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# A Handbook of Ideas and Activities for Teaching English as Second Language to Pre-Schoolers

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A HANDBOOK OF IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS  
A SECOND LANGUAGE TO PRE-SCHOOLERS

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This project by Laurie Jean Emel is accepted in its present form.

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This is a collection of activities for teaching English to children of pre-school age. The activities are aimed at the total involvement of the child by encouraging not only verbal communication, but also self-expression through art, body movements, and dramatization. The directions for the use of the activities include adaptations to varying class sizes, levels of English proficiency, and cultural backgrounds.

ERIC Descriptors: Children's Games, English (Second Language), Instructional Materials, Activity Learning, Early Childhood Education, Classroom Materials, Teaching Methods, Bilingual Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Most of the activities and ideas for language learning presented in this collection have been used by the teachers and teachers' aides at the Takoma Park Day Care Center of the Montgomery County Department of Social Services in Maryland. The children, from the ages of three to six, were grouped together in classes of fifteen with a teacher and teacher's aide in each classroom. The day care center provided full care for the children for eight to ten hours a day while their mothers worked or attended school. Though teaching English was not a primary goal of the day care center, these language learning activities were developed in part to meet the needs of the children who were non-native English speakers (approximately 25% of each class and from several different countries). The various activities were never presented as "English lessons", nor were they restricted to non-English speakers. Most of the teachers and aides spoke only English and had no training or experience in teaching language.

Our general objectives in using these activities were to encourage communication, create outlets for self-expression, and simply have fun. However, in a more academic setting, an ESL teacher might have a more specifically linguistic objective in mind, such as "practicing the imperative forms" or "learning the parts of the body." Along with each activity I have made these specific suggestions to the ESL teacher.

For a number of reasons I feel that it is best not to focus (at least not overtly) on the linguistic objective of the activity. Children of pre-school age whose native language is English show evidence that, though they are developing a sense of grammaticality, the patterns or rules are



their own and may not correspond to the adult pattern until the children are well into elementary school. For example, as soon as a child learns only one or two regular past tense forms -- like walked and opened -- he begins to overgeneralize and say things like goed and drinked, even though he may have used the irregular past tense forms correctly before and hears them correctly used by other people.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, while young children often stop and correct themselves according to their own notions of "correctness", there is evidence that corrections by adults play little, if any, role in forming the child's sense of grammaticality. Children cannot imitate what they cannot yet produce from their own cognitive facilities.<sup>2</sup>

A third point that is usually truer of children than of adults who are learning a language is that the child's interest is generally focused more on what he is saying rather than on how he is saying it.<sup>3</sup> Any or all of the above factors probably combine to produce the kind of ESL teacher-child conversations of which the following is a typical example from one of my children at the day care center:

Child: Teacher, Julio taked my tinker toys.

Teacher: You mean Julio took your tinker toys.

Child: I no got no friends.

Teacher: You don't have any friends?

Child: Si. I no got no friends.

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<sup>1</sup>Dan I. Slobin, Psycholinguistics (Basic Psychological Concepts Series; Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1971), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>Ursula Bellugi-Klima, "Linguistic Mechanisms Underlying Child Speech," Proceedings of the Conference on Language and Language Behavior, E.M. Zale, ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968.)

<sup>3</sup>Roger Brown, "The Child's Grammar from I to III," Minnesota Symposia on Child Psychology, Vol II, J.P. Hill, ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969.)

The ESL teacher may choose to rephrase what the child has said to set a correct pattern that the child may or may not be ready to organize into his unconscious set of "grammar rules". The teacher may also rephrase in order to clarify what the child has said, but it may be difficult to focus on content and grammaticality at the same time. When a child says, "Julio goed out the window", the utterance is true and perhaps very valuable from the standpoint of communication, though it is grammatically incorrect. The individual teacher must choose which "correctness" to respond to.

Though the activities in this collection have been chosen because they stress verbal communication, and in many cases a particular structure or set of vocabulary words, the child's attention will be focused on the activity for its own sake. His interest will be in playing the game, expressing himself, or satisfying his curiosity. The activities are lively and fun and appropriate to the energy level and relatively short attention span of a preschooler. The role of the teacher will be not to explain grammar structures or drill vocabulary words, but to facilitate the participation of the child in individual and group activities in which he can learn at his own rate and according to his own needs for communication or self-expression.

