

## The New—in Review

Alice Miel, Editor

A BOOK TO PROVOKE much thought is *Your School, Your Children* by Marie Syrkin (Fischer, 1944, \$2.50). For there is sure to be reaction to the various problems which Miss Syrkin raises concerning the schools. It is not necessary to agree entirely with the author in order to be impressed by the fact that she, a busy teacher, has taken time to present such material to the public and that she is sincere in her presentation.

Miss Syrkin, a teacher of many years' experience in the New York City school system, bases her discussion on some of the broad questions which confront parents and teachers today:

1. Is the school the bulwark of democracy which our forefathers intended and designed it to be?
2. Is it meeting the fundamental challenges of our time?
3. Is it developing clear thinking, sympathetic, and understanding citizens?
4. What and where is the lag between our objectives and our achievements in our schools in America?

These problems, long accepted by teachers and school administrators as pertinent, are presented in a readable book, filled with colorful illustrations from the author's experience, and written for the ordinary citizen who enjoys raking education over the coals, as well as for teachers. More than ever, the educational profession realizes today the need for popularly written material to stimulate interest in our schools, to give a better understanding of the objectives and procedures of education, and thus to enlist aid from our citizens in providing better schools than we now have. Miss Syrkin's book is a step in this direction, but it must be recognized that she presents a critical picture of life in a big city school system and that this is not the full picture of education in America. There is material to supplement a book

of this kind; the *Know Your Schools* series published by the U. S. Office of Education is a good example. Unfortunately, material of this kind usually reaches teachers rather than the public, for which it is intended.

Miss Syrkin covers many areas in which our schools are vulnerable: the use of undemocratic procedures, intolerance, the collapse of standards, the use and misuse of intelligence measurement. The conflicting philosophies of some of our prominent educators, presented in interesting style, include those of John Dewey, Robert Hutchins, Stringfellow Barr, and Carl and Mark Van Doren.

Perhaps the strongest part of the book is its attack on the failure of our schools to employ methods of true democracy in school procedure, resulting in a failure to produce citizens who really live democratically. It would be desirable to have for public consumption an equally readable presentation of some of the positive efforts of our schools in this direction.—Reviewed by Sara Malcolm Krentzman, Librarian, Demonstration School, Florida State College for Women, and Consultant in Library Science, Florida State Department of Education.

IN RAPID SUCCESSION have come three important contributions from the National Council for the Social Studies—two year-books copyrighted 1944 and a forty-page pamphlet "The Social Studies Look Beyond the War" that is worth much more than its price of 10 cents. The pamphlet, which is a statement of postwar policy prepared by a distinguished advisory commission of the Council, will be valued as a specific, practical, and sound guide to the planning of realistic programs of social education in the years ahead. Especially pointed are Sections IV, V, and VI, which deal with war and postwar needs for curriculum change and with teaching procedures in the social studies, including implications for the program of teacher education.

*Adapting Instruction in the Social Studies to Individual Differences*, the fifteenth yearbook, also contains usable material on teaching techniques. While the entire yearbook is well written and suggestive, readers will find Kai Jensen's chapter on "Interpretations of Individual Differences" especially worthwhile. Here has been brought together material on human development that should guide educators in selecting appropriate socializing experiences for learners of different maturity levels. The book is edited by Edward Krug and G. Lester Anderson who have produced a brief introduction on "Individual Differences as Resources in the Social Studies" that is a masterpiece.

The fourteenth yearbook *Citizens for a New World* was published with the cooperation of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Commission to Study the Organization of the Peace. To this volume the social studies teacher will turn to improve his background of understanding of various international developments. Edited by Erling Hunt, the yearbook has as contributors experts in the field of international law, in problems of international health, in economic and social rehabilitation, and in other fields.

The yearbooks sell for \$2 each. Order from 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington 6, D. C.

ANYONE WOULD like books if he had had an opportunity to grow up with them as did the two little Duffs whose story is reported by their mother, Annis Duff, in *Bequest of Wings*, an account of a family's pleasure with books (Viking, 1944, \$2). Besides being charmingly written, the book has the virtue of containing much good information on children's books and on ways of helping children to learn to handle them with care while enjoying them.

PENETRATING CONCLUSIONS and recommendations with regard to teaching materials on inter-American subjects are reported in *Latin America in School and College Teaching Materials* (1944) by a committee appointed to study the matter for the American Council on Education. While the committee has high praise for the improvements made in such materials in recent years, such shortcomings as the following are

noted: an unfortunate number of unnecessary inaccuracies of detail, prejudicial and unfounded comparisons of English and Spanish colonies, certain racial prejudices and judgments inimical to adequate understanding of Latin America, insufficient attention to the cultural products and point of view of Latin America, and a tendency to overemphasize the picturesque in these countries, both in words and pictures.

