

attempting to suggest what is needed. The ASCD Committee on Instructional Materials has an opportunity to contribute in this area. More opportunities for producers, publishers and editors to work with teachers, supervisors, principals and boys and girls should result in better and more useful materials.

From the writers' experience, materials such as these seem badly needed: (a) Materials of many types useful in helping boys and girls identify their real problems; (b) Materials of many types dealing with problems sized to the learner; (c) Materials of many types, useful and purchased on a broad enough scale to make them available at a reasonable price; (d) Materials of many types, dealing with the real problems young people face in growing up, designed to help them arrive at generalizations which will guide them in making personal choices.

The problems discussed suggest several possibilities for educators. First, we must face realistically the problems which, for solution, are dependent on citizen education. Provision of adequate finance, teacher time, materials specialists and better school quarters will be realized as citizens demand them. Second, we must recognize that the best use of materials in problem-solving teaching can be accomplished only when teachers have time for planning. Third, there must be recognition of the need for experimentation in the production as well as the use of materials. The improved use of materials in problem-centered teaching is a cooperative venture, requiring time and effort of all who are affected. All those concerned with instructional improvement should recognize that the provision of adequate materials is one sure way to encourage teachers to experiment with new methods of teaching.

Folklore Contributes to the Curriculum

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AS AN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST, I am convinced that folklore (the oral literature of the childhood of the race) is a priori the literature for children everywhere and at any time in history. Folklore, even when recorded in cold print, has the qualities which make it most appealing to the young—conversational quality, folk speech, folkways, folk beliefs, swift dra-

matic action. As the oral literature that has been preserved by the community with or without the help of art writers, it is pretested for popular appeal, for familiarity of concept, for meaningful vocabulary and speech patterns. That does not mean that the folklore of any group anywhere is necessarily adapted to the children of any other community nor that all folklore of any community

is suitable for school use with children in that community. With those safeguards the generalization with which this paragraph began seems tenable. I have certainly had a good opportunity to test it in my own teaching of courses in children's literature and also through a national survey, which I conducted in 1948, of the teaching of the subject in American colleges.

In order to safeguard against the use of imported folklore in unaltered form in American schools, it has seemed advisable to suggest that we place the greatest initial emphasis (at least) on the folklore of the community in which the school and the child are situated. The objection to imported folklore is not to its foreign character in a political sense, but to the fact that its use may nullify the great pedagogical principle of beginning with children where they are (educationally speaking). That is another way of phrasing the principle of the utilization of local resources. In other words, the use of folklore foreign to the community may mean the sacrifice of all the real reasons for using the folklore as enumerated already in this article—familiarity of concept, vocabulary, speech pattern, verbal exchange, folk beliefs and folkways.

However, in our country happily this does not constitute a grave limitation on materials in the sense that it does in many other countries which have a more homogeneous and stable population pattern. Inasmuch as this country is a nation of nations, so its folklore is a folklore of folklores. But just as our people are not unaltered, unassimilated blocs of foreigners physically transplanted to this land, neither

is our folklore, which has been subject to the same amalgamation and alterations as have the emigrants from abroad. When we have our choice between a bit of folklore in an unchanged form from abroad and an adaptation that has been worked out of it on our shores, pedagogically the preference is for the latter . . . as the first in point of time in the educational procedure here.

Children's Literature Emphasizes Folklore

This may be a partial explanation of why so many courses in children's literature in our colleges now have at least a unit on American folklore. By American folklore is meant the folklore of any considerable group within the political boundaries of the United States. Of the four outstanding textbooks in the field of children's literature at this time, two give official recognition to our folklore and one of these is organized almost entirely around folklore (and under that label). The latter, incidentally, is the more recent volume in point of revision. A third has as one of its special features a section on folklore, and the fourth (which has not been revised in this decade) is expected to stress folklore when it is revised. Some may ask what difference does it make whether the material is labeled as folklore or as American folklore. The main point is that correct classification is basic to any scholarly or scientific discipline. Taxonomy is more than terminological prolixity.

But children's reading is much wider than the standard content of courses in children's literature. And American

folklore has a curricular contribution to make to that much wider area included in the term language arts or communications. As a teacher of language arts methods, I have had an excellent opportunity to look into the role of folklore in this field.

Let us first see what relevance American folklore has to the problem of remedial reading. The connection to me is almost syllogistic in its logical simplicity. The retarded readers are those who have not successfully made the transition from oral literature to written literature (in the narrowest sense of both terms). The point at which oral literature most nearly approaches the written literature is in a folklore book, that is, oral literature typographically reproduced. That should indicate that folklore is the ideal bridge between the two skills and materials. We have earlier in this article enumerated the qualities which distinguish oral literature of the non-art type from the standard literature of the schools. This topic has been covered in somewhat greater detail in the *English Journal* for April, 1951. This article, by the way, brought me more responses from teachers than all the other articles I have ever written. I have recently learned that our folklore materials had been successfully used this summer at the University of Michigan Reading Workshop. Of course, I have been using the folklore materials in remedial reading cases on my own campus and so have my teachers.

