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CHILDREN LEARNING TO WRITE:

A PROGRESSION THROUGH PREDICTABLE STAGES

(TITLE)

BY

SHIRLEY D. VESTAL

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1993

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Abstract

A first-grade teacher documents her students' progression through predictable stages as they learn to write: distinct units of scribbling and/or ground line and profile in drawing, letters, words, sentences, story structure (character, setting, problem, solving the problem, and ending the story/telling how the characters felt), and conventions (capital letters, punctuation, and conventional spelling).

Criteria based on readability at each stage by a knowledgeable and sensitive reader are an important aspect of this study.

The class writes every day using a five-day story format:

Day One:	Character	Pink paper
Day Two:	Setting	Blue paper
Day Three:	Problem	Yellow paper
Day Four:	Solve the problem	White paper
Day Five:	End the story/tell how the characters felt	Green paper

At whatever writing stage the child is, at least a picture can be drawn. The child begins to use letters, makes words, writes sentences, progresses through the story-structure stage, and begins to use conventions.

The literate climate in which writing occurs in this classroom is described and explained. The first week's data report is day-by-day. The second through thirteenth weeks are reported week-by-week with enough day-by-day information to explain the teacher's procedures and the progression the children make.

Twenty-two students entered the study at the beginning of the school year with nineteen at the drawing stage, two at the letter stage, and one at the sentence stage. At the end of the study, the students were at these stages: none at the drawing stage, two at the letter stage, two at the word stage, nine at the sentence stage, five at the story-structure stage, and four at the conventions stage.

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INTRODUCTION

Children's ability to communicate by writing is a concern in our country today. Industry spends millions of dollars yearly to develop necessary communication skills the workers lack. Government develops programs to upgrade the nation's schools in which writing is a basic weakness. Parents want their children to write well but they really do not know how to help them. So the process by which a child learns to write is one that deserves attention.

About ten years ago I became interested in how children learn to write. (By "writing," I mean composing--not handwriting.) As I taught, I encouraged children to write about topics of interest to them. My methods included process writing and encouraging invented spelling. (By "process writing," I mean writing with an emphasis on encouraging the process of communicating thought rather than criticizing the product, especially the product's conventions: capital letters, punctuation, and spelling.)

However, I continued to teach reading, phonics, spelling, and handwriting by the traditional methods: basal readers, teacher manuals, and

workbooks. During the past few years my beliefs about how children learn to read have changed. Now my methods allow children to learn to read/write by reading/writing--lots of reading/writing.

My interest in how children learn to write and become literate caused me to do this research in my first-grade classroom about how children learn to write.

CHAPTER ONE

Review of Related Literature

There has been a decline in writing ability in the past few decades. People write less because of the widespread use of the telephone; few family members keep journals or diaries because of the popularity of the television. Jobs require less writing and more talking. Photojournalism and telecommunications are replacing prolific writing in newspapers and other print media. Parents criticize a child's efforts to write, concentrating on the formation of pictures, letters, and spelling (Lamme, 1984). Teachers do the same things as well as assigning writing topics that are not interesting to the child and creating an atmosphere that stifles the child's natural eagerness to write.

Students already spend 44 percent of their time writing, but spend only 3 percent of this time actually composing. The rest is devoted to filling in the blanks and other workbook-type activities (Calkins, 1986). In his first two weeks in first grade, Michael traced 111 words, copied 50 more, and filled in 55 pages of worksheets. When Michael's mother asked the teacher about the children writing

any original compositions, the teacher said there was not enough time (Graves & Stuart, 1985).

Calkins (1986) cites the need to tap children's natural desire to write and that makes everything else in the teaching of writing possible. Teachers need to allow students to write about subjects of their own choosing rather than about an object the teacher finds infinitely fascinating. Calkins recalls a hornet's nest she brought into the classroom to interest the children to write. It was not nearly as interesting to them as their own collections, even if those collections were only playground rocks. Few adults would want to spend time on something in which they are not interested (Graves & Stuart, 1985).

When children come to school they may say, "No, I can't read, but I can write!" (Lamme, 1984) Donald Graves (1991) reports that 90 percent of first-graders believe they can write while only 15 percent believe they can read. Research is showing that children will attempt to write even with very limited ability to read (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). Graves and Stuart (1985) found that students move through the grades of school, deciding that they cannot write. By fifth through eighth grade, only 40 percent consider themselves writers.

However, when the teaching and writing process is changed, 90 percent will say, "Yes, I am a writer!"

The first change that should take place in the classroom is immersing the students in print. Items in the room can be labeled by the teacher and students together. Commercially produced books as well as books written by the children should be there in abundance. And there should be a great deal of talking, listening, reading, and writing (Cambourne & Turbill, 1987).

Secondly, an understanding of the natural process a child uses to learn to write should be acquired and used. According to Saracho (1990) and many other researchers, children begin the writing process by scribbling. Scribbling progresses to horizontal scribbling. The child proceeds to use discrete units of scribbling and, finally, letters. According to Temple, Nathan, and Burris (1982) and Clay (1991), the first letters written are usually the letters in the child's own name.

Just as children learn to talk by babbling, they learn to write by scribbling (Routman, 1991). To a child scribbling is writing, "an invention that might very well work" (Smith, 1982, p. 179). The first day Pat Robertson asked her kindergarten class in Australia to write, the results were:

wriggly lines, something like hieroglyphics, lists of letters and numerals, the children's names and those of siblings, lists of unconnected words, a page of a Lebanese girl's version of Arabic writing, and combinations of words and pictures (Turnbill, 1982).

Drawing is an integral part of a child's beginning writing. Early attempts usually result in "pages filled with houses and mountain peaks and labeled with squiggly lines and random strings of letters or numbers" (Calkins & Harwayne, 1987, p. 43). When Lucy Calkins (1986) asked Chris, a first grader, what he planned to write about, he said, "How should I know. I haven't drawed it yet." Chris drew a person and announced that it would be his brother. He drew a second person representing himself. He decided his brother and he would be fighting. As he continued his story, he scanned the alphabet when he started to write a word. He would put down a letter, forget what he was writing, and go back to filling in the drawing. (This medium provided safety for him.) When he remembered, he would continue writing (p. 50).

Children begin by drawing objects scattered on the page such as a boy, a house, and a sunflower. They progress to a picture having a groundline. At this point they can tell about a boy walking behind

the house and planting seeds to grow more sunflowers. Finally, the boy will be drawn in profile (Calkins & Harwayne, 1987). After the profile stage is reached, then a horse can be led on a rope, people can kiss and dance, and a dog can drink out of a bowl (Calkins, 1986).

Lamme (1984) reports, "In the beginning writing period, both drawing and texts are repeated endlessly" (p. 71). Sometimes students draw each event on a separate page. The drawing soon decreases, probably in the second half of year one for most children. The writing increases, but the usefulness of drawing continues. It can help the child to see what he is trying to write more clearly (Turnbill, 1982).

Joan Servis developed the idea of "picturing" the characters to aid her fourth-grade students in writing. She asked the students to visualize the main character by drawing a picture of him or her; making brief notes about the character; and, perhaps, drawing the character in a setting (Routman, 1991, p. 181).

A four-year-old preschool student in Cambridge, Massachusetts drew a person fishing. When the researcher asked her to write about it, she wrote

the following:

YUTS A LADE YET FEHEG AD HE KOT FLEPR

Once a lady went fishing and he caught Flipper. The researcher was able to read the child's writing easily because he/she knew the pattern that most children follow in learning to write (Temple et al., 1982). Writing everything in capitals is common (Graves & Stuart, 1985). According to Calkins (1986) and Strickland and Morrow (1989), children begin with the first consonant of the word. Other consonants are added in the final and the medial positions. Finally, vowels are included.

Graves (1982) notes these five general stages of invention:

Stage I	Use of initial consonant	G (GRASS)
Stage II	Initial and final consonant	GS (GRASS)
Stage III	Initial, final, and interior consonant	GRS (GRASS)
Stage IV	Initial, final, and interior consonants, and vowel place holder. Vowel is incorrect but in the correct position.	GRES (GRASS)
Stage V	Child has the full spelling of the word with final components from visual memory systems and better vowel discrimination.	GRASS (p. 185)

Some of the invented spellings are easily understood when we consciously lay aside our learned rules and say the invented spelling. After comparing the invented spelling to the sound the child is trying to convey, the connection is usually obvious. When five-year-old Paul was unable to get his mother's attention, he wrote RUDF (Are you deaf?) with his rubber stamps. That got her attention because she understood his writing (Bissex, 1980).

Bissex (1980) notes a "remarkably uniform phonological system" among three to six-year-olds in spontaneous spellings (p. 34). She found that her son, Paul, used A to represent many vowel sounds and never put a vowel or consonant in place of the other. Temple et al. (1982) indicate that most students make the same discoveries in the same order, even when not taught. Calkins (1986) observed that children write are: R, you: U, ch: h, and w: Y (p. 55). Calkins and Harwayne (1987) explain, "We take a walk" would be "yetakayak." Names of letters can take the place of whole words. "You are my friend" might be "U R mi Frd" (p. 46).

Besides matching the letter with its phonetic sound or the sound of its name (Temple et al., 1982; Stone, 1991), the child may remember how the word looks from seeing it before in print or he may

remember the letters from the position of his tongue when articulating it (Graves & Stuart, 1985).

Lucy Calkins (1986) feels we would laugh at the idea of teaching a child to talk using the simplest phonemes first, then going to the more complex. Yet this is how we introduce children to the code of written language. Marie Clay (1991) says children may develop phonological awareness while exploring beginning writing. She mentions that a researcher rarely hears a reader sounding out beyond the first letters or letter clusters of words if the children have not been specifically taught to do this. The behavior is heard more frequently and beyond first letters when the same children are trying to write texts. Thus, Saracho (1990) contends, "Writing is a forerunner of reading" (p. 1).

Writing begins when the child composes a readable message to serve some communicable purpose (Temple et al., 1982). The child learns from corrections and from his own questions (Bissex, 1980). He is an active constructor of his own learning (Clay, 1991).

Lamme (1984) suggests, "If you encourage your beginning writer to spell words as best he can and if you refrain from criticizing the spelling, you will be surprised at how quickly he moves from labeling pictures to writing long stories, and from writing

safe, correctly spelled words on short notes to writing lengthy letters and messages" (p. 77).

Frank Smith (1982) believes "invented spellings are more conspicuous in children's writing because children have fewer correct spellings at their command. Learning to spell takes time; it begins with misspellings" (p. 185). Besides, Graves and Stuart (1985) reported that one teacher classified every word in a child's writing and found 80 percent of the misspelled words were on the sixth-grade level or higher.

As children progress from letters to words and sentences, they often fail to leave spaces between words. This omission does not mean they do not know the words are separate units. Before leaving spaces, they may prefer putting periods or dashes to separate the words (Temple et al., 1982; Calkins, 1986; Routman, 1988).

In Bissex's account (1980) of her son Paul's learning to write, she relates that when he was six years old he wrote stories in which there were two characters, a conflict, and a sequence of actions. Children's stories often have all or part of these elements: setting, an initiating event, an internal response, a goal, an attempt, an outcome, a consequence, and a reaction (Temple et al., 1982).

Gruber (1990), in one of her Frank Schaffer workshops, suggests a day-by-day story in which the child follows this pattern: Day 1--Draw a character. Day 2--Draw a setting. Day 3--Draw a picture of the character and his problem. Day 4--Draw a picture about the problem being solved. Day 5--Assemble the book; add a title page and cover.

