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## **Interracial books for children. Volume 5, No. 4 1974**

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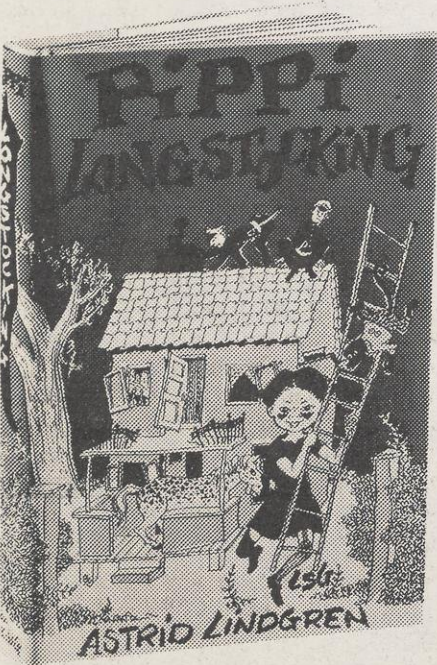


# Interracial Books FOR CHILDREN

Vol. 5 Number 4, 1974

## PIPPI LONGSTOCKING-- Feminist or Anti-Feminist?

By Kik Reeder



One of the most popular heroines in juvenile literature is a 9-year-old red-haired, pigtailed girl called Pippi Longstocking who lives alone with a small monkey and a big horse and does what she darn well pleases. And considering that she has been around for exactly 30 years (Astrid Lindgren began *Pippi Longstocking* in March, 1944), it is safe to say that she is well on her way to becoming a classic.

When Pippi first appeared in her own country (Sweden), she was an instant success, because she fundamentally broke the pattern of what up till then had been the accepted formula for little girl heroines. Things don't happen to Pippi—she *makes* them happen. She is self-assertive, inventive and independent with lots of charm and imagination. She lives alone in her own house, her mother having conveniently died when she was very little, and her father, a sea captain, having been blown overboard on one of his many voyages.

But Pippi is no Little Orphan Annie. She loves every minute of her freedom and independence. There is no one to tell her when to go to bed, she can eat cream cake for breakfast if she pleases, she doesn't bother with housecleaning or other dull chores, unless she can make a game

out of them. In fact she doesn't have to put up with any of the dreary demands that are made on most children. She dresses with a happy disregard for convention and especially favors one brown and one black stocking and a pair of enormous black shoes. Should the mood hit her, Pippi puts on ghastly make-up or picks her nose at parties.

She also happens to be the strongest girl in the world (she can lift a horse without the slightest effort) and she is rich as can be. So when she can't argue her way out of a situation—which she does very well, by the way—she simply resorts to force and removes any undesirables, be they policemen, social workers, burglars or circus managers. And whatever she needs in the world she can buy. Needless to say, Pippi sees no reason to go to school and she treats all adults with total lack of respect. (As a matter of fact doubts have been raised in Sweden as to this image of adults as total fools, or threatening old people, in the Pippi books. If the adult world, and not just authority, but all adults, are made to look entirely foolish and/or threatening, unkind and out of ill will, what then are children to expect of themselves as adults?)

Anyway it's no wonder Pippi Longstocking is popular with her young readers! She personifies the most cherished and secret dream of any child—that of being omnipotent and able to function without any interference from the adult world. Independent and disobedient children are not uncommon in children's literature, but they are seldom girls. And Pippi is super girl, tomboy, feminist or plain horror, all wrapped into one delicious creature, as popular with American children

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## Carnegie Funds Council Program on Racism, Sexism Awareness

In an innovative program to assist teachers, librarians, and publishers to detect racism and sexism in school materials, the Council on Interracial Books for Children has been conducting workshop-courses at three major universities. The courses were given at Pennsylvania State University last summer and at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Richmond College, CUNY, this year.

The program, aided by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, consists of two aspects: (1) developing criteria to identify racist and sexist stereotypes, distortions, and omissions in school texts; and (2) developing instructional material and methods to assist teachers in combating racism and sexism.

At all three courses—the first of their

*Continued on page 2*

## READING PROGRAMS: A Look at Distar

The values conveyed to children in the very first school books they read leave an indelible imprint. Because the Council is deeply concerned with the quality and content of the programs used to teach children to read, we are devoting a large portion of this issue to an examination of the Distar Reading Language Program. (Distar—an acronym for Directive Instructional System for Teachers in Arithmetic and Reading—also includes an Arithmetic Program not analyzed here.)

Distar, published by Science Research Associates (SRA), a division of International Business Machines (IBM), is widely used for pre-school through third grade, and it is the fastest-selling program in "economically deprived" communities in the U.S.

Our study of Distar was requested by the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Committee, a coalition of concerned parents and teachers. The Committee felt Distar to be culturally biased and demeaning to minority and white children from poor backgrounds. They also objected to the program's Pavlovian method of conditioning children to answer questions without thinking.

Reports from the National Education Association, the Michigan Education Association and the Michigan Department of Civil Rights support many of these criticisms. Last spring the Committee met with two Distar authors—Siegfried Engelmann and Wesley Becker—and convinced them to remove some of the more racist material from the editions of Distar sold to the Grand Rapids schools. In spite of the changes the Committee has found that the basically offensive methodology and content are impossible to edit out or eradicate from the existing program. The committee's continuing dissatisfaction led them to ask the Council for a more detailed analysis.

The Council concurs with the Michigan Committee's criticism. We find that Distar is based on questionable and potentially dangerous teaching methods and that the content conveys harmful stereotypes and anti-humanist attitudes. Our report on Distar, in several parts, follows below and on page 10.

The Council's articles were prepared by the Council staff under the direction of Beryl Banfield, author of *Africa in the Curriculum*, Dr. Albert V. Schwab, Assistant Professor at Richmond College, CUNY, and Jane Califf, who has taught reading in elementary schools. A special article was contributed by Dr. Vivian C. Gaman, Associate Professor of Development Skills, Manhattan Community College, CUNY.

## Bias Pervades Distar Content

The Council finds the Distar material to be both racist and sexist. In addition, the stories extol such anti-human values as selfishness, competitiveness and materialism. A detailed analysis follows.

### SEXISM

Sexism pervades the Distar material. Stories which feature males (human or animal) greatly outnumber those in which females are the main characters. In the material for Level III, for example, there are 68 stories exclusively about boys but only 4 about girls (see table, pg. 6). In the Distar Language I Storybook, 18 stories are about males; only 2 are about females.

When women and girls do appear, they are generally depicted as helpless, timid, stupid, ridiculous, authoritarian and/or shrewish. Adult women are frequently portrayed in authoritarian or punitive roles. At other times,

women are shown as incompetent, like the mother who stands helplessly by while her son, holding onto a balloon, rises up in the air; or the foolish-looking stout woman with an overflowing bag of groceries who is used to illustrate the word "sack." Another picture shows "mother" as a fat, tired and sloppy woman. In addition, most of the women in the stories are depicted either as housewives or teachers.

Girls are usually portrayed as pas-

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## Reappraising Distar in Theory and Practice

By Dr. Vivian C. Gaman

Distar, on the market for the past five years, enjoys high popularity in many school systems across the country. The availability of supplemental Federal funds for compensatory education, the focus on teacher accountability, and the marketing and merchandising practices of the Distar sales staff have all contributed to its success.

There are, for example, some school systems which are totally committed to Distar for the early childhood grades; other schools, in desperate search of remedial reading programs guaranteed to work, have extended it into the intermediate grades. These systems have succumbed to the Distar sales pitch which promises an instructional system designed to raise IQ's,

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The Native American as depicted in Distar material.

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# EDITORIALS

In the Council's growing liaison with teachers—prompted in part by the courses and workshops we have been conducting at Teachers College, Columbia University, and at other schools of education—we have been struck by certain outstanding gaps in the education of teachers. Though they speak of having taken courses on "the culture of poverty" (with its unspoken assumption of inferiority), on the behavior of "the disadvantaged child,"—and, to be sure, on all aspects of "American History," we find that disturbingly few teachers have received any training at all that will help them to critically question (1) their own assumption of the superiority of white, middle-class values, (2) their own behavior as part of an "advantaged" group in a racist society, or (3) their ethnocentric outlook on history. There are, of course, teachers who are sensitive and aware despite a lack of training, but such teachers are exceptional.

Before educators can teach a multicultural curriculum with sensitivity, they must understand the realities of racism, the history of institutional oppression of minorities and women, and the reasons why America maintains a traditionally ethnocentric perspective. Teachers brought up on a single set of values—a unicultural outlook—cannot be expected to turn about and successfully start teaching students of many cultures to respect multicultural values.

It is up to the teacher-training institutes to bring new awareness and a new curriculum to young teachers. A step in this direction were the workshops the Council just completed at Teachers College, Columbia University, and at Richmond College, CUNY, and gave last summer at Pennsylvania State University. These courses, described elsewhere in this issue, are designed to help teachers detect and counter the racist and sexist stereotypes, distortions and omissions traditionally found in school textbooks and other classroom materials.

Encouraged by the enthusiastic reception accorded these workshops, the Council is offering to set up similar courses at other teacher-training institutes, and to give in-service training for elementary and high school teachers. Other non-profit organizations—in particular, Foundations for Change in New York and New Perspectives on Race in Michigan—have developed important techniques for new awareness training. In cooperation with these groups, the Council is planning an expanded network of teacher training in racism awareness at all levels. Information about this program may be obtained by writing to the Council at 1841 Broadway, Third Floor, New York, N.Y. 10023.

Much has been written—and criticized—about the various techniques used to teach our children to read. Seldom is there discussion, or even interest, in the values and hidden messages conveyed to impressionable minds by the content of these programs.

The Council hopes that this issue's discussion of the content of one national reading program—Distar—will lead parents and educators to make a careful appraisal of the values projected in the reading programs in use in their schools.

## PROGRAM

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kind to be given at a college or university—ethnic resource specialists (Black, Asian American, Native American, Chicano, and Puerto Rican) and feminists gave historical background to refute the racist and sexist distortions commonly found in elementary and high school textbooks. Bibliographies, supplementary materials, media and audio-visual resources were provided by the specialists. At this year's courses, more than 75 trade and text books (K-12) were examined.

During the courses, the students refined a preliminary set of criteria for evaluating all books that had been prepared by the Council. In addition, it became clear that each minority required an individual set of criteria

because of their particular historical uniqueness. Students also became aware of the differences between a minority feminist perspective and a white feminist perspective regarding sex bias.

In addition to learning how to detect stereotypes and omissions, students were offered classroom techniques to counter bias in text materials.

The courses have been very well received. Both Teachers College and Richmond have requested that they be repeated. (The Council looks forward to working with other colleges and universities and invites inquiries from interested institutions.) At the request of several textbook publishers who sent representatives to the Teachers College course, the Council will launch a program of in-house training for book publishers and editors this fall.

The development of instructional material will begin this summer. The Council resource specialists will work with the Foundation for Change—which conducts specialized racism awareness training for educators—and with the National Education Association to develop teaching materials based on the criteria.

The NEA has already begun to field-test the preliminary criteria, which will now be further refined. This instrument summarizes some of the stereotypes, omissions and distortions encountered in texts in one column, and, in an adjoining column, refutes these misstatements with historical fact and supporting sources.

As instructional material and the final set of criteria become available, details will be announced jointly by the three cooperating organizations.

## PIPPI

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as she is with Swedish ones. She is "... a children's safety valve against the pressure of authority and daily life: This is the secret of [her] incredible success." (*The Horn Book Magazine*, February, 1973)

Yet, *Pippi Longstocking* (and the two other books in the series, *Pippi Goes on Board* and *Pippi in the South Seas*) has recently come under mounting criticism in her home country, Sweden. For although Pippi herself is a bit too "unreal" to truly identify with, she inhabits a world which is very real indeed, a world which most white children of any nationality can recognize very easily. It is a world filled with overt racism and hidden sexism, very much in the Western tradition of children's literature.

### THE "STYLISH" CANNIBAL KING

As it happens, Pippi's father, the sea captain who fell overboard, didn't drown after all. He just floated ashore and landed on a cannibal island, where he instantly was made a cannibal king, something Pippi considers very "stylish."

