

## Significant Books in Review

Column Editor: Ruth Streit

► Landis, Paul. *Adolescence and Youth*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company. 1952. 461 p.

The majority of adults today are bewildered by the actions of adolescents and youth and frankly admit that they do not understand young people. Not only are adults lacking in understanding but they are also ignorant of the causes of behavior and are inclined to blame the young people instead of recognizing the fact that all people are products of their environments and that social forces have had a tremendous influence upon the growing and developing individual.

### Importance of the Social Structure

Many constructive ideas are expressed in this book, *Adolescence and Youth*. One of the most interesting is the emphasis placed upon the complex social structure in which growth takes place. The fact that the emotional turmoil of adolescents and youth is a sociologically inspired condition and not a biologically induced state is also significant. Too long have people believed that adolescence is a period of great physical upheaval about which little can be done instead of recognizing the fact that this is but one of the growth gradients in the whole process of maturation. With research now available the thoughtful adult recognizes adolescence as a most interesting period in the life of the individual and as such it is in need of as much understanding as are the periods of infancy and childhood.

The organization of the book is interesting. Part I which includes the first seven chapters is taken up with the biological foundations, the social struc-

ture, personality, how personality is formed, and various personality stresses all of which indicate the various processes of growth from the human animal to the human personality, the individual, the person. "Parts II, III and IV take up three broad phases of adjustment in which lie the chief struggles of contemporary adolescents and youths in attaining adult status." These three broad phases are: Attaining Moral Maturity, The Transition to Marital Adulthood, and The Struggle for Economic Adulthood."

### The Struggle for Selfhood

The sane and wholesome treatment of topics is especially noteworthy. The educational insights are numerous and varied. Throughout the book one is aware of both sympathy for and understanding of the individual as he struggles for selfhood within the social matrix. The importance of persons rather than an acceptance of the mass is especially significant. While recognizing that much of the school's work must be done in group situations the author says: ". . . if the school is to do this task well, it must develop a more lively appreciation of the social processes that determine values, attitudes, and personal goals of the average adolescent and youth. It must recognize more fully the social processes that play upon individual differences and create persons with different roles and varying degrees or social status. It must try to understand the adolescent and youth's own conception of his social status as well."

Throughout the book each topic under discussion is treated constructively

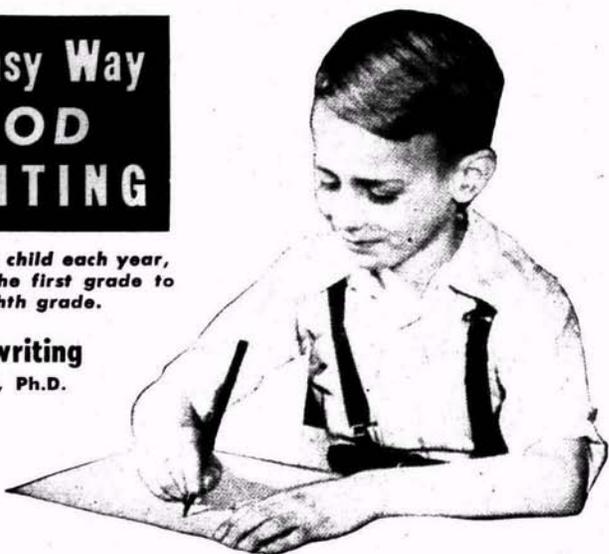
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and realistically. As one reads on and on one gains a very definite feeling of hopefulness and optimism. The researches quoted are basic to understanding but it is the interpretations of the data that give strength to the book and courage to those who work with young people of this age. This is a book that all adults should read.—*Ruth Streitz*, professor of education, Ohio State University, Columbus.

►McKillop, Anne Seeley. *The Relationship Between the Reader's Attitude and Certain Types of Reading Response*. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1952. 101 p.