Graves (1989, 1991) explains that professional fiction writers consider character as preeminent over the plot but children tend to make the plot preeminent over the character. They like to describe motion, action, and exaggerated elements. First graders develop characters according to this pattern: generic (good guys/bad guys) and popular characters (Ninja turtles/Snoopy), friends, themselves, and a created character--a very sophisticated act.

"Children have a natural interest in stories . . . they also create imaginative worlds just for the sake of living in them" (Smith, 1982, p. 193). Smith suggests that the simplest narrative technique of unfolding a story is probably the easiest convention for children to understand and learn.

When considering children's writings, Routman (1988) finds that about one third are based on literature, one third relate to people in the family,

and one third follow individual interests. Researchers agree that children write the most and the best when they write about topics of their own choosing and interest (Turnbill, 1982; Graves, 1983; Lamme, 1984). For a period of time children write more stories rather than longer stories (Calkins, 1986).

Routman (1988) points out that the kind of reading material to which children are exposed affects their writing. Furthermore, Routman (1991) finds that children write the best fictional stories when they have been immersed in literature. Mills and Clyde (1991) as well as Routman (1988) notice that stories from classrooms where basals dominate tend to follow the form and content to which these students have been exposed. Mary Ellen Varble (1990) reports that "second-grade students who were taught by the whole-language approach produced better writing samples when evaluated on content" (p. 249). Donald Graves (1983) suggests teachers should read children's writing to the class as literature as well as reading professional literature to them.

According to Graves, the conventions in children's writing come as the children want their writing to be published or, at least, to be understood by an audience. Handwriting is considered important by children when it is not

severed from its reason for being (Graves, 1983; Graves & Stuart, 1985). To a young author, revision is adding on by stapling, taping, or drawing arrows (Calkins & Harwayne, 1987). Kindergarteners and first graders often use darkened letters, oversized print, or capitals to add the sound of a voice to their writing. Exclamation marks and quotation marks are equally popular (Calkins, 1986).

Lucy Calkins (1986) believes "the single most important thing we can do for students' syntax, spelling, penmanship, and use of mechanics is to have them write often and with confidence" (p. 197). Calkins refers to the continual worrying students do about spelling and punctuation errors as "stuttering in writing" (p. 15). In comparing two third-grade classes, Calkins (1983, 1986) found the writers who had not had formal instruction in punctuation could define/explain more than eight kinds of punctuation. The children who had studied punctuation through class work, drills, and tests but had rarely written, were able to define/explain less than four kinds of punctuation. Graves and Stuart (1985) feel that time-consuming drills prevent students from practicing the skills required in writing.

After a parent or teacher understands more about the system a child uses to learn to write, there are

many good ways to encourage the process. First, the child will benefit from seeing the adult write (Graves, 1991). Harste recommends writing aloud with the class (1984). He considers this a powerful modeling technique at any grade level. However helpful this may be, the students will sense the value an adult places on writing. Graves and Stuart (1985) recommend the eventual practice of allowing an hour a day for writing in the classroom. When the teacher is comfortable with this amount of time, the students definitely internalize the importance placed on writing. Beginning the writing workshop with the teacher writing, uninterrupted by the students, for even five minutes has a calming effect on the entire class.

Secondly, the children will enjoy having a variety of writing materials to use: pencils, pens, markers, crayons, lined paper, unlined paper, small paper, large paper, colored paper, white paper, and other supplies the child may bring from home. Glue and staplers should be available to add on parts to the page or put pages together as the teacher recognizes the child's attempts at revision.

Thirdly, students will appreciate encouragement. Graves (1989) first asks the student, "How's it going?" before asking "What's your piece about?" Calkins

and Harwayne (1987) recommend aiming for 30-second conferences as much as possible, leaving time for the longer, more meaningful conference when most helpful. Calkins also reminds the adult to be a person, listening and leaving the control of the piece in the hands of the child (1986).

Finally, the students need daily opportunities to share what has been written (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). Besides sharing with an adult, students' writing and reading improve when the students are allowed to read other children's writing (Turnbill, 1982). To help a child add details, Calkins and Harwayne (1987) suggest asking the child to consider what questions classmates might ask about the subject.

Other worthwhile writing opportunities would be writing notes to each other, invitations, thank you's, cards, signs, and a daily journal (Routman, 1988).

Industry, government, teachers, and parents want children to be able to write. Initially, children believe they can write (Graves, 1991; Lamme, 1984). This belief on the part of children should be the constant motivation for their writing. In summary, the literature supports the approach of learning, following, and encouraging the process by which children learn to write. If the process

involves predictable stages, children should be encouraged as they advance from one stage to another. This praise would be similar to the praise given to children for progressing from standing to walking or from babbling to an understandable word (Lamme, 1984).

CHAPTER TWO

Rationale for the Study

The purpose of this study will be to document the progression children make through the following stages as they learn to write: distinct units of scribbling and/or ground line and profile in drawing, letters, words, sentences, story structure (character, setting, problem, solving the problem, and ending the story/telling how the characters felt), and conventions (capital letters, punctuation, and conventional spelling).

Another purpose of this study will be to document that children are encouraged in their progression through the writing stages by structuring story writing into five parts: character, setting, problem, solving the problem, and ending the story/ telling how the characters felt.

Design of the Study

The Subjects

A first-grade class in a small school district in central Illinois will be used in this study. There are 22 students in the class with 13 boys and 9 girls. The school is located at the edge of an industrial city surrounded by rich farm land. The

city has one of the highest unemployment rates of the cities in Illinois. The first-grade class is from a white population. The school's population is approximately 300 of which about one third is on free or reduced lunches. The school has a 30 percent mobility rate.

The Procedure

This study began the first day of school in August and ended in November after thirteen weeks. The procedure for the part of the day considered in this study was similar to what follows:

8:55--9:15	Journal Writing
9:15-10:30	Reading
10:30-11:15	Writing Stories

12:15-12:45	Spelling/Phonics

3:00--3:15	Handwriting

Note: Although the procedure for each time period is explained, only the activities conducted during the writing stories segment will be reported in the data of this study.

Journal Writing

There was abundant talking, listening, reading, and writing in this first-grade class (Cambourne & Turnbill, 1987). When the students arrived, they

were greeted by each other as well as by the teacher with talking and listening. While the teacher wrote attendance, lunch count, responses to parent notes, and students records of at-home reading, students wrote in journals. The journal entry included these items copied from the board: the date and a sentence composed by the class about activities of the day. Sometimes, the journal entry included the weather and writing about activities only of interest to the individual student. These journal entries were shared informally as students read each other's writing. Sometimes, they were shared with the class.

Reading

The teacher and the students shared in reading meaningful stories. (Informational articles or books were included also.) While the students sat on magic carpets (carpet samples) facing the teacher, she read a very worthwhile story or book to the class. (By "very worthwhile story or book," I mean one that has enough interest and value to the students and teacher to produce good listening, involved discussion, and lasting interest.) The intent of the teacher was to share the enjoyment of the story with the children--not to teach a skill. As the book was read, rhyming words, beginning sounds, or story structure often were noted by the teacher or by the students;

nevertheless, this was not the purpose for reading the story. Within this sharing of literature, children could learn about how writers write and they could learn about reading as well. Routman (1988) and Varble (1990) found the kind of reading material to which children were exposed affected their writing.

The class continued to read in the magic carpet setting or they returned to desks. Wordless picture books, big books, easy predictable books, harder predictable books, and less predictable books were read. The books were chosen by the teacher according to the reading levels in the class. The students read along with the teacher and/or with each other--usually aloud. (Students would learn from books at their own reading levels and they would learn from books at lower or higher reading levels than their own because the stories were interesting and worthwhile for them to listen and follow along as they and/or others read.)

The students discussed the books with the teacher and with each other, especially during the first reading. Sometimes, written responses were made. Occasionally, the teacher pointed out, taught, or tested a skill by teacher-made tests. Sometimes, the students simply read the books without an

accompanying activity. About once a week, the teacher listened to the students read individually for an oral reading grade. (The grade was determined by the percentage of words correctly read and evaluated according to the school's grading scale.)

Writing Stories

The class wrote. A five-day story format was followed. The five-day story format used in this study was:

Day One: On pink paper, draw and/or write about the character.

Day Two: On blue paper, draw and/or write about the setting.

Day Three: On yellow paper, draw and/or write about the problem.

Day Four: On white paper, draw and/or write about solving the problem.

Day Five: On green paper, draw and/or write to end the story and tell how the characters felt at the end.

The five-day story format came from a Frank Schaffer workshop (Gruber, 1990). The differences are Schaffer only suggested drawing the parts of the story and Schaffer used day five only for assembly of the book, not for ending the story and telling how the characters felt at the end.

Note: In this study one of the writing stages is drawing. So, if the child cannot write letters yet, drawing is that student's stage in the process (Calkins, 1986; Turnbill, 1982).

Children have a natural interest in stories, and narrative is the easiest form of writing for them to understand and learn (Smith, 1982). The students chose their own topics for stories as Graves (1983), Lamme (1984), and Turnbill (1982) suggested. The story-writing time was devoted to writing. Teacher talk was planned for five minutes or less of the time. Some of this took place as paper or folders were passed out. According to Calkins (1983, 1986) and Graves and Stuart (1985), students learn to write best by writing.

The paper and the writing folders were passed out. (The writing folders were made by folding white 12" x 18" construction paper and stapling the sides. The student's name was written at the top of one side of the folder.) The students read over what they had written from preceding days and thought about what they would write. The teacher and/or students mentioned what part of the story would be written. At the beginning of the study, the teacher talked briefly about that part of the story and gave examples from published stories. She

encouraged students to draw and write letters or words to tell the story. The teacher and students wrote quietly for a few minutes at their desks before they moved to a magic carpet, table, or someplace else in the room to write.

After the teacher wrote, she moved around the room having 10-30 second conferences with most students. She asked, "Who is your character?" or "What is your setting?" These short conferences allowed students needed sharing time at the outset, but they left extra seconds or minutes for the teacher to have longer conferences with students who needed more assistance to get a thought written or who needed more instruction about the stage into which he/she was progressing.

After writing time, the child's work was shared with partners, with the teacher, or with the group as quickly as possible. More formal sharing took place at the end of each week and once a month on Author's Day. On this day, the child shared the best story from his/her writing folder for the month. Parents and other family members were invited to listen and enjoy coffee and cookies.

The purpose of this study is to document the progression which children make through stages as

they learn to write and to show that a five-day story format encourages this progression.

Stages and Their Criteria

Each writing stage will be defined by these criteria:

Drawing:

A representation of the message is clear. The teacher recognizes the message unaided or with very little explanation from the student.

Letters:

The letter or letters are discernible by the teacher. The letters may be random and not related to the drawing on the page at all. Or the letters may sound like something in the message, may look like something in the message, or may be used for a purpose unique in that student's writing.

Words:

Letters convey the sense of a word to the teacher. Initially, one letter alone does not meet the criteria. Although it is agreed that often one letter will convey the sense of a word, in this study at least two letters must be used to meet the criteria for moving into the word stage. An example of two letters meeting the word stage criteria would usually entail a word having only two phonemes,

such as "bi" for "by," "buy," or "bye." "R" for "are" will be considered the letter stage, not the word stage; "R" or "Ro" for "red" will be considered the letter stage, not the word stage; "Rad" for "red" would be considered the word stage, especially when the drawing with "Rad" conveyed the sense of "red." (This teacher considers writing to be communicating thoughts to another by printed symbols--drawing and/or writing--discernible to the reader. "R" or "Ro" would be unclear. Even if the teacher understands the sense of "red" from "R" or "Ro" when the child explains it, the teacher probably could not read the letters as "red" on a later day without the child's help. However, the teacher probably could read "Rad" for "red" the first day or on a later day without the child's help.)