Why a cannibal island of all things? They were pretty few and far between by 1944. Well, because cannibals by tradition are thought of as hilariously funny, savage and adoring of whites. Pippi herself can't wait for her father to come and get her, so that she in turn can become a "cannibal Princess." And when father and daughter actually arrive in the Kurrekuredutt Island (*Pippi in the South Seas*) the "natives" are duly overcome by awe:

A mighty roar rose from the crowd when the gangplank was lowered.

"Ussamkura, kussomkara!" they shouted, and it meant, "Welcome back fat, white chief!"

And when Pippi's father mounts his throne to do a bit of ruling over his faithful people, he no longer wears ordinary clothes, but dresses in "royal regalia, with a crown on his head, a straw skirt around his waist, a necklace of shark's teeth around his neck and heavy bracelets around his ankles."

There is a very condescending attitude toward language as well as dress. "Luckily Captain Longstocking had been on the island long enough for the Kurrekuredutts to learn some of his language." (Heaven forbid that he should learn any of theirs!) "Naturally they didn't know the meaning of such difficult words as 'postal money order' and 'brigadier general' but they had picked up a lot just the same." (The poor, pitiful ignoramuses!)

Although the Kurrekuredutt children have lived on the island all their lives, it takes a white girl to save them from sharks and outsmart a couple of bandits who wish to steal their pearls.

### SHIPWRECKED AGAIN

Another chapter in the same book finds Pippi "shipwrecked" on a peaceful Swedish lake and in preparation for this outing with her friends, Pippi brings along an old pistol just in case they run into "cannibals or lions." *Cannibals again?* Threatening symbols seem to be in short supply. Or is it just that Robinson Crusoe and Friday simply refuse to rest in their graves?

Now, in all fairness to Astrid Lindgren, it can be argued that Pippi is always the leader and the solver of all problems, but the picture that is painted of the smiling, dancing, docile and incompetent "cannibals" is too much the traditional, stereotyped image of Third World people to stand unchallenged. There is nothing in the depiction of the "natives" that in any way adds to the story; they are what they are, incapable of ruling them-

selves simply because they are "natives." It takes a white man to set things straight. It is the old colonial thinking all over again and it is strongly felt by certain Swedes that such outmoded themes ought to be deleted from any children's book, and especially one with such impact on young minds as the bestselling *Pippi Longstocking*.

### PIPPI THE FEMINIST?

Here in the United States Pippi has been hailed as the first feminist children's book. *Ms.* magazine recently (January, 1974) called her "one of the most independent and inspiring female characters in children's literature."

Independent—yes. Inspiring—possibly. But female—hardly. In the recommended list of juvenile books that the New York City Public Library puts out she is referred to as a tomboy. The "nice" people in the tiny Swedish town where Pippi resides consider her a horror. And to her best friends, Tommy and Annika, she is simply more fun than anybody else. Pippi is not a "real" girl at all; she is made of the same stuff as Peter Pan and other "invisible" playmates we've all read about and loved as children, larger than life and capable of all the things "normal" children can only dream about.

It is soon apparent that Pippi isn't a girl at all, even a tomboy, but a boy in disguise. Astrid Lindgren has simply equipped Pippi with all the traits we have come to think of as male. She never cries; she is aggressive and unafraid, she has a monkey and a horse for pets but doesn't even own a doll, she stands up to all authority and she wants to be a pirate when she grows up. She is extremely generous with gifts and parties but when necessary she can dole out punishment to a bunch of bullies. In other words, Pippi acts like a "real" man.

### PIPPI'S FRIENDS

In contrast, Pippi's friends Tommy and Annika are perfectly "normal." They have a mother and a father. They are obedient and well-behaved children who always do what they are told. Annika never dirties her clothes and Tommy never bites his nails. Tommy is a "real" boy, always ready to follow Pippi's suggestions, no matter how daring, and Annika is a "real" girl, always a little hesitant and scared at first when Pippi and Tommy play rough. She needs a bit of prompting before she can overcome her "natural" shyness, she cries easily and is forever following the others

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## Interracial Books

### FOR CHILDREN

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A scene from *Pippi in the South Seas*, showing Pippi surrounded by "the cannibals."



## An Interview with Ray Anthony Shepard

### Black Book Editor Launches New Series



Ray Anthony Shepard, originator and editor of *Sprint Books*.

Scholastic Magazines, Inc., came out on April 1 with a new series of novellettes, called *Sprint Books*, designed for children in grades 4-6 who are reading at grade 2-3 level.

*Sprint Books* are paperback adventure stories designed for children who, because of their reading abilities, aren't yet ready for trade books. They will come in three graded "libraries": one set of five (in April) of 32 pages each; a more advanced set of five (this fall) of 64 pages each; and a third set of five (next January) of 96 pages each. The sets will each be accompanied by teachers' guides and spirit masters, i.e., material that can be easily duplicated. The publishers assert that after children have been exposed to Library III, they will graduate to trade books.

The *Sprint Books* are the brainchild of Ray Anthony Shepard, an editor at Scholastic and a winner of the third annual contest of the Council on Interracial Books for Children. Mr. Shepard's winning manuscript, *Sneakers* (which he describes as a mixture of Nancy Drew and Lew Archer), was subsequently published by E. P. Dutton Company, and he has since had two more books published: *Conjure Tales* (Dutton) and *The Case of the Missing Money* (one of the first five titles in Scholastic's *Sprint Library*).

#### A MULTI-PURPOSE PROGRAM

"About 85 per cent of children in elementary schools read below their grade levels," Mr. Shepard told a CIBC interviewer the other day. "Our problem was to come up with a series that could be sold in a variety of locations: urban and rural, suburban and core city." The first five titles in *Sprint Library I* reflect the response to this diverse constituency: a Little League story; *Big Bill* by Brenda Johnson (also a winner of the CIBC's manuscript contest); *The Case of the Missing Money* by Ray Shepard himself; *The Great Subway Chase* by Margaret Cooper and Maureen Armour; and *Fear* by Isabelle Lyles.

"We will be printing between 30,000 and 50,000 copies of each of these titles," Mr. Shepard says, "and we expect that they will be in every school system in the country."

Library I will contain five "new" words (per reading level) for each 100 words, and each book will be 3,000 words in length; Library II, 6,500 words each; Library III, 10,000 words each. Each library will consist initially of five titles, but new books will be added later.

"The series will have both urban and suburban subjects, and subjects who are Black, Puerto Rican, American Indian, Asian-American," according to Mr. Shepard. "I hope that more minority writers will consider writing *Sprint*

Books. I welcome inquiries from minority writers with manuscript ideas."

A teacher in the Midwest and in Massachusetts before he won the CIBC's manuscript contest, Mr. Shepard has been an editor at Scholastic for almost two years; he has had three children's books published (one of which made the *New York Times* list of "distinguished" literature for young people) and is at work on a fourth. He says he likes the combination of writing and editing and wishes more minority talent would consider entering the field. "I spent two weeks at Bread Loaf Writers Conference [Middlebury, Vermont]," he said, "and that kind of intense day-by-day relationship with other writers is a wonderfully creative thing for someone who wants to be involved in children's literature. It's the kind of program that I wish someone—some foundation, perhaps—would start."

Would he volunteer as a faculty member?

"You bet I would," Mr. Shepard told his visitor.

### DISTAR: Theory

*Continued from page 1*

bring some students "closer to grade level" and others "beyond grade level," insure parental involvement in the teaching of the three R's, and improve language, reading and arithmetic skills at a far greater rate and in less time than any other instructional program has been able to do thus far.

Nearly five years and millions of school dollars later, *Distar* can rightly claim one substantial accomplishment: it has been a financial bonanza for its authors and for Science Research Associates (SRA), its publishers. It is not, however, the panacea that SRA claims it to be.

Admittedly, some children have learned some good decoding skills (i.e., an ability to sound out words) through the program, even though the evidence does not indicate that the decoding skills learned through *Distar* in any way improve a child's ability to comprehend what he reads. We need to ask, however, whether these children would not have learned the same decoding skills in a reading program which was structured on sounder educational and psychosocial principles, was a little more humanistic in its approach, less racially offensive and sexist in its content, and required less of a bite in school budgets.

*Distar's* racial stereotyping, sexism and rigidity are covered elsewhere in this issue. This article looks at other aspects of the *Distar* language and reading model—the verbal deprivation hypothesis on which the model is predicated, the program content as it relates to this hypothesis and the evaluation data which belie the presumptuous assertions which *Distar's* authors persist in making about the program.

#### THE DISTAR PHILOSOPHY

*Distar's* philosophy is detailed in *Teaching Disadvantaged Children in the Preschool*, by Carl Bereiter and Siegfried Engelmann (1966), and in *Preventing Failure in the Primary Grades*, by Engelmann (1969). The "disadvantaged" child, or the "child of poverty," as Engelmann (*Distar's* senior author) sometimes calls him, has a "language deficit" and, as a result, serious problems in communi-

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## Women in World History Texts: Females in "Male" Roles

By Janice Law Trecker

The last issue of the *Bulletin* (Vol. 5, No. 3) contained the article "Textbooks and the Invisible Woman," which concentrated on the treatment of women in social studies and history books about the U.S. This article by the same author is concerned with women in textbooks on European and world history.

There is perhaps no more graphic example of ethnologist Lionel Tiger's thesis that male bonding is "the spinal cord" of human society than the typical school text. Those women who fit into the male hierarchy in politics or government, that is, the great queens and the influential women of the old European dynastic families, are treated by and large like their male counterparts. With the decline of monarchies and the rise in Western civilization of non-dynastic governmental systems, women simply drop out of the picture.

Comparing the treatment of women in secondary school European and world history textbooks with the American history texts makes clear the operative principle of selection, namely that making history is seen as a male activity, that males are the determiners and influencers of events, women the passive victims or recipients, and that the inclusion of women, beyond the barest tokenism, depends upon their ability to fit into the organizations and activities of males.

#### THE "HEROINES" OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

Perhaps because of the really outstanding women who are dealt with in European and world history texts, like Catherine the Great, Elizabeth I, Isabella of Spain, St. Catherine and St. Joan, these texts lack the condescending and frivolous treatment of women which is such an irritating part of American histories. We are spared, for example, learned dissertations on skirt lengths—a veritable obsession of U.S. textbooks.

However, it is not unheard of for history texts to omit all mention of woman suffrage, including such new texts as *The World Since 1500* (by L.S. Staurianos, Prentice-Hall, 1966) and *Europe Since 1914* (by Gordon Craig, Dryden Press, 1972). When, for example, the British suffrage struggle is recounted, the names of the leaders are invariably omitted. Emmeline Pankhurst—like other prominent feminists—is one of the invisible women in history. Few texts index Mary Wollstonecraft or Francis Wright or the Continental or Asian leaders for women's rights. Interestingly enough, although John Stuart Mill is usually included in texts, the co-author of many of his works on women, Harriet Mill, is never cited.

The abysmal status of women in Classical Greece is the invariable token inclusion of information about women's legal rights. There is only rarely any mention of female influence in more favorable eras, with the possible exception of Imperial Rome.

The reluctance to include information on women's status is particularly striking with regard to the modern era. There is a notable lack of interest in women's roles in countries like the Soviet Union, China or Cuba, or in Israel or Sweden. The omission of the impact of Maoism on women in China is somewhat surprising, especially in texts which point out the subordinate position of women under the old Chinese Empire. As for the status of women in the West, as in United States history texts, women's problems end with the vote.

Where changes in women's social and legal status are brought up, the facts alone are usually dropped into the narrative without comment. The dates of the extension of the franchise or the mention that limitations were placed on women's freedom by such documents as the Code Napoleon or the *Koran* are deemed sufficient in themselves.

#### RESPONSIBLE ROLES OF WOMEN IGNORED

In another area, one of the few texts to include any information on the daily lives of men and women of the medieval period gives no idea of the importance of the work performed by peasant women and only a vague idea of the important responsibilities held by women of the middle and upper classes, many of whom took complete charge of their families' financial affairs during their husbands' absences in the Crusades, etc. As in comparable U.S. history textbooks, women's work does not become significant to the historian until it has moved outside of the home during the industrial revolution. The impact of that shift, the implications of having a high percentage of female laborers, and the relationships between a woman's legal and social rights and her economic status are, however, never explored.

Women's activities in revolutionary movements are lucky to be represented by a note about a French revolutionary salon, while only two texts examined made even passing reference to women's activities in the World Wars or in the other military and social upheavals of the modern world. Interestingly, the period engravings and paintings used to illustrate these texts, which show women in social and even military activities, suggest they had a more important place in their society than the historian is willing to concede.