Folklore Assists in Reading Improvement

It is along similar lines that folklore has a contribution to make to the much

wider field of the improvement of reading among students generally. It is my conviction that the reading experts who have dominated the field for the most part since 1917, have, in trying to lessen vocabulary and concept burdens for the developing readers, accomplished something far different and of an almost disastrous nature. In order to present only reading material which conformed to their strictly limited vocabularies and concept patterns, they began to write materials themselves rather than use traditional literature or even literature in any sense other than a concourse of written symbols. That eliminated the fanciful quality from children's readers and launched the arid school of so-called steam shovel literature (stories that lacked all story quality and were solely and coldly designed to inform the child all about firemen, policemen, and garbage collectors). These stories were as boring to the child in their purposeful way as the older moralizing so-called character-building stories of the didactic period.

This change in reading materials also brought about a wholesale elimination of poetry from children's readers. Obviously, it is too difficult to try to re-write our heritage of poetry in any "scientific" concept or syntax. The crisis was further aggravated by the movement to limit reading to silent reading. This movement reached its climax in a situation in which neither child nor teacher is allowed to say a "blessed" word.

Thus reading became ever more muted and unrewarding emotionally. Phonics were read out of court and an attempt made to force children to for-

get that written symbols had any oral counterparts: written language was to lose all its sound effects. It became a solitary, silent, monastic procedure—and became about as popular with the children. This situation was rendered even more painful (if not ridiculous) for the schools by the rapid parallel development outside the schools of such lively media as the radio, the sound recorder and playback, the talkies, the television. Reading had been made as unattractive as possible and so was unable to compete on equal terms with the most glamorous, and the most numerous, rivals the written word had ever known. No wonder some citizens are becoming so wrought up over the reading difficulties their children experience in the schools. No wonder reading clinics now begin in the third grade. And what is the material that is now being fed to these convalescing readers? Folklore, the very same material that occupied most of the readers before the scientific reading experts between the two World Wars got busy. One noticeable difference is that this time the youngsters are being given a much larger ration of American folklore rather than the world folklore they received before 1917.

Social Studies Utilize Folklore

With regard to the contribution that our folklore can make to the teaching of the social studies, I have had to rely heavily upon the assistance of a very able colleague trained in that field. It is our feeling that in the field of history, as in the other fields we have already discussed, the "scientific experts" are again to be held accountable for a similar departure from the tastes

and capacities of our students generally. In their efforts to eliminate everything from the history books that could not be established in the most literal and legal sense, the experts eliminated all the legends and popular anecdotes which alone make history palatable to beginners in the public schools. The elimination of the fanciful quality in this field led to the production of history textbooks that were just as boring in their inflexible determination to be emotionally sterile as some earlier texts had been in their didactic determination to point a moral or illustrate our national superiority. Most of the material which I can remember from my grade school history courses has been scornfully labeled as "folklore." That goes not only for harmless anecdotes about Washington and other idealized leaders but it also blasted the Custer courage, the Alamo glory, and all the things that made our hearts rise in our throats and our chests expand with pride in reading the story of our country and the mighty deeds of her sons and daughters which we might well emulate.

It is very "scientific" to cut out all the emotionally satisfying qualities in our textbooks and our teaching, but do not then wonder why we have to bring into the schools myriads of psychiatrists and psychologists to handle the emotional problems of the children. Of course, I would not have it thought for a moment that folklore should be taught as history, but certainly folklore must be taught along with history. Something must be done to keep the subject from being altogether an inquest held for the benefit of pathologists and morticians.

It is my conviction that "scientific" history finally became so emotionally sterile that many teachers had to give up trying to teach it and went over to courses in social problems, sociology, economics, current events. But these are no substitutes for history. It is only against the background of history that events today or tomorrow can assume any intelligible pattern. Moreover, in times of prolonged cold war such as ours, when boys are being called right out of the graduation ceremonies to fight for their country, it is nonsense to go around in rubber gloves and sterile bandagings lest you infect them with some bit of love for their country or pride in their people. It may be that a willingness to fight and die for one's country involves a great deal of the emotional and not too much of the purely intellectual. In that case, there are some things we should be trying to avoid more in our schools than satisfactory emotional experiences for a patriotic youth.

Another thing that we must remember is that a too great preoccupation with current events and social problems will always stress the things upon which we as citizens of this country do not agree, the things that are in bitterest controversy among us. How can that be any way to build national unity in the face of world disaster? From the standpoint of student interest

it is true that the current events appeal because they still have the vital and emotional qualities that the historians have taken out of the history books. Current events have all the humor, reckless prejudice, exaggeration, and color of life around us. Obviously, dehydrated history cannot compete.

In the social studies, the way is being paved for the restoration of the legendary (properly labeled) in our history courses. In this field at the junior high school level a very excellent textbook has just been prepared by one of the leading firms; and at the high school level, an American history text utilizing our folklore is being prepared. Of course, more than one set of recordings has been prepared for school use, capitalizing upon the obvious correlations between folk music and our history. As yet the teachers of the social studies have shown a much greater resistance to the acceptance of folklore as a legitimate component in their curriculum than have the teachers of English. However, folklore is even more fitted for use in their field than in the literary.

In any one article it is impossible to outline all the contributions our folklore can make to our curriculum in all fields or in any field, but I hope that its relevance to some of our major teaching problems has been made a bit more obvious.

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