Sentences:

A sentence will be demonstrated by at least two words carrying the sense of a statement.

Story Structure:

A total of at least five sentences will meet the story-structure stage criterion if the sentences tell a story in the following manner:

1. At least one sentence conveys the sense of a character or characters.

2. At least one sentence conveys the sense of a setting (referring to time and/or place).

3. At least one sentence conveys the sense of a problem.

4. At least one sentence conveys the sense of the problem being solved.

5. At least one sentence conveys the sense of an end to the story and/or tells how the character or characters felt.

Conventions:

The conventions stage criteria will have been met if capital letters, punctuation, and conventional spelling are used at least to this extent:

Capital letters: Capital letters must begin at least two sentences of the story.

Punctuation: A period or a question mark must end at least two sentences of the story.

Conventional spelling: At least 50 percent of the words must display conventional spelling.

All three criteria must be met for the conventions stage to have been reached.

Spelling/Phonics

Each week the spelling list was made up of words the class contributed to rhyme with two base words named by the teacher. For example, cat and

red might be base words. Then, students might suggest a list including cat, bat, hat, red, bed, and fed. Also, one word which was used often, but not rhyming, was learned--such as "what," "who," and "they."

The base words were listed as wall words in the classroom. Five activities used with the words were the following:

1. The students copied the spelling list from the board as it was made by the class. The students took the list home to practice the words.
2. The words were recopied, the paper was cut apart to put the words in alphabetical order, and the words were held up as each one was pronounced by the teacher.
3. Sentences containing two or more of the list words were composed by the class and copied from the board.
4. A student-to-student "pretend" test was given, with each student having a turn as the "teacher."
5. The test was given by the teacher.

Handwriting

The lower-case letters of the alphabet as well as words containing those letters were practiced. Then, the upper-case letters of the alphabet as well as words beginning with these letters were

practiced. A test was given at the end of each week. After all the letters had been practiced, the ones with which most students had problems were given additional attention. At this time, such items as thank-you notes were written by the class.

Note: About once every two weeks when there was time available between activites, the class spent 5-10 minutes correcting sentences the teacher had written on the board. These sentences had mistakes in capital letters, punctuation, and conventional spellings.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DATA

The following is a week-by-week description of the procedure and the results realized in this study.

Week One

Day One

The first day of school each first-grade student was given a white piece of paper without lines. They were told they could write a story about what they would do at home in the afternoon. The story could be either something they would really do or something they would do if they could do anything they liked.

Some of the immediate responses were:

Student	Teacher
I can't write words.	Then draw a picture.
How do you spell____?	Listen to the sounds you hear.

One boy asked the boy next to him how to spell a word.

After a few minutes of drawing and writing, almost everyone willingly shared what they had done with the class. Some topics were: space trip,

playing on a slide, being bored, and enjoying the sunshine.

Robert C. wrote his name and drew himself. When asked to draw more, he said he couldn't. When encouraged to add some things around him in the picture, he drew a tree with a hole in it. He said a squirrel lived there. So he was encouraged to write what the squirrel did there.

Ashley J. drew a picture of rain. (Appendix 1)

Jacob drew his cockateel saying, "Jacob." (Appendix 2)

Robert S. drew himself playing in a band. He played a guitar. Another band member played the guitar, too. One member played the saxophone (He was drawn in profile.). The final member played drums. He drew speakers behind or above the band as well as lights. (Appendix 3)

Jason would play with his dog. (Appendix 4)

Nineteen of the twenty-three students entered the class at the writing stage of drawing with a ground line/profile. Damon began at the letter stage. Matthew and Shane began at the word stage. Jason began at the sentence stage.

The students took these one-day stories home with them.

Day Two

The second day the students were given pink, unlined, 5½" x 8½" paper and the students were asked to begin to write a story. (Since school started for the students with a short school day on Monday, they wrote a four-day story Tuesday through Friday of this week and a five-day story during each of the following five-day weeks.) The students were asked to write about the character. (The teacher had led the class in a discussion about who characters were while reading literature earlier that morning.) Some of the directions the teacher gave were: "Draw pictures. Write what you can." Each student was asked to share with the class who the character would be. Each shared readily. Then, the teacher sat down at her desk to write. The students were asked to write, be quiet, and let the teacher write by asking no questions for a few minutes.

After a few minutes, the teacher walked around the room having a 10-30 second conference with each student. Some of the comments the teacher made to students were: "Who is your character? Can you write the name or word? The word starts with the same sound and letter as your name. Turtle begins like your name ends, Robert."

They wrote their names and the date on the pages. The date was on the board for them to copy. The pages were collected.

Day Three

The third day the students were given blue paper and asked to continue writing the story they had started the day before. The pink pages (p. 1) were returned to them. Then students were asked to write about the setting: where the character was and when the story was happening (the time of day). In a story earlier in the morning, the teacher discussed the time of day with the class.

Students drew pictures: the sun, a sailboat on water, a turtle in water, and people inside houses.

The pink and blue pages were collected.

Day Four

The fourth day the students were given yellow paper on which they were asked to write about a problem the character had experienced. The pink and blue pages were returned to them. On this day there seemed to be a need for the directions to be repeated several times. An example from a story the teacher had read to the class earlier was discussed. After writing, the students shared the problems in their stories for about 20 seconds each. Matthew's

character's problem was that he "forgot how to use the camera." (Appendix 5)

The pink, blue, and yellow pages were collected.

Day Five

On the fifth day white pages were used on which the students wrote how the character's problem was solved, how the story ended, and how the characters felt at the end of the story. After "The Three Bears" and "The Three Kittens" were read by the teacher, there was a discussion about the characters, the setting, their problems, how the problems were solved, and how the characters felt at the end of the stories.

After the children wrote for a while, the process of stapling their four pages together began and the students continued to write. As the pages were stapled, the students gave a title for the story which was written by the teacher on the first page with a black marker.

The students sat on their magic carpets and shared their stories with partners. After the sharing, each child was given a folder made by folding white 12" x 18" construction paper and stapling the sides. The student's name had been written at the top of one side of the folder. They decorated the folders with markers or crayons. The

first completed story was put in the folder. Lines were drawn on the back of the folder and the title of the first story was written with black marker on the first line. Subsequent story titles were written in red, green, and blue before returning to black. The color coding made finding the story easier.

Week Two

Week two was a normal five-day school week. So the five-day story was written on pink, blue, yellow, white, and green paper. (The green paper was made by edging white paper with a green marker or crayon.) The general plan was:

Day One	Character
Day Two	Setting
Day Three	Problem
Day Four	Solving the Problem
Day Five	Ending the Story/ Telling How the Characters Felt

While the teacher read stories to the children and while the children read wordless picture books and predictable books, the parts of a story (story structure) were discussed. The students were encouraged to think of an idea for a story that would take all week to write.

They were reminded to draw pictures, write

letters, and use words if they could. They shared their ideas briefly with the class when beginning their writing. The teacher wrote for about five minutes. Then she walked around the room to talk to them about what they had written.

After this conferencing, the students shared their day's writing with the class. This week, they shared more loudly and listened to each other a little better.

Each day as the boys and girls received their papers and folders, they eagerly engaged in the process. One day a student asked, "What do we draw and write today?"

Charlie answered, "Where it happens."

The teacher asked, "What else?"

Another student answered, "When."

The teacher added, "Outside or inside, day or night."

On Wednesday of the second week, students were asked to write at least one letter on the page, if they could, about the problem. They were asked to hold up the page if they had written a letter. They were asked to write as many letters as they could. (Occasionally, this method was used to encourage some students who may have needed just a nudge to

try something such as making a letter. Sometimes this method was a way to gain a group response when there was not time for individual responses to the teacher.)

During this second week, eight students advanced to the letter stage and eleven students advanced to the word stage.

Ashley J. read her letters to the teacher: "I am having a good time." (Appendix 6)

Robert C. wrote about a helpful electrical monster in the rain (Ra). The "R" was written as a capital letter, the initial letter in his name. (Appendix 7) At the end of the story, the electrical monster was safe ("saf," written vertically) inside the house. (Appendix 8)

Robert C. was a student repeating first grade. His first-year teachers related that he participated very little in the learning process. In spite of the Reading Recovery program and his teachers' efforts to help him learn, Robert finished the year reading at a 1.2 level, made F's in spelling, and could not remember consistently how to spell his name.

This year Robert C. seemed to be turned on to learning to write and read. When he said, "I'm done," the teacher answered, "You know what? You're

never done writing. You add to the pictures, letters, words."

A few minutes later, Robert S. said, "I'm done." Immediately Robert C. was asked to tell him what had been said. He repeated the message like a true believer!

The same day Robert S. added this sentence to his picture: "My dog. He's very nice and he's my pet." (Appendix 9)

Haley ended her story with these words: "A Happy Story." When the teacher read her words that way, she said, "How did you know that?"

The teacher said, "I could read it." (Appendix 10)

Week Three

The third week of school was a four-day week because of Labor Day. So a four-day format was followed:

Day One	Character
Day Two	Setting
Day Three	Problem
Day Four	Solving Problem, Ending Story, and Telling How Characters Felt at the End

When discussing characters this week, the children were asked to tell more things about the

character. The teacher asked the students to describe her in such a way that someone could tell her from other teachers at school. They answered, "Your name, what you look like, your pretty clothes, your brown hair, You have a little gray in your hair." There the discussion stopped!

After the teacher wrote, she shared her writing with the students. Then, they shared their writing with each other on their magic carpets.

One day the class was asked what they were writing on that day. Some answered, "setting."

They were asked, "What is that?"

They answered, "Where and when the story happens."

They were told they could take their magic carpets, supply boxes, and blue papers someplace in the room to write or they could write at the desks.

The students sat or lay down on the magic carpets. Some visited while getting settled, but most wrote well. Everyone left the room for lunch. Then, everyone returned to the same spots to write.

The next day, the students were anxious to move to the magic carpets to write. They made themselves comfortable in corners, against walls, and with their supplies bordering the edges of the carpets.

On the second day of the third week, one

student advanced to the word stage. On the third day, the same student advanced to the sentence stage. First, Charlie wrote: "Ha." (Appendix 11)

The next day he wrote: "Ha, ha, catman."

The teacher asked, "How did you know how to write this (catman)?"

He said, "Mom told me how to spell man and I know how to spell cat." (Appendix 12)

Ashley M. advanced from the letter stage (week two-Appendix 13) to the sentence stage (week three). "He lost his parents." (Appendix 14)

Week Four

A four-day format was used for week four since a substitute teacher would conduct the class on Friday.

At the beginning of the fourth week, the students were asked to spend one minute as thinking time. Then they were asked, "Now, how many know what you'll write about?" Most did. The teacher walked among the students, letting them tell her about their characters. They wrote. The teacher wrote. On the board a list was made which was left there most of the time. It was a list of things to add to writing:

Name

Page #'s

Draw more.

Write more letters, words.

The teacher walked around again, letting the students tell her what they wrote. Then the papers were put in the writing folders.

During this week, one student advanced from the stage of drawing with a ground line/profile to the letter stage. David said the "G"'s meant "singing." (Appendix 15)

One student advanced from the stage of drawing with a ground line/profile to the word stage.

