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FOCUS: FROM THE BASICS TO FANTASY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FROM THE BASICS TO FANTASY

This was to have been the issue of MEJ on Politics and the English Teacher, but it seems that not many teachers are concerned about such problems as the threat of mandatory testing and curriculum, tenure or accountability. We did receive two articles on falling standardized test scores. Perhaps a news item from the latest Council-Grams will jar some of you to write for a later issue. "At a conference of state school superintendents held in mid-November, Owen B. Kiernan, executive director of the...National Association of School Principals, predicted that all 50 states will decide within 18 months to require students to pass minimum competency tests in reading, writing, and mathematics." Dr. Kiernan further said, "...an army of [parents] will march on the courts of the country, arguing that we have perpetrated a fraud because we have not taught their children the basics."

Three articles we received did seem to form a unit. Two were concerned about the importance of developing or having a world of the imagination -- one, Ken Donelson's through the use of old-time radio scripts and the other, Theresa Corey's, through storytelling. These two articles lead nicely into Ruth Stenerson's comparison of two works, the popularity of which have demonstrated clearly that the world of fantasy does not end when childhood does. Perhaps, after all, the need for fantasy is a "basic."

The spring issue will stress reading -- programs, problems, successes -- at all levels. Write us your thoughts or tell us your needs. Maybe someone has an answer to them.

AN OBIT FOR MCGUFFEY: LANGUAGE AND THE MEDIA

Julie Carson
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Like you, I have been reading voluminous reports in newspapers and journals and watching television features about the decline in student literacy and I've heard the consequent cry that school systems, colleges and universities get "back to basics." I've even read of a little schoolhouse in Minnesota where the McGuffey reader has been adopted in what I consider a desperate and ill-advised attempt to teach students to read and write better.

McGuffey is a famous dead educator who wrote, beginning in 1836, a series of graded readers. The seven McGuffey Eclectic Readers, which dominated the school market for over 75 years, emphasized reading, spelling, punctuation and enunciation. All noble and worthy subjects, and I suppose that if one is put off by some of the non-traditional approaches to teaching reading and writing, the McGuffey reader might seem a sound alternative. Reading, spelling and punctuation are, after all, "basics" and one could always omit the articulation exercises.

But getting back to McGuffey's basics also means accepting a consistent religious and moral philosophy in all the reading excerpts, all clearly designed for a nineteenth-century white, Protestant, middle class audience; it means reinforcing sexist stereotypes on both male and female children; it means too, one must consider the

fact that most nineteenth century students finished only the second reader and to have finished the fourth was to have been very well educated. I wonder, when I read of the McGuffey revival, if parents are really ready for that trade-off.

I wonder, too, if they realize a typical vocabulary list in the second graded reader would include the words indolent, rebuked, prattle and transgressions and in the third, a typical class discussion includes defining ellipsis, contemptible, magnanimity, and rapturous. I'd like to believe they'd think these words are inappropriate for the lower levels of our public school reading classes; that they have little (or nothing) to do with a child's ability to function effectively in his or her own society; that by defining ellipsis, the child is not thereby immunizing himself from ever committing the error.

Parents who consent to their child's school's using McGuffey should look carefully into the texts and consider all the possible consequences of subjecting their children to all the social and educational anachronisms implicit in them. But, newspaper reporters and editors have a responsibility to inform themselves as well, before praising or encouraging a hasty "back to basics" retreat in the schools. A closer look at McGuffey reveals facts which brief perusals obscure; a closer look at writing in public schools and institutions reveals that facts have been obscured by news editors who didn't take the time to do their homework, a practice McGuffey would soundly

denounce.

I refer, of course, to the proliferation of newstories and features about the decline in national verbal ability scores and the recent report by the National Assessment of Educational Progress on Writing Mechanics. Since many hats and mortar boards are already in the ring, I'd like to toss mine in, too, and not only address those issues, but suggest ways the press is culpably involved in creating and then reporting its own newstory.

Briefly, I'd like to point out that there is no foolproof way of evaluating a student's ability to write by giving him an objective test; that the tests themselves award knowledge only incidental to competence in writing; that the adolescent who brings any imagination to the test may easily receive scores which brand him verbally deficient. Furthermore, the statistics most often cited from the National Assessment of Educational Progress study are those which report the bad news; good news is no news, it seems. Like the McGuffey Eclectic Readers, objective tests -- their content and context -- and the NAEP report, need a closer look and a fairer review.

There sits on my desk today a questionnaire from the English Curriculum Study Center of a major university which requests:

> Please check any of the following that you consider to be significant weaknesses in a majority of the students enrolled in freshman composition courses.

___Content	___Spelling
___Sentence structure	___Punctuation
___Organization	___Diction
___Constructing paragraphs	___Usage
___Logic	___Lack of parallelism
___Subordination of ideas	___Pronoun-antecedent agreement
___Run-on sentences	___Subject-verb agreement

Of these fourteen topics, spelling and punctuation are the items most critics of student writing seize upon. They are the most easily recognized; the critic can be certain of his judgment. But any writing teacher can tell you that the problem is not with either of those items. Neither is it the usage rules which another generation learned for shall/will distinctions. The problems are tougher: logic, subordination of ideas, organization, and style, generally. These are the matters on which writing teachers spend their time; but they aren't, for the most part, the matters that can be tested with objective, machine-scored examinations. And that is the crucial issue the public ought to know more about, because objective tests can provide neat statistics -- and statistics, I've found, make news.

Recently I have been asked to review new American College Testing (ACT) tests on "College Composition" and "Freshman English." The College Composition sample informs the student that the exam "is

designed to measure both your knowledge of the theoretical aspects of writing usually taught in a beginning two-semester college course in composition and your ability to put the principles of standard written English (as distinct from spoken English) into practice. Those taking the test are presumed to have a knowledge of the fundamental principles of rhetoric and of such elements of language, grammar, and logic as may be useful in composition."

"As may be useful in composition;" that's the key -- and presumably the rationale for each question. But consider this ACT "College Composition" example: after supplying a 13-line sentence, the examiners ask

> Which of the following best describes the general pattern of modification in the passage?
>
> (A) Article (determiner) - noun-verb
>
> (B) Article (determiner) - noun-prepositional phrase
>
> (C) Adverb-noun-prepositional phrase
>
> (D) Noun-verb-noun
>
> (E) Adverb-adjective-noun.

The student who had studied traditional grammar and had memorized its labels might find this an easy question. But that, of course, would be no guarantee that he could write very well. Labels are one thing, lucidity another, and like many writing teachers, I've known several students who could write effective prose yet could not systematically recognize the terms appositive, article or adverb.

They produced them with great grace; they just never found it necessary to label them. Some teachers in a suburban school district outside Minneapolis recently developed a program in which high school students were intensively taught traditional grammar. Throughout the program and at its end, the students were tested and nearly all had mastered the ability to recognize, label and even correct ungrammatical units. Retested some months later with other students who had not passed through the program, they distinguished themselves only by knowing the terms, not by avoiding their use in writing.

A similar question appears on the ACT "Freshman English" sample test:

14. Which of the following underlined phrases and clauses modifies the whole main clause of its sentence rather than any one word in the main clause?

(A) The demonstration ended, the students returned to their dormitories.

(B) Ending the demonstration, the students returned to their dormitories.

(C) The students, through with the demonstration, withdrew to their dormitories.

(D) The students, who had quit the demonstration, reassembled in the dormitories.

(E) Having ended the demonstration, the students went back to their dormitories.

Again, how much does it matter to a 17-year-old's writing ability to be able to answer this question? From my point of view, very

little. A real test is teaching students to exhibit that kind of sentence variety in their essays.

The preceding two questions require certain sophistication with the formal study of traditional grammar. But students can bring other kinds of sophistication with them that can, ironically, serve to lower their computerized "verbal ability" scores. Consider question 12 of the College Composition exam:

She treasures shows.

She shows treasures.

These sentences show that English is a language in which

(A) inflectional endings change meaning

(B) nouns and verbs are usually indistinguishable

(C) inversion of word order does not change meaning

(D) word order often determines grammatical function

(E) context is not important in clarifying relationships between words.

Now, the answer key lists (D) as the preferable answer, but what of the student who can quite reasonably make a case for (C) because he/she has been reading a lot of poetry or who was strongly influenced by a teacher who liked Latinate structures? The student may have been reading or writing similar sentences: "She charms displays"; "She secrets shares"; "She thoughts reveals." Or what of the student who gets caught up in the word play and too quickly chooses (B)?

Clearly, the scoring machine does not reward creativity, especially the kind students might also exhibit in another type of question which asks them to combine three sentences into one. The students are advised: "Be sure that the new sentence you create is a complete sentence, that it contains all of the essential facts given in the original set of sentences, that it maintains the proper relationship of ideas, and that it is clearly and effectively written." In other words, the students are asked to create a new sentence with the only real constraint of not distorting the given information.

Question 10: The Cheyenne Indian reservation has 433,000 acres. It is bounded on the east by the Tongue River and the west by the Crow Indian reservation. Three thousand Indians live on it.

Which of the following is the best way to begin the new sentence?

(A) Its population of three thousand
(B) A location east of the Tongue
(C) Being bounded on the east
(D) There on a 433,000-acre reservation
(E) Three thousand Cheyenne

The eager student who has had his or her flair for "creative" writing praised might, conceivably,want to try creating a sentence with any of the five for, afterall, there was no constraint upon adding information. The same student might have trouble with Question 11:

Question 11: There was an accident. Three cars were damaged. No one was injured.

(A) In the accident there was
(B) The damage was
(C) Three cars were
(D) The accident being
(E) No one injured

Without straining, and adding relatively few new words and ideas, I can create reasonable sentences with four of the five proposed beginnings (I resisted (D) "The accident being").

In both questions, the student who put aside aspirations of "creative prose" and read each question for all its pedantic simplicity inevitably chose the "right" answer.