Even more discouraging, defects are equally noticable in the new "inquiry" texts and books of documentary sources. For example, the collection *The Development of Civilization*, (by Harry Carroll Jr. et al., Scott Foresman, 1962), which deserves credit for including one of Susan B. Anthony's speeches on suffrage, devotes 4 of its 151 selections, or 13 out of 534 pages, to pieces by or about women. Only one of these discusses women's lives or status. Another, higher level text, *Readings in Modern World Civilization* (by Leon Bernard and Theodore B. Hodges, Macmillan, 1962), shows an even smaller representation of women and women writers. Of 217 entries, only 2 relate to women.

The texts on European and world history all indicate the same refusal to see women and women's activities as a legitimate part of history. Whether this refusal is expressed by trivializing or omitting women's activities as is the current fashion in United States textbooks or simply by treating only those women who somehow fit into a recognized male hierarchy as in world or European histories, the result is the same.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JANICE LAW TRECKER served as a resource specialist for the Council's workshop, Literature in the Classroom, at Pennsylvania State University, summer, 1971.



# THE BOOKSHELF

**Black is brown is tan** by Arnold Adoff, illustrated by Emily McCully. Harper & Row, 1973, \$4.95, 32 pages

*Black is brown is tan* is a story about a family like mine—the mother is Black, the father is white, and the kids are like my daughter. Finally, a book about us!

Arnold Adoff has written a book of worth, mellowness and joy about himself and his family. It is a story of an interracial couple and their children and they are *real* people. This in itself is a major accomplishment since such couples (families) often meet with hostilities from each racial group. However, in his zeal to "humanize" this family (and other multiracial relationships) Mr. Adoff has, perhaps, painted too rosy a picture of family life. Neither parent "works" even though there is a typewriter in one of the drawings and there is no interaction with any one except other family members. Why? Why don't the children ever play with anyone other than their parents and relatives? It is true that the story has a country setting, but can they be that isolated? Also, the children seem to be sexless; are they two boys, two girls or boy and girl?

Quibbles aside, this book fills a definite need. It is all that we have to offer children about the multiracial family, and until something "perfect" comes along, my daughter *can* say, "That looks like us." The book also breaks down the traditional family role stereotypes—the mother is shown chopping pine wood as well as reading stories and cooking. The father is shown taking charge of cooking and bed preparation (baths, yelling, and all) at least part time. The parents are sharing! Mr Adoff tried hard and Ms. McCully's drawings are beautiful. [E.M.]

\* \* \*

**Langston Hughes, American Poet** by Alice Walker, illustrated by Don Miller. T. Y. Crowell, 1973, \$3.95, 40 pages

Often when adults write books for children the results are disappointing. Fortunately, this is not the case with Alice Walker's *Langston Hughes, American Poet*.

Complicated facts skillfully woven into a simple straightforward narra-

tive make a good biography for younger children, and *Langston Hughes, American Poet* is a wonderful addition to Crowell's already successful biography series. Alice Walker is the author of two volumes of poetry, one book of short stories, and a novel. She met Hughes and vowed that "I would write a book about him for children some day."

Langston was a lonely Black child in the white midwest. With his father off to Mexico seeking his fortune, and his mother moving from one small white town to another looking for work, Langston filled his loneliness with stories he heard from his grandmother and with books. At an early age Langston decided to become a poet. In grammar school, he was elected class poet, and shortly after high school, he published his now famous "I've Known Rivers."

The stories his grandmother told him, his father's dislike of Black people (a case of blaming the victim) and Langston's loneliness in the small midwestern towns led him to seek out Black people and they became his subject matter.

The two poems included in the biography—"When Susanna Jones Wears Red" and "I've Known Rivers"—give young readers an introduction to Hughes' poetry; Ms. Walker has given them an excellent introduction to Hughes the poet. [R. A. S.]

\* \* \*

**The All-American Coeds** by Betsy Madden. Criterion Books, 1971, \$4.25, 143 pages

**Not Bad for a Girl** by Isabella Taves. M. Evans & Co., 1972, \$4.50, 95 pages

Both books concern young, popular girls breaking through society's rigid strictures against girls competing with boys in sports—in these two instances, high school varsity basketball and Little League baseball. Both books are essentially feminist in orientation, stressing that it is both desirable as well as physically feasible for girls to compete with boys in athletics.

*The All-American Coeds* is an excellent, fast-action, well-written sports story. The heroine, Joyce Collins, is the bright and very tough Black captain of the (mostly white) high school girls' basketball team. She initiates an uncompromising battle to have this top notch team matched against the boys' varsity. She wants good competition for her undefeated team and acknowledgement that girls can, in fact, play as well as boys, but there is heavy opposition from parents, school, and the boys' team itself.

Joyce organizes and coaches her group in after-school sessions, and for practice, they successfully defeat several local men's teams. The girls then execute a Lysistrata-type strike against the boys' team—"no game with us, no date with us"—and the desired match is arranged.

Unfortunately, although the girls' team does play as well as the boys', the author doesn't allow the girls to win. Instead, she has them lose by one point. It would have been nice to have winners, just once! As some compensation, however, the book ends with our heroine contemplating girl pitchers—and we know what battle is on next.

*Not Bad for a Girl* (not such a good title) by Isabella Taves is not quite



*This biography of the poet Langston Hughes was written by Alice Walker and illustrated by Don Miller.*

so successful. Through various struggles against the anti-girl forces, the twelve-year-old heroine, Sharon Lee, who plays baseball as well as the boys and "does not throw like a girl" (an insult?), finally makes the all-boy Little League baseball team. The book, based on a true story, is probably an accurate account of the frenzy that such female participation can cause in a small town.

Unfortunately, the heroine is somewhat characterless, largely because the book focuses mainly on adults and their reactions to Sharon's playing baseball. Little time is devoted to Sharon's feeling about the struggle.

Although Sharon is a tough young girl, willing to put herself on the line against great opposition, she is more a passive participant than an initiator of change. Saddest of all, Sharon is commended most for her passive response to the heckling she receives on the baseball field. "Fag! Get that fag in center field," a woman shouts. "Murder her! Who does she think she is?" Sharon ignores the heckling and plays the game. Afterwards her mother says, "People were so awful and so cruel and you pretended nothing was going on. Sharon, I think this is the proudest moment of my life and none of us will ever forget." It is unfortunate that the "best" thing the heroine does in the whole book is to passively ignore insults. While it may have been a good response to that particular incident, women and girls too often respond to attacks on themselves with just such passivity. A purportedly "feminist" book should not praise such a response. [S.R.]

\* \* \*

**An Album of Puerto Ricans in the United States** by Stuart J. Brahs, photographs by Nathan Farb. Franklin Watts, 1973, \$4.95, 84 pages

This photo album with text touches the highlights of Puerto Rican history. The book takes a liberal position on most issues (Mr. Brahs was a legislative assistant to Congressman Herman Badillo of New York, who has written a foreword to the book). Barrio landlords are criticized; school systems are scored for having a very small percentage of Puerto Rican teachers; the difficulties of Puerto Ricans coming from Puerto Rico to the U.S. are dealt with accurately; and the positive feelings that Puerto Ricans have for each other are praised.

However, the basic assumptions about Puerto Rico's relationship to Spain and the U.S. are never fully examined. For instance, Spain's colonization of Puerto Rico is referred to as "discovery." And when Herman Badillo refers to Puerto Ricans entering the "mainstream" of American life, he does not question the stream he wants to flow into.

On the whole, however, Mr. Brahs seems basically respectful of Puerto

Ricans and he does try to include different viewpoints—such as those of the *independistas*—with fairness. The text is geared for the junior high level and can be used in conjunction with other books of a more comprehensive scope, since, on the whole, it is the varied photographs that make the book interesting, rather than the historical analyses. [R. G.]

\* \* \*

**Africa Counts: Number and Pattern in African Culture** by Claudia Zaslavsky. Prindle, Weber and Schmidt (53 State St., Boston, Mass. 02109) 1973, \$12.50, 328 pages

Concentrating mainly on Africa south of the Sahara, this book describes the construction of various numeration systems with bases of 5, 10 or 20; different systems of hand gestures for numbers; the variety of shapes and patterns in African art and architecture; and many mathematical games played by children and adults (with detailed explanations), as well as other mathematical adventures.

*Africa Counts* is not simply an analysis of African mathematics however. The author ties in the mathematical concepts to much of the history and culture of African people, and this information is put in perspective by comparison to mathematical, historical and cultural developments in other parts of the world.

The text is supplemented by informative photos, illustrations, charts and diagrams. Teachers at all levels will be able to find much material in *Africa Counts* to help them counteract biases and distortions about Africa found in other books. [J.C.]

\* \* \*

**Lanterns for Fiesta** by Suzanne Fulle. Macrae Smith, 1973, \$4.75, 134 pages.

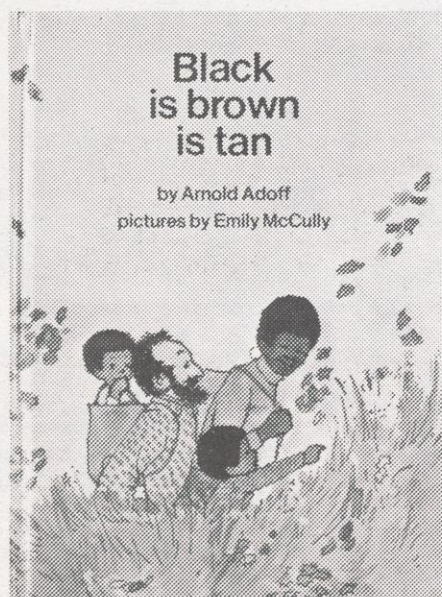
After reading *Lanterns for Fiesta* I know that the sincerity of an author is not sufficient to produce a credible picture of *barrio* life.

Poverty is the underlying theme, and the message here is that poor Chicanos with Anglo help can end up happily at a fiesta. (Anglo is the Chicano word for white.)

The author's lack of real knowledge of the culture's linguistic patterns is readily evident in the dialogue; for instance, the use of "Francesca," "caro mio," and "carito mio" points out a confusion between Italian and Chicano expressions. The use of "infante," "Bandito," "Remurez," and having a girl say "estoy contento" cast doubt on the writer's real acquaintance with the people and language she has attempted to write about. (On the jacket it states that the author, as a child, saw a little Mexican American girl and her grandfather selling tamales by a railroad station. This may be the author's only claim to authenticity.)

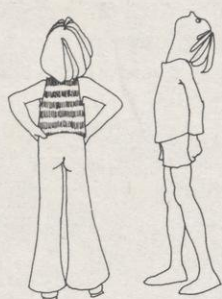
A gabacho (that's an Anglo you don't like much) store-owner, who "never intended to hire a Mexican," hires Juanita without parental consent in spite of her twelve tender years. He puts her to work in the store but not before she has proven herself worthy. (One also finds the implication that the grocery store owner believes that all of Juanita's friends are thieves.) Juanita tells her mother about the new job but never gets one word of commendation despite the fact that they live in abject poverty. Quite to the contrary the mother asks, "Who is going to hire a Mexican?" In no way would a Chicano mother thus undermine a child's self-confidence and sense of ethnic pride.

As long as aware librarians, editors, book reviewers and other concerned individuals remain silent, such plastic productions will continue to flow onto the book shelves and into the minds of our children. Let's stop buying these books. [J.G.T.]



*Black is brown is tan depicts an interracial marriage.*





*Mandy (of Mandy and the Flying Map) floats over her friends.*

We have received several new books from feminist collectives. All are low cost, written with the intention of breaking down some of the blatant stereotypes found in so many books written for children.

From the Canadian Women's Educational Press comes **Mandy and the Flying Map**, written by Bev Allison and illustrated by Ann Powell. This is about a young girl who loves maps who, to satisfy her curiosity about how her home town would look from the air, takes off aboard a flying map. It is a book with an assertive, adventurous and curious girl as a main character (\$1.50 in paper; \$3.25 in cloth).

Among the paperbacks from New Seed Press are **Fanshen the Magic Bear** (60¢), written by Becky Sarah and illustrated by Dana Smith, about a young girl who liberates a town from the domination of a greedy king, and **Peter Learns to Crochet** (60¢) by Irene Levinson, illustrated by Ketra Sutherland, in which young Peter faces the dilemma of wanting to learn a craft not usually associated with boys.