Two students advanced from the letter stage to the word stage. Kimberly explained that her word was "boat" and the picture showed a boat. (Appendix 16)

One student advanced from the word stage to the sentence stage. Haley read her writing: "She was looking for Indian beads." (Appendix 17)

On the last writing day of the fourth week, the children sat in a group on their magic carpets facing the teacher. The teacher sat in a small chair as she did when she read a book to them. Each student took a turn sitting in the Author's Chair, a small chair beside the teacher. Each child read the best story from his/her writing folder for the first four weeks.

The students had learned to hold the page so others could see while sharing at the desks or with a partner on the magic carpets. Also, each had learned how to tell the story and/or read the pages in about a minute.

Occasionally, students needed to be reminded to show the pictures, read the title, and tell the story. Charlie told his story quickly and well and he showed his pictures to his audience. The teacher noted that the way he shared would be good when the parents were invited in a couple of weeks since the parents would get tired like the children do if the sharing took too long.

Week Five

The fifth week, plans were made to follow a regular five-day format.

When writing about the character, the students were asked to think about what a classmate might ask about the picture. The writer could then add some of those things, label parts of the picture, and add colors. The class was asked how many wrote one letter on the page, two, . . . ten.

The remaining best of the first four weeks' stories were shared. (At the end of week four, the children weren't ready to sit long enough to share all

the stories.) Some students decided to change their choice of best when they thought about which the parents would enjoy most. Jacob quickly said his parents would enjoy the one with more words. He commented, "I had a lot of words on that one."

When writing about the setting, the boys and girls were told, "Okay, it's time to do that same good writing on your story that you did this morning." (Earlier, they had written in response to a book about a boy being left behind during a class trip.)

One student said, "Oh, this means it's almost lunch time."

Another student said, "Is it the problem today?"

The teacher responded, "No. It's where and when it's happening."

The students were told they would be sharing their stories with their parents in one week. Also, the teacher told them she was very interested in children's writing. She was taking classes at a college. Sometimes, she shared what the students had written with other people. That was one reason she sometimes copied what the students wrote and marked down whether they wrote letters, words, or sentences.

The next day, the teacher further explained to the class that she only wrote down what words and

stories they did in the story-writing time--not the journal writing or responses to literature. Then, she commented that they did not write just because she asked them to write. Besides that, they wrote to share with parents, classmates, and other teachers. (Some other teachers were aware of what they wrote.)

When allowed to choose to write on the magic carpets or at the desks, about half chose the carpets and half stayed at the desks. The teacher wrote while sitting on a large green chest in the classroom.

As the students finished writing that day, the teacher shared what she had written and let the children see how she had crossed out some words rather than erasing. The teacher explained that if the writing were published, she would rewrite it or type it and they could do the same when they showed their writing to their parents.

Although plans had been made to follow a five-day format, picture taking on the fourth day disrupted the schedule. So, writing did not occur on that day and the children noticed and commented about it.

On the following day, they were asked to take out the pink page from the folder and reread what they had written about the character since they hadn't written for two days. Then, they were led to reread

the blue page and, finally, to reread the yellow page before continuing to write and to end the story on the white page. The teacher explained that writers get started again in this manner after they have left their writing for a while.

Students were asked what they could do to make their stories better since the parents were coming the next week to hear the stories. The list was rewritten on the board:

Name

Page #'s

Draw more.

Write more.

Date

This week Robert C. wrote a story about a dragon car that breathed out fire from the front and the back of the car. He explained that the car went 100 miles an hour--fast! When asked what the letters said, he answered, "It doesn't say nothing. I just wrote that."

The teacher commented, "It looks like you were trying to write miles (M) and fast (F)."

He said, "Yes, that's what it says--miles and fast." (Appendix 18)

David continued to write at the letter stage. He wrote B: bat. David wrote A's on the page and he explained to the teacher the A's were drills to turn

sideways and cut the ladder apart (The ladder was drawn on the page.).

Matthew continued to write at the word stage. He wrote baTR: battle and MiGSiBad: Mikie and Sinbad.

Jacob advanced to the sentence stage by writing "I've been waiting for Mario." (Appendix 19)

This week Jason's story was about a Ninja. The setting was Japan in the summer of 1991. (Appendix 20 and 21) (If Jason had written his setting in a sentence, he would have advanced to the story-structure stage.)

The problem in Jason's story was: "His master (Ninja's master) tells him he is not doing good." (Appendix 22)

The Ninja solved his problem when "He quits his job." (Appendix 23)

On the back of the last page, Jason continued, "The Ninja quit. What will we do? What will we do? Hire a new one." (Appendix 24)

Week Six

In the weekly letter to parents about general classroom news and communications sent out during the fifth week of this research, parents were invited to the class's first monthly Author's Day to be held on Wednesday of the sixth week. The parents were told

to expect to see the children writing mostly at the level of pictures with some letters, words, and sentences. Refreshments would be served. The children were the authors and they would be sharing their best stories from the first five weeks.

During the sixth week a new four or five-day story was not written. The time on Monday was used for a different kind of writing. The time on Tuesday was used to practice sharing the stories of the students who decided to use their fifth-week stories for Author's Day instead of the ones they had chosen before the fifth week.

A reminder note was sent on Tuesday to the parents. A welcome sign was made and signed by the class for the bulletin board just outside the classroom door. Adult-size chairs were ordered from the janitor.

On Wednesday, twenty-one family members came to the first monthly Author's Day. The students sat on their magic carpets and took turns sharing their stories from the Author's Chair. The family members listened, smiled, laughed, and exchanged comments about the stories.

The parents were informed about the process the children used to write their five-day stories. After

the sharing, which lasted 30 minutes, the writing folders containing the other stories the children had written were passed out. Family members listened to them explain those stories individually at the child's desk.

Parents stayed the rest of the hour visiting with their children as well as with each other. Several signed their names to send cookies for subsequent Author's Days.

On Thursday and Friday of the sixth week, students wrote partner stories. They included many of the story-structure elements used in four-day and five-day stories. They wrote in various parts of the room on carpets, at desks, or on the floor. They figured out who would take the story or parts of it home by discussion, by making an extra story, or by flipping a coin. (The stories were not considered in recording whether someone moved a stage in writing.)

Week Seven

The students continued to write at various places in the classroom--on the magic carpets, at desks, and around tables. This week the teacher had the colored paper copied with two writing lines added at the bottom of each page since most were at the word or sentence stage.

On the first day of this week Kaleena advanced to the sentence stage.

On the second day a new student named Amber arrived in the class. The teacher commented that the new girl needed to be told how the class wrote stories. So, the teacher explained that on Monday the class wrote about a character on pink paper. She asked the class to tell what was written on Tuesday. The class answered, "Setting--on blue paper." The teacher explained that the setting is where the story happens: city or country, inside or outside, and when: night or day. The students were encouraged to look in their folders at the pink paper to see what character was being written about. Some said, "I remember."

The teacher said, "It's been noisy. I wonder if you're going to let me write."

"We will," they answered.

On the fourth day white paper was used to solve the problem and end the story (since a substitute teacher would be in the class on the fifth day).

The students were anxious to go to their magic carpets to write. The teacher instructed them to go and write quietly. They were asked to look at the clock. The teacher explained that the big hand was between the 11 and the 12 and they could write until

the big hand got to the 2, about 10-15 minutes. The students wrote well with only a couple of reminders.

Jason and Robert S. advanced to the story-structure stage.

Week Eight

Week eight began on Wednesday. So, the story writing plan for this week was:

Day One	Character and Setting
Day Two	Problem
Day Three	Solve the Problem, End the Story, and Tell How the Characters Felt

On day one after the pink papers were passed out, the teacher asked, "What are we writing today?"

The students readily answered, "The character."

The teacher walked around the room listening to the students tell her about their characters. Charlie said, "I've got it: X men, heroes. I can even write it."

Robert C. said, "Mrs. Vestal, do you think a magic bird would be a good idea?"

The teacher answered, "Yes, I think a magic bird is a great idea."

Kaleena, Ashley H., and Amanda were encouraged to write about a new topic this week. For several weeks, each had written about her friends.

Robert S. planned to write about a dragon and his magic.

Following these conferences, blue paper was passed out. The teacher said, "Since we have only three days this week, today we're writing the character and the setting. Look at these pictures (calendar pictures). What is the setting?"

The students answered, "Outside on the ocean, outside at night, outside in the mountains, inside."

The teacher said, "Now, I'll write and you write."

On day two, when the yellow paper was passed out, the teacher said, "We're running out of yellow paper. I have a surprise for you. Next week I will have all the colors of paper for you as well as green because Mrs. Dole (the principal) gave it to us."

From the class there were "Oooh's, Ah's," and smiles.

After 10-30 second conferences, the teacher wrote and showed the students her writing. She counted 65 words in her writing. Charlie said, "Wow!"

The teacher read what she had written to the class.

The students who had written 5 words were asked to hold their writing up, 4 words, . . . 1 word.

Then those with 5 letters were asked to hold their writing up, 4 letters, . . . 1 letter. The students shared their writing.

Four students advanced to the sentence stage. Dwayne wrote "Good team wins. The bad team loses." (Appendix 25)

Tyler wrote, "Hey, why do I have bull horns?" (Appendix 26)

Ashley H. wrote, "My dog died." Ashley asked, "What stage am I at?" (Appendix 27)

Johnathon wrote, "The hawk wrecked into the bird."

On day three the teacher gave the students a choice of using one or two pieces of paper to solve the problem and end the story. The students took their boxes and folders, cleared their desks, and went to their magic carpets or wherever they wanted to write. Ten were lying half on their magic carpets and half on the floor. Two sat on the green chest and wrote on the sink counter. Two sat at a round table. Four sat at desks around the outside of the room. Four sat at their own desks. One student tried two places before he found that he was most comfortable back at his own desk. Most students shared supplies. Few words were spoken.

Most of the activity was drawing, coloring, and writing.

Jason had reached the story-structure stage the previous week. This week he wrote a story called "Mr. Pumpkinhead."

"He is not a monster. He is Mister Pumpkinhead. He is in a Pumpkin ranch." (Appendix 28)

"He scares people. They are afraid of him. But he is nice. It is the day." (Appendix 29)

"He is lonely. And he is sad. It is the night before Halloween." (Appendix 30)

"It rained and he grew a real face." (Appendix 31)

The teacher commented, "Look at those tears."

Robert C. said, "I told him he needed more tears."

Robert S. had reached the story-structure stage the week before and this week he wrote "The Magic Dragon."

"The dragon is lost and he is magic." Appendix 32)

"He was blowing fire at a house." (Appendix 33)

"He did not see the bad guys." (Appendix 34)

"He killed the purple monster." (Appendix 35)

Amanda advanced to the word stage by writing

the word "bee."

Haley advanced to the story-structure stage.

Week Nine

During week nine the teacher encouraged the students to describe the character in such a way that a person could know what the character looked like from the top of its head to the bottom of its feet.

Jacob wrote about a teacher who glowed in the dark. Jason wrote about a scientist.

As the students continued the story on the following days, they were encouraged to look back to the preceding day's page or pages to write or draw more, and then they were encouraged to continue writing the story.

The teacher continued to write while the students wrote.

Sometimes the students were asked to use their own supplies to decrease distractions. A few students who wrote around the room were causing problems and were asked to return to their desks.

The story pages were stapled together and a cover made from white construction paper. The cover was made to wrap around the spine of the story for a continuous picture similar to those seen on trade books read in the classroom.

The students continued to share the stories with the class on their magic carpets at the end of the last school day of the week.

During this week Matthew advanced to the sentence stage.

Week Ten

During this week students began using a minute to think before writing. They were asked to put down supplies. Then they put their head in their hands (as the teacher often did to think), put their heads down, or simply sat quietly to think about what they would write.