Finally, there is another sort of sophistication some students can bring to tests like these which do not necessarily predict skill in creating an essay: a well-honed vocabulary. Consider these two questions from the ACT "Freshman English" exam:

POLONIUS: Your noble son is mad;
Mad call I it, for, to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

QUEEN: More matter with less art.

The queen criticizes Polonius because his remarks are too

(A)detailed and circumstantial (B) exact and specific
(C) verbose and circuitous (D) general and illogical
(E) impolite and disrespectful

Jesperson, Otto. Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin. London: Allen & Unwin, 1922, 448 pp.

In a systematically arranged bibliography, the work cited above would be most appropriately listed under which of the following headings?

(A) Early Printed Books (B) English Etymology
(C) General Philology (D) Paleography
(E) Phonetics and Phonology

Perhaps this may startle some, but most 17- and 18-year olds we meet in Freshman English don't command verbose, circuitous, etymology, paleography or philology. And I can't conjure a reason for their having to do so, except to choose two more right answers on the answer sheet. Similarly, can we reasonably bemoan a student's failure to recognize the word thesaurus (from another question) if he were taught to look for synonyms at the end of a dictionary entry?

My point in all this is simply that, like most other college and high school teachers I know, I'd like to have freshmen with whom I could discuss -- on the first day of class -- the differences between etymology and philology. But because most of them aren't up to that, I don't wring my hands, point to a low verbal ability score from some test and rail at their school districts. A newspaper headline might make much of quantitative results of this score or that declining, but the editors of those papers ought to investigate more, and look at the tests, even as briefly as I have been able to do in these few pages. I've often thought I'd like to get them to take the tests our students must take, but there'd be no point in it: sophistication in test-taking, a certain savvy about prescriptive forms, and an understanding of context would skew the results. More important is getting reporters to be investigators, and having them study the reports

behind the news releases.

The study which has most recently dominated the slow news days is that conducted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In 1969-70 and 1974, NAEP surveyed the writing skills of over 80,000 students and concluded in a news release: "American teenagers are losing their ability to communicate through written English." No wonder, in a year of a rather dull presidential election, the release made headlines and became feature stories across the nation. But let's take a closer look at the report itself, especially at the data that never made it into galleys.

Unlike the exams I was discussing earlier, the NAEP test for writing skills asked students to write an essay. The assignment, it seems to me, was simplistic and trivialized the significance of the text. The 17-year olds in our classes would be insulted by these instructions:

> Everybody knows of something that is worth talking about. Maybe you know about a famous building like the Empire State Building in New York City or something like the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Or you might know a lot about the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City or the new sports stadium in Atlanta or St. Louis. Or you might be familiar with something from nature, like Niagara Falls, a gigantic wheat field, a grove of orange trees, or a part of the wide, muddy river like the Mississippi.
>
> There is probably something you can describe. Choose something you know about. It may be something from around where you live, or something you have studied in school. Think about it for a while and then write a description of what it looks like so that it could be recognized by someone who has read your description.

Name what you are describing and try to use your best writing.

Another time, I'd like to analyze those three paragraphs and give them a holistic score. Though grammatically perfect, they're simplistic and dull. If this "essay" received an "8" (the highest possible holistic score) on the basis of its coherence, development, punctuation and spelling, give me an essay of 4.85 with some mistakes but with some attempt at creativity and imagination any day. But that's another issue. Those are the instructions.

The students' papers were evaluated in two ways, with a holistic score of 1 to 8 and with a "descriptive"score which had a grader marking a computerized sheet for errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, word choice, agreement, awkwardness, and sentence construction.

The holistic mean scores for 17-year olds declined a total of two-tenths of one point in five years, from 5.1 to 4.9. This decline and only one other were regarded as statistically significant by the NAEP examiners. The other declivity was in the average number of letters per word, where the scores dipped one-tenth of one point in five years. These two were the only changes regarded as"statistically significant" by the National Assessment of Educational Progress examiners. Consider, then, the real data upon which this recent rash of alarming newstories has been based: (1) a decline of two-tenths of one point in five years of a score based on the subjective evaluation of student essays by a great number of

different readers and (2) a decline of one-tenth of one point in, of all things, the average number of letters per word. An essay topic which encouraged the use of past tense or plurals could have sent those latter statistics soaring upwards.

Though other slight declines were noted, as in the frequency of run-on sentences or awkward sentences, it is crucial to keep in mind that only the above two changes are regarded by the NAEP as statistically significant.

A careful reading of the report brings an old aphorism to mind: "No news is good news." Indeed, from what I've read in the papers and what I read in the NAEP study, I have to conclude "Good news makes no news." I'd like to share with you some of the data, observations, and comments from this national study I haven't found on a front page.

One of the major issues I was trying to emphasize when discussing objective tests and scores derived from them was context. Students are placed in an artificial setting with exercises which are often confusing and which may not allow them to exhibit their true command of English. Yet the scores they achieve are used to characterize their overall verbal abilities and to evaluate their school districts. The NAEP itself acknowledged similar limitations in its study:

> This report describes only one facet of the national assessment of writing. It deals with one particular writing task performed under one particular set of circumstances and in no way constitutes a definitive study of writing in the largest sense of that word. The students who participated in this exercise were told to use their best writing but were not told that their papers would be examined for mechanical correctness. (p. 4)

Most writing teachers will agree that a composition class is one in which we teach re-writing and revision. We take a student's first effort and point out items and aspects that need correction or refinement. This is a time-honored practice, I assume, given the number of people employed as editors and proofreaders. Furthermore, which of us has not written an essay and not gone back (or wanted to) to reconsider, correct or generally refine? We are wont to do so, I believe, especially when we understand the form, more than the content, will be under close scrutiny. But most of us don't have to worry because our first drafts are not going to be given a holistic score of 1 to 8.

Other aspects of the NAEP study which didn't receive much press coverage more clearly substantiate my claim that good news makes no news. Consider these conclusions about the essays of the 17-year-olds:

3. In general, most of those aspects of writing generally called "mechanics" and stressed heavily in elementary and junior high school English classes (e.g., punctuation, capitalization, agreement, spelling, word usage and so on) are being handled adequately by the vast majority of students, and there is no evidence of deterioration in their use.

4. Good writers are as good as they were -- i.e., have the same mean holistic score -- and there may be a few more of them than there were in 1969.

5. Good writers are writing longer essays without losing coherence or increasing their error rates in such areas as punctuation, word choice, spelling, run-ons, fragments and so on.

6. Good essays contain about the same mixture of simple, compound and complex sentences and the same proportion of sentences with phrases;

they continue to contain only one spelling error in every 100 words.

By examining the item analysis tables, one finds other generally unreported conclusions. The 17-year-olds' essays in 1974 contained a greater number of words and sentences, and accordingly, more words per sentence, more sentences per paragraph and more punctuation. Moreover, the average female student's mean holistic score was 5.0, above the national mean (and the male students'). The report concludes: "The average female continues to write longer essays than the average male, fewer run-ons, awkward sentences and more sentences with phrases; she also spells somewhat better" (p. 14).

Now those results are newsworthy, and I believe the media owe it to the thousands of English and Language Arts teachers in the country to report those conclusions.

The back-to-basics movement, if you view it as teaching nouns, verbs, adverbs as labels out of the context of writing is a dubious enterprise. Teaching grammar is not teaching writing. Teaching spelling is not teaching writing. Insist on a basic curriculum of grammar drills and spelling bees and you've got students who could parse anyone's sentence and correct misspelled words, but you won't necessarily have writers.

Do not misunderstand me: I believe grammar and spelling should be taught in schools and colleges, but they should be taught within a lesson which teaches some writing skill. Otherwise, it's like a home economics class where you measure the ingredients and never bake the cake. It's

after you've tasted the cake that you decide what you want to change in those ingredients the next time.

The notion of "the next time" is important in writing. The errors students make (like those all of us make) are produced irregularly. Any teacher who witnesses a paper go through several stages of revision knows that aspects of grammar, usage and style never all get refined immediately and thereafter consistently. Students are, after all, still learning to write throughout high school and college, and even their graduate school years. And there is the other real controversy in writing today: who should be teaching what writing skill at what level.

We are playing a game of Blind Man's Bluff. The universities and colleges blame the high schools; the high schools chide the junior highs; the junior highs chastise the elementary schools; we all condemn television. But frankly, it doesn't matter how we got where we are; it matters that we begin designing writing curricula which do not merely minimize decline of our students' writing skills but which encourage their development. Despite what you may have inferred as I was calling for closer scrutiny of statistics and test items earlier, I am concerned about the quality of writing in our Freshman English classes. We are dismayed with students' lack of facility with language. Our classes confirm some of the findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress: our students are writing as they speak and see less need than their predecessors did for learning the very formal dialect

required in writing.

Those of us who make our livings by working with words surely realize that we have various speaking styles and none of them is as formal as that which we employ when we sit down to write. Television, radio, checklists, instructions with pictures, book digests are all evidence that the written word is losing its prestige value in our society. Tapes are available of speeches at professional meetings; videotapes supplant or supplement texts. Business matters are handled over the phone. There are, in other words, few times required in the average person's life in which he or she must read or write a formal document. There are fewer times when persons have to dust off their writing skills, skills about which they have substantial anxiety anyway. Consider the adolescent's world: writing papers is for English classes, and perhaps for not all of them. No one in his society but his English teacher or maybe a scrupulous parent corrects his grammar. No one makes a strong case for his learning to write well, except perhaps those who counsel him about college requirements.

In addition to these omissions are the negative reinforcements in his world. Listen to the language, grammar and coherence of popular songs -- the lyrics of which our students have committed to memory with amazing accuracy, over periods of years. Their culture snuggles up to a transistor radio instead of with a book, and new professional models become their guides.