That the primary focus of these activities is not necessarily a specific linguistic goal in language proficiency does not imply that the learning situation is unstructured, but rather that the learning environment is purposefully structured in such a way as to allow the child to respond as a total person. We learn all the time by what we see and feel and think and do, and, since teaching and learning cannot be avoided, a teacher can come to the classroom in a certain flexible state of mind which I think enables him/her to use the child's dynamic flow of natural expressiveness and creativity in order to help the child attain his/her individuality. This

state of mind might be characterized as that of a listener, not only a listener to what the child is saying in his speech, but also to what he/she is saying with his/her body, behavior, fantasies, emotions and play. Mary Caroline Richards expresses this conception of a teacher's role. "Whatever we teach him (the child) should be touched by the spirit of the world that is natural to him. He lives naturally in a world of myth and poetry and invisible beings. He loves sound and movement and color and drama . . . The sense of language grows out of motion and gesture and picture and sound. The teacher should aid in this education personally -- and not by textbook! The knowledge he may convey then will be infused with human qualities of imagination and sensory delight and true concern."<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing that different children have different needs and abilities, a teacher might choose to work with a smaller group or with an individual so that the children can get more individual attention. Generally, state guidelines for pre-school facilities require two adults for a class size of fifteen, making it possible for a teacher or an aide to work with an individual or a small group while the others are supervised in other activities.

Though most of the activities are flexible enough to accommodate any number of participants at various levels of English proficiency, there are a number of ways to facilitate the participation of a child who knows little or no English, or who is new to the class. In a bilingual classroom the teacher can give necessary explanations to the child in his own language. Often beginners learn by observing or imitating the children who have more facility in the language. Some activities lend themselves well to pairing the beginner with the child who knows more English. Other activities need not be verbal at all, but can become more verbal according to the level

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Caroline Richards, Centering in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1964), p. 104.

of the child's English. Suggested adaptations to different levels of English proficiency have been included in the description of the activity itself.

One final aspect to consider is the cultural content of the activities. A teacher cannot assume, even with native American children, that he/she shares the same living environment as the children. It cannot be assumed, for example, that a family unit consists of a mother, father, and children, or that a home is a house with a big yard and two cars in the garage. It is the teacher's responsibility to be sensitive to the child's reality and try to provide a learning environment that allows for the expression of what is important to the child. This is not to say that a child should not be introduced to things that do not reflect his own experience, but that new experiences can broaden the child's world, without replacing it. In the description of certain activities, suggestions are made for adapting the activity to reflect the backgrounds of the children.

OBSTACLE COURSE

Number of participants: 2 to 10 (2 or 3 can actually participate while the others observe until their turns come)

Materials: a blindfold

Especially valuable for: giving and receiving directions, developing trust

Arrange an obstacle course in the room using furniture, books, blocks or even people. Then choose someone to walk the obstacle course blindfolded while the teacher or a child who knows the game and all the vocabulary gives directions. For example, "Walk ahead very slowly. Stop! Turn right. Get down on your hands and knees. Crawl forward. Stop! Stand up."

Rearrange the course slightly for the next person and make it very simple for someone who is a little hesitant to try or who knows very little English. The children may go in pairs. The one who knows English better can go first and the learner can follow with his hands on the leader's shoulders.

PLANT A GARDEN

Number of participants: any number

Materials: Pictures of a variety of fresh vegetables or flowers cut from magazines or old books. (or real vegetables and flowers)

Especially valuable for: listening comprehension, vocabulary building (especially names of plants)

In this game the teacher is the gardener and all the children are flower or vegetable seeds. Each child chooses the kind of vegetable or flower he wants to be and has a picture of his chosen vegetable or flower hung around his neck or pinned to his clothing. If possible, have the real vegetables on hand. As the children choose their vegetables, they can practice new words by association with the pictures and by discussion. "What kind of vegetable is Michael going to be? What color is the carrot? Do you like spinach?" Continue asking questions, as appropriate, throughout the narrative. Children who don't choose to participate can watch the garden grow. Even a child who speaks no English can be a vegetable because verbal responses are not required. The following is one suggestion for a way that a teacher might narrate this activity.

Very early in the spring when the ground is still cold and there are no leaves on the trees and no one goes barefoot, I plant some tiny little onion seeds, radish seeds, lettuce seeds, and peas. These little seeds don't mind the cold. (Pretend to dig a little hole for each vegetable seed and call the children one by one by their vegetable names. Have them curl up in little balls on the floor.) I cover the tiny seeds with some dirt because they have to sleep in the ground for a week or two before they begin

to grow. I put some water on the ground for my seeds. The sun shines on them for many days. Then one day the seeds begin to grow. (Have the children start to uncurl.) I see tiny green leaves coming out of the ground. The little plants look at the sun. (Have the children open their eyes.) Now it is almost summer. The ground is warm. The sun shines every day. Now I can plant my beans, tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers. They only like hot weather. They don't like cold weather. (Repeat the planting process with the rest of the seeds.) Every day my plants grow taller. (The children start to stand up.) Finally, all my vegetables are big and ready to eat. (The children are standing with their arms stretched out.) I'm so hungry. I think I'll eat a cucumber. (Pick up the "cucumber" and pretend to eat it.) I'm going to make a salad with tomato, lettuce, and pepper. (Continue like this until the whole garden is harvested. The game is then over and can be repeated.)