Also, the students started to work on writing words more neatly so they could read what they had written and the teacher could read what they had written.

After about 10 minutes of writing on the second day of this week, the teacher showed the class 100 words she had written. Ashley H. said, "I see where you crossed out some things."

The teacher said, "Yes. I didn't like how I had it."

The students continued writing for about 10 more minutes while the teacher walked around seeing what they had written.

Dwayne, Jacob, and Shane were complimented for

writing more neatly. Tyler changed "fish" to "snake" by crossing out "fish." Jason started using capital letters at the beginning of his sentences. Robert S. said, "Is this a sentence?"

The teacher said, "Yes."

The class had its second monthly Author's Day on Wednesday of this week. Eleven family members came. The students had written about Author's Day in their journals that morning and signed their names to a welcome sign outside the classroom door. The teacher had written "Author's Day" on the board behind the Author's Chair.

Several parents commented that the Author's Day was a good idea. Robert S.'s mother related that he writes stories all the time at home. He had told her he needed a stapler to staple the story pages together and she had gotten him one.

Jason's mother said she couldn't get him to hold a crayon until he was four years old. "So, you're doing something right," she said.

Some parents felt the students needed to talk more loudly. They felt the stories were good, but the parents could not hear them.

The teacher and students discussed the problem after the parents left. A microphone was discussed. The decision was made to set up chairs next time for

the parents before they came. The chairs would be set up closer to the students.

On the fourth day of school this week, the week's story ended. Only this story was left in the writing folder. The other stories were put in a portfolio to be kept until the end of the school year. It was decided that only the current month's stories would be kept in the writing folder. Out of these, one would be chosen for the next Author's Day.

As this week's stories were being finished, the teacher noticed several instances where lower-ability students were pairing up with higher-ability students to write. They sat close to each other and showed each other pages quietly.

Week Eleven

During this week the class continued to spend some time thinking before putting pencil, marker, or crayon to paper. As they went to their chosen writing places, the teacher asked that they come by her to tell her what they were writing about if they liked. About 10 students came. The others simply started writing.

Also, the students were asked to find their own writing folders from the holder and pick up the colored paper for the day. They did this very efficiently.

Amanda asked if she could work on a previous day's page. The teacher said that was a good idea.

The teacher discussed the class's need to improve on handwriting. They had copied a sentence from the board about Bill Clinton being elected president the day before. Some of the handwriting on the pages had not been very readable.

On Thursday the yellow paper was used. The teacher asked, "What are we writing today?"

Ashley M. answered, "The problem."

On Friday white and green papers were used to solve the problem and end the stories. Stories were stapled and given titles. While students wrote at various places around the room, the teacher noticed several things. Some students talked while writing but the talking was helping them to write. Stephen talked to Alicia nearby and he seemed to write more freely. She sat close to him and continued to write. Some students wandered back to their desks. The students were really good about using the writing folders to keep their papers together and their boxes to carry their supplies.

During this week Robert C. moved to the sentence stage. He wrote, "He is too fast." (Appendix 36)

Jason, Robert S., and Ashley H. moved to the

conventions stage. Robert S. wrote "The Nice Robot and the Alien."

"The nice robot was riding a skateboard." (Appendix 37)

"The nice robot made a bed and went to sleep." (Appendix 38)

"The nice robot is scared of the big robot." (Appendix 39)

"The nice robot met a alien." (Appendix 40)

"The nice robot was a star with the alien." (Appendix 41)

"The nice robot had a fun day." (Appendix 42) (Robert S. asked for an extra green page since the story was six pages in length.)

Week Twelve

As the students prepared to write about the character on the pink page, they were asked to put their heads in their hands to think before they wrote.

The teacher showed the class what her grandson, James, age 4.10, wrote. He drew the teacher's house, garage, and trees. He said it was dark. The teacher talked to him about the "d" sound and wrote it for him. He remembered d in Andrew's name at the day care center. Later, he remembered d in duck. He wrote the letters of his name

randomly spaced around the page. The students showed great interest in how James wrote by looking at the teacher or the writing the entire time it was being discussed.

At various places in the classroom the students wrote and visited quietly. Someone said something about a truck. Another said, "That ain't a truck."

As they shared markers, the teacher said, "I hope that sharing is not slowing down the writing."

They said, "It's not."

The teacher had insisted on pencils being used for words to make them more readable.

On Tuesday, the students wrote about the setting on blue paper for 10 minutes at their seats. Also, they finished the pink pages from the previous day. The teacher asked them to hold up the pages to show her what they had written. She asked them to spend the next two minutes writing words with their pencils. If the lines on the first side of the page were full, they could add more on the back. They could change some things. Some students were rereading what they had written. Then they went to various spots in the room to write for 10 more minutes. A student said, "Sh."

On Tuesday, Stephen advanced to the sentence stage.

There was no school on Wednesday. On Thursday, the teacher wrote five sentences on the board in which there were intentional mistakes in capitalization and punctuation. The class corrected these sentences together. Author's Day, two weeks away, was mentioned.

The teacher started to pass out pink paper as if it were Monday. A student said, "No. It's yellow today."

The teacher said, "Thank you," and passed out yellow paper instead.

On Friday, white paper was used to solve the problem of the story. Thinking before writing with all of the prior days' writing in front of the writer continued.

When stories were shared, many students realized that they had written lots of words but they still could not read them because of poor handwriting or spacing.

Week Thirteen

The students continued picking up and returning their writing folders by color and name. They continued thinking time before writing. Also, they continued to write at their desks for a period of time specified by the teacher and often pointed out on the clock. Then, they left their desks by rows

to go to whatever place in the room they wanted to write.

Jacob started using dots to separate his words.

Haley pointed out to the teacher that she had used two periods in her writing.

Many students' sentences were more readable this week. Robert S., at the conventions stage, wrote a story called "The F.B.I.--Police Chopper." The class had watched "Ghostwriter," a PBS show in which children write and share their thinking about the writing process as they write. The class had discussed the way the children in "Ghostwriter" wrote so it was easy to read. Robert S. readily told us he got the F.B.I. idea from the "Ghostwriter" show.

This week Jacob, Tyler, and Alicia reached the story-structure stage.

Haley reached the conventions stage.

Those in the conventions stage were given wallpaper sample pages or white construction paper for covers.

Summary of the Data

At the beginning of the study, the 22 students in the class were functioning at these stages:

Drawing	19 students
Letters	1 student

Words	2 students
Sentences	1 student
Story Structure	0 students
Conventions	0 students

During week two through week five, some students moved to letters, words, and sentences. By week nine, four students had moved to the story-structure stage. By the thirteenth and final week of the study, the four students at the story-structure stage had moved to the conventions stage while five other students had moved to the story-structure stage.

During the study David transferred to a different school and Amber transferred to our school. So, the number of students was 22 at the beginning of the study and at the conclusion of the study.

At the conclusion of the study the class of 22 students had reached these stages:

Drawing	0 students
Letters	2 students
Words	2 students
Sentences	9 students
Story Structure	5 students
Conventions	4 students

During the thirteen weeks of this study, three students progressed all the way from the drawing

stage through letters, words, sentences, and story structure to the conventions stage. One student entered the study at the sentence stage and progressed through the story-structure stage to the conventions stage. Although progressing at a different pace, the other students were moving through the same predictable stages.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

This study has documented that children do progress through these predictable stages as they learn to write: distinct units of scribbling and/or ground line and profile in drawing, letters, words, sentences, story structure (character, setting, problem, solving the problem, and ending the story/ telling how the characters felt), and conventions (capital letters, punctuation, and conventional spelling).

The teacher provides a literate climate in which the students' writing grows. She models and shares the four facets of language: reading, writing, talking, and listening. Each facet touches the other three facets, lighting the way for each student's development. The literature shared in the classroom flows in and out of a reservoir of language the child needs and uses to grow in his/her ability to write. The spelling/phonics activities and the correcting-sentences activities provides reinforcement of what the child is learning by writing.

Time and the needed structure for these

children to write are provided. Eliminating dull, unprofitable drills gives the children time to act upon their innately motivated desire to write. They only need a path to be mapped for them by the structure of the five-day story format:

Day One: On pink paper, draw and/or write about the character.

Day Two: On blue paper, draw and/or write about the setting.

Day Three: On yellow paper, draw and/or write about the problem.

Day Four: On white paper, draw and/or write about solving the problem.

Day Five: On green paper, draw and/or write to end the story and tell how the characters felt at the end.

Establishing the criteria by which this researcher measures the children's stepping from one stage into another stage is critical. The stages serve as signposts by which children can steer their way while writing. The children perceive more of the way as they go along. The signposts show the way to be real and just down the road in their future. Thus, children feel free to

take risks and write more and better.

Drawing, letters, words, sentences, story structure, and conventions are means to an end: they serve the unique purpose of getting a communicable message from the mind of one person to the mind of another person. By its very nature, writing must be able to be read or discerned: it must make sense to the reader. This exchange of information is made easier by the reader of children's writing being knowledgeable about the natural process children use to do such things as learning to spell, making letters, and spacing words in a sentence.

Also, this knowledgeable reader needs to have the ability and desire to show the growing writer the criteria of the next stage: the rules of the road to follow. These rules are what define a letter, a word, a sentence, story structure, and conventions. Although these rules may define the next stage for the young writer, that young writer does not know the rules. At early stages of writing, the young writer does not need to know the rules. That is, the child does not need to be able to identify, explain, or exemplify these rules or criteria until the child has experienced them. The teacher or guide needs them,

needs to model them, and needs to be able to identify when the child has met the criteria. In this way, the teacher can applaud the child's experience and movement to another stage in writing--quickly and with enthusiasm. This is comparable to a parent's joy at a child's first step or first spoken word. The parents and other family members share in the teacher's applause of the children's writing at Author's Days. This encouragement, natural and/or learned on the part of parents and teachers, inspires the writer to continue in his/her progression through the writing stages with even more confidence, enjoyment, and enthusiasm.

Materials should be provided: they are the writer's tools. Materials this teacher considers important for this kind of writing are five colors of writing paper, all kinds of writing instruments and coloring instruments, and cover-making materials. The amount of lines for writing on the paper should change as the writer writes more.

The place the writer uses should be made as comfortable as possible. Some writers prefer a desk. Others prefer a table or the floor. Sitting on a carpet feels right to some. While some feel free to write in an open space, others feel safe to compose

in a quiet corner. Sometimes, writing occurs best alone. Sometimes, the writing seems to flow better if the writer sits close to one or two people.

The teacher provides the structure of a five-day story format and he/she provides knowledgeable encouragement. The student needs to know when he/she has reached another writing stage. This guides that student along his/her way. In this way children progress through predictable stages as they learn to write.

Recommendations

Knowledge of how children learn to write needs to be the basis for decisions about children's writing. Teachers can expend their energies more efficiently by respecting the stages through which children progress when learning to write. Children will progress in a more energetic manner because they will feel secure where they are currently functioning and trust the teacher to lead them along the way.

The teacher's knowledgeable direction of children learning to write will become known and appreciated by the parents as the parents witness the children's progress.

Industry and government will realize young people who are proficient in writing if the motivation is allowed to remain in children. The motivation to learn to write is within children and will remain within them if more advanced stages of writing are not expected of children without the proper time, structure, and knowledgeable encouragement being provided at the earlier stages. Expecting a child to use conventions should not precede or take the place of adequate opportunity to write, grow, and enjoy the earlier stages of learning to write.