New from Lollipop Power are **Jo, Flo and Yolanda** by Carol de Poix, illustrated by Stephane Sove New (\$1.50), a story of triplets with different aspirations, and **Carlotta and the Scientist**, written and illustrated by Patricia Riley Lenthall (\$1.75), about a female penguin whose curiosity takes her on an unusual adventure. The latter is—at last—an animal story with an adventurous female animal, not a mother hen or rabbit, and it is one of Lollipop Power's best. **The Magic Hat**, by Kim Westsmith Chapman with illustrations by Kitty Riley Clark (\$1.75), also new from Lollipop, is a fantasy centered around a group of boys and a group of girls who are separated (and bored) by sex stereotyped toys. [N.D.]

Our children need books which emphasize a variety of choices and views of the world. These small collectives are filling this need and they need our support because, unfortunately, since most collectives cannot afford to promote their books, they are not carried by many bookstores. For publication lists and order forms, write directly to the presses mentioned above at:

Canadian Women's Educational Press  
280 Bloor St. West, Suite No. 305  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Lollipop Power  
P.O. Box 1171  
Chapel Hill, N.C. 27514

New Seed Press  
P.O. Box 3016  
Stanford, Cal. 94305

Contributing reviewers for this issue are Roberto Gautier, Susan Ribner, Ray Anthony Shepard and Jose G. Taylor. Council reviewers are Jane Califf, EdCelina Marcus and Nessa Darren. THE BOOK-SHELF is an on-going department; your comments, suggestions and contributions are welcome.

## DISTAR: Theory

*Continued from page 3*

cating. He states that generally, this child's statements are incomplete, lack plausible syntactic structure, and are grammatically incoherent. At age four, or so the Engelman theory goes, the "child of poverty" does not understand the meaning of such words as "long, full, animal, red, under, first, before, or, if, all and not," and often he "cannot repeat a simple statement such as, 'The bread is under the oven,' even after he has been given four trials" (Engelmann, 1970).

On the basis of data generated from his studies with four-year-old Black children in the Urbana, Illinois, area, Bereiter reported that their primary method of communicating was through the use of gestures and poorly organized phrases. Specifically, he interpreted their verbal behavior as basically a non-logical mode of expressive behavior (Bereiter, 1966).

Bereiter and Engelmann find support for their linguistic deficit model in the works of Martin Deutsch of New York University's Institute of Developmental Studies and Basil Bernstein, an investigator of British language behavior. The Deutsch model, commonly known as a "cumulative deficit model," suggests that academic underachievement is a function of restricted and limited language development, a phenomenon prevalent among "lower-class" Black children (Deutsch, 1967). Bernstein's popularity rests mainly on his formulation of two language codes — one, a restricted, linguistically and semantically "inferior" code most commonly used by the lower classes, and the other, a highly structured linguistically and semantically "correct" code, the dominant speech pattern of the middle class (Bernstein, 1967).

The inference to be drawn from Bereiter and Engelmann is that the Black child is a linguistic monstrosity, whose speech network and communicative processes consist mainly of grunts and groans, hand gestures, low-grade phrases and sentences that are limited in cognitive content.

The verbal deprivation theory is, however, generally rejected by reputable linguists, who hold that language differences are not synonymous with language "inferiority" or cognitive deficiencies. On the contrary, they agree that while nonstandard dialects differ basically from standard, they are highly structured language systems which permit the expression of logical and sequential thought and, therefore, serve as an appropriate means of communication.

### THE DISTAR APPROACH

The content of the Distar program flows from the verbal deprivation theory outlined above. Bereiter and Engelmann, operating on the assumption that many Black children are without language in general and without language for learning in particular, discarded as useless traditional approaches to curriculum. These approaches, they said, were developed for middle-class children who already had a well developed language and who were further blessed with the *right kind* of motivation prerequisite for learning. What was needed was a different kind of program for the Black child because:

The disadvantaged child is different in terms of motivation to work. To treat this child as one would treat a middle-class child is to deny that he is different. To put this child through programs designed for middle-class children is to commit oneself to lock-step teaching. It is in effect to say, "these children will go through the same motions as the middle-class child goes through, regardless of how different these children may be" (Engelmann, 1970).

Consequently, the program was de-

*Continued on page 6*

# INFORMATION CLEARINGHOUSE

The Social Responsibilities Roundtable of the American Library Association regularly publishes a *Newsletter*, which reports its activities and contains discussion and reports of the "alternative" librarian movement. To subscribe to the *Newsletter*, send \$3 (\$10 for institutions) to Sherrie Bergman Friedman, SRRT Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 330, Bristol, R.I. 02809.

Quinto Sol Publications has expanded its award program for Chicano manuscripts. The Premio Quinto Sol for Chicano Literature award has been increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000, and new categories—an open category, a college student category and three awards to high school students—have been added. Details are available from Quinto Sol Publications, P.O. Box 9275, Berkeley, California 94709.

A discussion of biculturalism in the school library will be a part of the Bilingual Bicultural Educational Workshop, to be held in Detroit August 19-24. For details, write to Ms. Alma Flor Ada, Director, IBBS, Mercy College, 8200 West Outer Drive, Detroit, Michigan 48219.

*The Rican*, a bilingual journal of contemporary Puerto Rican thought, is publishing once more, after a hiatus of some months. Its May, 1974, issue is devoted entirely to "Puerto Ricans and Education." Subscriptions are \$4.50 a year for individuals, \$15 a year for institutions. Write The Puerto Rican Journal, Inc., P.O. Box 11039, Chicago, Ill. 60611.

The Puerto Rican Media Action and Educational Council is developing programs to counteract Puerto Rican underrepresentation in the mass media. They are now soliciting resumes for a media skills bank and developing an employment and training resource bank for Puerto Ricans who seek work in the printed and electronic media. For more information and to subscribe to the group's monthly publication, *News*, contact: Puerto Rican Media Action and Educational Council, 1699 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019, Julio Rodriguez, Director, (212) 369-1725.

The New Day Press is publishing a new series of children's paperbacks, *Stories from Black History Series II*. Edited by John McClusky, Assistant Professor of American Studies at Case Western Reserve University, this series concentrates on the Reconstruction period of American history. Brenda Johnston, awarded an honorable mention in last year's CIBC writing contest, has contributed a story on Dred Scott, and two new Black writers—Pamela Pruitt and Frank G. Ceasor Sr.—are featured. Black artists furnished the illustrations. Inquiries about Series I (Pre-Civil War Black History for Children) and Series II should be directed to New Day Press, c/o Karamu House, 2355 East 89th St., Cleveland, Ohio 44106.

Third World Newsreel is a nationwide filmmaking and distribution collective set up after the October 1967 march on the Pentagon against the Vietnam War. Its goal is to make films serve the interests and needs of poor and working people. The important films from Third World Newsreel, available for classroom rental at inexpensive rates, speak out strongly against economic exploitation, racism, sexism, and imperialism, Third World struggles, ecology, labor, and prisons. A 48-page catalog can be obtained by writing to 26 West 20th St., New York, N.Y. 10011, or 1232 Market St., San Francisco, Cal. 94102.

Tricontinental Film Center also distributes shorts and features made by Third World filmmakers (a 28-page catalog is available from 244 West 27th St., New York, N.Y. 10001, or P.O. Box 4430, Berkeley, Cal. 94704), such as *When the People Awake* (Chile), *Memories of Underdevelopment* (Cuba), *Away with All Pests* (China), *Culebra: The Beginning* (Puerto Rico), *A Luta Continua* (Mozambique), *Mexico: The Frozen Revolution*, *Tupamaros* (Uruguay), *Reou-Takh* (Senegal), *Peasants of the Second Fortress* (Japan), *Yo Soy Chicano*, and *Little White Salmon Indian Settlement*. Speakers are also available at film showings, whenever possible.

National Organization for Women, Lincoln Chapter, has published *Sex Role Stereotypes: A Study of Primary Textbooks Used in the Lincoln, Nebraska Public School System*. For each copy, send \$2 to National Organization for Women, P.O. Box 83069, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501, Attention: Betty Corea or Eva Sartori.

*Feminist Resources for Schools and Colleges* (formerly *Feminist Resources for Elementary and Secondary Schools*, which was mentioned in the Information Clearinghouse, Volume 5, No. 1 & 2) is now available in a revised, 19-page version. Send \$1 plus 25¢ postage to The Feminist Press, Box 334, State University of New York, College at Old Westbury, Old Westbury, Long Island, N.Y. 11578.

American Indian Press Association *News Service* is available to Indian publications—newsletters, newspapers, magazines and other periodicals. For information about rates, contact the American Indian Press Association, 1346 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Rm. 206, Washington, D.C. 20036. For publications or other organizations that are not oriented toward American Indians, the weekly packets of news releases on national Indian events are available at a subscription rate of \$100 per year. American Indian Press Association also offers *Medium Rare*, a monthly newsletter covering media developments in the press, radio and television for and about Indians, including a list of media opportunities. Members and subscribers receive *Medium Rare* as part of their services from AIPA. It is available to others at a rate of \$10 a year.



## DISTAR: Content

Continued from page 1

sive, timid, and, in general, inferior to boys. A boy deliberately spills milk on his sister's dress and laughs while she cries; a "bad" man hits Ann with a fan and runs away, leaving her crying; a boy bravely explores an unknown part of a house while his frightened sister timidly trails behind.

All levels of Distar promote the unquestioning acceptance of sex roles. For example, in "The Dog that Liked a Cat" (Library Series, Book 6) a female cat and a male dog get together to frighten a dog that has been bullying them. The dog asks the cat not to tell the other dogs that he is her friend because they will then question if he's a "real dog." He also asks if he may chase her sometimes to maintain his image as a "real dog." The cat agrees. The dog's masculinity is thereby assured, as is the cat's feminine inferiority. Both assume roles rather than honestly admit friendship. Thus they pretend to be what society expects them to be rather than risk the consequences of being what they are.

In the story of Tom and Sally (Level 3, Book C), Sally asks questions and Tom knows all the answers. Commenting on ancient Egypt, Tom says, "When a king dies, they put him in a pyramid with all of his slaves and his goats and wives." Not only are wives listed after goats, but no comment is evoked on the inhumanity of a culture having slaves or of burying people and animals alive. Sally simply asks, "Did you say wives?"

Distar gives no recognition to woman's role in history either. Only male historical figures are shown; only males are shown as discoverers or inventors.

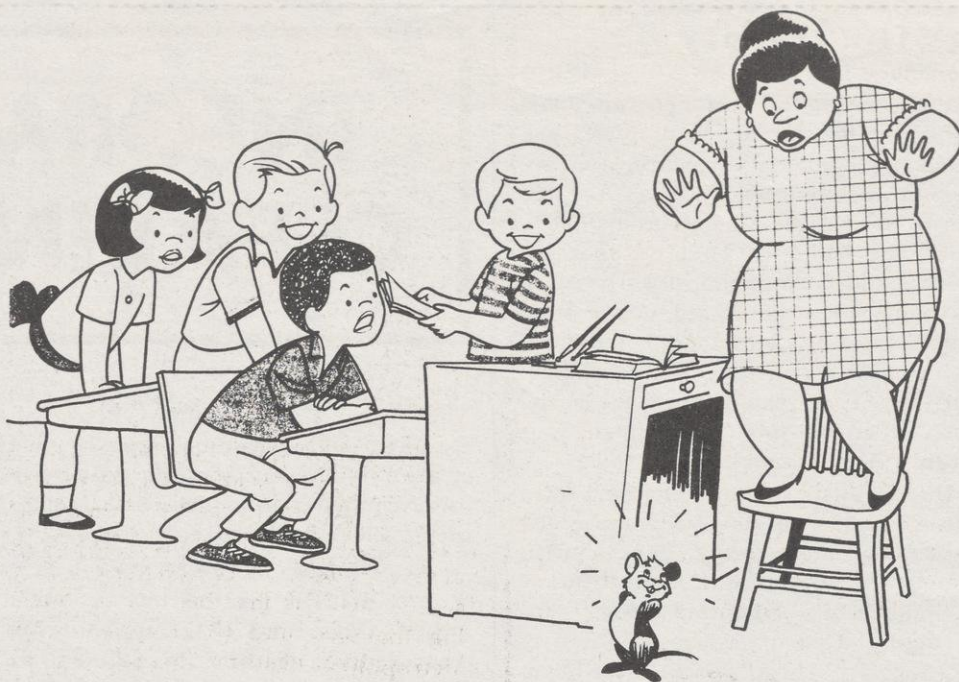
### RACISM

Elements of racism run throughout the Distar materials. At a time when educators are asking that Blacks in school texts be presented in positive roles, it is grossly insensitive to portray a stout Black (?) woman standing on a chair afraid of a mouse while children at their desks laugh at her plight.