Some children have never seen a vegetable garden. A class might grow a few beans in glasses which expose the roots so the children can see the development of a plant from seed. The beans can be sprouted on a damp paper towel and then placed against the inside wall of a clear plastic or glass container filled with potting soil. Some young plants might be left without water or sunlight and compared to healthy plants.

Our class visited a nearby garden periodically throughout the growing season, harvesting a variety of vegetables and sampling them fresh. We discussed color, size, texture and taste. If no garden is available, a walk through the park to observe nature closely can develop the same sense of appreciation.

MOVE OVER

Number of participants: 3 to 10

Materials: a chair for each child

Especially valuable for: learning numbers

Arrange the children in chairs in a semi-circle and recite this poem:

There were ten in the bed (or whatever number of participants)

And the little one said,

"Move over! Move over!"

So they all moved over

And one fell out

And the other ones said, "Good night". (All the children say "Good Night" and the one who has just fallen out of bed answers.)

With the words "Move over. Move over," all the children move to the next chair and the one on the end falls out on the floor. Each verse starts with one number less than the preceding verse:

There were nine in the bed . . .

There were eight in the bed . . . and so on.

The game ends when all the children have fallen out of bed and are sleeping on the floor. As the children become more familiar with the game they begin to recite the words along with the teacher. The poem can also be reversed:

There was one in the bed

And Michael said, (Michael is the next on in line to get in)

"Move over! Move over!"

So the one moved over

And Michael got in



And the other ones said, "Good night".

There were two in the bed

And Isatu said,

"Move over! Move over!"

So the two moved over

And Isatu got in

And the other ones said, "Good night". And so on . . .

KEY VOCABULARY CARDS

Number of participants: any number

Materials: paper (preferably something strong like index cards or pieces of poster board) and a magic marker

Especially valuable for: helping children make creative use of their own experience and emotions and developing an interest in reading and writing

In Teacher, Sylvia Ashton Warner describes key vocabulary words as words that have intense meaning for a child and are already a part of his dynamic life. She believes that in these first key words, the love of reading is born. She asks a child, "What word do you want?", writes it on a large tough card and gives it to the child. The word may be one flung out in anger or fear like kill, ghost, beat, or the word may be kiss or darling. The words will not always be pleasant or polite, but they must be an important part of the child. Each child may take the card home with him, bring it back in the morning and get a new word. Take back a word that a child doesn't remember how to read, because if he doesn't remember it, the word is not important enough.

Each child accumulates his key words in a box with his name on it. Every time new words are given, the children pair up and share their words with each other. After accumulating about forty words, the children can begin creative writing. At first, they simply attempt to write their own words and, eventually, they may string them together in one-sentence autobiographies. The teacher may encourage the children to illustrate their stories, share them with other members of the class, or display them on the walls of the classroom. Sharing a child's story or autobiography is a

unique opportunity for the teacher to glimpse the child's inner world and come to know him better. Miss Warner warns that it is not always easy to unlock key vocabulary words. It helps to spend time alone with each child, especially at times when the child is experiencing something difficult or struggling with new growth. At first, the child may simply ask for words of common objects or other words of fairly neutral emotive strength, such as window or drink (though, depending on the child's experience, such usually neutral words may indeed be the meaningful ones).

To be most effective, especially with children whose English is very limited, key vocabulary words can best be used by the bilingual teacher.

<sup>1</sup>Sylvia Ashton Warner, Teacher (New York, N.Y.: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1963.)

SIMON SAYS

Number of participants: any number

Materials: none

Especially valuable for: learning the parts of the body

Before playing "Simon Says", the children need to know the parts of the body that will be mentioned. The game can be simplified by using only a few body parts and gradually adding new words. Parts of the body might be taught by sitting in a group and asking, "Where's your nose? Where's your head? Your chin? Your knee?", etc. The children could ask the teacher the same questions or point out the parts on the teacher's body. Another way to practice parts of the body is to have the children reassemble a human form by placing it, part by part, on a flannel board, or by pasting it on a large piece of construction paper. There are also several songs which use parts of the body: Hokey pokey; Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes; 'Dem Bones.