Further Research

Future beneficial research would be to use the five-day story format at other grade levels. The same stages could be used, especially if the students have not experienced this format. The researcher should set up criteria for identifying when proficiency at each grade level has been achieved, that is, more detailed criteria for each stage should be delineated.

Research could be done to see if story writing affects students' later efforts in informational writing.

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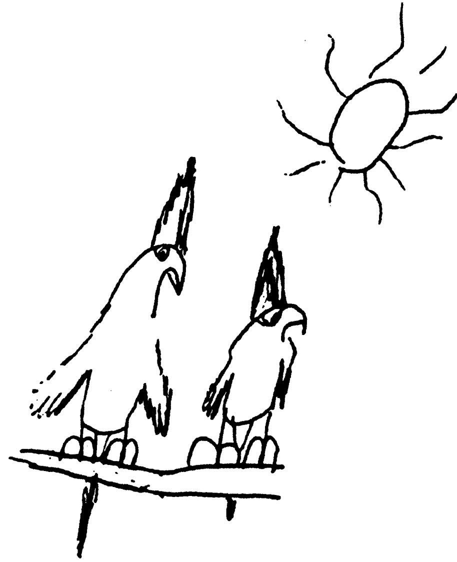
Appendix 1

Appendix 2



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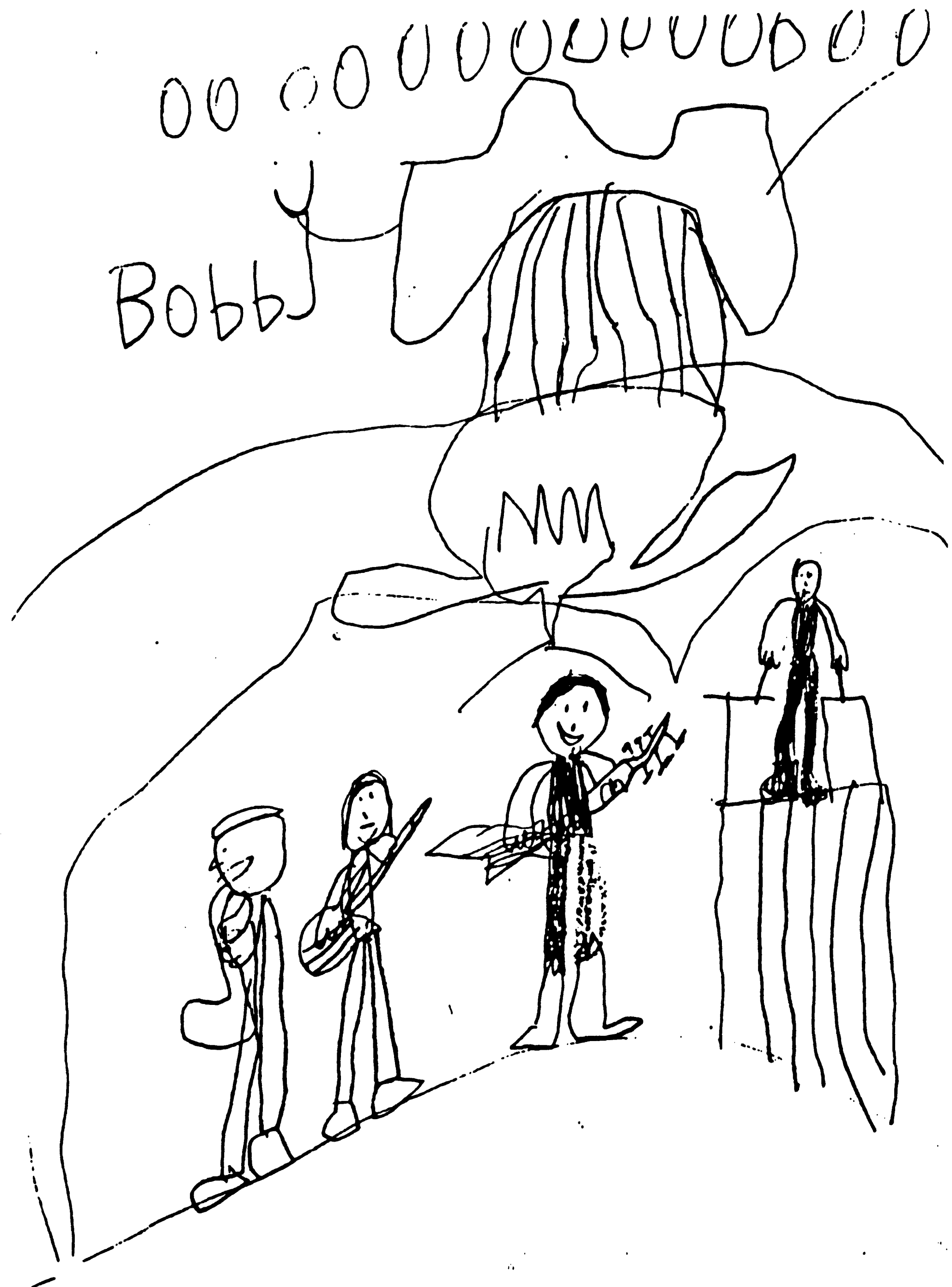

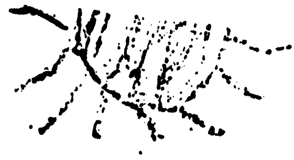

Appendix 4

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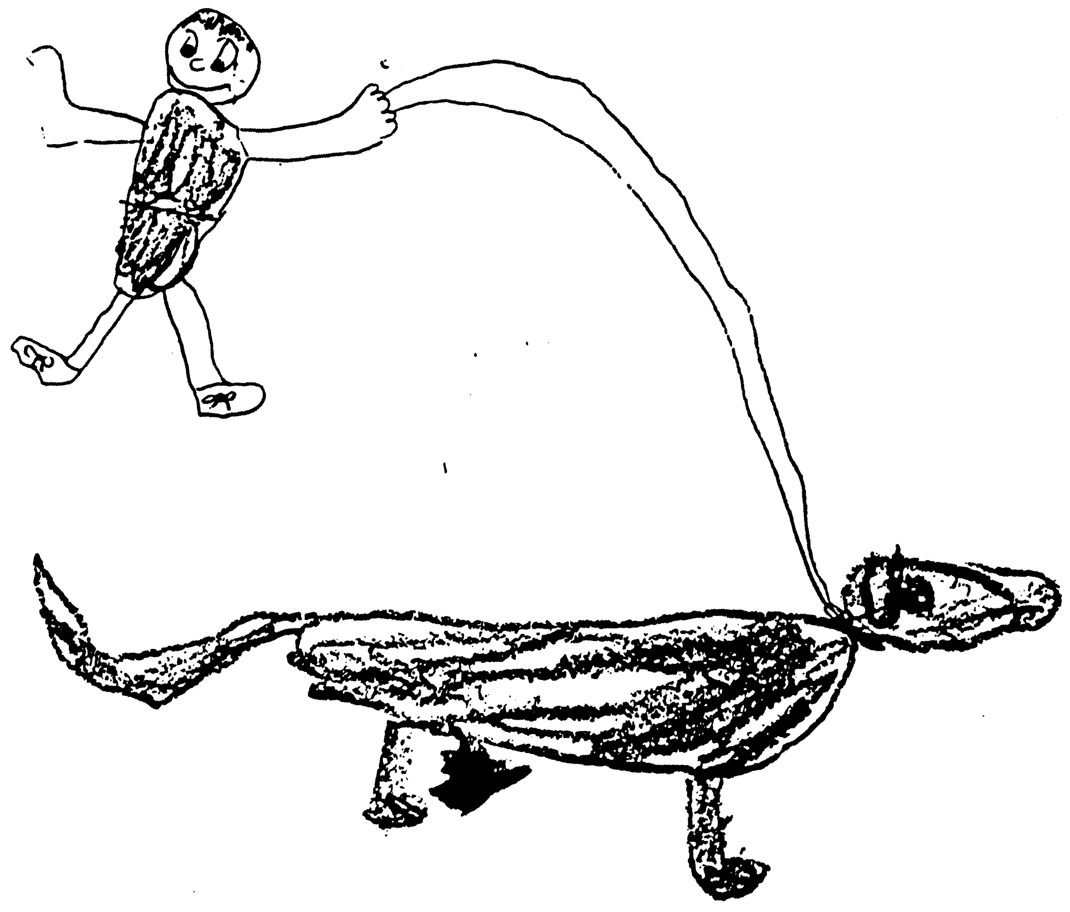

Appendix 5

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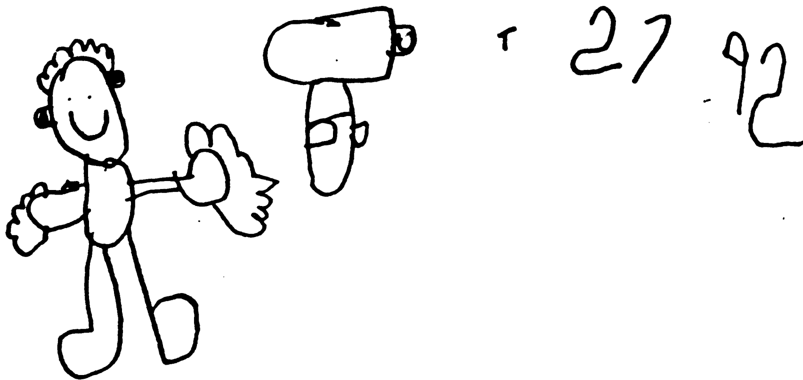

Appendix 6

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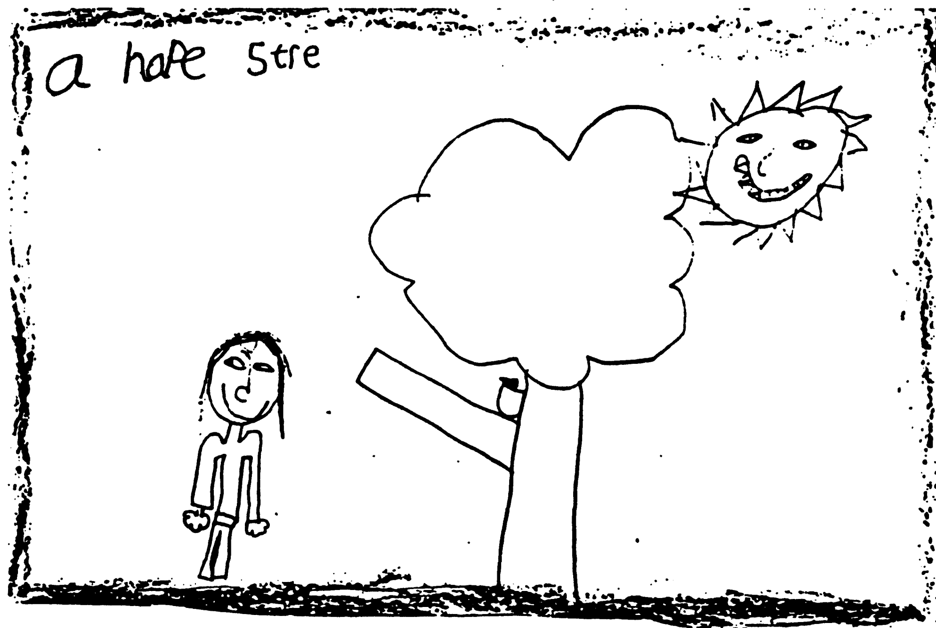