Some stories like the "Sid and the Boss" series (Level 3 books) might appear positive because a Black adult is portrayed in an authority position. But a closer look reveals a decidedly insulting situation. The Black man has no name other than "the boss" and he is made to look ridiculous. He constantly gets upset, "jumps up and down" and "stands on his head."

In a number of stories, Black men appear inept while whites are shown in positive problem-solving situations. The Black fisherman is shown as unable to catch a seal while, in the same set of stories, the white mailman successfully delivers mail and another figures out how to watch a ball game, even though the stadium is filled (Library Series, Book 2). There is an illustration of a Black cowboy unable to drive a cow across a river and a story of a greedy Black king who is punished (Library Series, Books 7 and 8).

The treatment of Native Americans is equally offensive. One of the "Take Homes"—sheets given to children as rewards for success in class—is the



picture of a stereotyped Native American with an exaggerated hooked nose and a feather in his hair. The stories about the American Indian show a complete ignorance of Indian culture (Level 3 books). The competitiveness for which Little Bear, the main character, is rewarded is alien to Native American values.

The absurdity of these stories is exemplified by one of Little Bear's observations: "If a hen eats ice cream, it will lay cold eggs." To put such a statement, however humorously intended, in the mouth and mind of an American Indian, whose history and culture show profound understanding of nature, is derogatory. The chief's acceptance of this statement—he says, "Little Bear, you are a very smart Indian boy" and rewards him with a string of beads—is a further insult.

Another aspect of the racism that runs throughout Distar is the traditional ethnocentric Euro-American bias. The only mythology in the Distar stories is the story of Achilles. The omission of any references to African, Asian and Native American mythology continues the emphasis on the importance of Western civilization.

### OTHER ANTI-HUMANIST VALUES

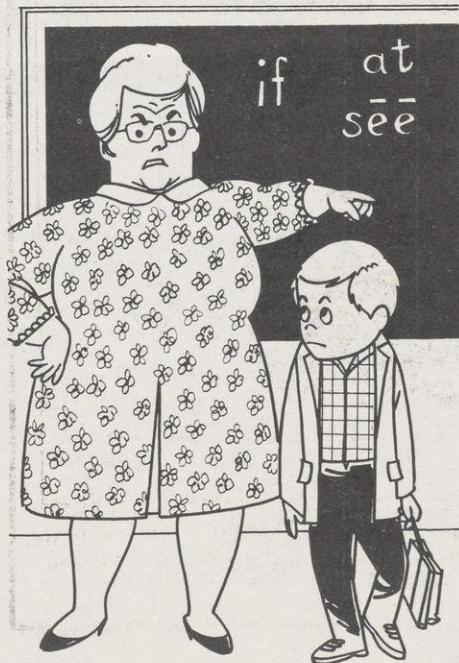
An examination of the content of the reading and language programs for sexism and racism reveals other anti-humanist values that will be conveyed to young minds.

We question the pictures and sentences that call attention to physical differences—large ears, obesity, long hair, baldness, etc.—which frequently and unjustly set some people apart. There is the picture, for example, of a boy with huge ears. The class assignment is to underline the sentence that correctly describes this boy. The choices are: "He has little ears. He has big teeth. He has big ears. He has a big nose." (Reading I Workbook.)

In other exercises, the student must choose sentences commenting on fat people: "His Dad is fat." "They are fat." "He is not fat." (Same workbook.)

Considering the fact that children with obvious physical differences often endure ridicule from their peers, Distar's insensitivity in calling attention to these differences is inexcusable.

Many stories perpetuate materialistic values. Stories discourage people from



Two Distar views of women: the white teacher (above) is shown as a stern authoritarian; the Black teacher (top) is shown as ridiculous. (In Distar illustrations it is difficult to distinguish race, but Black people are stereotypically depicted by broad noses, full lips and black hair.)

doing things unless their efforts result in material gain for themselves. There is the boy who says to his friend, "I will go with you if you give me a bag of candy." In "Fred and the Fat Pig," the pig is unable to cross a river. A fox gets other animals to do the actual work of getting the pig across. Not only does the pig pay the fox, while the other animals get nothing, but in the end the other animals must pay the fox to use the bridge that they themselves constructed.

There is no mention in the teachers' guide that the fox's behavior be criticized, and the implication is that such behavior is clever and should be emulated (Library Series, Book 6).

"The Hill of Hair" (Library Series, Book 4) makes fun of a man with long red hair who passively allows all his hair to be cut off so that a pet shop owner can see if he is a man or a pet.

In general, the stories communicate lack of compassion and concern for others and foster a destructive type of competitiveness.

There are other questionable attitudes that are promulgated by the Distar stories. Many stories, for example, stress unquestioning obedience to those in power. (This goes hand-in-hand with the basic teaching strategy of Distar.) Clear anti-worker bias is reflected in the series about the industrialist Henry Ford and the workers in his factory. The stories depict genius and generosity on the part of management but show no appreciation for the workers' role. In fact, only the competitiveness among the workers is depicted. For example, one worker says to another: "... you're sick, but you remember those men outside waiting for your job. They won't get it. Work, work, work."

## DISTAR: Theory

Continued from page 5

signed for children who are different—different in motivation to work, in language development and verbal competency, and in cognitive endowment.

The primary objective of the Distar program is to provide the child with standard language patterns, to develop his vocabulary and his conceptual skills. The program is based on a behavioristic theory of learning. Specific responses to a prescribed stimulus are required. Children are rewarded for correct responses and penalized for incorrect ones. There is usually only one "right" answer even though more than one may be correct—and/or the "correct" answer is sometimes not necessarily logical. No deviations from the script are permitted. The authors guaranteed that their program would succeed where others had failed. And then, whether from the flush of excitement about their creation of the *ultimate* in instructional programs for the so-called "verbally deprived," or whether from their knowledge of a harried and frustrated group of school administrators, ready and waiting to be plucked, Distar's authors and SRA took the most preposterous step of all. Distar, they proclaimed, is the *only* way to teach basic language, reading and arithmetic skills!

The program purporting to build language skills clearly demonstrates the contempt which the Distar authors hold for the cognitive abilities of some children. In one lesson, for example, the teacher points to line drawings of a snake, an ice cream cone, an elephant and a crayon, and asks, "Is this a man?" In another, she points to a drawing of a house and asks, "Can you wear this?" In still another, she points to a picture of a tricycle and asks, "Can you eat this?" Children giving the correct responses are rewarded with praise or with more tangible rewards.

The reading program proposes to bring into functional use the syntactic and semantic patterns which have been "learned" in the language program, to teach decoding and comprehension skills, and to develop logical ways of thinking. The program uses a slightly modified version of the English alphabet, containing 40 lower case letters, each representing a specific sound. Silent letters are produced in miniature (thus *have* becomes *have*). Children are required to "blend" sounds to form words through a prolonged sounding pattern. For example, children are required to blend "wwwaaalllk" and then "say it fast." They are told by the teacher, "But we don't say 'wwwaaalllk,' we say 'walk' (!) (Exclamation mine).

In most exercises choral responses are required and there is endless repetition to the teacher's request to "say it fast." The learner is exhorted by the teacher to "work hard" and if he does, he is rewarded by a take-home



Count of Boy and Girl Characters in Distar Reading III Stories

Level	Total Stories	Boy Characters	Girl Characters	Boy and Girl Characters	No Boy or Girl Characters
A	38	24	0	0	14
B	30	5	0	1	24
C	37	3	4	14	16
D	30	1	0	0	29
E	35	35	0	0	0
TOTALS	170	68	4	15	83



The Distar Reading Program is divided into three levels. Level I consists of a teacher's guide and four large presentation books. Teachers display the presentation books to their pupils, who sit facing them in a small semi-circle. Students are directed to look at the lesson page and to repeat certain sounds, words or phrases on cue. (The lesson books are printed in two colors: one color indicates exactly what the teacher is to say; the other color indicates exactly what the teacher is to do—how to correct mistakes, when to smile, etc.)

Level I also includes a pupil workbook for class reading assignments and "Take Homes"—instructional sheets, often illustrated, given as rewards to children who master a particular lesson. A "Special Supplement for Student Materials" tells the teacher how to use these "Take Homes."

Level II includes three more presentation books with lists of words to sound out and a "Recycling Book" for reviewing material that children may have forgotten during the summer or absences. "Take Homes" continue to be used.

Level III consists of six individual reading books and for the first time group instruction is based on these individual readers rather than presentation books or "Take Homes."

The Distar Language Program is designed to promote "proper" speech and "logical" thought. It can be used either by itself or in conjunction with the Reading Program. Language I consists of six teacher presentation books; Language II has five. They each have a storybook which the teacher uses to reinforce daily presentation material, and again, "Take Homes" are used as a "reward for achievement" and to reinforce skills.

Distar also includes a separate Arithmetic Program, but this portion is not included in the CIBC analysis.

fisher men had lots of things to ē.t. this  
fisher man did not hav. lots of things to ē.t.



16

This illustration from the Distar library series shows—again—the stereotyped shrewish wife. The text shows Distar's modified alphabet with diacritical marks and small silent letters.

exercise. The teacher is instructed to show her appreciation of the children's performance by "giving them something they want, such as verbal praise, a handshake, or a tangible reward, a piece of colored paper, a raisin, or a small piece of candy." But the non-performing child (and performance requires a child's full attention) is not to receive any of these rewards until he has demonstrated his willingness to attend to task.

#### DISTAR DATA

From a pedagogical and psychosocial point of view, there are serious questions about Distar's validity as a teaching instrument. An analysis of the content and observation of children at work in the program suggest that "vocabulary development" is more a process of labeling than of concept building. The method of teaching decoding skills (Level I-Reading) is questionable, in that it presents extraneous vowel sounds between the consonants and then negates a response after it has been given, as in the case of "wwwaaalllk."

Paradoxically, the very skills which the authors isolate as paramount to the development of abstract thinking

receive little attention (Level III-Reading). Specifically, practice in drawing inferences and conclusions through interpretive reading, or formulating reasonable hypotheses to a problem through analytic reading, or detecting bias and propaganda through critical reading, receive scant attention in this program. Instead there is undue emphasis on rote recall of facts and on following directions. Nonsense words are used to represent objects in the environment. For example, in one lesson "zurch" is used for house and in another, "gleek" for a dresser. According to the Distar Language II guide, this is "to give children practice in asking questions about the object to which you are referring." This serves no useful pedagogical purpose; the time wasted on this activity could be spent developing high frequency words or the comprehension skills noted above.

There is a built-in punitive component in the program in that frequent comparison is made between the child who is paying attention and succeeding and the one who is not. Furthermore, the child's ego and self-image are under constant bombardment as a result of many of the directions which the teacher is required to give. For example, the teacher is in-

structed to praise the child for his "smartness" by permitting him to read a book from the Distar Library Series by saying, "Why are you getting these books? Because you finished lesson 70, and you are really smart." What, then, of the children who have not reached lesson 70? Clearly, these directives are fraught with danger, particularly when given by a hostile teacher!