They read signs everyday in which plurals are incorrectly formed with apostrophes; they see new forms like <u>scarfs</u> and <u>au jus</u> as a noun; certain

products contain less not fewer calories; they are asked "to input" and to buzz their ways through life with nominalizations. They listen to the language of Archie Bunker and the Fonz. In their world where new words and structures are created daily in advertisements and dialogues, language has eminent variety. And they should listen to an English teacher talk about who and whom?

English instructors are easy targets; we are, supposedly, the guardians of the purity of the language. But we certainly are not the ones who write advertisements, song lyrics, restaurant menus and cereal boxes. We see students less than an hour a day and in that hour are supposed to counteract the forces of the other 23. Until our efforts are reinforced by other teachers, by parents, by newspapers, television and radio, ours is an isolated and to the student -- esoteric endeavor.

I don't know if McGuffey's students could write. No national assessments were made of their verbal abilities. Nostalgia is becoming a hallmark of the 70's and I can't help believing McGuffey is part of the trend. If he "worked," he did so for a variety of reasons including the fact that he did not have to compete with sophisticated media for the students' attention. He did not have to be a TV hero, disc jockey or rock group to get their undivided attention. Times have changed and we are admittedly struggling for ways to get good writing rewarded in this society. We in the classrooms have some answers, but not all the right ones. But there's one

we're certain of: you don't teach writing with a hickory stick or a McGuffey Reader. You teach it by understanding the student's culture, not maligning it. Let's keep McGuffey in the history class and out of English.

CONFERENCE ON ENGLISH EDUCATION CONVENTION
March 16-18, Radisson Hotel, Minneapolis

The 1978 CEE convention includes 70 sessions on topics such as teaching literature, writing, language, reading, drama, film; the "back-to-the basics" movement; assessment and accountability; defining the English curriculum; inservice methods for English teachers; research in English education; alternative teaching methods; teacher morale; public relations; teacher centers; and other topics of interest to English teachers, administrators, curriculum coordinators, and teacher trainers. The convention begins on Thursday afternoon with special workshop sessions; regular sessions begin Friday morning and run through Saturday morning.

Main speakers:

Keynote address (Thursday evening): Maxine Greene, Teachers College, Columbia University, speaking on a philosophy for language arts in the 1980's

Friday breakfast speech: Rexford Brown, National Assessment for Educational Progress, speaking on literacy and accountability

Saturday luncheon speech: Donald Murray, University of New Hampshire, speaking on composition instruction and teacher education in writing methods

Program chairs:
Richard Beach and Gerald Brunetti, University of Minnesota

For further information about the convention and registration, write to:

CEE Convention
NCTE
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, Illinois 61801

RESPONSE TO "AN OBIT FOR MCGUFFEY: LANGUAGE AND MEDIA"

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Ms. Carson is certainly right in her questioning of the results of standardized tests. It is hard, and to my mind no one has yet been able, to establish a one-to-one relationship between a student's score on an objective test and his ability to write. Yet I think most teachers, myself included, feel that there is some sort of loose correlation. Students who receive high verbal SAT scores usually write better than those who receive low ones. Also, students who know traditional grammar usually write better than those who do not. But here the relationship is very tenuous and the writing ability most certainly does not flow from the teaching of traditional grammar. More likely, it is simply that students who are sensitive to language learn grammar more easily and also write better. However, there is no doubt in my mind that a "well-honed vocabulary" does correlate with good writing, and as any teacher knows who has marked "word choice" on a student's paper, does contribute to good writing.

There is no real doubt that test scores are falling; the significant questions are why, what does it mean, and who is responsible. Recently, several reports have come out, such as that by the panel of experts convened by the College Entrance Examination Board, which offered rational, appropriate and articulate answers. The most important cause of the SAT

score declines is that more students are finishing high school and going to college. As more students take SAT's, including women and minorities, who previously had few opportunities and little social encouragement to get a higher education, naturally the scores go down. This cause of lower SAT scores is demonstrated by the fact that scores of females are falling faster than those of males and that scores from urban areas are falling faster than those from rural areas. This cause of lowering scores is in many ways to be commended.

Yet the panel did find that some of the causes of lowering scores do result from what goes on in the schools. While more students finish school, more are also absent. Automatic promotions and decline in the amount of homework were also felt to affect the scores. Even more important has been the significant drop in English enrollments, especially composition and language courses. The fact that SAT math scores have declined at a slower rate than verbal scores supports this position. One final cause, the panel found, was that the reading level for high school textbooks has dropped. This might well make one ask himself, "Do we want to reinstate McGuffey's Readers?" As Ms. Carson points out, one would hope not, but it does lead into the"Back to Basics Movement."

Support for the McGuffey Reader, as well as the "Back to Basics" movement involves much more than a wave of nostalgia. The Readers were not only concerned with intellectual education, but with moral and cultural

education as well. In fact it is the latter two that most traditionalists want brought back into the schools. One has only to look at the recent textbooks controversy in Kanawha County, West Virginia, to see that many parents want a McGuffey-like reader. These parents were not objecting to sex or profanity in texts. There was none. They objected to having their children read the writing of controversial figures such as Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X. In other words, they wanted their children's education to be primarily what they considered to be moral, and only secondarily intellectual. These West Virginians reflect the views of a great many American parents: the primary business of the schools is to inculcate moral values and to build character.

Certainly these parents would approve of McGuffey. What is impressive in the Readers is their morality. There is hardly a page in any of the Readers from the first to the sixth that does not address itself to some moral problem or point to some moral lesson. Of course, the morality was that of the Victorian era. It was deeply religious, which meant Protestant Christianity, closer to Puritanism than to the Unitarianism of New England. God was omnipresent. He had His eye on every child every second both day and night. He was a just Father who would surely punish the slightest transgression. No one questioned the truths of the Bible or their relevance to everyday life -- especially to the classroom. Of course, the Readers are filled with stories from the Bible that support the proper religious point of view.

Yet for all their concern with religion, like the Victorian age in general, the morality of the Readers was materialistic. Virtue was not its own reward: the pious widow discovers the tattered stranger with whom she shares her last morsel of food is really her son who has returned rich from voyages to India; the barber who respects the Sabbath receives a rich inheritance, and the boy who controlled his curiosity was rewarded with a job. Malfeasance was also punished physically or materially. The boy who stole a cherry not only lost his job, but the cherry was filled with cayenne pepper so that he burned his mouth. All of the essential virtues were stressed -- industry, sobriety, thrift, propriety, and conformity. Those who practiced them succeeded materially. Those who were lazy or self-indulgent lost out in the material world.

Certainly one might question the reality of this morality, but not object to it very strenuously. What is objectionable in the McGuffey Readers is the view that the arrangements of society were all for the best. If the widow starves through no fault of her own, society should not be held accountable. It is not society's fault. She should wait for charity. Society should not be concerned with a laborer who loses an arm or a leg; the kind employer will reward him. In other words, life is full of hardships, but remember God looks out for his children. Today few people can accept this point of view, and they do not really want their children inculcated with it. Most people feel society and government have responsibilities toward citizens. Few people, as one of my students who was injured in a taconite plant can

testify, are naive enough to believe Big Business is altruistic to its employees.

However, the "Back to Basics" movement has another genesis besides the tradition of the schools teaching morality and building character. That is the view that education must be a useful tool. Perhaps the best example of this is The First Book of Country Life Readers by Cora Wilson, founder of the Moonlight Schools and President of the Kentucky Illiteracy Commission. The Moonlight Schools were set up to teach adult farmers and their wives who found their way to night school by moonlight. Ms. Wilson wastes no time on frills. She is eminently pragmatic. Her purpose is to immerse her students in the mainstream of American life.[1] She tells them the necessity of voting, why one should keep clean, the filth of flies, the need to rotate crops, and many other such pragmatic topics. The goal of these primers is not religious indoctrination, although that appears in them, but that "clean pores, clean teeth, a 'garage' for the farm wagon, and a neat house, painted in an acceptable suburban hue are essential to full participation in American life." (Schroeder, p. 68)

How much of the concern over falling SAT test scores and how much of the "Back to Basics" movement is a result of the schools getting away from these two traditions is difficult to say. Yet it is undoubtedly a major cause. Little comment was raised about test scores falling in the 1960's. Modular scheduling and film courses probably contribute more to the outcry than do the actual scores. These courses are fun. Whether or not they are

effective is not the question: Americans know that good education, like good medicine, should taste bitter. While I agree with Ms. Carson that the McGuffey Reader should be put to sleep, I wish that we had a comparable reader today, one that could capture the spirit of the 1970's the way they caught the flavor of their times. But then today is more complicated -- sociologically. We are no longer a rural nation, but an urban one with different values for each major group. I doubt if even the venerable William Holmes McGuffey could come up with a common reader that would be suitable for all.

Notes

1. All references to the Moonlight Schools come from Fred E. H. Schroeder, "The Genesis of Dick and Jane" in Outlaw Aesthetics, Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1977, pp. 62-93. Anyone interested in the tradition of American school primers should read this chapter.

THE J.M.W. TURNER WATERCOLORS

Dale S. Olson
St. Cloud, Minnesota

An impression of an impression of color
brushed with a sun ray
tipped of spider silk
Images arose
never to be again
Worlds turned together
in an instant
then melted
like fog in the sun

STORYTELLING, YOU, AND EMILY EMERSON'S MOON

Theresa Corey
Worthington, Minnesota

Storytelling enthusiasts in pursuit of improving their practice of this ancient art would do well to temporarily set aside the scholarly works of Arbuthnot, Sawyer, and associates and settle themselves in a small chair in the "Easy Reading" section of the Children's Room. There, shelved between the numerous other M's, is to be found (hopefully) Jean Merrill's Emily Emerson's Moon. It is, as its author intended, a book for young children; obviously then, there is to be found no heavy discussion of the history of storytelling, no "Ten Tips for Storytellers," no list of "Best Stories to Tell." Merrill's book is designed to delight the child, but the student of storytelling will find the story to be a significant statement on the storyteller's role as it regards the child's imagination.

