

MAY 30 1994

AN ANTHOLOGY
of
POETRY FOR THE THIRD GRADE

AN ABSTRACT
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF DANBURY STATE COLLEGE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE

by
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June 1966

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The use of poetry in the third grade curriculum is an important factor in the complete education of children. Poetry, written in the present day or long ago, will give children pleasure and profit in great variety. It is a fine literary art which uses the elements of speech to evoke emotional and aesthetic responses. Children, listening to poetry, see with the poet's eyes, share his emotions, and relive his experiences in their own imaginations.

Imagination can give vitality, scope, and meaning to the factual. When it is appropriately stimulated and guided, imagination can help develop the ability to see connections, to transform and deepen insight, and to interpret and communicate. This strengthening of the powers of feeling and perception makes children more aware of life and their place in it. A properly guided emergence from the ego-centric existence of children is important to their development as mentally healthy individuals.

Poetry must be read to third grade children. Only in this way can the subtleties and meanings be conveyed to them. The images in poetry are produced by syllabic stress which brings out the true value of the sentences. This stress is carefully planned by the poet. Heavy stress is laid upon

the logically important words and is preceded and followed by lighter stress. These variations, plus the pauses denoted by punctuation, set the rhythm which must be observed to do justice to the meaning of any poem.

Selections chosen for reading to these children should be greatly varied. Third graders need both the realistic and the fanciful. The realistic is needed to awaken them to aspects of their own world and to carry them in time and space to other peoples of the past and the present. The fanciful will take them away from the possible and plausible and give them a greater perspective of both the real and the improbable in life.

Third grade children must never have poetry imposed upon them. There should be no analysis or memorization except at the children's own instigation. Their experiences, at this age, must be those of pleasure and satisfaction if they are to develop an appreciation of poetry and benefit from their contact with it. Effective reading at suitable times and a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom are also necessary to the growth of this appreciation with its concurrent stimulus to creative thought.

The heterogeneously grouped third grade will have various levels of ability and interest. Many children who are reading below grade level have a much higher interest level. The words and phrases of poetry will be of particular benefit to them. The selective vocabulary of a poem evokes more vivid sensory and emotional responses than does the

prose of the average early elementary school reader. These responses lead children to the use of their natural creativity which can, too often, be stifled under the routine pressures of their lives. The development and organization of such inner responses as imagination, feeling, and originality in the elementary child is of vital importance to his future as a completely functioning individual. It is a teacher's responsibility to provide the creative and aesthetic experiences which will stimulate and strengthen the potentials of all the children.

The poems in the anthology, which comprises Part II of the thesis, have been selected for their value to third grade children in multisensory imagery, vocabulary enrichment, interest level, depth of meaning, and degree of emotional and intellectual responses evoked. Poems in the entire "Nature" section are linked with the science text and are rich in sensory images which further children's scientific observations and deepen their appreciation and understanding of the wonders of the world. The sections "Special Days" and "The World" contain poems which enrich social studies lessons and represent six areas of interest: history of America, heroic deeds of great men, festivals, fantasy, adventure, and children everywhere. "The World of Children" is a section which combines fact and fantasy. These poems are high in interest and also meet children's needs by giving them confidence, security, laughter, an escape from reality, and an understanding of themselves and others. The selections in the anthology range

from simple verses to narrative poems but they all have brought the greatest pleasure to many third grade classes and, at the same time, stimulated the most creative responses.