This book is the description of a carefully-done study of still another phase of the reading process. In this research, the attitude of the reader was explored to determine how his verbally-

expressed attitudes affect those reading responses involving judgment and evaluation. Much of the first part of the book is devoted to phases of the reading procedure which provide background for the problem under investigation. Emphasis is placed upon the function in his reading of the reader's background and experience which are expressed in his attitude toward the material he reads. In turn, this attitude, it is proposed, affects his evaluation and reaction to the material oftentimes without regard to what the author himself intended.

Although it is not difficult to find reading taught as if it were a stale, mechanical process, most teachers are concerned with what happens to the reader himself, although many have failed to grasp the fact that whatever the reader brings to the reading colors his understanding of the material and modifies its meaning for him.

### Study of Metropolitan Cases

This study, which involved 512 eleventh-grade students in three schools, two in New York City and one in a New Jersey suburb, was carried on by the use of three tests. These were: first, a test of general reading ability; second, a vocabulary test used as a measure of verbal intelligence and general information; and third, scales to measure attitude toward Negroes, Communism, and Israel.

The narrowness of the geographic area plus the probable similarity in the background of only 512 cases decreases the validity of the study somewhat, it would seem, although the obvious painstaking care with which it was carried out compensates for that lack in some measure.

### Values to School Personnel

The study has specific implications for schools at both the elementary and secondary levels. Particularly in fields such as social studies and literature where attitude colors so definitely the response students make to their reading is it necessary for teachers to teach reading carefully and to be adequately aware of students' needs not only in the area of mechanical reading ability but in experiential background and in the basic values they hold, as well. The study has another value which should not be overlooked. Most teachers and administrators in public schools lack a knowledge of the research pertinent to educational progress which is being carried on in the colleges and bureaus of research. Here is one of many such studies which teachers will benefit from reading and studying.—James C. MacCampbell, Public Schools, Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

►Burrows, Alvina Treut, *Teaching in the Middle Grades*. Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1952.

This is a satisfying book and one that has long been needed. To those who appreciated *They All Want To Write*, an equally fine book, written by Alvina Treut and others while they were teaching in Bronxville, New York, this is no surprise because that volume was a harbinger of better books on education.

The cry against "too much theory" has long come both from experienced and from student teachers. Perhaps they have felt need for what one finds in this book, namely, live boys and girls doing things as only real children can do them. Arnold, Stanley, Rodney, Barton and Ann appear with their interests, activities and problems. Fortunately, they also show how teachers who are determined to help them can and do help them.

### The Answer to Teachers' Questions

There are chapters which answer questions on every aspect of the teacher's work. Certainly any sincere, thoughtful teacher can become a much more effective teacher by a careful study of this fine book. The child and his characteristics and needs, both group and individual, come from Mrs. Burrows' knowledge and happy teaching experiences. There are chapters on "An Eleven Year Old Group Studies Greek Life," "A Fourth Grade Studies Arithmetic," "A Third Grade Studies Science," and "Content Learnings in the Middle Grades." There seems small realization in many schools today that the skills can best be developed in an environment where content is interesting and important.

Every sincere teacher in America will find answers to many of his most perplexing problems in this excellent book. One of the most baffling and intriguing problems to an earnest teacher is what to do when a child is seemingly stymied in his development. The incident

which the author describes on pages nine and ten concerning Stanley are especially interesting. Stanley was a child of many school problems. Academically, as well as personally, as the author says, he found school to be difficult. He had been given a large amount of individual help in reading and spelling and, even, extra tutoring. These difficulties were reflected in his conduct. He had made himself unpopular with the children by pushing, bullying and using rough language. Then he went into Mrs. O'Brien's room. "The word had gone around that Mrs. O'Brien could teach you to make 'swell' puppets and that there was no end to the shows you could give with them.—Stanley had decided on the character which he wished to make. It was to be a giant."

The author describes how it became legitimate for Stanley to talk in a rough, blustering way as a giant and how this began to make him feel more relaxed: "By late fall his puppet was ready for a play and Stanley's first part for his giant was in the play, 'The Brave Little Tailor.' Stanley truly lived the part. The other children were enthusiastic and made it clear that they thought that Stanley was 'simply wonderful.' No better medicine could have been prescribed. The effect was immediate. As dramatic as was his role in the play was Stanley's change from a surly, intimidating nuisance to a constructive, dependable boy."