Jean Merrill's Emily Emerson's Moon is the story of a little girl whose father offers to get her the moon. With an equal amount of pride and delight, Emily informs her older brother, Avery, of what her father has promised to do, but Avery's response is flippant:

> Daddy was teasing, I bet.
> The moon's too high
> In the top of the sky
> For even Daddy to get.

Emily's father assures her that he was not teasing, and to prove it he finds her a "little sun" she can wear and a "scrap of rainbow" to tie

in her hair. But Avery stands firm as he snickers at the sunflower ("If that's a sun, I'm a star!") and snorts at the ribbon:

> A rainbow! That rag in your hair?
> You said Daddy said
> He'd get you the moon,
> Not a floppy old ribbon to wear.

By this point Jean Merrill has introduced the three characters of her story. There is Emily Emerson, a little girl caught up in the world of the imagination. Emily could have discovered a Wonderland with Alice, gone"On Beyond Zebra" with Conrad Cornelius O'Donald O'Dell, or celebrated her birthday in Katroo with the Birthday Bird. Avery will never meet the Birthday Bird because he knows that Katroo isn't on anybody's map. He'll never go "On Beyond Zebra" because he knows that "z is the point at which the alphabet ends." He'll never discover a Wonderland with Alice because he knows there is nothing at the bottom of a rabbit hole but a lot of dirt and maybe an ordinary rabbit. Then, there is Emily's father. He also knows that Katroo isn't on anybody's map, that "z is the point at which the alphabet ends," that there's no Wonderland at the bottom of the rabbit hole. And yet he offers to get her the moon!

As the story progresses, it becomes obvious that Emily and her father have the same "moon" in mind. Suspecting what her father is up to, Emily pleads:

> Daddy, you promised the moon.
> And, please, don't tease --
> Don't give me instead
> A moon-shaped yellow Balloon.

Emily, while admitting to her father that she'd be content to have the "moon/ On a piece of string," reveals her own wisdom as she contemplates the inevitable reaction from Avery:

> ... Avery would prick
> A balloon with a pin
> To prove it wasn't a moon.

It is at this point that the problem arises for Emily's father, for he realizes his daughter's awareness of her threatened imaginative world:

> He had in his pocket a yellow balloon.
> But how
> Did a man
> Get hold of a moon?

Emily's father attempts to gracefully work his way out of the predicament, but he realizes that Emily, although very aware of what is real and what is imaginary, is not quite ready to let go of the delightful imaginary world which she and her father have shared. Her imagination is still going strong, and she keeps her eyes firmly fixed on the moon. "The moon," she argues," wouldn't be any bother at all" to her. As for where to keep it, her closet would be the perfect place: "I'd like a moon for a closet light! " And should the stars get lonely for the moon as her father suggests they might, she'll just move her moon to the window so the stars can see it after she has fallen asleep. Realizing the strength of Emily's determination and imagination, her father concludes:

> Well, go to bed, Moonbeam,
> .....
> And I will think of a plan.
> It's true I promised
> To get you the moon,
> And I'll do the best I can.

Left alone, Emily conjures up imaginative ways her father might actually manage:

> He might
> Build a ladder
> Six hundred feet high
> And lasso
> The moon
> Right out of the sky.
>
> He might
> Ride a kite
> That was going way up,
> And scoop up
> The moon
> In a coffee cup.
>
> Or he might find a trap
> That some mice didn't want,
> Which would make a nice trap for a moon
> If he baited it well
> With bacon or jam
> Or maybe a macaroon.

The next morning Emily's father refuses to say a word about the promised moon, but Emily gets her moon by night. While Emily's imagination conjured up a number of interesting plans, her father's own imaginative mind was hard at work on one. In the evening Emily discovers the fish pond that he has built:

> And there in the pond
> Were six speckled fish
> And a frog with a crocky tune.
> And better than that--
> On top of the water
> Was a beautiful silvery moon.

Emily, of course, is delighted:

> Oh, thank you, Daddy!
> The pond is exactly right
> Because it's a very good place
> To keep the moon
> When I go to bed at night.

It won't be lonely
With the fish and the frog,
And there are stars in the pond beside.
And, look! If I tickle
My moon with my toe,
It dances from side to side!

And Avery Emerson?

Avery Emerson
Didn't snicker
He hardly knew what to say.
For the moon in the pond
Was the moon from the sky
In an upside-down sort of way.

It is Emily Emerson whom children will undoubtedly hail as the heroine of the story, for she manages to get her moon in spite of a doubting brother. The adult reader, however, will identify Emily's father as the true hero. His heroism lies not so much in the fact that he saves Emily from the fate Avery had in store for her -- a broken yellow balloon -- as in the fact that he allows her to hold onto her imaginary world as she gradually comes into significant touch with the world of reality. It is through his own preserved imagination that he comes up with a moon. When Merrill refers to this moon being present in an "upside-down sort of way," she is, of course, making reference to the moon's reflection in the pond. The phrase, however, holds further significance: this particular moon is an "upside-down" sort of moon in that it draws its existence from the factual world of Emily's brother and the imaginative world of her father.

Although the yellow balloon Emily's father intended to use as a moon proves useless in view of Avery's pin, for the reader the balloon proves to

be the perfect embodiment of Emily's imagination. Her imagination is a big, bright balloon on a string, bringing her a world of adventure, excitement, and delight; however, as is the case with all delicate balloons, it flirts with a fatal end as it nears the sharpness of reality. Emily's father sees the significance of this balloon and its need to be carefully guided and cared for. And, more important, he realizes that although Emily sees this balloon for what it really is, she is not quite ready to let it go nor is it necessary that she do so.

"There is only one child in the world," wrote Carl Sandburg, "and that child's name is All Children." As Sandburg told his own children of the Rootabaga Country and the big city of Liver and Onions, he caught sight of the bright, big balloon that comes into the lives of all children. Whether this balloon is carefully cared for, merely tolerated, or suddenly and purposely destroyed, it is the experience of All Children.

Emily's experience with her bright, big balloon is a grand one, but it stands in stark contrast to the experience of Marco, the creation of Dr. Seuss in And To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street. Marco, like Emily, is a child whose imagination is vibrant and strong; unlike Emily, however, he receives no approval from his father. From the beginning of the story, it is clear that Marco's father places his emphasis on the real world and echoes the cry of Avery: a sun is a sun, a star is a star, and a balloon is just a balloon.

Marco relates his awareness of his father's attitude:

When I leave home to walk to school,
Dad always says to me,
"Marco, keep your eyelids up
And see what you can see."

But when I tell him where I've been
And what I think I've seen,
He looks at me and sternly says,
"Your eyesight's much too keen.

"Stop telling such outlandish tales.
Stop turning minnows into whales."

Although Marco listens intently to his father's admonition, his imagination begins to work as he views the only sight on Mulberry Street: "Just a broken-down wagon/ That's drawn by a horse." To Marco, whose mind bears the imaginative mark of Emily's, the sight is hardly worthy of notice, so he envisions how a zebra in place of the horse would bring some life to the scene. Yet an animal as "marvelous" as the zebra is certainly worthy of something more than an ordinary wagon, he reasons, and then proceeds to replace the wagon with a reindeer, the chariot with a sled, the reindeer with an elephant carrying a Rajah, and the sled with a big brass band and wagon. As he tacks on a man in a trailer to listen to the sounds of the band, he concludes that two giraffes are necessary to help the elephant pull the load. When he realizes that his vision will undoubtedly cause a traffic mix-up where Mulberry Street and Bliss intersect, he adds the police and Sgt. Mulvaney, and then proceeds to add the mayor, the aldermen with banners, a circling airplane that drops confetti, and crowds of people. To top the vision off, he adds "...A Chinaman/ Who eats with sticks..../A big Magician/ Doing tricks.../A ten-foot beard/That needs a comb..."

Marco's vision nears a halt as he reaches home. As he rushes through the gate to his yard, he is alive with the excitement of a story that, in his words, "NO ONE COULD BEAT." But his excitement is short-lived as he confronts his father:

Dad looked at me sharply and pulled at his chin.
He frowned at me sternly from there in his seat,
"Was there nothing to look at...no people to greet?
Did <u>nothing</u> excite you or make your heart beat?"

Marco, like Emily, is aware of the difference between the imaginary world he has just created and the world of reality to which his father clings. Unlike Emily, Marco is to experience no delightful upside-down combination of the two, and his response to his father's stern question indicates his awareness that he must set this imaginative world aside:

"Nothing," I said, growing red as a beet,
"But a plain horse and wagon on Mulberry street."

It is the storyteller who has the opportunity to witness "All Children" and their balloons -- whether they be bright and big, losing the air that gives them buoyancy, or shattered and gone. The first challenge is to recognize the magnitude of this view and to realize, like Emily's father, the true significance of the imagination. Emily's father sees the significant difference between the two worlds, yet he does not see them as separated by a barrier that must make the traveler choose one or the other. He is, indeed, a traveler who journeys through both, does not lose sight of where he is, and appreciates the significant relationship between the two.

In 1967 the British scholar and statesman, Jacob Bronowski, spoke of this relationship:

> When a child begins to play games with things that stand for other things... he enters the gateway to reason and imagination together. For the human reason discovers new relations between things not by deduction, but by that unpredictable blend of speculation and insight that scientists call induction, which, like other forms of imagination--cannot be formalized.

In looking ahead to the day when man's dream of landing on the moon would become a reality, Bronowski declared that when it happened it would be "not a technical but an imaginative triumph." Is it any wonder then that Albert Einstein, a genius of our time, believed imagination to be "more important than knowledge."