#### DISTAR'S PEDAGOGICAL METHOD

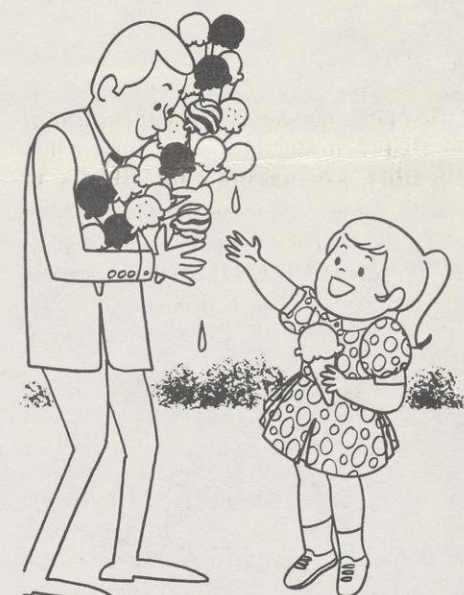
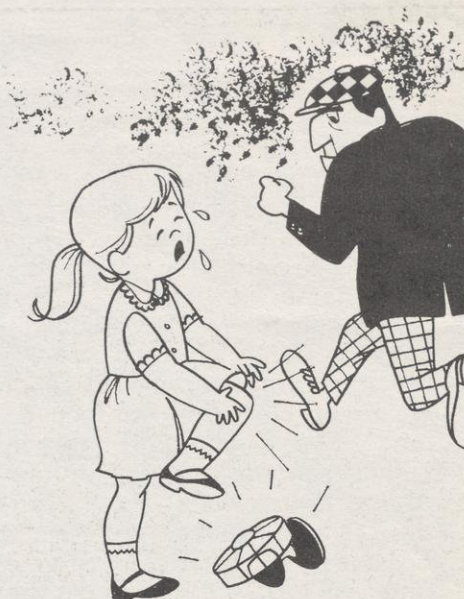
The data reviewed here fall into three categories: (1) Distar's "in-house" research that supports its claims; (2) evaluation by agencies selected to evaluate Distar in two New York City school districts that provides conflicting findings, and (3) the New York Metropolitan Reading Test scores indicating that Distar children are not performing any better than non-Distar children, and, in fact, in too many instances are not performing as well.

Distar's own, "in-house," evaluation, "Summaries of Case Studies on the Effectiveness of the Distar Instructional System," was conducted by SRA and published in 1971 (Gordon, editor, 1971). The report covers findings in 21 case studies in which the number of Distar subjects was very small: 8 of the Distar groups contained less than 20 pupils; in fact, one group had only 8 children. With few exceptions, the number of subjects in the control groups far outweighed the number in the Distar groups. In some instances, the control groups were as much as four times larger than the Distar groups.

In all studies, all three Distar programs—language, reading and arithmetic—were used. The Distar and control groups are vaguely described in one of the studies as having been drawn from "the total, available three- and four-year-old functionally retarded disadvantaged population in the district," and in another that they came from "families headed by primarily semi-skilled and service workers, welfare recipients, and unemployed." Race designation indicated that, in some instances, they were all Black, in others, Black, Puerto Rican and white. Since the reports are presented in summary form, there is no information indicating how the subjects were selected, how the population was maintained during the life of the project, or how much time was spent

Continued on page 8

Below, from left to right are various Distar stereotypes of women: the bossy mother (two illustrations, both women apparently Black), the angry housewife, the helpless woman, and the sloppy, exhausted housewife. Meanwhile, a father—all clean and smiling—dispenses ice cream cones. (At the top, right) Distar's little girls fit into the same stereotypes as the women. The puzzled little girl is ready to literally step into her mother's shoes, and a little girl cries passively after a "bad man" has hurt her.





Distar is by no means a new educational concept, as some believe. Actually, it has taken the worst of traditional American teaching methods and refined them. While it purports to teach the basic skills to "disadvantaged" children, a close analysis reveals assumptions and methods which work against the very children it claims to help.

The false assumption that the language of poor children is insufficient for logical thought helps perpetuate the equally false view that such children are somehow inferior. The emphasis on rote memorization and on endless repetition promotes the development of pupils who have no need to think except superficially. The assumption that children will only learn if there are external rewards such as raisins and candy reflects our society's attitude toward work and the alienation people feel from their own work. It also teaches children to work not for their own satisfaction, but for a specific set of external rewards.

Just as Distar does not believe that children can learn for their own "internal" satisfaction, so it mistrusts teachers and insists that they not teach unless their every action is strictly prescribed. The teachers' guides tell them when to speak, what to say, when to stop, at what point to praise and the precise words they are to use. Words of praise become a predicted response and lose all sincerity. The pupil-teacher relationship becomes impersonal; teachers and pupils perform like robots—the former act and the latter react obediently and unquestioningly on cue. Any deviation from the boring, repetitious script is considered a waste of time.

And underlying all of this is the racist and classist assumption that minority and working class children need this sterile, one-tracked, rote approach if they are to learn. Ignored is the need for a curriculum that shows respect for different cultures and different languages, that stimulates imagination and creativity and that provides books to inspire interest and excitement in reading.

in instruction in each subject area.

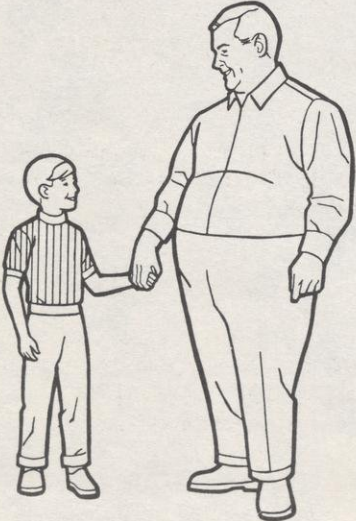
In any event, in each of the 21 cases, Distar's data indicate that Distar children outscored all other children in reading performance on standardized reading tests, and that in some instances they surpassed the national norms.

On the basis of these findings, established on such limited sample sizes, Distar proceeds to draw unwarranted generalizations about the effectiveness of its program, stating that it "has successfully done the job it was intended to do" (Gordon, 1971).

Reputable researchers tend to state the limitations of their findings and suggest cautious interpretations of the data, particularly in studies using



Above: the clumsy fat woman is used to illustrate the word "sack." Below: the fat man illustrates a Distar workbook question.



a rat has a fat t<sup>ā</sup>l.

his dad is fat.

his mom is sad.

her nām<sub>e</sub> is ron.

colorful format," and its failure to consider "alternative methods and materials" (Vine & Mayher, 1971). The report makes a pertinent point in its summary statement: "If we have learned anything about the teaching of reading it is that there is no one approach that will work best with all children."

It should be mentioned here that this particular project was exceptionally expensive; \$54,000 was spent on "Distar equipment" and \$15,000 on hiring an SRA consultant for 60 days to teach teachers how to use Distar material (Vine & Mayher, 1971).

The 1973 NYU report on District 15 is more favorable to Distar. This report, covering the 1972-73 school year, indicates that Distar was a success in District 15, and presents statistical data to buttress this claim. On the other hand, the report declares that "the effectiveness of the program rested heavily upon the quality of the teaching employed" (Kastner & Hollinshead, 1973). This statement raises the question: When children learn via Distar, is it the result of the program, or is it the teaching competency of the classroom teacher? The report answers the question: "It has become an educational truism that any curriculum or method is only as good as the teacher who uses it. This applies to Distar as well" (Kastner & Hollinshead, 1973).

The second "outside" evaluation was carried out by the Institute for Educational Development, which examined Distar's success in School District 14. The Institute's 1973 report indicated that Distar is alive and well in that district. The program has been in operation since 1970 and during the 1972-73 school year, it serviced kindergarten through third grade in all 21 of the district's elementary schools, at a cost of \$1,816,200 for the school year. How "well" the program is working, however, can be ascertained by the data which follow in category 3.

METROPOLITAN READING SCORES

This category deals with the Metropolitan Reading Test scores, which are the criteria by which New York City children's reading competency is judged and decisions about promotion are made. Whether the use of standardized achievement test scores for these purposes is feasible or reasonable is not at issue here. Those criteria are used in this city and consequently the performance of Distar children must be measured by the same criteria. And if the Distar program is all that its authors promise it to be, then we would expect Distar children to turn in a better performance than non-Distar children, even scoring in some instances above the national norms.

In order to equate the effectiveness of Distar reading, the performance of Distar children is judged against the performance of non-Distar children. This section focuses on two Distar districts: District 14, which has been in the Distar program since 1969, and District 15, in the program since 1970. (These two districts are also analyzed under category 2 above.) In addition, School X, in District 23, is included in this analysis, since that has been a Distar school since 1968 and was one of the first Distar experimental projects. (The letter X is used to preserve the anonymity of the school.)

District 5, in Harlem, was selected by this writer as the "comparison district" because of its predominantly Black school population and because it is in an economically depressed area. While Districts 14 and 15 are predominantly Puerto Rican, this ethnic group is also designated as "disadvantaged" and has low test scores. The only district with a significant white population is District 15. See Table I which lists the major ethnic

TABLE I			
Black, Puerto Rican and White Populations in Three New York City School Districts and School X			
District	Black	Puerto Rican	(white)
14*	25.5	61.4	9.1
15*	17.9	49.6	27.8
5	85.5	11.6	.8
23, School X	88.8	10.4	.5

\* indicates Distar Projects

This table does not include Asians, Native Americans or Spanish-speaking Americans other than Puerto Ricans. They total approximately 4 per cent or less in each district.

distributions of these two districts, District 5 and School X.

Table II presents the number of schools scoring at or above grade level in three districts, and for School X, during 1971 and 1973. The table covers grades 2 through 5. (It should be noted that a school having, for example, 4 third grade classes, 2 scoring low and 2 scoring high, may reach the national average of 3.7 for the third grade.

These data do not support Distar's claims of superior performance for Distar children. In fact, School X, which has been on Distar since 1968, does not register one grade average at or above the national average. On the other hand, District 5, a non-Distar district, had a total of 25 schools (second through fifth grades) scoring at or above grade level in 1971 and 1973. This total number is higher than that recorded for District 14, with a total of 21 schools over the same period, and slightly lower than for District 15, which has a total of 30.

We cannot state with certainty that the fourth and fifth grade classes in Districts 14 and 15 are made up of previous Distar children. But since the program has been in District 14 since 1969 and in District 15 since 1970, it is reasonable to assume that a considerable number of children now in the second and third grades were once in Distar. Thus it is possible that the high totals for District 14 and 15 in the second grade during the 1973 school year may be due to substantial influence from the Distar program.

It is to be noted, however, that there is a startling drop in the totals for the third grades in these two districts, such that we can infer that decoding skills attained up to the second grade were not functional in the third grade. We also note a specific pattern of performance in that there is a steady decline in reading achievement beginning with the third grade, whether in a Distar or non-Distar district. (This is a pattern that plagues many other New York City districts as well.) It is probably due to the following fac-

TABLE II									
Number of Schools Scoring At or Above the National Norms in Three Distar and one Non-Distar New York City Districts, 1971, 1973; Grades 2, 3, 4, 5.									
District	Number of Schools Reporting	Grade 2		Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5	
		'71	'73	'71	'73	'71	'73	'71	'73
5	20	9	7	4	3	2	0	0	0
14*	20	5	12	0	2	0	0	1	1
15*	20	8	11	2	4	2	2	0	0
23, School X		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

\* indicates Distar Projects



tors: (1) In grade 2, New York City children are administered the primary level of the Metropolitan Reading Test. This level taps decoding skills with little emphasis on comprehension. If one analyzes second grade scores for the entire city, it becomes apparent that few classes in this grade fall far below the median score, which is 2.7, or the seventh month of the second year, since the test usually is administered in April of each year. (2) Beginning with the third grade, however, the elementary level of the test is administered. This level focuses on comprehension skills, with particular emphasis on inferential skills, rather than on literal reading (the lowest level in the comprehension hierarchy). In fact, in the elementary test administered in the 1972-73 school year, 26 items dealt with finding the main idea of a selection and drawing inferences, as opposed to 13 items requiring literal reading.

These important comprehension skills are not developed in the Distar program, nor apparently in many other programs.

The data indicate that Distar is not the panacea for reading failure. But the greatest danger may not lie in Distar's failure to teach children how to read. What may be far more damaging is the possible insidious effect which the verbal deprivation theory may have upon teachers and Black children: Distar's false assumption of the limited language and inferior cognitive abilities of Black children may serve as a powerful reinforcer of the myth of Black inferiority.

Furthermore, the rigid, behavioristic theoretical model which tolerates no deviation in behavior is likely to develop automatons who, like Pavlov's dog, will salivate at the ring of the bell rather than critical thinking persons who will seek alternative solutions to problems.

Parents and educators should weigh these criticisms when making a determination about whether or not to continue using Distar or to purchase it for their school.