Mrs. Burrows shows that boys and girls cannot easily be deceived. Changes in a child must be real if he is to be won over.

Many people have worked very hard to make science a part of the elementary school curriculum. Today all schools that are "on their toes," regard science as one of the best parts of their curriculum. As in every phase of the

good life for boys and girls for which Mrs. Burrows shows appreciation, she evidences thorough understanding for the part which science curiosity plays in their lives. In chapter seven she says: "Evidence that the intellectual content of science holds absorbing interest for boys and girls is well-nigh inescapable. Even in classrooms or homes where science experiments are not an accepted part of daily life children cram their pockets with specimens or show off their collection of snails, rocks, or other prized possessions."

### Plan Time To Help Individual Pupils

Another innovation, that need which is often difficult for teachers to see, is the absolute necessity for a daily program which includes planned time for giving individual help to children. Even in crowded classrooms there are ways of planning that allow for times when boys and girls can be profitably busy and the teacher can give individual help.

Better schools will result when more teachers realize the opportunities for effective teaching which Mrs. Burrows so ably describes.—*Ruth Bristol*, Montclair State Teachers College, New Jersey.

► Ferris, Helen. *Writing Books for Boys and Girls*. Garden City, New York; Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1952. 320 pp.

How many times have adults wanted to know something of the personal life of an author as well as the reasons for writing a particular book! Perhaps more often than not these curiosities and interests have not been fully answered. However in *Writing Books for Boys and Girls* Helen Ferris, as editor-in-chief of the Junior Literary Guild

Selections, has brought together in this charming little book not only answers but insights into the thoughts and beliefs of both the authors and their stories thus making both live happily again in one's memory. The book is indeed a delight to the lovers of good literature for children.

### Age Interests vs. Grade Levels

The extent and variety of books for children cannot be overestimated. Within the covers of this one book alone there are accounts of two hundred sixteen authors of books for children who tell how they happened to write the particular book mentioned. In addition the book is organized as follows: Writing for Six to Eight Year Olds; Writing for Nine to Eleven Year Olds; Writing for Twelve to Sixteen Year Olds. This bears out the modern psychological point of view that "age interests" are better guides to the understanding of children than are "grade levels." And then the Authors Index which includes not only the authors' names but titles of books, some marked with symbols to indicate the Newbery Award or the Caldecott Award is of inestimable value to teachers, parents and librarians.

The following quotation sums up in eloquent language both the content and the significance of books for children and makes one long for the gift to create the lovely and altogether delightful stories which are the right of every child living in today's world: "For upward of a quarter of a century, American writers for boys and girls have enjoyed unprecedented freedom in their creative work. The shelves in children's rooms of our public libraries, in our school libraries, in our homes, are eloquent of the stimulating variety in what they have written for their young audience. Here are books for every age of young reader up to the

time when they are ready for adult reading fare. Here are stories of many kinds—of today and yesterday, those laid in our country and around the world. Here are fantasy, poetry. And nonsense. Books that reveal the wonders of the earth and the sea and the sky. The lives of great men and women of our own and other times, rich in inspiration for the seeking young. And on and on. Ours has been a time of flowering in children's literature, of lilted and stirring gifts to young minds and hearts." (p. 11)

As interesting as the book proved to be to this reviewer it is the acknowledgment or page of indebtedness that Miss Ferris penned which offers the real challenge to writers and to publishers. She says:

"You who believe in joyousness,  
in beauty, imagination,  
in the integrity of science.

"you are courageous:  
when the yet unknown  
lies before you,  
you say, 'why not?'

"you are gallant:  
when books you foster  
are rejected by  
young readers,  
you go steadfastly on.

"Yours is the gift of understanding,  
of according glad recognition  
to the creators of living literature  
for young minds and hearts."

*Writing Books for Boys and Girls* will encourage many potential contributors to the field of children's literature and it will also prove of value to the classroom teacher who wishes to make good literature "come alive" for her children. An excellent and charming book!—*Ruth Streit*, professor of education, Ohio State University, Columbus.

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