In playing "Simon Says", the teacher leads the game by giving orders for the children to follow. If an order is prefaced by "Simon Says", all the children must follow the order. For example, "Simon says put your hand on your head. Simon says put your hand on your knee. Simon says put your finger on your nose. Simon says turn around. Simon says sit down. Simon says smile." If an order does not begin with "Simon says", then everyone remains frozen in the last position and no one follows the order. Normally, if someone follows an order that doesn't begin with "Simon Says", he is out of the game, although unlimited mistakes could be permitted,

especially with beginners. If the game is played competitively, the winner is the one left standing when all other players have been eliminated. A child who is fairly proficient in English can give the orders and the teacher can join the players. It is possible for a child who speaks little or no English to enjoy "Simon Says" because he can simply imitate what the others are doing and gradually learn to associate the word that is spoken with the part of the body being used.

I SPY

Number of Participants: any number

Materials: none

Especially valuable for: practicing question forms and building vocabulary

The teacher or one of the children says, "I spy something \_\_\_\_\_."

(Insert any adjective that describes a quality of the mystery object that is visible in the room — green, soft, round, small.) The children try to guess the object by asking questions. "Is it the clock?" "Is it Monica's button?" "Is it the rug?" If a child doesn't know the name of the object he may point or say, "Is it that?" The teacher can supply the name by saying, "No, it isn't the chalk." The teacher can further simplify the game by holding up the color or the shape of the mystery object. The one who guesses the mystery object gets to be the leader and choose the next object. If he has already had a turn he may choose someone else.

To make the game more difficult, the adjective could be omitted: "I spy something." This encourages the children to use adjectives as well as nouns in the questions: "Is it big?" "Is it soft?" "Is it yellow?"

MYSTERY PERSON OR OBJECT

Number of participants: 8 or more for MYSTERY PERSON  
any number for MYSTERY OBJECT

Materials: none

Especially valuable for: practicing questions forms and building vocabulary

All the children close their eyes and the teacher or one of the children quietly chooses someone to go hide behind a bookcase or under a table draped with a blanket. Have the children open their eyes and try to learn who is missing by asking "yes" or "no" questions: "Is he a boy?" "Is he five years old?" "Does he go to kindergarten?" "Is he from Korea?" "Is he from Bolivia?" "Is he Juan?" Even a child with little English can make one word questions about names. "Shayna?" "Cedric"? When the children have guessed who the mystery person is, he comes back and another is chosen.

A more difficult variation on this game is to hide an object from the room behind a screen and have the children guess what it is by asking questions about it. (either information questions or yes/no questions) "How big is it?" "What color is it?" "Can I play with it?" "Is it the play dough?"

STORY PAINTING

Number of participants: any number (children work individually)

Materials: large pieces of paper, and tempera paint, colored chalk, or crayons

Especially valuable for: helping the children express their feelings and getting to know the children more intimately (especially good for shy or troubled children)

Set up an easel with about three or four colors of tempera paint (or substitute big pieces of paper on a table or on the floor with colored chalk or crayons). Let the child paint or draw anything he wants. Try to talk to him about the picture. "It's beautiful. Can you tell me about it? I see you like green. I do too. Do you see something else in the room that is green?" Since, ideally, the picture is a reflection of the child's inner world, the teacher should not offer his own interpretations or suggest any changes or criticism.

Some children may enjoy dictating a story about the picture. The story can be written in the margins of the picture or on another piece of paper attached to the painting. With the child's permission, the picture can be displayed in the room and the story read to the class. Some children may like to tell the story to the group themselves.

The story need not have any obvious relationship to the picture. It should be written down as it comes out and not modified to achieve coherency or to fit the teacher's conception of what a story should be. The teacher may talk about the story after it is written or gently ask about certain aspects of the story that are not clear. The subject matter of the story may not always be pleasant, but, because the child is communicating what is



important to him, the teacher must be careful about being critical either directly or indirectly. The following is an example of a story which was dictated to me by a four-year-old boy. The story accompanied a painting that consisted of bright red splashes and streaks on a black background.

"Here my mother. She burning in the apartment. Uncle Willie crashed his car. He stay in a wheel chair all the time. He beat me with his hands. I run away cause he can't run fast. I run fast. This is a ax. I'm gonna chop off Willie's head."

ROLE PLAYING

Number of participants: depends on role play

Materials: depends on role play, availability of materials, and teacher's imagination

Especially valuable for: eliciting communication in a specific situation, and allowing the children to explore a variety of roles

Role playing can have endless variation and take many forms. However, a few general guidelines about the role of the teacher apply in any case. Provide the materials, space, time, and supervision. Be interested and enthusiastic and help children who can't get started by talking about familiar experiences they have had. Help expand the child's own wishes or ideas, but help only when necessary and do not set rigid patterns to copy. The following are some suggestions for role plays.