The concern, of course, as we contemplate this emphasis on the imagination, will be whether we encourage children to turn from reality. Dr. Bruno Bettelheim, the noted child psychologist, puts the concern to rest as he tells the story of another Emily Emerson. In the midst of a discussion about Christmas and Santa Claus, the ten-year-old girl stood up and declared: "I know there's no Santa and no Tooth Fairy who puts a dime under my pillow." Then she cried, "I hate reality." "To hate reality," says Dr. Bettelheim, "is a likely consequence of being forced to give up fantasies too early" -- a likely consequence of having somebody stick your balloon with a pin just to prove that it isn't the moon. "All children," Dr. Bettelheim remarked, "sooner or later must learn to distinguish between reality and fantasy, but they will learn this on the basis or their own experience.... Magical thinking will eventually be abandoned on the basis of the child's widening experience with reality."

The storyteller's realization of the significance of the child's imagination is vital, and the second challenge illustrated in Emily Emerson's

Moon, is of equal significance. To encourage the development of the imagination in the child, the storyteller must understand the imaginary world by recalling within himself the excitement, adventure, and the true delight which it once offered to him. In his essay on Shelley,Francis Thompson asks and answers the question that must be contemplated and taken into the storyteller's heart:

> Know you what it is to be a child? It is to be something very different from the man of to-day. It is to have a spirit yet streaming from the waters of baptism; it is to believe in love, to believe in loveliness, to believe in belief; it is to be so little that the elves can reach to whisper in your ear; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness, and nothing into everything, for each child has its fairy godmother in its own soul....

Should you as a storyteller decide to settle yourself in the Children's Room with these thoughts and Emily Emerson's Moon, don't be so quick to leave when the book is finished. Further reading will take you deep into the child's imaginary world of "Wild Things," "On Beyond Zebra Places," and people you'll meet nowhere else. And don't be surprised if, suddenly, you see and recapture that bright, big balloon that you yourself once held as a child. As a storyteller it is important that you do so, for the true storyteller is one who can, at a moment's notice, step naturally and sincerely into the imaginary world of the child and realize the significance of doing so.

Emily Emerson's father has the makings of a true storyteller. He still has a hold of his yellow balloon though he knows that it isn't the moon.

VIC AND SADE, BOB AND RAY, JACK AND DOC: OLD-TIME RADIO PROGRAMS IN THE SCHOOL

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The golden age of old-time radio may have lasted only a few years, 1935 on through the early 1950's, but surprisingly enough old-time radio still seems to be news. The Atlanta Constitution announced in November,1976,that "The memorable faces and voices of more than 50 years of radio and television broadcasting are being collected in what is thought to be the nation's first museum for broadcasting [to be located in New York City]." The Los Angeles Times in December headed a story, "Don't Let the Lone Ranger Hear You Say That Radio Is Dead." Wire services carried brief notices about the death of actress Virginia Payne, radio's Ma Perkins, and the Los Angeles Times carried a tribute to Ma Perkins in early 1977. The Los Angeles Times also carried a story on Carlton E. Morse, writer of one of the most popular radio programs One Man's Family in August, 1976, and two lovely and loving columns on Paul Rhymer in his Vic and Sade, Don Weldon's "Paul Rhymer, Madcap Marquis of Vic and Sade" on April 11, 1976, and Charles Champlin's "Radio Waves Span Time" on February 4, 1977. The attention and publicity given even today to Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre production of H. G. Wells' War of the Worlds on October 31, 1938, continues to astound people who probably wonder why anything so old should be worth newspaper space or television recreation, witness the 1975 televised version (and the 1977 repeat) of the 1938 frightening of America.

If that weren't enough, people continue to turn out for discussions of old-time radio. When I passed through Chicago in late 1976, I picked up a copy of the Tribune, read about a University of Chicago Extension Division plan for a Festival of Chicago comedy, and wrote to the director asking if it would be possible to get a taping of a "Vic and Sade" discussion. When I received the tape several weeks later, I learned that the session had been very successful.

And more periodic reruns of old shows on local radio stations have proved popular and convinced a few doubters that old-time radio is not dead. Certainly, rebroadcasts of The Lone Ranger, The Shadow, Jack Armstrong, Fibber McGee and Molly and The Goon Show (BBC) have won new followers for a form supposedly long since decently buried.

And the 1976 publication of John Dunning's Tune In Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio, 1925-1976, a popular selection of the Nostalgia Book Club, is another hint that there are plenty of people out there who still care deeply about old-time radio.

But what has old-time radio to do with school, particularly when the cry is heard, "We need to get back to the basics" or "Kids don't write enough" or "Kids aren't able to read the way I was when I was young"? Do radio shows deserve classroom attention?

It's impossible not to be sympathetic in many ways to what the back-to-the-basics people want, a demonstrably literate populace. I'm convinced that using radio shows can help to create greater literacy in some specific ways though I make no pretense that radio, or anything else for that matter,

is the panacea.

"The Theater of the Mind" is certainly overused as a descriptive term for old-time radio, but despite its triteness, the term still makes sense. Radio and reading had much in common, and old-time radio shows may even have been a catalyst for reading. Both radio shows and reading demand active imagination and listeners/readers willing and able to create worlds out of the words and people and clues provided on radio and in print. Television is literal and imaginatively dead-end while radio and reading are imaginative and open-ended. Readers of The Catcher in the Rye or Catch-22 or The Pigman must determine for themselves what the characters look like and how they sound and what settings they operate in from the clues Salinger or Heller or Zindel provide. No television or movie script needs to be produced to tell us what Holden looks like or acts like and luckily enough none has, but we do need a movie of The Catcher in the Rye. Salinger has provided clues aplenty picked up by millions of readers over the last twenty-five years. But radio shows also provided clues. I Love a Mystery was a great adventure series, and its best story was "Temple of the Vampires." I, and heaven knows how many other boys, did not need to be told what Jack and Doc and Reggie looked like or acted like. I knew. I was given some words by radio actors and a few sound effects, and the world I created made sense. And so did every other listener create a world. I used radio as I used reading, to create worlds far more exciting than my own, to develop my imagination, to escape, to find myself, to enjoy. So did other people. Radio could be used in

class to supplement and reinforce reading clues, context clues, character clues, ideas,settings, tones, moods, everything that goes to make literature out of printed symbols. I believe radio could be used to motivate writing in innumerable ways.

Here are a few possibilities.

Ambrose Bierce's short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" is widely taught. Robert Enrico's prize winning film adaption (available from Pyramid Films) is also widely used, either separately or in conjunction with the printed version. Less well known is a radio production on Escape, perhaps not as satisfying as either story or film, but intriguing in its differences. All too little has been done with what happens to a work in one medium altered to fit the demands and needs of another medium. Both the Bierce story and the Enrico film would benefit from a close comparison of the differences and similarities in treatment of the same plot. Many students do that kind of thing inadvertently, getting excited about a book and then being puzzled about the filmed version or loving a film and then reading the book. Whatever the direction of that process, students are often fascinated by what happens when a book is transformed into a film, a fascination deserving more attention than it usually gets in class.

Bob and Ray (Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding) are two extraordinarily gifted radio satirists. They later appeared on television and stage though predictably with less success. Both are comedians of the mind, using their voices to create a world of characters delightful and funny on radio but not

visual enough for television or stage. There are many reels of taped Bob and Ray shows, early ones on a Boston station and later ones on network radio. The world of Bob and Ray involved wacky people like Wally Ballou and Mary McGoon and satires like "One Feller's Family," a takeoff on One Man's Family, "Mary Backstayge, Noble Wife," a takeoff on Mary Noble, Backstage Wife, and "Mr. Trace, Keener Than Most Persons," a takeoff on Mr. Keene, Tracer of Lost Persons. Bob and Ray's comedy reads well today and listens even better. A collection of Bob and Ray scripts, radio and television, Write If You Get Work (Random House, 1975), might work well with students, just as their radio routines would work. Again, some discussion of radio material published for reading, rather than listening, compared with the radio production itself might be worthwhile, but with Bob and Ray the tapes would probably stand by themselves, and they would easily fit into units or discussions on comedy, writing, humor, satire, or parody.

Science fiction and fantasy are popular with many students, and if old-time radio generally did very little with either genre, a few radio shows provide some first-class material. Dimension X and X Minus One based many scripts on short stories by Ray Bradbury and Robert Heinlein and Isaac Asimov. Dimension X writers combined nine stories from Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles on August 18, 1950, to produce an abbreviated, different, but oddly effective version of the book. And on September 29, 1950, it produced "And the Moon Be Still as Bright," a lovely and effective version of"June 2001:-- And the Moon Be Still as Bright" from The Martian Chronicles.

On September 29, 1951, it produced "Nightfall" from Isaac Asimov's short story, and on September 1, 1950, it produced "The Roads Must Roll" from Robert Heinlein's story. Later in January, 1964, NBC Experiments in Drama produced "There Will Come Soft Rains," from "August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains" in The Martian Chronicles, and "Zero Hour" from Bradbury's The Illustrated Man. One short story from The Martian Chronicles, "April 2000: The Third Expedition," has been done twice on radio, both under the title "Mars Is Heaven," the first on June 2, 1950, by Escape, the second on July 7, 1950, by Dimension X. Intriguingly, while much of the plot and most of the characters are straight out of Bradbury, some characters undergo a change in name or rank and one entirely new character is introduced in Escape, several minor plot details are altered, and the endings of both radio shows differ from the short story. Students might be curious, as I am, about the changes, particularly the ones that are apparently insignificant and alter nothing important. Why the changes in characters? Why the minor plot alterations? Why the quite different endings? These science fiction radio shows are worth studying in their own right, but some students might be interested in comparing them with two television shows, Star Trek and Space: 1999. Fantasy was on radio, notably in Corwin Presents and The Columbia Workshop, though these shows may seem somewhat dated. But a BBC four-hour eight-part adaptation of Tolkien's The Hobbit will not seem outdated, and the radio production will almost certainly appeal to Tolkien readers and might attract a few others to Tolkien or to fantasy.

