EDUCATION

DIARY OF A HARLEM SCHOOL TEACHER, by Jim Haskins. 1969. Grove Press, Inc., New York. 167 pp. $4.95.

The author, like a number of other teacher-writers in similar situations, communicates his feelings of frustration, despair, and anger about the quality of life in the neighborhood as well as the quality of education in the school.

Most of the book consists of diary entries made daily during a school year. A shorter section contains brief biographic descriptions of the nine children in Haskins' class who received most of his attention. He attempts to describe the life style of the children, their family situations, and their individual needs.

Haskins' diary provides insights into relationships between black and white teachers in P.S. 92. The latter fear discrimination and loss of their jobs if parents and others in the neighborhood gain a major voice in making policy decisions. Black teachers and parents indict white educators for being concerned with the control of education but not caring enough about its present state.

I do not consider this an important book. Other authors, such as Herbert Kohl and Peter Schrag, have written about the same problems more effectively and in greater depth.

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GROWING FOOD, by D. J. Edwards. 1969. John Day Co., New York. 48 pp. $2.68.

Intended for learners in primary and intermediate schools, this is a resumé of ecologic conditions for growing food crops in all parts of the world. A unique feature is the use of diagrams from which children can derive facts and ideas in addition to the text material. Measurement and number are frequently used to amplify the basic facts.

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ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM, by E. Paul Torrance. 1970. Wm. C. Brown Co., Dubuque, Iowa. 136 pp. $2.25.

Torrance outlines and discusses ways to awaken and to realize the potential for creativity in children, as well as to identify their creative needs. He defines creativity as "a special kind of problem-solving," which has as its product "novelty and value, either for the thinker or for his culture."

Certain kinds of skills necessary for creative thinking are identified, and chapters are devoted to ideas a teacher might use in developing these skills—which include creative reading. Extensive lists of learning experiences are supplemented with examples of materials one might use to encourage particular experiences.

The suggestions for building creative reading skills were of special interest to me as an elementary teacher, as was the author's checklist of the characteristics of the "ideal child." For instance, one of the most basic of children's creative needs is curiosity; yet the category "Always asking questions" was ranked by both parents and teachers 39th among 62 characteristics to be encouraged. This checklist provides some important clues for teachers interested in providing a "responsive" classroom environment, in which creativity is encouraged and rewarded.

The author has done much of his research with the disadvantaged child. Two chapters are devoted to techniques for finding hidden talent in such children—and the techniques are of even wider application.

The value of learning by creative methods lies in the fact that motivation and reward are intrinsic. The book encourages this kind of learning.

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WHAT'S HAPPENED TO TEACHER?, by Myron Brenton. Coward-McCann, Inc. New York. 280 pp. $5.95.

Brenton's book is based on interviews with more than 250 teachers and administrators throughout the country, with officials of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers; and with federal, state, and local education officials. The intention was to explore the condition of public school teachers in contemporary American society.

The volume is written in an organized but discursive style. To those who have been working closely with schools, most of the information here will be a straightforward description of the life they know. Little or no controversial information or major new insights are included. However, those unacquainted with the politics and policies of public schools may be surprised at some of the problems discussed.

I was disappointed with the relative paucity of data. Even the data that are present may escape the superficial eye, since they are thoroughly woven into the text. Some subjects, such as teacher effectiveness, are grossly oversimplified, but this might be expected in a wide-ranging discussion. Much of the volume is made up of statements or impressions gleaned, apparently, from the interviews; these pertain to the feelings of individuals about the role and stature of American public education. Topics receiving major attention are historical perspectives, description

of the average teacher, money, problems of the beginning teacher, teacher militancy, power plays, school children, ghetto schools, school interaction with the community, and professionalism.

The point that Brenton makes best is developed in the last chapter, "The Limits of Professionalism." He seems to say that educational professionalism has been shallow, that self-interest has been high, and that many have wanted the benefits of a profession without the responsibilities thereof. He cites some of the most interesting data of the book in this regard. The basis of selection of examples used and generalizations stated, however, will disturb some readers, here as elsewhere in the book. Accountability and concern for the best interests of students are convincingly called for: this portion, at least, should be read and carefully considered by every classroom teacher. In general, I suspect that most classroom teachers will feel that educational administrators, faculty of teacher-education institutions, and parents are the ones who would benefit most from reading about the feelings and concerns reported here.

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DISCOVERING SCIENCE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, by Edith M. Selberg, Louise A. Neal, and Matthew F. Vessel. 1970. Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, Mass. 495 pp. $9.95.

This textbook for the use of elementary-school teachers is practically worthless in helping children to "discover" science. The activities suggested are so highly structured and complex that the teacher would have to be extremely sensitive to keep from being in the way of the children's learning.

Several things keep this book from being a useful tool in the instruction of science in the modern, child-centered, open-ended style. First, the authors choose to elaborate on activities that run the gamut from anatomic features of animals to geologic terms to atomic structure. The inclusion of so many science concepts is overpowering to the teacher. Each concept receives such superficial treatment that only very shallow learning can result—perhaps only the ability to label the diagrams and to pronounce and spell the scientific words. Second, the teacher seems to be made the authority in the activities. The children are led to trust their teachers rather than their own observations and materials. Consider, for example, the following description of an activity:

> If a large sowbug or pillbug shows a bulging light-colored pouch on the underside of the thorax between the legs, the teacher explains that this pouch is used to carry the eggs and the young for a short while after they hatch.
>
> [A class exchange is illustrated:]
>
> *P.* What are the animals called?
>
> *T.* They are called sowbugs and pillbugs, or *crustaceans* (written on chalkboard and clearly pronounced). They are related to insects but are not insects. Look at the pictures in your book. Notice that pillbugs appear to be different from sowbugs. What are the differences? How can you tell which is which?

Third, the children are made to focus on what many science educators consider trivial at this age; for example, the complete anatomic drawings of goldfish, the complete periodic chart of the elements, and correct chemical formulas and equations.

The authors do a creditable job in presenting a child's stages of intellectual development (*à la* Piaget) and in listing processes and concepts around which the book is constructed. There are also many interesting and relevant activities for children and excellent bibliographical notation. The text would help the teacher who is interested in learning and presenting scientific facts to children. However, the teacher who is interested in maximum child involvement wth minimum teacher intervention, the teacher who is willing to give the child room to explore and "discover" without the anxiety of having to cover *X* number of concepts in *Y* number of years, will find this text to be of little use.

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ENVIRONMENT

ECOTACTICS: THE SIERRA CLUB HANDBOOK FOR ENVIRONMENT ACTIVISTS, ed. by John G. Mitchell and Constance L. Stallings. 1970. Pocket Books, New York. 288 pp. 95¢.

Most of the articles in this book are by students. The appendix is a useful compilation of organizations, although NABT is conspicuous by its absence. The appeal is frankly to young people, and the use of "in" words is readily apparent. The villain in this melodrama is technology. The curriculum proposed is straight out of conservation literature. The tactics are primarily against "giant industry," but here and there are accounts of antilitter moves that are appealing.

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SST AND SONIC BOOM HANDBOOK, by William A. Shurcliff. 1970. Ballantine Books, Inc., New York. 153 pp. 95¢.

This book deserves a special place on the shelves of those concerned with focusing attention on our environmental