Housekeeping — Provide some basic household furnishings: a couple of toy phones, a pillow or two and a blanket for a bed, a painted cardboard box for a stove, another box for a table, a few plastic dishes and cups, and some clothes for dress-up. The children can play a variety of roles with this set-up: cooking and eating a meal, putting a child to bed, carrying on a phone conversation, disciplining a child. If necessary, help the children choose roles, hoping that they will show some flexibility in sex stereotyping. The teacher might say, "I'm so hungry. Would you like to cook something for me?" Or he might telephone and ask to speak to someone in the household. The extent to which the teacher participates depends somewhat on the level of English of the children. This kind of role play is a good way to learn something about a child's home environment.

Fire Department — An old vacuum cleaner or hair dryer hose and a few cardboard boxes are enough to start a role play about firemen. A wagon or even a tricycle can be a fire engine. This role play might start with a teacher's call to the "fire department". If the classroom is equipped with large sturdy wooden blocks, the children can make elaborate buildings or fire engines with them.

Beauty Parlor — A comb, some hair pins, a few rollers, a shower cap, and a bottle of clear nail polish (or water) sets up a beauty parlor. All kinds of conversations can take place while children are having their hair done. "Who cuts your hair? Do you wash your hair yourself? What color is Shayna's hair?"

Hospital — Some Band-aids, cloth strips, M & M's or water in bottles, a stethoscope (preferably a real one) and some tongue depressors are some objects that might be used for a hospital role play. A vinyl flight bag makes a very professional-looking doctor's bag. A hospital role play might be a good time to encourage a little girl who wants to be the doctor or a little boy who wants to be the nurse for a change.

Cowboys — Guns and holsters, bandannas, a rope, and sticks for horses are props for cowboys. Some people object to acting out violence and would not feel comfortable supervising such play. There are, however, respectable members of the community who carry guns (policemen and soldiers, for example), and who can use them responsibly. The role play might be less aggressive if the guns are not made available and the cowboys are encouraged to round up cattle and cook around a campfire, or the policemen encouraged to direct traffic. The cowboys and policemen can be cowgirls and policewomen as well.

Children's Stories — Some stories, played on a record player or read or told by the teacher, lend themselves very well to dramatization. Three bowls, three chairs, and three blankets, for example, set the stage for Goldilocks and The Three Bears. The fairy tale or folk tale might be a familiar one taken from the child's own cultural background, especially in a class in which a large number of children come from the same country.

The role plays are more realistic if they reflect the child's own background. For example, if the children eat black beans and tortillas almost every day, provide the ingredients of these dishes when setting up the kitchen for housekeeping. Also, plan a visit to a fire station or a police station or beauty parlor to bring the children closer to the real thing and add fuel to their imaginations in play.

LOTTO

Number of participants: 2 to 6 (or more if the children are seated two to a card)

Materials: LOTTO game (commercial or home-made)

Especially valuable for: vocabulary building (names of objects, numbers or letters)

LOTTO is commercially available in a variety of forms, emphasizing object names, numbers or letters. Each player has one or more cards divided into six sections. Each section contains a picture, number, or letter. The teacher has a pile of smaller cards corresponding to the sections on the players' cards. He chooses them randomly one by one and asks, for example, "Who has the umbrella?" The player who has an umbrella on his card answers, "I have the umbrella," and places the small card over the corresponding section of his large card. The game continues like this until one player has covered all of his card and calls, "LOTTO". He is the winner. The game may be continued until all the players have covered their cards. A child whose English is good and who knows the game might take the role of the teacher.

If the children know little or no English, the teacher would show the card as he asks the question. Then a child who doesn't associate the word with the object could still recognize the picture and match it to the corresponding picture on his own card.

Home-made LOTTO games can control the words or concepts to be taught. For a giant-sized colorful LOTTO game, take pieces of poster board and divide them up into six to twelve squares. Then paste a picture in each of

the squares, setting aside the duplicate of each picture (preferably backed with cardboard). Two copies of the same issue of a children's magazine or two Sears catalogues can provide the paired pictures. Very young children whose fine motor control is not yet well developed will find these giant LOTTO cards easier to manipulate. Articles of clothing, pieces of furniture, animals, kinds of food, professions, and pictures of people are some pictures that might be used in LOTTO.

If the pictures are not attached to the poster board, but left in cardboard backed pairs, each child can fill in his card with his favorite pictures to be matched. Thus, the same poster board can be used again and again while the pictures continue to change as the collection grows.