Appendix 11

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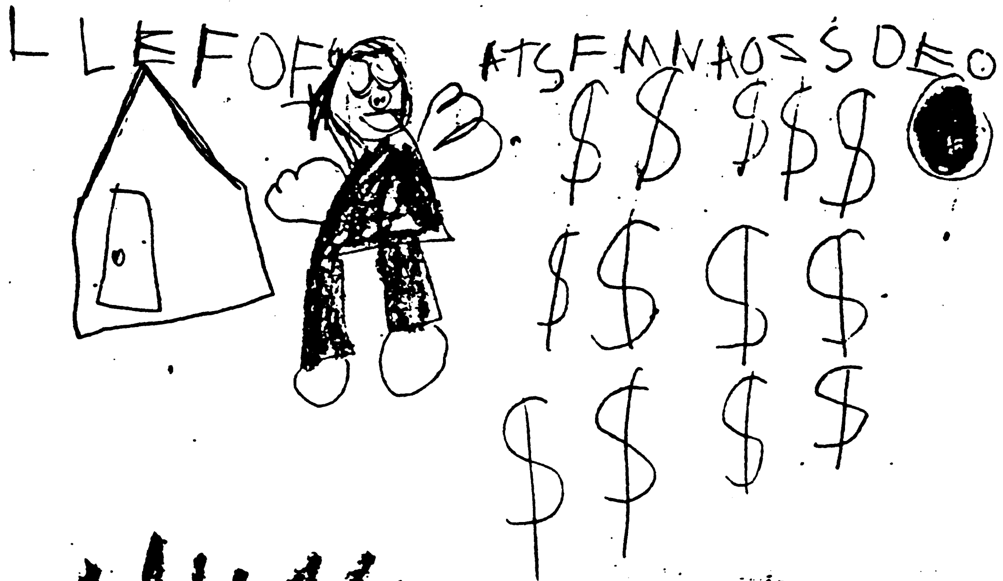

Appendix 14

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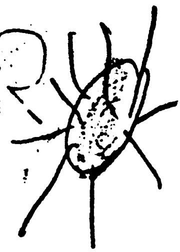

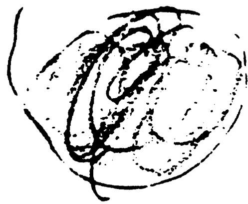

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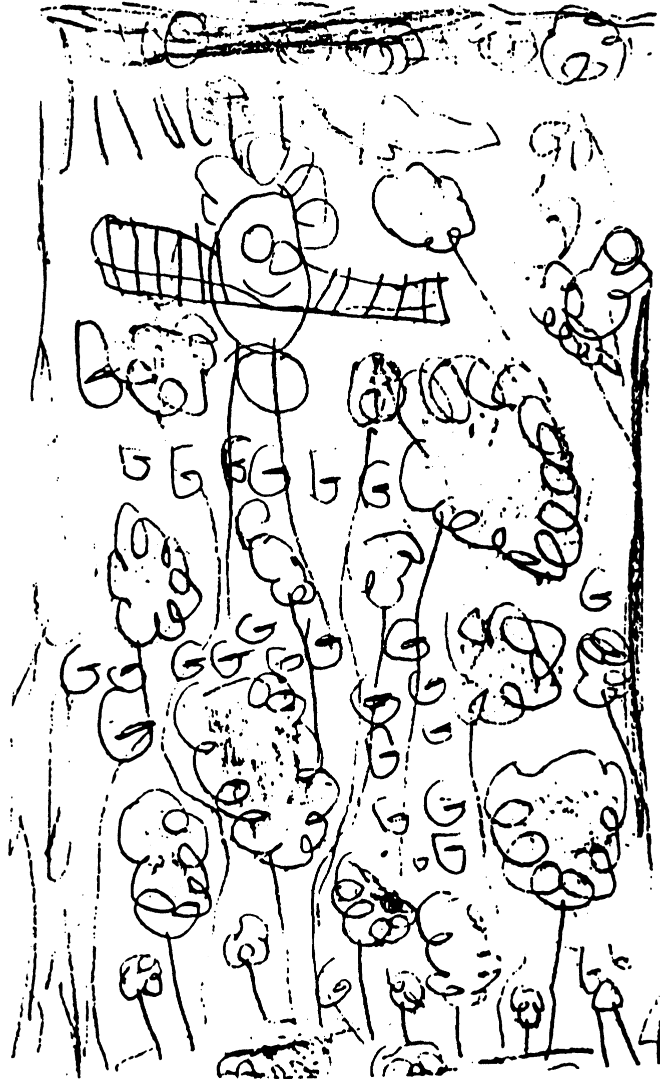

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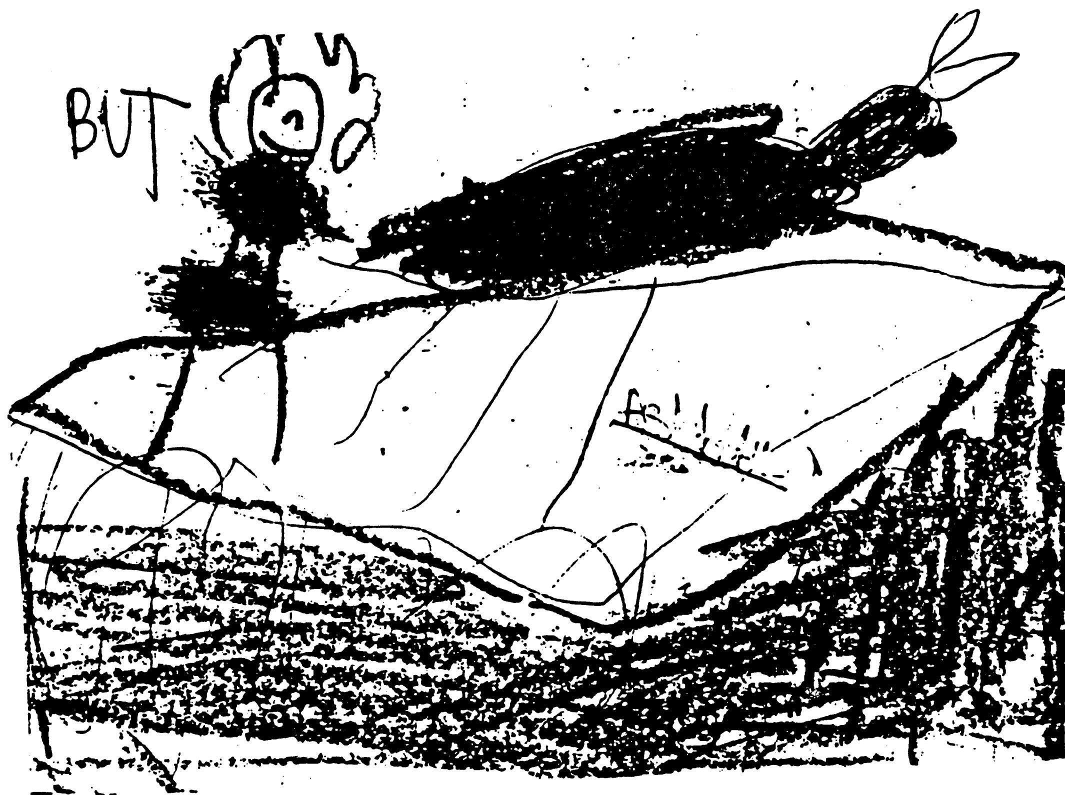

Appendix 17

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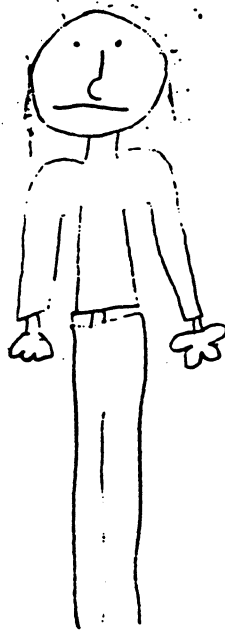

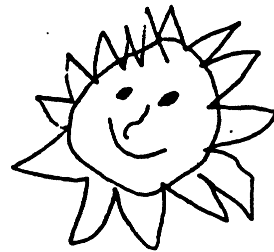

Appendix 18

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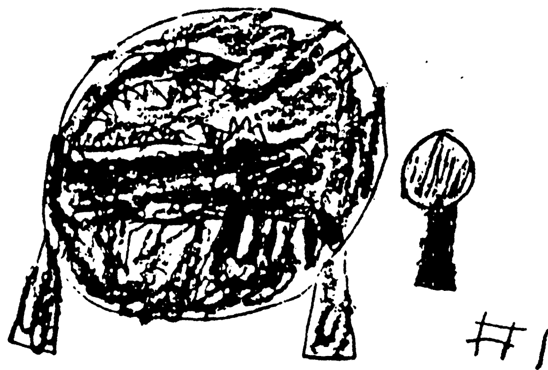
Appendix 20



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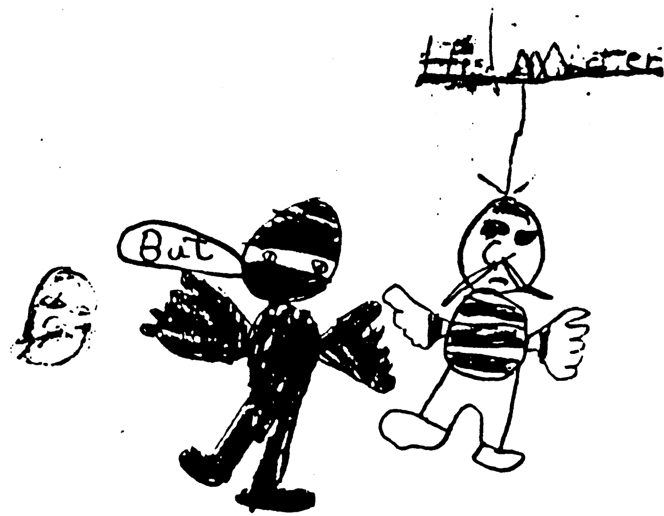

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Appendix 23

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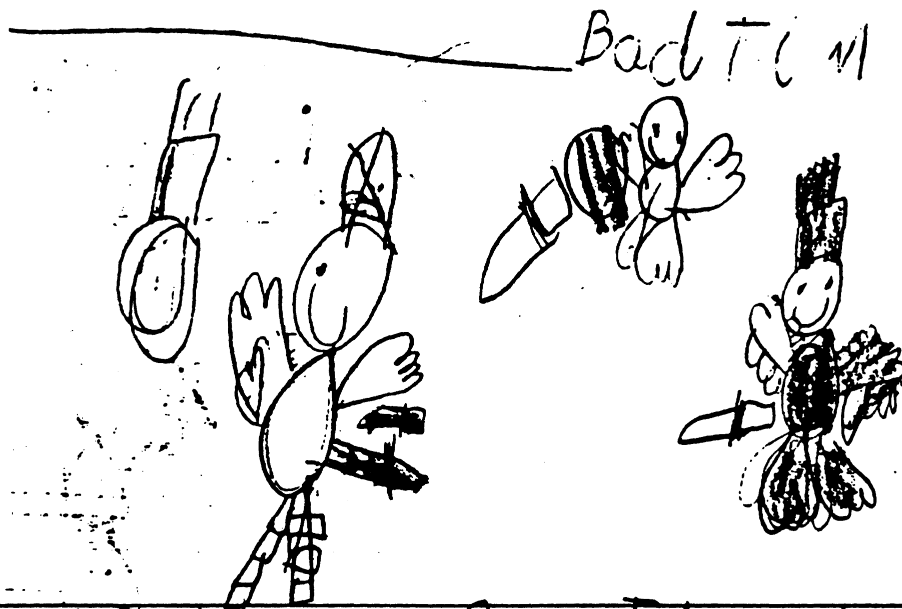
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Appendix 26