How much secondary students watch Saturday morning kiddie shows is problematic, but likely more than we suspect. Kids' shows were much listened to on radio, not so much on Saturday morning as from about 4:30 to 6:00 each weekday evening. A comparison of radio shows like "Jack Armstrong," "Jungle Jim," "Buck Jones," "Little Orphan Annie," "Dick Tracy," or "Captain Midnight" with present day televised kids' show might have some possibilities. Several students have been fascinated with the differences and similarities of two award-winning kids' shows, Let's Pretend on radio and Sesame Street on television.

Comedy reigned on radio as it does on television and comparing radio shows like Fibber McGee and Molly, The Great Gildersleeve, and Our Miss Brooks with televised situation comedies like Gilligan's Island (off the network but apparently in syndication across America every day of the week), All in the Family, The Mary Tyler Moore Show, and Laverne and Shirley might reveal much about the nature and changes in comedy or the values of our society. Equally attractive, comparing the work of comedians not in situation comedies like radio's Fred Allen (a genius who could not make the changeover to television) or Henry Morgan with television's Johnny Carson or his stable or comedians offers more food for thought than most of us will be able to digest though students might rise to the defense of television comedy. Finally, the old BBC Goon Show, which gave Peter Sellers his start, has several parallels with television's Monty Python Show.

Radio soap operas had millions of fans, but then so do television soap

operas. Radio's "Young Widder Brown," "Stella Dallas," "Ma Perkins," "Just Plain Bill," "Lorenzo Jones," "Life Can Be Beautiful," and "Front Page Farrell" compared with television's "As the World Turns," "Love of Life," "All My Children," "Search for Tomorrow," "Another World," "General Hospital," and "Edge of Night" might suggest how far we have developed (or regressed) in the last twenty or so years. Those who think high school students have little time to watch TV soap operas should read the letters to the editor and various columnists in the Soap Opera Digest. If these provide any index, teenagers do watch TV soap operas. What were the values of old-time radio soap opera heroines and heroes? What are the values of TV soap characters? How closely do their values, radio or television, approximate the values of the watchers? What problems exist for major characters on radio soaps as opposed to TV soaps? What techniques were used on radio to indicate moods and tones and what techniques are open to television soaps? What stereotypes were perpetuated on old radio soaps and what ones are on television soaps? What plot cliches were commonly used on radio and what ones are common on television? Listening to a few minutes of radio soaps may make listeners appreciative of even the worst of their televised counterparts. Few radio soap operas lasted more than a few months when they left radio and moved over to television, and students after hearing an episode or two of "Valiant Lady" or "Stella Dallas" may be able to guess why. Indeed, teachers trying to underscore the dangers and linguistic poverty of using cliches and trite

ideas and stale plot gimmicks and hackneyed situations to a bored or uncomprehending class could hardly do better than play a few episodes of a radio soap opera like "Valiant Lady," once popular though today it's impossible to understand why. Students will laugh at the cliches and triteness, and once they begin to analyze why they laughed and what they laughed at, they may begin to understand for the first time what harm dumb and sterile language can cause to emotions and ideas and situations some writer meant to be taken seriously.

For students interested in verbal comedy and wit, no radio show would be so appealing and funny as Paul Rhymer's "Vic and Sade," a fifteen-minute afternoon show lasting from the early 1930's through 1946 which sometimes became lost in the lather of soap operas. James Thurber thought Rhymer a comedy genius, and having recently heard many hours of "Vic and Sade" on tapes I'm not about to dispute Thurber. Using four actors, Vic, wife Sade, son Rush, and Uncle Fletcher, Rhymer created individual 12-13 minute short stories every weekday for about fifteen years, stories peopled with strange characters Vic or Sade or Rush or Uncle Fletcher knew like Rooster Davis, Mr. Chinbunny, Smelly Clark, Elwin Stowley, Hank Gutstop, Fred and Ruthie Stembottom, Dottie Brainfeeble, Mr. Gumpx (the ever-present but never-seen garbageman), Ike Kneesuffer, Police Chief Cullerson, Bluetooth Johnson, Rotten Davis, Clyman Smurch, and Irma Flo Kessy, people we only heard about, but if Vic or Sade or Rush or Uncle Fletcher said they were real and important, we believed them. The family loved beef punkles and beef punkle

icecream, so we did too, even though we hadn't the faintest notion what beef punkles were. Vic's lodge, the Sacred Stars of the Milky Way, became a part of our lives just as did Sade's beloved Yamelton's Department Store. Every family then, and most families now, had an Uncle Fletcher, garrulous and absent-minded and lovable, capable of telling long, convoluted, pointless stories about people no one else knew or cared to know. Uncle Fletcher's favorite lines would sound vaguely familiar to anyone with an Uncle Fletcher, for example, "Ike Stufflebottom went into the brass bed business, moved to St. Charles, later died." There must be students who would not like "Vic and Sade," just as there must have been people in the 1930's and 1940's who didn't like them, but then there have been insensitive clods throughout history.

Finally, teachers might play tapes of old-time radio just for the fun of it. True, given the serious conditions today and the back-to-the-basics people, some people would consider fun impossible to justify in education (as students frequently believe that school and fun are mutually exclusive terms), but at its best education should be tiring, never tiresome. And for those moments when we might like to read a short story simply for enjoyment, presumably to reward us or the kids, or for the many moments when we might like to read something they'd enjoy <u>and</u> learn from, we might consider using an old radio show. "Vic and Sade" stands up well, but then so do the many mystery or horror shows on radio. Horror and terror and suspense shows, especially, were joys on radio because the monsters and villains and situations we create in our imaginations were infinitely superior to the biggest

budgeted television superspecialextraextravaganza. Suspense presented an incredible number of great shows as did The Shadow or Escape. Some of the greatest horror and terror shows were on sustaining programs (never sponsored) and all too little known. Shows like Quiet Please, Black Mass, The Mysterious Traveler, Theatre 10:30, Beyond Midnight, and Murder at Midnight work beautifully in class. I defy anyone to listen to "Behind the Locked Door" or The Mysterious Traveler or "The Thing on the Fourble Board" from Quiet Please without getting the creeps even though the shows are more than twenty years old. (McCoy's Recordings have five great tapes on "Tops in Horror" with these shows -- details about this and other matters in the appendix.)

In concluding his article, "Paul Rhymer, Madcap Marquis of Vic and Sade" in the April 11, 1976, Los Angeles Times, Don Weldon wrote,

> At this point in history, when mass tensions are building up to an intolerable level, there's a strange nostalgia in the air for reminders of the '30's, a decade when nonsense was an antidote for the doldrums and sanity was preserved with mock insanity. That's almost a lost art, victim to the life-is-real-is-earnest syndrome.

There's merit in Weldon's argument, for most of us would like to find sanity in an insane world and make sense out of chaos, and the time of radio (not necessarily radio itself) seems like an island to flee to. That's one rationale for the continued popularity of old-time radio shows. But there's more to it than that. There was and is an integrity about some old radio shows that's evident to listeners, and the integrity demands preservation and attention. That integrity can be found in few radio shows -- integrity

is rare in anything -- but it is present in Bob and Ray and Vic and Sade and I Love a Mystery and One Man's Family and Fred Allen and Dimension X and Quiet Please and the radio version of Gunsmoke. If preserving and discussing and thinking about humanity's rare moments of art and integrity -- whether they are in print or on film or on tape -- is the province of education, then radio deserves a place in the classroom.

Appendix A: A Note on Available Old-Time Radio Shows

Some shows are available in cassettes or on records. Most companies produce reel-to-reel tape recordings. The more expensive is the custom-made tape where requests are filled for this half-hour show plus that 15-minute show plus another hour show. Obviously, these are more expensive. MAR-BREN (address below) charges $7.00 for an hour of tape, $12.75 for two hours, and $18.50 for three hours. A number of distributors now produce ready-made reels, usually four to six hours of tapes for purchase with included programs listed in catalogues. These reels take advantage of the fact that early radio was monaural, so programs can be recorded on both right and left channels (they must be played on a stereo tape recorder). Playing these tapes at 3 3/4 speed gives twice the mileage out of 1200' or 1800' of tape. Ready-made tapes allow no freedom to select shows in a precise order, but they are economical, and frequently listeners will find five out of eight shows they wanted and the other three turn out to be serendipitous and sometimes better than the ones originally requested. Two of the largest suppliers of ready-made tapes are RADIO RERUNS and MCCOY'S RECORDING (addresses below).

Appendix B: Addresses of 10 Suppliers of Old-Time Radio Shows

1 RADIO RERUNS, P.O. Box 724, Redmond, Washington 98052
2 MCCOY'S RECORDING, INC., P. O. Box 1069, Richland, Washington 99352
3 MAR-BREN SOUND LTD., P. O. Box 4099 Rochester, NY 14625
4 REMEMBER RADIO, INC., Drawer "C", Euless, Texas 76039
5 MARK 56 PRODUCTIONS, P. O. Box 1, Anaheim, CA 92805
6 OLD TIME RADIO, INC., 618 Commonwealth Building, Allentown, PA 18101
7 THE RADIO VAULT, Box 9032, Wyoming, Michigan 49509

8. OLD-TYME RADIO CO., INC., P. O. Box 81, Hazlet, New Jersey 07730
9. RADIOLA, Box H, Croton-on-Hudson, NY 10520
10. THE RADIO STORE, P. O. Box 203-B, Oradell, New Jersey 07649

Appendix C: A Brief Bibliography of Materials on Radio

Teacher/Student Aimed Material:
1. G. Howard Poteet, Radio! Dayton, OH: Pflaum, 1975. Brief coverage of history, drama, comedy, soap operas, quiz shows, music, sports, and news of radio. Only 125 pages yet beautifully done. Many illustrations.

