III

RHYME WRITING

AN EXPERIMENT FOR THE ELEMENTARY GRADES

Children have an instinctive love for rhymes and jingles of all kinds. Their natures respond whole-heartedly to the rhymes of poetry and music. The day they first hear the Pat-a-cake jingle their interest is awakened and the Mother Goose rhymes are always a source of pleasure to them.

So far does their interest go that they become the writers of original rhymes. To many of us such a thing would be almost an impossibility, but children welcome the opportunity; for it is but another means of giving expression to their artistic ability.

With our fourth grade some very definite work has been done along this line. First, the birds and spring flowers were studied. Poems about these were read to the class, in order to give the children an appreciation for the beautiful and a standard for good poetry.

Excursions were made for the purpose of observing the different birds and flowers. When their observations resulted in the finding of good descriptive words the children wrote them on their pads and it was very interesting to notice the desire on the part of each child to have the best line of words. When the children returned to the school-room these lists were read and discussed.

The children were taught a few simple principles of rhyme-making, rhyming of words, and the numbers of syllables to a line. All this was in preparation for the actual writing of original rhymes.

The first class product was worked out in the following way:

The children decided that they wished to write a rhyme about a robin. First, a list of the best bird words chosen from their lists previously made, was put on the board. Those that were especially suitable words were underscored. Then all the children were asked to decide how many stanzas they wished to write and how many lines to put in each and the ideas they wished to express. This being decided, they were then ready for the actual writing of their rhymes.

The class then thought quietly about their first line. Many lines were repeated aloud in the class until one which seemed best to the majority of the class was accepted. This was written on the board by the teacher and the children counted the syllables. Then the next line was written in the same way; and so on through the entire rhyme. Often a line that did not satisfy the class was written on the board for want of a better one, but later the children would come back to it and change it to suit them. Often in getting the right number of syllables the children would change a word of too many syllables for a shorter one or vice versa. Sometimes the sequence of the different lines was changed also. The rhymes were read aloud and, if not satisfactory, the class would suggest changes. I found that the teacher had really very little need to offer suggestions, for the children knew when their rhymes were good and when they needed to be changed.

The following is the first class product that was the result of a lesson carried on in the above manner:

ROBIN RED BREAST

Robin, robin red-breast, singing in a tree,
What happy playmates you and I will be! Have you come to tell us glad spring is here,
And to bring to all happiness and cheer?

Robin, robin red-breast, in your nest I peep;
There I see your dear little birdies three
Swinging and swaying in the old oak tree.

Your joyful secret was not kept from me.

Many individual rhymes were written by the class with, of course, varied results; but there was ever present a lively interest.

In connection with the study of the apple industry the class wrote a rhyme about the apple tree. It was written as the other class rhymes were written. The class decided to have the first stanza describe the appearance of the tree and the second to tell the pleasures the tree affords them. This decision gives continuity to each stanza and makes a nucleus around which to group their thoughts. The rhyme is as follows:

THE APPLE TREE

The apple tree stands in my orchard,
It is gnarled and twisted and old,
A sweet fragrance steals in at the door,
As the blossoms quietly unfold.
Happy little children love to swing
Under the shady apple tree,
And to hear the robin’s cheerful song
As he swings and sways merrily.

The rhyme “Maytime” is but another
result of the eagerness of the children to ex-
press their love for nature.

**MAY-TIME**

’Tis now the month of May!
Hear the birds merrily sing.
Everywhere are fragrant blossoms
For the whole world is awakening.

Frolicking children are playing
In the meadows far away,
Picking violets here and there
For 'tis the merry month of May.

The masterpiece of the class poems is one
written about the Massanutten Peak. First
the children were taken to the Normal School
hill and to the top of Franklin Street, where
they could see the peak plainly. They ob-
served it and as on other occasions wrote in
their pads words describing it. Parts of
Wordsworth’s description of his trip through
the Alps were read to them, as were also de-
scriptions of Fuji-Yama and other noted
peaks. After a preparation of a few days, in
which the children wrote on their pads whatever they thought of as being of possible use to
them, they were ready to write their poems.
They decided to have a poem of two stanzas of
four lines each, having the first stanza de-
scribe the Peak and the second tell what the
Peak reminds them of. A list of words and
phrases was put on the board and the follow-
ing is the result:

**MASSANUTTEN PEAK**

Beautiful Massanutten Peak!
You are blue as the summer sky,
Standing there in the distance
With your tower so very high.

Beautiful Massanetten Peak!
You are the king of our country side
With your armor of shaggy rocks,
We look to you as our Valley Guide.

The first stanza of this poem was quickly
written, but the second and third lines of the
second brought forth some very clear think-
ing on the part of the class, in which the pow-
er to criticize and judge their own work was
exercized. These lines were first written:
“
You are the guard of our country side
With your shaggy armor of rocks.”

Then some child suggested that they use
the word ‘King’ instead of ‘Guard’. This
change being made, another child suggested
that ‘robe’ be used instead of ‘armor’ and that
they say ‘robe of shaggy rocks’ rather than
‘shaggy robe of rocks’.

The benefit derived from this form of
work was well worth the time spent on it.
The children developed a sense for the fitness
of words and enlarged their vocabularies, to
say nothing of the real pleasure which both
the boys and the girls derived from these ex-
ercises. I have since seen boys who formerly
were accustomed to scorn the reading of
poetry voluntarily read it and appreciate it.

**Mary V. Yancey**

**IV**

**A TEACHER’S TRAVELS**

**Sketch No. 4**

The hotels of New Orleans rank, with
the finest in the country. Some of the lar-
ger ones are the St. Charles, the Grune-
wald, and the Monteleone. The lobby of
the Monteleone is very beautiful. It re-
mined me of the Southern Hotel in Balti-
more and of the Tutwiler in Birmingham.
But I have not yet seen anywhere a hotel
lobby as beautiful, to my notion, as that of
the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond.

From New Orleans to Mobile was about
five hours by rail. The stage from Mobile
to Pensacola I had intended to make by boat,
but the bureau of information at the Mobile
station informed me that no passenger boats
were running between Mobile and Pensacola.
While waiting for the next train I inspected
the monument to Admiral Semmes, found
certain other memorials to Civil War heroes,
and got a glimpse or two of the harbor—a
busy place, full of big and little ships of var-
ious kinds.

The three o’clock train went first north,
then east, then south, and finally came at dusk
down the Escambia River to Pensacola. A
boy in khaki, on his way home, helped me to
find a hotel. The next morning, at 6:15,
I boarded a Louisville and Nashville train,
pushed out upon the causeway through Es-