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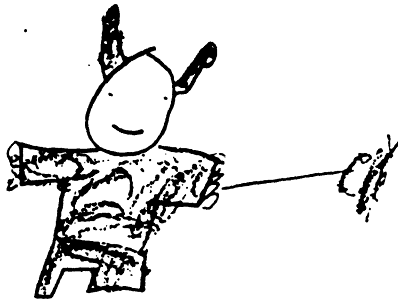

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B o l H o z

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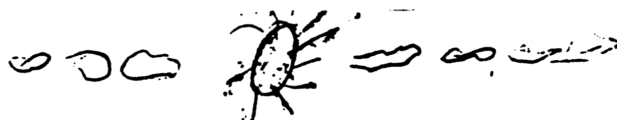
Pumckinhead. he is in a Pumckn Pach



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it is the nit befor Thut

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Appendix 32

Appendix 33

Appendix 34

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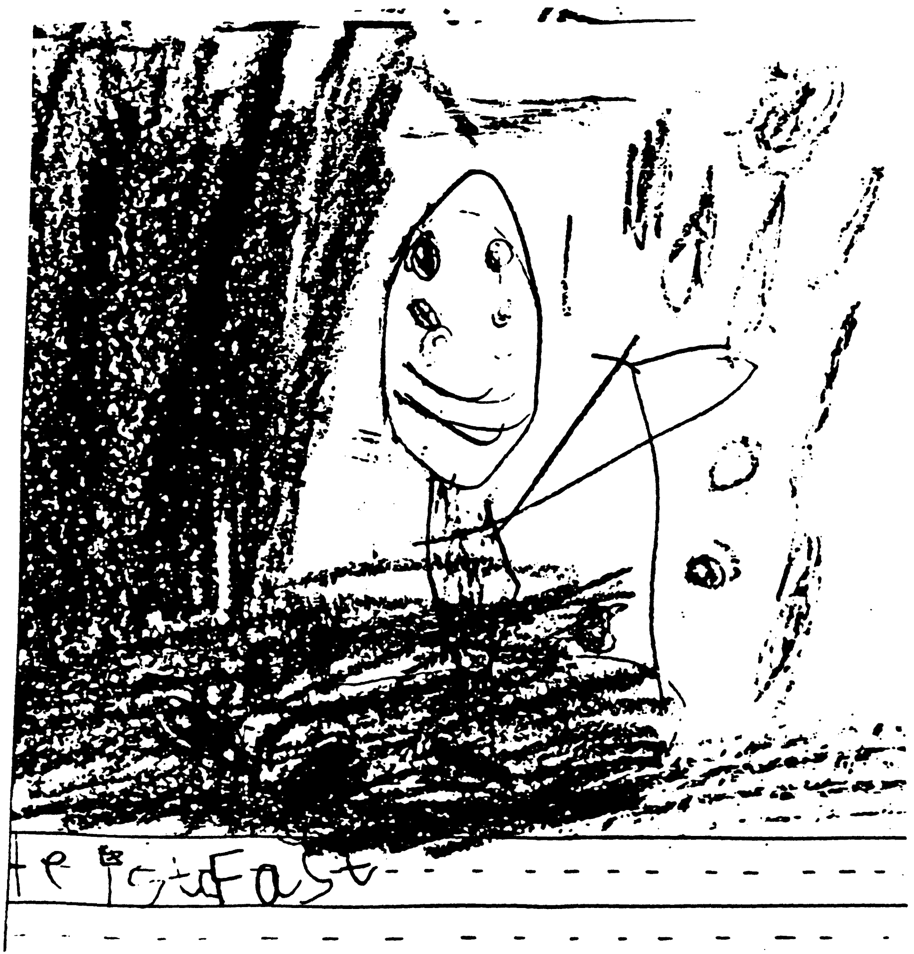
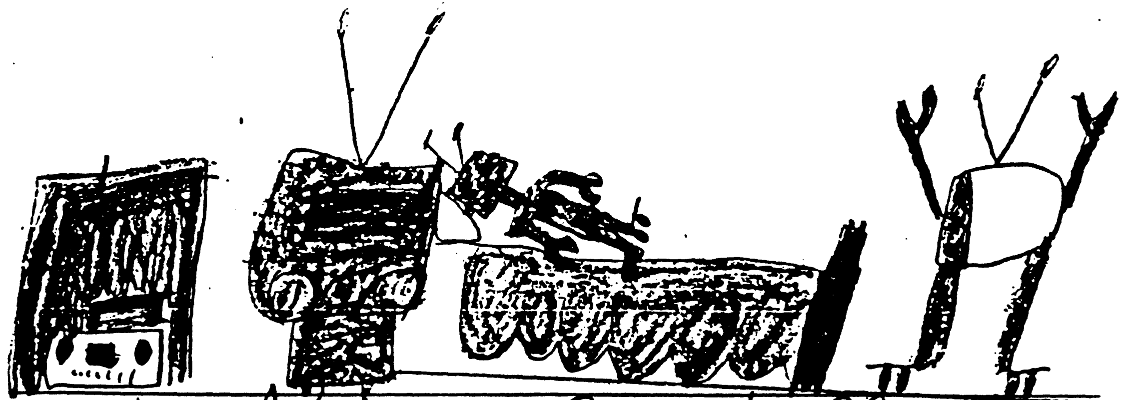
PURPLe MOTSTeR

Appendix 36



The Nice Robot And The Alien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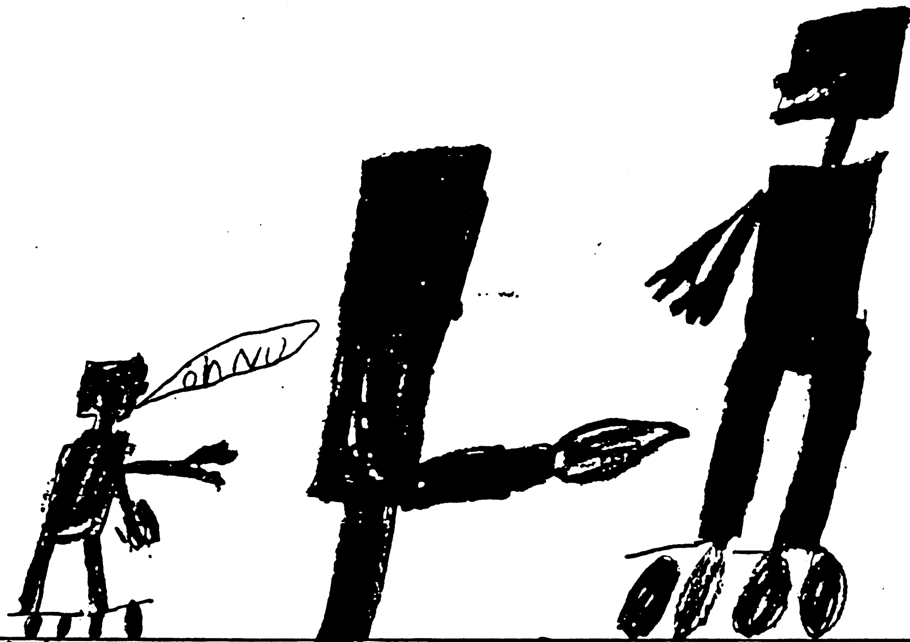
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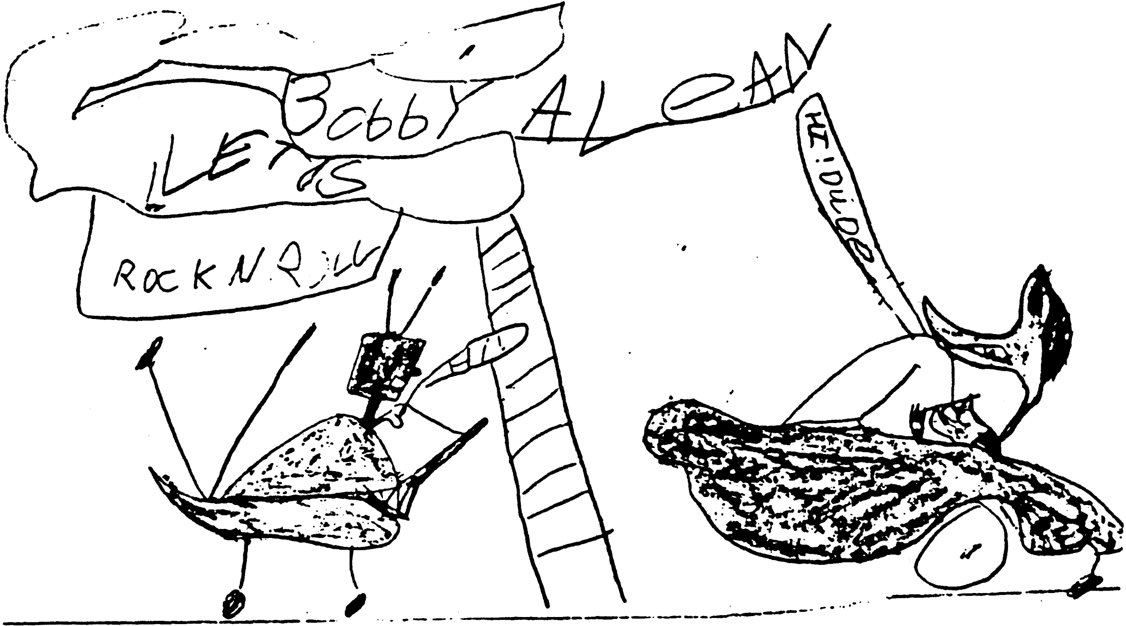
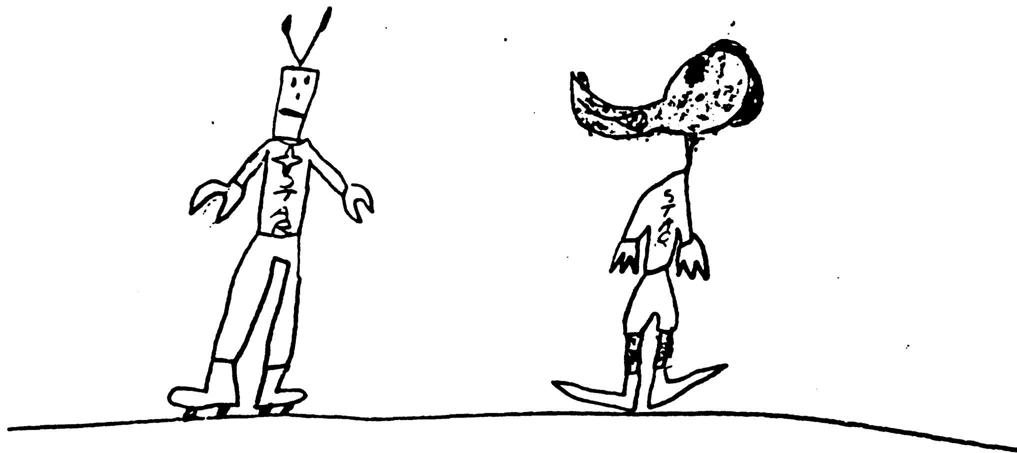
Appendix 40





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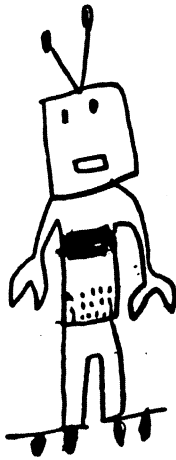
Appendix 42



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