Mary was so excited she could hardly wait for the big day.
It was a lovely warm summer day.
Oh dear! I wonder what the trouble is now.
The whole school was buzzing with excitement.
What would happen if pills were developed that could be substituted for food.
When I get older . . .
I wonder why . . .
I remember . . .
I was an acorn lying in the tall grass.
When I heard the door open, I turned around quickly.
A clown is the nicest man to know.

What could be the meaning of the words I had just heard?
It was the middle of the night and everyone in the house was asleep.
"Tell me where it is," he begged.
Once upon a time, a long, long time ago . . .
I was frightened when I first saw that old house. The screen door was hanging part way open, and the setting sun cast slanting shadows across the weed-grown lawn.
When I grow up, I'd like to . . .
I thought he was the meanest person I had ever known.
The sun had barely risen, but already I could tell what kind of a day this would be.
I feel proud when . . .
All the way home, I kept wondering how I was going to explain this to my parents.
I was never so embarrassed . . .
Bill stood stock still. His legs refused to move. The sweat broke out on his forehead.
The hardest problem I have is . . .
There was a strange silence about the forest that night.
I wish people wouldn't . . .
On weekends I . . .
What would happen if everyone always told the truth about everything?

Longer beginnings are sometimes used to spark children's imagination. Here are some examples:

Everyone says that all cats are graceful. I thought this was true, until Puddy came to live at our house.

Bill walked to the window to let in a little air. As he began to raise it, something caught his eye. He stood with his mouth open. There on the lawn below was the strangest thing he had ever seen.

The children were playing on the beach when they discovered the strange footprints in the sand. Their curiosity got the best of them and they decided to follow the tracks along the shore.

Mary knew that if her parents found out, she wouldn't be able to sit for days, but she was determined to carry out her plan in spite of this.

Closer and closer our ship came to this strange new world. I waited tensely, fearing unknown things, yet at the same time listing in my mind a hundred unanswerable

> questions. What would I see? What would I hear? What manner of creatures would occupy this place? What tastes and smells and textures would I learn to live with, of which I now know nothing?
>
> "Once upon a time," I began my story. Then I paused to look at my little sister. I had Debbie's complete attention. She already had forgotten the broken television. "Long ago I knew a little girl," I said, "and do you know what? She looked almost exactly like you."
>
> Peering cautiously around a clover leaf, Eugene relaxed as he saw the coast was clear. "Whew!" he thought, "That was a narrow escape for an elf!"
>
> "Well," said the little old lady, "I don't know how I will do it, but I must find something to cook up in a stew for my family tonight." And so she tied her scarf around her head and went into the yard.

All children should have the opportunity to participate in group storytelling, but especially those children not yet ready to undertake writing responsibilities by themselves (42, p. 48). In the primary grades, the discussion time needs to be long, and individual efforts, if they are attempted, need to be preceded by group work (37, p. 64). An activity children may enjoy by the latter part of the second grade is getting together to write group stories (42, p. 48). It is in these small groups of two or three that children often feel most comfortable (40, p. 438). Some implicit examples of ways that may be used to stimulate children to create stories are listed below. These may be duplicated and each child given his individual copy or may be put on the chalkboard. Some children may wish to end stories in picture rather than word form at first, but by late second grade

most children will have made the transition to written endings (42, p. 47).

It was a chilly evening that I met . . .
Walking with him was a . . .
Quietly I asked him . . .
He answered almost angrily, . . .
This was unfortunate because . . .

I am an apple. I am red and round and I look like a . . . When I was hanging on the tree I felt happy and I wanted to . . . Then someone came and yanked me by my stem and I hurt like a . . . Soon I was stuffed into a crate with many other apples. I felt as though I were a . . . But I was proud because . . . Now it is early the next morning. I am brought to a market. I am sold to a little boy. The first thing he does is rub me against his rough pants. My skin feels like a . . . and it makes me as . . . as a . . . Then he starts to twirl what is left of my stem. That makes me feel as if I were . . . Suddenly he comes closer and closer. I am afraid that . . . Chomp! A piece of me is gone. My first thought is . . . My body feels like a . . . Little by little I am broken up until only my core is left. But my core is my most important part because . . . I am going to take my seeds and . . .

Imagine you are the first blade of grass in the spring. Imagine you have been asleep all winter. Now you wake up and there is a foot of snow on you. How do you feel? What do your grass muscles do to push through the snow? Will you make it up through the snow? How much of the snow has melted? Pop! You just pushed your little green head through the snow. You look around and see that you are the first blade of grass to appear. What are your feelings?