### RECORD STORIES

Number of participants: any number

Materials: record player and story records

Especially valuable for: listening comprehension and dramatization

Story records are records accompanied by a picture story book. They usually cost less than a dollar and are available in toy stores. Disney, Inc., has all the popular fairy tales in this form with music from the stories on the reverse side.

The narrator reads a story and a little bell indicates when to turn the page. Even a child with very little English can follow a story through the pictures as he gradually learns to associate the words with the actions. Children may take turns holding the book and turning the pages for a group of listeners, or a child may work with the record books alone.

When a number of children are familiar with a story, it can be dramatized. The Three Little Pigs is easy and fun to do. Assign the parts of the three pigs and the wolf and mark off three parts of the room to represent the three houses built of straw and sticks and bricks. Then play the record and let the children act out the parts. If the children's English is more advanced, the teacher can narrate the story and then pause to let each character say his own lines.

FLANNEL BOARD

Number of participants: any number

Materials: flannel board and felt or flannel backed cut-outs

Especially valuable for: vocabulary building or counting

A flannel board can be made by stretching a piece of light-colored flannel or felt around a piece of plywood, heavy cardboard, or an old bulletin board. Geometric shapes in different colors, letters, numbers, food, animals, human figures, or articles of clothing can be cut out of felt or cut from old books and magazines and backed with flannel or felt. The child or the teacher can create a scene or design by pressing the objects onto the flannel board, which is placed on an easel or leaned against a wall.

A flannel board can be used in a variety of ways:

1. Tell a story and let the children take turns changing the scenes on the board.
2. Write down a story that a child tells about a design or a scene he has created and read it to the class or let the child tell it if he wishes.
3. Put several human figures on the board and let each child dress one. Talk about the colors and articles of clothing.
4. Let each child put up what he'd like to have for lunch. Talk about food. Classify foods under fruit, vegetables, starches, snacks, desserts, breakfast food, favorite foods, or a number of other classifications.



5. Take turns counting objects or naming colors.
6. Put up a variety of animals and talk about their size, shape and habits. Some children may not have seen a wide variety of animals, so it is important to keep the size of the animal figures somewhat in proportion. A child who has never seen a giraffe or a turtle would have no way of knowing that the giraffe is much bigger than the turtle. This activity might be a follow-up to a class trip to the zoo.
7. Have cut-outs of household furnishings and let the children arrange them room by room

OBJECT PAINTING

Number of participants: 6 to 8 per adult

Materials: tempera paint, sheets of white or colored paper, and a variety of geometric shapes (wooden or plastic blocks, carved potato or carrot pieces, or cookie cutters)

Especially valuable for: developing creativity and building vocabulary (especially colors and shapes)

Each child chooses his own color of paper and paint and an object. The teacher can encourage the practice of names of colors and shapes by asking questions while the materials are being distributed. "Do you want red or blue paper? Who wants a square?" etc. Then the children dip the objects in paint and apply them to the paper. The paint should be placed in shallow dishes scattered about the table and should be thick enough so that it clings to the object and doesn't run. Trading of paint colors and objects is encouraged for creativity and practice in English. "Who has the black paint? May I have your triangle?" The finished products can be hung around the room on display and discussed before the children take them home as gifts to some family member or friend.

Object painting is an especially good activity for a child who is shy or who is non-verbal. Let him help set up the materials and be a special helper during clean-up. Talk about what you are doing. "Here is a bucket of water and a sponge. Would you like to help me wash the tables? Please hand me the red paint (point to the red paint). Now hand me the blue paint. Let's throw the potatoes and carrots in the waste basket. Are there any pieces on the floor?"

Object painting tends to be messy and the children should wear smocks

to protect their clothing. Old shirts ~~and~~ ~~are~~ good  
washable smocks.