History of radio:
1. Erik Barnouw, A Tower in Babel: A History of Broadcasting in the United States to 1933, NY: Oxford University Press, 1968.
2. Erik Barnouw, The Golden Web: A History of Broadcasting in the United States, 1933-1953, NY: Oxford University Press, 1968.
3. Erik Barnouw, The Image Empire: A History of Broadcasting in the United States from 1953, NY: Oxford University Press, 1970.
4. Jim Harmon, The Great Radio Heroes, NY: Doubleday, 1967. On I Love a Mystery, The Shadow, Jack Armstrong, etc.
5. Joseph Julian, This Was Radio: A Personal Memoir, NY: Viking, 1975.
6. Howard Koch, The Panic Broadcast, NY: Avon, 1970. About the October 31, 1938, Mercury Theatre production of H. G. Wells' The War of the Worlds and the national panic it caused. Almost unbelievable but true.
7. Ron Lackman, Remember Radio, NY: Putnam, 1970.
8. Lawrence Lichty and Malachi C. Topping (eds.) American Broadcasting: A Source Book on the History of Radio and Television, NY: Hastings House, 1975. A massive 723 page compilation of valuable documents.
9. Curtis Mitchell. Cavalcade of Broadcasting, Chicago: Follett, 1970.
10. Irving Settel, A Pictorial History of Radio, NY: Grosset, 1967.
11. Sam J. Slate and Joe Cook, It Sounds Impossible, NY: Macmillan, 1963.

Encyclopedias of Radio Programs:
1. Frank Buxton and Bill Owen, The Big Broadcast, 1920-1950, NY: Viking, 1972.
2. John Dunning, Tune in Yesterday: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Old-Time Radio, 1925-1976, Englewood Cliffs, NY: Prentice-Hall, 1976. 671 pages of radio shows in the best source book yet.

Radio Scripts:
1. G. Howard Poteet (ed.) Published Radio, Television and Film Scripts: A Bibliography, Troy NY: Whitsun Publishing Co., 1975.

Radio News:
1. Edward Bliss, In Search of Light: The Broadcasts of Edward R. Murrow 1938-1961, NY: Knopf, 1967.

2. Fred Friendly, Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control..., NY: Random House, 1967.
3. Eric Sevareid, This Is Eric Sevareid, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1964.

Radio Soap Operas:
1. Madeleine Edmondson and David Rounds, The Soaps: Daytime Serials of Radio and TV, NY: Stein and Day, 1973
2. Mary Jane Higby, Tune in Tomorrow, NY: Ace, 1968. The popular soap opera, When a Girl Marries, was her best starring role, but she acted in other serials like The Right to Happiness, Our Gal Sunday and Stella Dallas.
3. Raymond William Stedman, The Serials: Suspense and Drama by Installment Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971. A number of chapters on radio serials.

Radio Humor:
1. Goodman Ace. Ladies and Gentlemen -- Easy Aces, NY: Doubleday, 1970. Eight Easy Aces scripts.
2. Fred Allen, Treadmill to Oblivion, Boston: Little, Brown, 1954.
3. Fred Allen, Much Ado about Me, Boston: Little, Brown, 1956.
4. Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding, Write If You Get Work: The Best of Bob and Ray, NY: Random House, 1975. Radio and TV scripts about Wally Ballou, Mary McGoon, the Charley Chipmunk Club, Biff Burns and other assorted Bob and Ray fictions and funnies.
5. Jim Harmon, The Great Radio Comedians, NY: Doubleday, 1970.
6. Mary Frances Rhymer (ed.), The Small House Halfway Up in the Next Block, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1972. A great "Forward" by Ray Bradbury plus 30 wonderful Vic and Sade shows by that genius of humor, Paul Rhymer.
7. Mary Frances Rhymer (ed.), Vic and Sade: the Best Radio Plays of Paul Rhymer, NY: Seabury Press, 1976. Thirty more Vic and Sade scripts with a sympathetic "Forward" by Jean Shepherd.

SPOONED FROM THE SAME POT

J. Ruth Stenerson
Bemidji State University

J. R. R. Tolkien in his essay, "On Fairy Tales" uses the image of a Cauldron of Story in which simmers a constantly replenished brew made up of individual characters, events,themes, and settings drawn from all that has ever been written or told. Each new story-teller, Tolkien implies, stirs the pot afresh and draws out what he needs, blending it with his own imagination to produce a fresh and never-before-existent work of literature. Even a look at the cover and centerfold illustrations for Terry Brooks' The Sword of Shannara is sufficient evidence that Brooks drew from the cauldron of story an unusual number of the same ingredients that Tolkien used in his The Lord of the Rings.

The number of similarities is so great that it would be easy to write off Brooks' book as too imitative to deserve attention. Parallel characters, similar events and images, almost identical elements of setting can all be produced as evidence. It would seem that Brooks' memory and imagination were saturated with the Rings series. But imitative as The Sword of Shannara (SS) is, readers who enjoyed The Lord of the Rings (LoR) can still find some pleasurable hours in Brooks' novel, in part from noting the parallels.

One of the most obvious parallels is the concern with the conflict between good and evil. Whatever influence Tolkien has been, this conflict has dominated many contemporary novels of fantasy -- for instance, Susan Cooper's novels, such as The Grey Wolf, C. S. Lewis' space fantasies, and

Madeline L'Engle's A Wrinkle in Time and The Wind in the Door, to name a few. These writers seem to be in rebellion against the popular view that distinctions between good and evil are relative and blurred. "Good and ill have not changed since yesteryear," says Aragorn (LoR),"nor are they one thing among Elves and Dwarves and another among Men. It is a man's part to discern them" (LoR, II, 50). The universe of these books is a moral one.

Most of these fantasies based on the conflict between good and evil have the central character seeking to find something, as does Shea in The Sword of Shannara. Frodo, on the other hand, seeks to get rid of something dangerous (LoR). He must hurl the ring of power into the fiery crack of the Mount of Doom, while Shea must find and use the Sword of Shannara, which has strong similarities to Excalibur. Evil forces know the identity but not the location of both characters. Both Shea and Frodo work against limited time and in rumor-infested societies, and the consequences of their acts go far beyond themselves. Neither can escape his role even in the face of his ignorance of the total problem and his weakness against his foes, yet each makes a deliberate choice to participate in his quest. "This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much hope as the strong. Yet such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere" (LoR, I, 353). All races on earth are affected by the outcomes.

Beside the similarity in type of conflict, the parallelism among characters in these works is undeniable. Tolkien's wizard, Gandalf, is almost

identical in role to Brooks' druid, Allanon. With the same magical fire blazing from his fingertips, Allanon is as adept as Gandalf at appearing out of his unexplained journeyings at the very spot where the action is crucial. "Allanon -- the mysterious wanderer of the four lands, historian of the races, philosopher and teacher, and, some said, practitioner of the mystic arts" (SS,18) is blood brother to Gandalf.

Tolkien's unlikely hero, Frodo Baggins the hobbit, has much similarity to Shea, also a halfling. Both are drawn reluctantly into the hero role. Frodo has a loyal friend and servant in Samwise Gamgee, while Shea is accompanied as much as possible by his half-brother Flick. One of Frodo's protectors and guides among his Nine Walkers is the border-ranger and king-to-be Aragorn, while Balinor, leader of the Border Legion and king-to-be of Tyrsis, is one of Shea's seven companions. Both companies are of mixed races. The elf Legolas (LOR) is quite interchangeable with Durin and Dayel (SS), as is the dwarf Gimli (LoR) with Hendel (SS). Orl Fane (SS) and Gollum (LoR) serve similar purposes and grovel in the same fashion. Brona, the Warlock Lord of the Skull Kingdom (SS) is close kin to Sauron the Middle Earth. The Skull-Bearers (SS) equate the Nazgul, evil servants of Sauron (LoR).

The settings and images related to them contain numerous likenesses between the two works. Both books use an unnatural silence in nature as sign of impending evil. Blackness and darkness are associated with evil forces in both: black birds wheel in the sky; black clouds rise in the north to blot out the sun; characters hear distant weird cries and see strange lights in the

darkness. Poisonous mists and vapors abound. The North in both works is linked with evil, which is devastating to nature as well as to the races of beings on earth. Mountains in both are sharp, dangerous, uneroded, with knife-edged peaks and lonely passes. Bad weather presages disaster. Elfstones protect Shea (SS) as they serve the needs of the Nine Walkers in the Ring series. The use of the elfstones makes Shea visible to the Warlock Lord just as the putting on of the ring makes Fedo visible to Sauron.

In spite of all these similarities between Lord of the Rings and The Sword of Shannara, there is a difference in the comment each makes. Power in both is dangerous. Good beings in The Lord of the Rings who already have it refuse possession of the ring because they know it would corrupt them. Flick and Shea (SS) grow to understand better and better the dangers that lie in power. But where Tolkien emphasizes the simple devotion to duty and loyalty such as we see in Frodo and Sam, Brooks makes a strong point of the need for the one who would wield the sword of Right to be willing to face the truth--especially to be willing to see himself as he really is. There is a process of purging going on as Shea holds the Sword of Shannara, and only when that process is completed is he dangerous to the Warlock Lord.

There are literally dozens of points of similarity that can be drawn between The Sword of Shannara and The Lord of the Rings, too many to be explained simply by saying that both authors have drawn from the same Cauldron of Story. But that is not to say that the more recent story is unworthy of being read. Brooks seems to have believed that he could do no better than follow the pattern of Tolkien's popular work, but there is also much in the book which is of his own creation.

1977 BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Richard Beach
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis

Norine Odland
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis

We want to thank Louisa Smith, doctoral candidate in children's literature, for her reviews of adolescent novels. Readers who would like an annotated list of a large number of 1977 titles, New Books for Young Readers, should send their names and addresses to Norine Odland, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, 136 Burton Hall, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

Books for Children

Alexander, Lloyd. THE TOWN CATS AND OTHER TALES. illus. by Laszlo Kubinyi Dutton, 1977. 126 pp. $7.50.
Another tale to entrance a reader. The cat observes humans, their weaknesses and follies contrasted with their strengths and loyalties. With a sense of humor the author respects the reader who will detect the wry edges of satire. No moralizing but much to reflect about morals. 10 and up.