Pretend you are walking in a cave. It is so dark in there you can't see anything. You have to use your hands to feel, your nose to smell, ears to hear. Give a description of the walls in the cave, use your imagination and make comparisons. You creep along in the dark cave with your hands against the wall to steady yourself. Suddenly your hand touches something flat and slimy. What is it like? You hear something fall in front of you. There is the sound of a splash. What do you think it is like? A musty smell strikes your nose. It is so strong that it almost hurts. What is the strongest smell you

> know? You hear a small cry and then a scuffling noise. What does the cry remind you of? Your hand drops into a big crack in the cave wall. Your fingers touch something soft. What is it like? Your foot steps on something big and wiggly. What thing in the kitchen is like it? You look up and see daylight ahead. It is the mouth of the cave. When have you felt the same way?

Loosely structured plots and lists of characters or situations allow children to develop the story in their own way while encouraging them to write. The class as a whole may compose the beginning of a story and then each child may write his own ending. Another technique is the add-on story. Each child begins writing a story and at a given signal passes his paper back. He then reads the story beginning that has been passed back to him and writes what he thinks will happen next. Again, on signal, he passes the paper back. This is continued until the last pass when children end the story that has been passed to them.

Another story beginning source is a box of news-story titles. Children need not have knowledge of the original news item, although it might be useful in some instances.

Flannel board figures, shadow play on favorite book characters can all be used as the beginning of a story. Oral dramatization, especially for young children, will give them a feeling for doing action stories before they try to write them.

These situations may be helpful in encouraging children to write:

Children may be asked to make three wishes, then check to see if they were all for themselves or were for other people. They then may write three more wishes: one for themselves, one for another person and one for all people. Are all of their wishes important?

What do the children consider to be the best TV show and why?

Which "don't" do children hear most often? If they could choose don'ts and dos, which would they be?

What does the class think the enemies of mankind are? Do they think enemies can ever be friends?

The class may discuss situations and then write solutions. For instance: What could you say when you miss a party? What should you do when you know someone lied? When someone is rude, should you be rude to them?

A discussion about managing allowances may begin. How do children spend their allowance? Why do they save it, or part of it? Are they satisfied with the results of their managing? What suggestions for next week's allowance do they have?

After an excursion children may enjoy writing on some related idea. Topics from a library visit might include: why quiet is desirable, what it would feel like to be an adventure book that nobody reads, etc.

After seeing a play, TV show or movie, the children may describe how they would act if they were one of the characters in real life. The discussion might include what they liked or disliked about a character, why they would or would not rather be themselves than some character.

Children will enjoy describing some common happening on earth as if they were an observer from another plant seeing earthlings for the first time.

After a discussion about wild animals, children may suppose they are animals and tell about their homes, how they find food, protect themselves, etc.

The class may imagine they are lying on the bank of a stream watching their fishing lines. Suddenly they hear a rustle in the leaves behind them. They jump up. Then they may tell what happens next.

Ask the children what a bird would see everybody doing if it peeked into their window in the evening.

Encourage the class to think of all the possible uses for a: book, can, box, tree, chair, brick, cushion, etc.

Children can describe a real or imaginary travel experience.

Children may tell about the best costume they ever had or the one they wish they could get. They may give reasons why it seems so important to their happiness.

A special incident that happened on the way to school, or at home when they arrived could be described by the children.

The class may imagine that one of the "little people" from the land of make-believe is sitting on the window sill. They may describe his or her appearance, why he is sitting there, and where he is going when he leaves.

Children may select one of their dreams, or some other fanciful tale, to write about. It may be a nighttime dream or a daydream. What does a pet dream about? If children were a pig or horse, how would their dreams change? Why?

A series of sounds can be recorded. Related sounds of carpenters' tools might include a hammer, saw, electric drill, etc. Or the sound of unrelated things could be used: piano, a door closing, footsteps, cows mooing, etc. After playing the recording, children can suggest different possibilities for people, plot and setting for stories.

Related words can be put on the chalkboard and the class can be asked to write a story about them. For example:
magic, wish, castle, prince, journey
bump, hole, puppy, bandage, skates
pet, want ads, telephone, smiles, leash
forest, bear, honey, mud, spank
paper, puppet, pen, fingers, measles
gutter, splash, paper, race, cloudburst

Unrelated words also could be tried:
cat, bankrobber, flower
potato, key, sidewalk

bell, curtain, turtle
book, flea, coach
ticket, rabbit, fishbones
a fleecy cloud, pile of leaves, Easter vacation
a bag of popcorn, happily romping puppy, a clap of thunder

Children may be stimulated to write stories by using imaginary situations.