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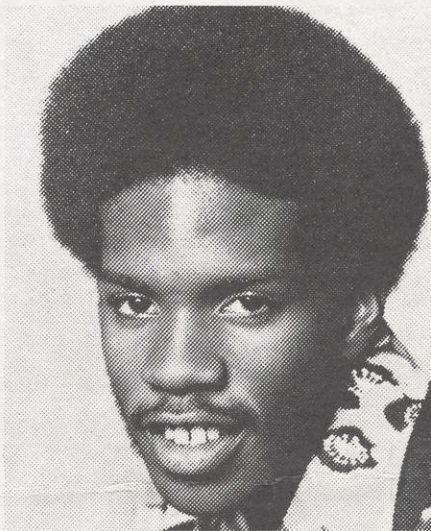
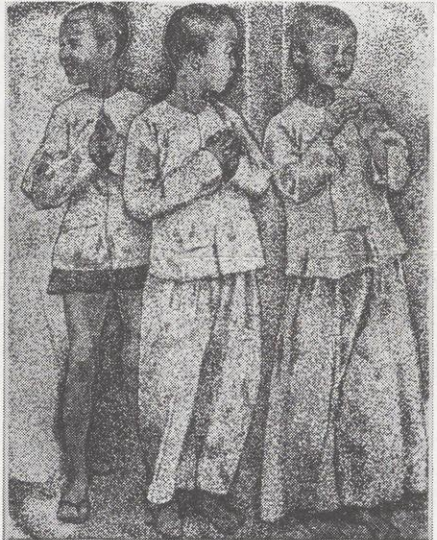
# ART DIRECTORS, TAKE NOTE



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Landres Dessisso, a graduate of the High School of Art and Design, has done illustrations for *Ski*, *Cavalier* and other magazines, album covers, and set designs. Mr. Dessisso can be reached through the Council or telephone (212) 864-6791.



Terry Croom attended the School of Visual Arts on a full scholarship. Among his free-lance assignments has been work for *Black Sports* magazine. (It should be added that Mr. Croom's work displays a tonal range that should be seen in full color.) Mr. Croom's address is 159-26 Harlem River Dr., New York, N.Y. 10039; tel.: (212) 283-5069.



Oren Lyon, chief of the Turtle Clan of the Onodaga Nation, is associate professor of American History at State University of New York, Buffalo. He did the illustrations for Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve's *Jimmy Yellow Hawk* (which won the Council's manuscript contest) and *High Elk's Treasure*, and for his own book, *Dog Story* (all published by Holiday House). Mr. Lyon can be reached at Box 13, Nedrwo, N.Y. 13120.



# The Role of Parents in Distar's "Behavior Modification" Program

The creators of the Distar Reading and Language Programs have also published guide books for the parents of children participating in these courses of study. *Teaching Children, A Child Management Program for Parents* and *Home Practice for Parent and Child* were both published by the Engelmann-Becker Corporation in 1969.

In these two publications, parents are encouraged to accept—never to question—Distar programs. Distar and whatever else is happening in the classroom is projected as educationally sound and in need of no criticism or change. Therefore, parents must do everything in their power to see that their children adapt to the classroom situation. Children who do not studiously and unquestioningly do all their assigned work must be manipulated to do so and parents are given many behavior modification techniques to make their children passive and obedient, following all rules dictated by adults.

## CHILDREN LIKE SPONGES

Parents are told to enforce the following rule: "You do what I want you to do before you get to do what you want to do." If children object, parents are advised: "Ignore protests about rules. Do not get trapped into arguing with your child about 'fairness' or 'reasonableness' of a rule. . . . Behave with the attitude, 'That's the way it is.' . . . You can last longer than your child. . . ."

There is never a suggestion that a child has any right to question or criticize rules or to participate in making them. Children, in the view of Distar's creators, are like sponges. They must absorb everything and regurgitate on cue.

Behavior modification techniques are also to be used to encourage children to bring home and complete their Distar assignments. It is suggested that parents give their children points for each completed assignment and for improvement in behavior. A certain

number of points will result in a prize, such as a candy bar or potato chips for 25 points, "play a game with Mommy" for 20 points, "play ball with Daddy" for 10 points. Parents' behavior, like that of teachers and children, is prescribed.

## REWARDS AT WORK

Many examples of the "successful" use of this reward system are given to encourage parents to use it. In one instance, a class of 17 disruptive children from "disadvantaged homes" is described. The teacher spent most of her time disciplining the children. Instead of analyzing her teaching methods or the content of the lessons which might have alienated the students, she taped a little notebook to each child's desk. Every 15 minutes the children would receive points (as well as praise) for good behavior. The points could be traded in for such items as candy, comics, perfume and kites. The class soon became the "best" behaved in the school.

Engelmann and Becker conclude: "The rewards for the program cost \$80.76 during the eight weeks it was in effect. Rewards appear to be less expensive than psychologists. \$80 would pay for only three hours of a psychologist's time." The authors did not consider that if the curriculum had been changed, implemented differently and made more relevant to these pupils, points—not to mention psychologists—might have been completely unnecessary.

Distar's authors admit that it might be necessary to convince children to work for a particular reward or "pay-off":

After the child has learned to work for a particular pay-off, it is possible to teach the child to work for other pay-offs simply by treating a new pay-off as if it were as much fun as other reinforcers he knows about. "If you do this job, I'm going to let you work your arithmetic sheet. How about that?" This approach is similar to the one Tom Sawyer used to convince his friends that whitewashing a fence was the supreme reinforcing activity.

The implication is to be deceitful with children if necessary. This advice also underestimates children's intelligence; few youngsters would leap at the chance to do an arithmetic or reading sheet just because their parents pretend it would be fun.

To deal with any questions a parent may raise about the reward system, we find the following in *Home Practice for Parent and Child*:

"Q. Why do you give the children raisins and other rewards?

A. Would you work without a paycheck? All behavior is influenced by its pay-off."

It does not occur to Engelmann and Becker that reading can be its own re-

ward; that teachers can convey to their students an enthusiasm for reading simply by showing them that learning the sounds of the alphabet and decoding words will enable them to read many interesting and exciting books—books that can teach them how to do many things, take them to faraway places, acquaint them with different peoples and cultures, or provide them with a joyful reading experience.

It also does not seem to occur to Engelmann and Becker that children may need external rewards because the excessive repetitiveness, dullness, rigidity and emptiness of the Distar program require external rewards to keep the children attentive and in their seats.

## POSITIVE WAYS TO DEAL WITH BIASED CONTENT

Many of the criticisms of the Distar Reading series can be applied to other reading programs as well. What, then, can the teacher or parent do to counteract the racism, sexism, distorted values or plain inanity present in many children's stories? Fortunately, these stories can be used effectively to teach critical thinking and to develop in children greater sensitivity toward others. Here are some suggestions:

**1. Have children analyze the behavior of characters toward one another.** Ask: What do you think of the way (character's name) behaved? How would you have acted if you were (character's name)?

For example, Distar's "The Hill of Hair" (described in the article about the program's content), in which the owner of a pet shop cuts off all the hair of a long-haired man to find out if he is "a pet or a man," raises many thought-provoking questions for discussion: Did the pet shop owner have a right to cut off all of the man's hair? Why or why not? Is short hair or no hair better than long hair? Why? Are people entitled to wear their hair in any style they please? Explain. If you were the long-haired man, would you have been happy to lose it all? Why or why not? What would you have done if you had been this man?

**2. Discuss the plot of the story.** For example, ask: Does this story make sense? If not, what is wrong with it? What happened at the beginning of the story? What happened at the end? Did you expect this ending? Why? How else could this story have ended?

For instance, in "Dozy, Bring a Hamburger" (Distar Language I Storybook), Dozy is asked by his boss to bring him a hamburger. He brings him a shoe, a tree and other items instead, angering the boss. Finally, when Dozy brings a hamburger, the boss is happy. Questions such as the following can spark an interesting discussion: Does it make sense to you that a boy would bring his boss a shoe or a tree instead of a hamburger? Why or why not? Do you know anyone who would behave in this way? Do you think the boss should have gotten his own hamburger? Why or why not? If you were to write a story about a boss asking a worker to get him a hamburger, what would you have them say and do?

**3. Examine the standards of physical attractiveness.** Contrast the representations of beauty and ugliness; see if obesity or some other characteristic is depicted in a disparaging manner. Discuss: What do the words "beautiful" and "ugly" mean to you? Compare the children's responses and ask: Do these words mean the same to everyone? When you choose your friends, what do you look for? Why? Which is more important—the way people look or the way they treat one another? Why?

**4. Analyze what is required for ac-**

ceptance. A popular story theme features an animal or person who in some way deviates from the group and who must perform an heroic feat to win acceptance. Discuss: Should people who look or act differently or have different interests be rejected? Should it be necessary for them to do something special to prove their worth?

**5. Check how minority peoples are portrayed.** Note if they are shown as ridiculous; if they function in essentially subservient roles; if they have to exhibit superior qualities to be accepted; or if solutions to their problems depend on the benevolence of a white person. These stereotypes should not be ignored. To counteract a portrayal of minority people as inferior, teachers can read stories which present a better view of minorities and make available books which show Black people, Asians, Chicanos, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans as decision makers, authority figures, creators or inventors. Comparisons can be made between such people and those portrayed in the textbook.

For example, in "Sid and the Boss" stories (Distar Level III Reader), the boss, a Black adult male, becomes very impatient whenever Sid, a young white boy, does not understand what he is saying. To show his anger, the boss "jumps up and down" and "stands on his head." In this instance, children can be asked the following: Have they ever seen an adult behave in this manner? What is the best way to treat someone whom you are trying to teach? If you were the boss, how would you have behaved toward Sid?

To offset this ludicrous picture of a Black adult male, the teacher could read to her pupils or tell them about Black men like Langston Hughes and W.E.B. DuBois who have made important contributions to American life.

**6. Note if a story is based on a distorted interpretation of minority or non-Western history or culture.** For example, do "savage" American Indians threaten "peaceful" settlers? Read or paraphrase interpretations from other sources. Be sure to include books in which minority people present their own point of view. Older children can do their own research. Compare the findings. Stress the importance of not relying on only one book for information. Help develop a healthy suspicion of the printed word.

**7. Compare behaviors and activities for girls and boys.** Are girls portrayed as passive, fearful or uncreative, while boys make decisions and engage in interesting activities? Ask: Is this an accurate view of girls' interests and abilities? What are boys doing that girls could do and vice versa?

## SIXTH ANNUAL CONTEST

FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN, ASIAN AMERICAN,  
AMERICAN INDIAN, CHICANO AND PUERTO RICAN  
WRITERS WHO ARE UNPUBLISHED IN  
THE CHILDREN'S BOOK FIELD

FIVE PRIZES OF \$500 EACH

Minority writers are invited to submit manuscripts for children's books. Any literary form—picture or story book, poetry, fiction or non-fiction—is acceptable as long as it is free of racist and sexist stereotypes. For contest rules please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Contest Committee, Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, New York, New York 10023.

CONTEST ENDS DECEMBER 31, 1974



8. **Dramatize stories the class has read.** Encourage children to change the story line and the character's behavior. Transform a timid girl into a brave one or change a fox that will only help another animal for a fee to one that offers its services out of good will. (Boys and girls should be free to portray characters of the opposite sex. This may help break down stereotyped behaviors and enable boys and girls to better understand one another.)

9. **Note if the book presents an all (or almost all) white world.** Many reading texts portray a white world with a few Blacks, Asians or Native Americans scattered here and there. Point out that this is not a realistic picture and that Caucasians comprise less than one third of the world's population. Read stories about peoples in Asia, Africa and South America which show an appreciation of their contributions to the world as well as a respect for their cultures.

10. **Contact publishers.** Children can write letters protesting any stereotypes or distortions in the story line or illustrations that the class has detected. (This is a meaningful way to teach the value of letter writing.)

## Listing of Asian American "Heroes and Heroines" Challenged

In the last issue of the *Bulletin* (Vol. 5, No. 3), an article on "10 Quick Ways to Analyze Books for Racism and Sexism" included a list of minority heroes and heroines often omitted or maligned in textbooks. The following statement is a response to the Asian American listing. It was prepared by Jean Yonemura, student representative of the Asian American Studies Department, City College of New York.

Asian Americans have always been a small minority in the United States. We have been small in number, but we have made significant contributions to American society ever since we first came here. But in order to determine who our heroes and heroines are, we should not look for famous or outstanding individuals in particular fields. We should look at the collective strength of Asian American working people, and there we may find our heroes and heroines numbering in the thousands.

Going back to the early Asian American immigrants, we find that Chinese laborers were the most important work force in building the Western section of the transcontinental railroad. They and the Chinese mine workers faced unprecedented racial attacks in California. Chinese laborers worked under grueling conditions thousands of miles from home, and without their labor America would have been divided and the development of the West would have been set back many years.