FAMILY PORTRAIT

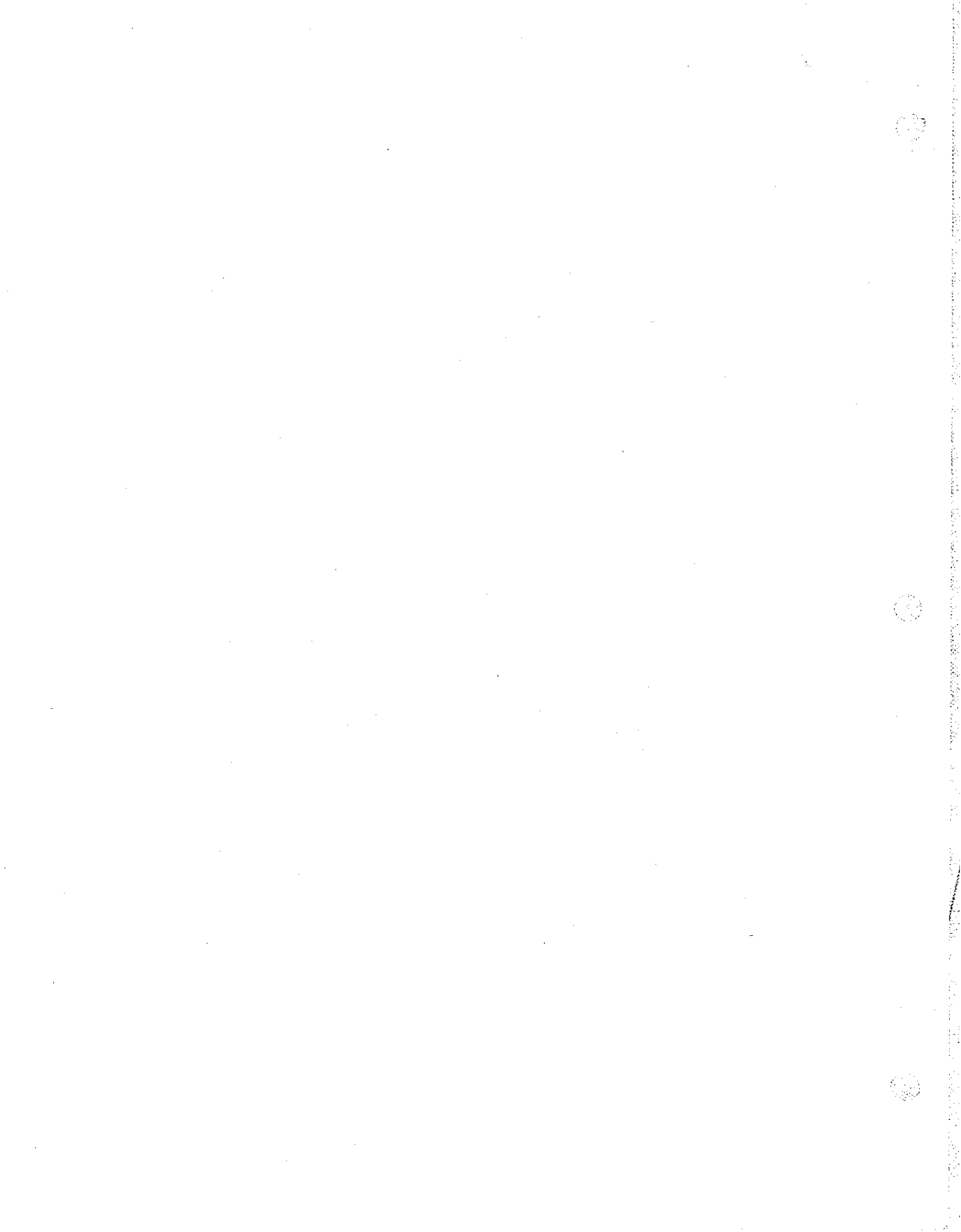
Number of participants: any number

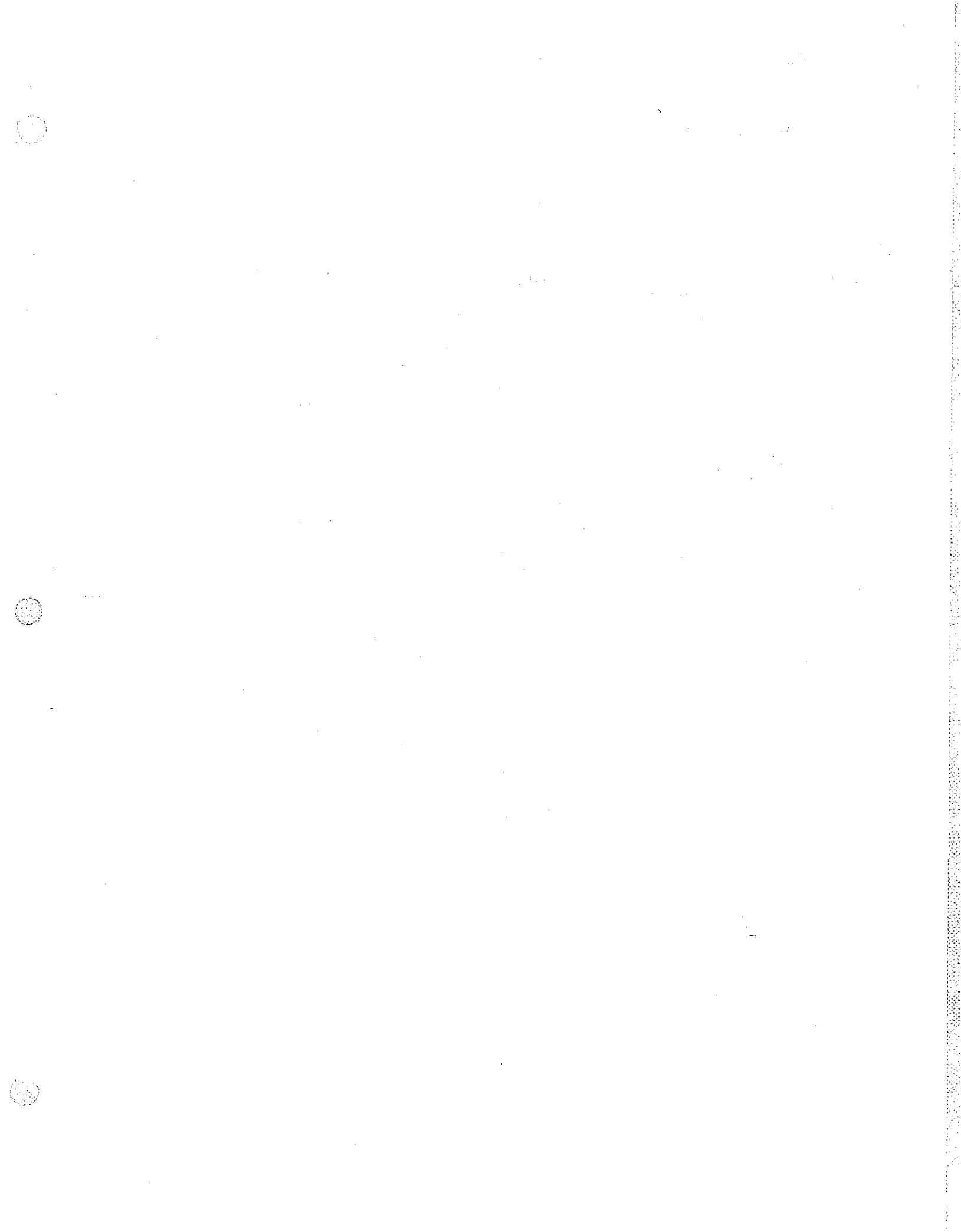
Materials: pictures of people of all ages (can be from old books and magazines), large pieces of paper, and paste

Especially valuable for: vocabulary building (especially family relationships)

The teacher provides a big pile of magazine pictures of children and adults of all ages and both sexes and invites the child to choose pictures that represent his family. The pictures should reflect the racial and cultural background of the members of the class. The pictures may be pasted on large pieces of construction paper and hung around the room. As the children are assembling their family portraits, the conversation can center around family life and family relationships. "I know your Mama. She's even prettier than the picture. She has a good job at the phone company, doesn't she? She made a beautiful cake for your birthday party. Is this your brother? How old is he? Does he go to school? Do you like to play with your brother?"

The family portraits may be accompanied by a story dictated to the teacher. The story may be attached to the portrait and read to the class, or the child may wish to tell the story himself. When the portraits are finished the children might pair up and share them with each other.





EASEL WRITING

Number of participants: any number

Materials: large sheets of paper (preferably on an easel), crayons, paint, or colored chalk

Especially valuable for: writing and reading readiness