Cleary, Beverly. RAMONA AND HER FATHER. illus. by Alan Tiegreen. William Morrow, 1977. 186 pages. $6.50.
Ramona is in second grade where life is bearable even if dull at times. At home there are several crises, among them Father losing his job. Cleary uses her keen sense of humor and her perception of children's feelings to make it all ring true. A certain winner among readers. 7 up.

Little, Jean. LISTEN FOR THE SINGING. Dutton, 1977. 215 pp. $6.95.
A wonderful story about Anna and her family who came to Canada from Germany to escape Hitler. Anna's success in dealing with her limited vision lies in her strength and that of her family. 10 and up.

Macaulay, David. CASTLE. illus. by author. Houghton Mifflin, 1977. 79 pp. $8.95.
The final book in a series of five demonstrates talent for mingling the instructive with the enjoyable. The detailed drawings that clearly illustrate the building of a castle could easily be called his best. A treat for both children and adults.

Pearson, Susan. THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ONE DAY, J. P.! illus. by Kay Chorao. Dial, 1977. unpaged, $5.95.
J. P. always has his nose in a book, until one day his mother insists he go outside and play. By the end of the day, she is glad to have him go to his room, and for J. P. his day outside comes to a satisfactory conclusion. A popular book, one to which children easily relate. 5-8.

Peterson, Jeanne Whitehouse. I HAVE A SISTER MY SISTER IS DEAF. illus. by Deborah Ray. Harper, 1977. unpaged. $4.79.
A young girl describes how her deaf sister perceives and operates in our everyday world. Advantages to being deaf are pointed out such as not being awakened in the night or afraid of the thunder of a storm. Softly illustrated, this book realistically presents what our world is like to a deaf person and will help other children understand this handicap.

Rounds, Glen. MR. YOWDER AND THE STEAMBOAT. illus. by author. Holiday House, 1977. unpaged. $5.95.
Mr. Yowder only meant to do some quiet fishing one day in New York City's harbor. He never intended to end up, through a card game, as the captain and pilot of a steamboat. What Mr. Yowder does as captain and where he steers the steamboat make for great fun in Glen Rounds' latest tall tale. 7-11

Ryder, Joanne. FIREFLIES. illus. by Don Bolognese. (A Science I CAN READ book) Harper and Row, 1977. 61 pages. $4.95.
The text describes the life cycle of the nocturnal insects, including a detailed explanation of their reproduction. Based on recent research. 7-11.

Ruffins, Reynold. A GREAT AQUARIUM BOOK. illus. by Jane Sarnoff. Scribner, 1977. 48 pp. $7.95.
A brilliantly illustrated beginner's book on selecting fish and equipment for tropical and freshwater aquariums. Sections on fish anatomy, care and feeding, highlighted by a spattering of fishy facts and riddles. Enthusiastic and colorful presentations will captivate and inform audiences of all ages and interests.

Spier, Peter. NOAH'S ARK. illus. by author. Doubleday, 1977. unpaged. $6.95.
Noah's ark again comes alive under the skillful pen of Peter Spier. Spier illustrates a 17th century Dutch poem in soft watercolor and brings to life not only Noah but also all the animals who inhabited the ark and repopulated the earth. 4-8.

Books for Adolescents

Cormier, Robert. I AM THE CHEESE. Pantheon Books, 1977.
One of the best of the 1977 adolescent novels (by the author of THE CHOCOLATE WAR) , this is an intricate, tightly constructed, mystery thriller about a high school boy, Adam, and his family's "cat and mouse" intrigues with government agents. Adam's father, formerly a small town newspaper reporter uncovered a scandal involving connections between the government and organized crime by changing his identity and career and moving the family to another town. Adam, drugged and confined to what seems to be a "hospital", is recounting his past to someone, perhaps a psychiatrist. Through much of the novel, the reader is not quite sure about what constitutes reality.

The story about Adam's past emerges from tape recordings of these sessions along with the "psychiatrist's" own commentary and some suggestive nursery rhymes. I am not about to reveal all and destroy the intriguing guessing-game, other than to say that Cormier's rather grim world-view often prevails -- I kept guessing the worst of options and they were confirmed. While some young readers may have trouble putting it all together, Cormier's language is always clear and occasionally lyrical.

Lampman, Evelyn Sibley. BARGAIN BRIDE. Atheneum, 1977.
Part of the appeal of this book resides in the imagination of young women who wonder what it would be like to be married to someone not of their own choosing. Ginny, married at age ten to Steven Mayhew, must go live with him when she reaches her fifteenth birthday, which is where the narrative begins. This is a release from an unpleasant life with her aunt and family but also a frightening prospect for Ginny. But her husband has a heart attack and dies on their wedding night, leaving her a widow, but a widow well-off.

The novel is selective about the life that it shows in its Oregon Territory setting, but what it presents seems authentic in dialogue and setting. It is written well enough to overcome a predictable ending. Junior high girls ought to enjoy it and will probably pass it on to their friends.

Lingard, Joan. HOSTAGES TO FORTUNE. Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1977.
This is the fifth of a series about the star-crossed couple, Sadie, the Protestant, and Kevin, the Catholic, in their flight from Belfast. As usual, their fortunes are mixed, some good, some bad, but always there is that element of realism. Sadie, true to character, both resents and accepts Kevin's younger sister who crowds them in their second-hand caravan. This book finds them in Wales where they are befriended by a young couple their age and an older couple who share their home with them.

To fully understand the underlying bitterness that occasionally surfaces and the commitment that makes Kevin feel he must help raise the other children in his family when he can barely provide for his own, it helps to read the first book in the series. It is hard for Americans to realize the resentment felt by Protestants and Catholics toward each other, and these books are first rate in getting that feeling across. But it also means that even an upbeat ending can have shadows, and Sadie and Kevin are never quite free from the Belfast tensions, even though it appears that they have finally found a home. Good realism without preachy morals or into-the-sunset endings.

Lipsyte, Robert. ONE FAT SUMMER. Harper and Row, 1977.
The autobiographies college students write about key moments in the past suggests that what they did as adolescents in the summer had a strong influence on their development. Often the responsibility of a job or the challenges of coping with new environments resulted in major changes in their behavior or attitude. Sportswriter, Robert Lipsyte, has written a lively account of the changes in Robert Marks during a summer vacation with his family in a lake resort town. Robert is overweight and lacks self-confidence. He takes a job working on the grounds of an estate owned by a miserly scold who has given the job to Robert rather than an ex-con, Willie, the local town "hood" and bully. Willy vows revenge and Robert is continually taunted and tortured by Willy and his gang. After pushing the lawnmower in the hot sun week after week, Robert begins to lose some weight. He refuses to tell his parents or sister about Willie -- they are too involved with their marital or dating problems to contend with him. By the end of the summer, Robert has slimmed down considerably and shows new self-confidence by overcoming Willie in a final show-down.

Younger adolescents will like Lipsyte's descriptions of the continuous action in the book. Some of the characterizations and sub-plots are awkward, but Robert should be an appealing character for junior high readers.

Scoppettone, Sandra. THE LATE GREAT ME. Bantam Books, 1977 (G. P. Putnam edition, 1976.)
Geri, the teenage narrator of this novel, tells us right at the start that she is shy, unassuming, and considered by her parents to be inferior to her brother who has done all of the "right" things. By using this first person point of view Scoppettone creates empathy with Geri's perspective on her shallow brother and her parents' marital problems. Therefore, it is not hard to understand why, when at age 17 she begins dating Dave, already an alcoholic, she soon develops a steady drinking habit. She finds that drinking boosts her ego, allows

some escape from her dreary family life, and brings further acceptance from Dave. However, after some embarrassing drunken bashes, one of her teachers, an ex-alcoholic, tries to help her. Initially Geri rejects her teacher's help. Her parents finally realize her problem but deal with it ineffectively by ordering her to stop drinking. When this only further alienates Geri, she finally turns to her teacher, admitting she has a problem. Her teacher gets her to attend some Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. While the details on how she works out some of her problems are unfortunately lacking, she does realize that the "late great me" -- her false sense of self achievement through drinking -- differs from the "real me."

The novel avoids a lot of heavy-handed moralizing about the evils of alcoholism because it shows one unique individual's reasons for drinking and resulting consequences, leaving it up to the reader to make judgments. Some of the characters are portrayed more successfully than others: Geri's teacher, as revealed through her relationship with Geri, has far more depth than Dave or Geri's parents. Excessive teenage drinking is not uncommon. This book could provide some readers with some insights into possible ways to help others or themselves.

Yep, Laurence. CHILD OF THE OWL. Harper and Row, 1977.
In one of the best written of this group of books, Yep captures the texture of life in San Francisco's Chinatown, a world that defines the visions and values of the book's characters. He is particularly sensitive in his portrayal of the conflict between Chinese traditions and contemporary American values. In the middle of this conflict is Casey, a twelve-year-old girl without a mother, whose father is a compulsive gambler. She is quite mature and is always questioning others' beliefs and attitudes. When her father goes into the hospital, she lives with her wealthy uncle, who epitomizes crass American consumerism. She does not get along with him and moves in with her poor grandmother. Casey begins to appreciate her grandmother's Chinese traditions, which embody personal integrity and self-worth. Later, when she learns that the person who stole a valuable charm and assaulted her grandmother was her father, she realizes that her father's gambling represents his own lack of integrity and self-worth.

Adolescents who are attempting to define their own values in the midst of value conflicts will identify with Casey's tough minded perspective. The only drawback to the book is a long, tedious legend in the middle of the book that I suspect most readers will skim or skip. Otherwise, Yep's literary quality deserves recognition.