As children hear about some vivid character, animal or mythological beast, they may close their eyes and imagine they see it. Then each may contribute a sentence to a chalkboard story: If I was a glimsy morathon, I would . . . (laugh, color him purple, take him to a pet show and win first prize, etc.).

Children may make up the imaginary situations: What would you do . . .? Encourage them to think of the most unusual things they can, such as: if you saw a cave man running down the street, if the sun turned into lemon ice cream, etc. Children also enjoy imagining what they would do if: they were the first man to reach an undiscovered island, they were a bird and had just been given their first worm for dinner, they woke up one morning and looked in the mirror but saw someone else, etc.

At another session, stories can be built by asking questions such as: What would you do if a Googlesnooze came to your house? What would it look like? What would it do? What should you do?

Children may pretend they are a member of the local fire department and there is a fire near where they live. They may then tell what they would do to help put out the fire.

Each guest at the first Thanksgiving made a speech. Children could imagine they are an Indian, one of the Puritan ladies, or the governor. What would they say in their speech?

Children may enjoy pretending they are a statue that knows exactly what kind of statue they are (an army general on a horse, a Roman statue in a museum, etc.). If they came to life, what would they do?

If the children were inanimate objects such as a parking meter, a little boy's socks, etc., what would their list of complaints include?

The teacher may ask the children to run very fast, then to imagine why they are running (in a race, from something they fear, etc.). Afterwards they can discuss exactly how they felt emotionally and physically.

There are many situations children can imagine that will lead to different viewpoints for a story. Children may pretend they are a mother pet giving advice to her baby, a kitten playing in the leaves, an animal being entered in a pet show. Or they may think how they would feel if they were a mother who has a headache with noisy children nearby, or a lonely new child at school. Another situation might be reacting to a gift that was rather babyish. How would they feel about it? What will they say? How would they act? Or if the children were the cupcakes for a birthday treat, how would they feel? They may suppose they are the birthday boy, the other children, the person who cleans up after the birthday party, melting ice cream waiting for children to eat it, etc.

Children may be asked to imagine they are a tree. Who are their friends? Do they like people? They may act as a tree in a storm, a fire, a spring day, a drought, in light snow, etc. What is the most noble purpose of a tree? Why do they raise their arms all day? Do they talk to the birds? If so, what do they say? Do they like being a tree?

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken to help the writer better understand creativity and to compile some activities that could be used in promoting creative story writing in the primary grades. The procedure used was library research.

Several definitions of creativity were examined with the understanding that no single definition appeared

satisfactory to the different authorities. The four stages of creative thought (preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification) were described.

Three theories of creativity were reviewed. Guilford's structure-of-the-intellect theory sees creativity as a mental process consisting of related abilities. Freud's psychoanalytic theory believes creative thought is the result of interplay between the id and the ego. The perceptual theory proposed by Schachtel considers creativity as the ability to remain sensitive to the environment with a greater receptibility to experience.

The writer found an abundance of material on motivating children to write from their imagination and experience. Some advantages of creative writing include encouraging children to look at their environment and experiences, helping them to know themselves and others better, and providing a socially accepted way of reducing tensions and worries. Creative writing is a classroom activity that cuts across ability levels, giving the teacher an opportunity to see where specific instructions are needed. Creative writing may at times provide her with some clues to children's behavior.

The atmosphere considered most conducive for creative writing is one of spontaneous self-direction with a minimal amount of adult guidance. Many educational experts suggest accomplishing this by providing rich environmental experiences

and opportunities where children can explore, discover, and learn by trial and error. The teacher accepts any creative work the children offer, leaving formal guidance and criticism for a later time. A flexible schedule minimizes the daily pressures on children and allows time for them to think and express themselves. Children should be acquainted with a wide variety of literature and be encouraged to share their own oral or written compositions.

A variety of activities for helping primary children develop skills in the area of creative story writing was collected. Especially emphasized were sensory stimulation and descriptive vocabulary words with ideas that children might find helpful in story titles and beginnings.

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THREE THEORIES OF CREATIVITY AND SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATIVE STORY WRITING IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

by

ELIZABETH BRINDLE VACIN

B. S., Kansas State University, 1964

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