### IMMIGRANT FARM WORKERS

Japanese and Filipino immigrants worked primarily as farm laborers, in most cases without owning their own farmland. They worked long and hard to bring food to the tables of American families, and joined together with the many Mexican farm workers, who are still fighting for a decent way of life in return for their toil in the fields.

Today, more than 100 years after the first large-scale Asian immigration to America, we find that most of our people are still working people. Many of our parents' generation especially still work in garment factories, restaurants and laundries, in a day-to-day struggle for survival. They not only face these hardships of work but

also the difficulties of living in a society permeated by racism and based on keeping Asians "in their place" and in oppressive community conditions. And they struggle not only for themselves, but for their children and for the generations to come.

We take courage from our Asian American resisters—those who say "enough" to racism and oppression in all its many forms. We applaud those among us who take initiative to challenge the degrading stereotypes of Asians; who actively involve themselves in the day-to-day community struggles for our people's rights and for better livelihoods; who spread the word about our people's history and alternative value systems for the present; who strive to bring about greater unity among our people; and who fight to open new areas in which Asians may combat racism and struggle for a better American society.

We find our heroes and heroines in all walks of life, and in all periods of our history in America. Our elderly have lived through many changes, and they are our ties with our past heritage as early immigrants to America. They have learned much through the struggles that it took to live in this country, and they symbolize the strength of our people. Asian working people are, each day, continuing to contribute to American society in many different ways and to provide a background for our struggle. The young represent the future of our people, and will certainly continue the fight for our rights, for our people as a whole, and for a better America. These are our Asian American "heroes" and "heroines."

## Conference Broaches Problems of Minority Waiters

A discussion of the problems of minority writers was held as part of a recent Arts Drop-In at Columbia University, New York City.

At the outset, the question of a correct "label" for the discussion was raised when John O. Killens, the novelist, carefully defined the term "minority" as essentially a relative one. He also objected to the term "Third World," declaring that to be a second-class citizen was bad enough.

Since most of the conference participants were Black (and, it might be added, male), the discussion focused on some problems of Black writers, many of which are shared by other "minority" writers. Killens pointed out that Blacks are no longer the "in thing" for publishing houses in the 70's, and that the Black writer who does find a publisher is then often faced with a white editor who is defensive about the portrayal of white characters. In addition, Killens stated, "universality" is often lauded, but it is defined only on white terms. However, as Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian novelist, pointed out, universality can exist only as it is drawn from specific experience, whether "minority" or not.

Killens added that the "Black experience"—seen only from a negative view point and dealing with negative matters such as Black despair—is often seen as the only subject fit for Black writers. Chivuzo Ude, a former editor at Doubleday who is now chairman of Nok Publishers, confirmed this contention, stating that establishment publishers demand that the "minority" writer fit certain pre-established molds. However, as Killens later stated, the Black experience is many-faceted, and the Black writer's responsibility is to speak truthfully to Black people.

Addison Gayle, Jr., editor of *The Black Aesthetic* (Doubleday, 1972), added that a Black writer's job is to serve the Black community according to its needs. He stated, too, that the Black writer bears a responsibility for halting the "mad rush" of Blacks towards "American" values and "making it."

# INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

## Africa

A 62-page catalog of socio-political, cultural, and literary books on African studies is available from the Africana Publishing Company, 101 5th Ave., New York, N.Y. 10003.

"Presses of Africa" is a special edition of the *Small Press Review* compiled by Special Guest Editor Joseph Bruchac. The issue—Volume 5, No. 4 (20)—includes articles about African publishers, periodicals, and a bibliography of African books in print. Single issues are \$1; order from Dustbooks, P.O. Box 1056, Paradise, Cal. 95969.

The Committee to Support the Republic of Guinea-Bissau is serving as a clearinghouse for educational material on that country that has been produced by different organizations. For information on available posters, tapes, films and literature write to the Committee at 164 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

The Liberation Support Movement provides an audio-visual program on Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe (southern Rhodesia), Namibia (southwest Africa), Azania (south Africa), and other countries in Africa. Films, slides, photo exhibits, posters, and publications put out by the LSM are available from the LSM Information Center, Box 93228, Richmond, B.C., Canada. (604) 278-2992.

The American Committee on Africa assists people interested in African affairs, particularly the struggles in Southern Africa against racial and economic injustice, by providing resource materials and speakers. For their literature list, write to the committee at 164 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016. Some titles of publications include *U.S. Corporations in Southern Africa* (\$1.50), *IBM in South Africa*, 20 pp. (\$1), *Chrysler, Ford, and GM in South Africa*, 36 pp. (\$1), *Angola: Five Centuries of Portuguese Exploitation*, 112 pp. (\$2.50), and *Gulf Oil: Portuguese Ally in Angola*, 27 pp. (\$1)

## Brazil

American Friends of Brazil is an independent non-profit organization whose main activity is to publish the *Brazilian Information Bulletin* four times a year. Subscriptions are \$3 a year for individuals, \$5 for institutions. Write American Friends of Brazil, P.O. Box 2279, Station A, Berkeley, Cal. 94702.

## Great Britain

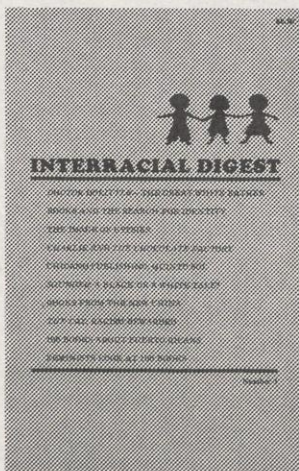
*Race Today* is a monthly magazine that covers race relations, concentrating on Great Britain and the Commonwealth countries. Subscriptions are \$6 a year; write *Race Today*, 184 Kings Cross Road, London WC1, England.

## Sweden

Swedish Professor Göte Klingberg of the Gothenburg School of Education reports that some of his students have been doing interesting papers on children's book portrayals of Third World people, stereotypes of ethnic and professional groups, sex roles, etc. Although there has been little research into these questions, Professor Klingberg cited three authoritative sources: Anna Jensen's *Børnebogens samfundsskildring* (The depiction of society in the children's book) in *Børne- og ungdomsbøger. Problemer og analyser*, edited by Sven Møller Kristensen and Preben Ramkv, Copenhagen 1969; Kari Skjønberg's *Kjønnsroller, miljø og sosial lagdeling i barnelitteraturen* (Sex roles, milieu and social group division in children's literature), Oslo 1972; and Rita Liljeström's *Könsroller i ungdomsböcker och massmedia* (Sex roles in books for young people and mass media) in *Kynne eller kön? Om könsrollerna i det moderna samhället* by Per Holmberg et al., Stockholm 1966.

## West Germany

A 10-page *Annotated Bibliography of West German Children's Literature about African American Life*, prepared by Jörg Becker, is available from the Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y., 10023, for cost of Xeroxing (50¢). The listing includes books from Austria and Switzerland.



Order your Copy of this New Book Now!

The *Interracial Digest*—containing 10 of the best articles from previous *Bulletins*—is now available. In a handy 5 1/2" X 8 1/2" format, the 48-page *Digest* includes reviews of such children's classics as "Doctor Dolittle," "The Cay," "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" and "Sounder," as well as general articles on the portrayal of minorities in children's books. The *Digest* is available free to new institutional or contributing subscribers (see coupon on page 12) or it can be obtained from the Council, 1841 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10023, for \$2.50.



## PIPPI

Continued from page 2

around like a shadow.

But most baffling of all is the fact that the supposedly liberated Pippi is herself full of sexist attitudes toward her two friends. At the end of the first chapter in *Pippi Longstocking*, Pippi gives each of her new playmates little gifts to remember her by. "Tommy got a dagger with a shimmering mother-of-pearl handle, and Annika a little box with a cover decorated with pink shells. In the box there was a ring with a green stone." And when Pippi on one occasion hides things for her friends to find, it is a useful item for Tommy (a notebook with a silver pencil) but for Annika a red coral necklace. Tommy also gets a flute, some paint and a jeep, while Annika gets more things to adorn herself with, a brooch and a red parasol.

The sex roles are so clearly defined that although Pippi herself doesn't play with dolls, she doesn't think twice before buying one for Annika (*Pippi*



The films of Astrid Lingren's books feature Inger Nilsson as Pippi.

*Goes on Board*) and for Tommy—guess what? A pop gun! And when Tommy decides that he too wants to become a pirate like Pippi when he grows up, Annika is very upset and says: "I don't dare become a pirate. What'll I do then?" But Pippi knows. "Oh, you can come along anyway," she says, "and dust the grand piano." (Italics mine.)

Even when dealing with Pippi's absent mother and father, the writer manages a nice bit of sexism. The mother is whisked off to heaven, where she is now an angel, watching over Pippi, while the father "formerly the Terror of the Sea, [is] now cannibal king." What can be more passive and spiritless (!) than an angel? What more fascinating and awe-inspiring than a father who is a Terror?

Once again, just as with racism, the sexism serves no purpose other than to perpetuate well established sex roles without questioning, without evaluation. Pippi embodies a complete set of glorified but questionable white, male values: strength, wealth, success, defiance and staunch unemotionalism. Feminists in both America and Sweden are beginning to feel that there are a great many so-called female values that need appreciation as well. Tenderness, consideration for others, and richness of feeling ought no longer to be demerited as "silly" and "feminine" but elevated as most desirable attributes in both sexes.

That Lindgren has also created one of the most amazing, hilarious and charming heroines in juvenile literature doesn't alter any of this. On the contrary, the mere fact that Pippi is increasingly successful (see accompanying box) among young readers, makes

it more important than ever that parents, teachers, librarians and publishers are made aware of these negative aspects of the books. Now, when the concepts of racism and sexism are under mounting scrutiny all over the world, a revision of the Pippi books would seem both necessary and timely. For although this is neither the place nor the time to worry about Pippi's economic future, both Astrid Lindgren and her publishers might soon find that their little gold mine has become obsolete.

And that would ultimately deprive countless youngsters all over the world of one of their most rewarding reading experiences. The Pippi books would be just as funny, just as "inspiring," without their racist and sexist aspects. As Pippi herself says: "Don't worry about me. I'll always come out on top."

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KIK REEDER, who is visiting the U.S., is a Swedish journalist-writer who has been working for the Scandinavian press as a fiction editor.

## CONTEST AWARD WINNERS PUBLISHED

Three manuscripts that won awards in the Council contest for minority writers will be published next spring.

Two of this past year's winners have already been accepted for publication. "Morning Arrow" by Nanabah Chee Dodge (winner in the American Indian category) will be published by Lothrop, Lee & Shepard. "The Year of the Trees" by Mildred Taylor (winner of the Black American category) will be brought out by Dial Press under the title "Song of the Trees." The book will be illustrated by the Black artist Mahiri Fufuka.

Lothrop, Lee & Shepard will also publish "Morning Song" by MinFong Ho. This manuscript was a winner in the Fourth Annual Contest (Asian American category) in 1972.

The publication of these three books brings to 21 the number of new books published as a result of the contest. For a complete report on this year's contest winners, please see the last

bulletin (Vol. 5, No. 3). For details about entering the next contest, please see the box on page 10.

## Conference Reveals Need for Better Bilingual Materials

About 4,000 teachers and administrators in bilingual programs nationwide attended the annual bilingual bi-cultural conference in New York City, May 15-18, at the Waldorf-Astoria. Participants chose from among 100 workshops dealing with methods of teaching children of two languages and cultures.

Although no workshop on racism and sexism in bilingual materials was offered, a look at the books in the commercial exhibits revealed the need for one—publishers' booths were filled with racist and sexist texts and fiction. Many books featured only blond, white children; others were merely bilingual versions of the standard (racist and sexist) "classics." Most of the Spanish books, imported from Spain and Mexico, were utterly irrelevant to bilingual children in the United States.

Teachers interested in fighting sexism and racism in bilingual materials should write to publishers, school administrators and the Council. Perhaps next year's conference (information on its whereabouts will be released in September) will respond by holding workshops that challenge the *status quo* in bilingual books.

## Join Us at the ALA, July 8th

The American Library Association will hold its annual conference in New York City from July 7 to July 13. The Council will present a workshop on racism in children's books at the conference. The presentation will be Monday, July 8 at 2 p.m. in the Waldorf-Astoria's Empire Room. We invite all our readers to this workshop. If you are attending the ALA conference, you can participate without prior arrangement. If you are not an ALA participant and would like to attend, please contact the Council.

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