The report contains also analyses of history and geography textbooks, biography, textbooks on modern problems and on international relations, current events magazines and pamphlets, language textbooks, arts and crafts, music, and films relating to Latin America. Order from the Council, 744 Jackson Place, Washington 6, D. C. \$2.50 in paper, \$3 in cloth.

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE language materials available now include *Brazilian Portuguese from Thought to Word* (Princeton University Press, 1944, \$3) and two paper-covered readers in the Macmillan Inter-American Series, *Anécdotas Fáciles* and *Conversación Fácil* (48 cents each, list).

INFORMATION ABOUT notable people and events connected with every day of the year is to be found in a new edition of *Anniversaries and Holidays* by Mary E. Hazeltine (American Library Association, Chicago, \$6). A comparison with the 1928 edition shows more material on the major holidays and more names of craftsmen, engineers, inventors, civic and religious leaders, scientists, aviators, and the like with fuller identification of each.

PROPOSED AND PENDING legislation affecting children and youth in the areas of health, education, employment, recreation, and welfare may be secured by placing one's name on the mailing list of a new organization, Child Welfare Information Service, Inc. This is a voluntary, nonprofit association supported by contributions and subscriptions. Legislation is reported impartially in mimeographed bulletins issued every few days. President of the organization is Mrs. Eugene Meyer of the *Washington Post* and author of *Journey Through Chaos*. Free for a trial period. Address: 930 F Street, N.W., Washington 4, D. C.

## Radio Listening in the Elementary School

By GEORGIANA MAAR, Librarian, Stratford Avenue School, Garden City, N. Y.

When the CBS American School of the Air began to broadcast its weekly "Tales of Far and Near" program, our school was very much interested. Since the beginning we have followed the stories quite continuously and have found the programs stimulating, particularly to the youngsters in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades where they listen regularly.

Different approaches have been used to interest the children and to acquaint them with the stories to be presented. One time we had a radio shelf in the library where we kept the books that had been broadcast or were to be broadcast. Another time the librarian tried to preview the story each week with the various groups. Last year we had two large posters listing the stories. These were placed in a conspicuous place in the library so that the children might refer to them and know in advance what stories would be used. This year we have a list typed for handy reference and from time to time have displayed it and book jackets or pictures representing the different stories.

The teachers use this story program in various ways and some do more in preparation than others. It depends somewhat on the group and its interest and in the value which the teacher places on the program as a part of the weekly class program. To give some idea of procedure a typical approach and evaluation is described.

On the day of the story the teacher inquires in her group who has read today's book. If someone has, he has a chance to review it briefly so the group will have an idea of the story. Or if many have read the book, there may be a discussion of incidents. That happened with a sixth-grade group the day of the broadcast of *The Sea Snake* by S. W. Meader. One after another told in a few sentences the part of the story he found exciting. Then one of the girls read the excerpt and review as given in the Teachers' Manual provided by the American School of the Air. Someone else read the life of Stephen Meader as given there so that all might know something of him and of his other books.

By then it was time to turn on the radio and tune in the station. This is always done about five minutes ahead of time to give the

children plenty of time to get settled before the story begins and to allow time for emergencies. After all it is well to know ahead of time whether the radio is working in order to arrange to share the one in another classroom if necessary.

After the story there is another short discussion. This time it is based on the broadcast. Some questions to be asked are: "Did you like it?" "Was it readily understood?" "Did the story make a good broadcast?" "Did the script writer satisfy you in his selection of episodes?" "Was there anything omitted which you feel is essential to the story?"

If there is time, other books similar in type can be discussed. In this case we talked of other adventure stories of the sea and of the present war. This is sometimes postponed until the class is in the library where the books as mentioned can be easily taken from the shelves. Often the success of the broadcast can be judged by the demand in the library for the book or others like it.

Sometimes letters are written to the broadcasting station commenting on or criticizing the stories or making suggestions for stories to be used. Sometimes we have taken a poll on the popularity of the stories and sent that record to headquarters.

And what is the value of this? It is another medium for presenting books to children. The books broadcast are well selected and in every case are stories worthwhile for children to know. They read avidly many of the stories which otherwise they might ignore, for the broadcast has given them a taste of the book and they wish to hear more.

The broadcasts this year have been broad in their representation. The classics are there in *Rip Van Winkle* by Irving, *The Courtship of Miles Standish* by Longfellow and *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* by Pyle. Famous people are represented in *He Wouldn't Be King* by Baker, *Davy Crockett* by Rourke, and *Dr. George Washington Carver, Scientist* by Graham. Other books cover the usual interests of children—dogs, Indians, humor, pioneers, adventure, fairies, and the present war.

There is such a wide variety that every child will find much to satisfy him in the twenty-nine broadcasts, and the radio listening may help to develop his appreciation of good literature and increase his interest in reading.

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