This activity is in response to a child's request to learn to write his name or any other word. If he wants to do it himself, the teacher can guide his hand, making large clear letters across the paper. Then the child can choose another color and trace over the letters again, alone or with the teacher's help. This process can be repeated with many colors, or single letters, or the whole word can be practiced around the original. Children can compare their words to find letters they have in common.

Making large colorful letters in a variety of media on an easel has more appeal for many beginners than sitting down with a paper and pencil. Moreover, young children's fine motor control is not well developed and it is easier for them to make large sweeping movements with the whole arm. Do not aim for perfection, but try to sense when the child is satisfied with the results and praise him for what he has done.

Some children enjoy copying words from books. You might also try giving a child a few envelopes and suggesting that he send you a "letter". Answer the letter very simply, "Dear Julio, Thank you for your letter. I love you. Teacher." Help him read the letter and discuss the letters together.

I'M GOING ON A TRIP

Number of participants: any number

Materials: pictures of objects (drawn or cut from old books or magazines)

Especially valuable for: vocabulary building and practice on verb forms

Arrange the children in a circle on the floor around the pile of pictures. Start the game by choosing one picture (of a coat, for example) and say, "I'm going on a trip and I'm going to take a coat." Then pass the picture to the child on the right. He will take your picture and choose one of his own (a cat, for example) from the center. He will say, "I'm going on a trip and I'm going to take a coat and a cat." Then he will pass both pictures to his right and that child will add his own. The pictures are named by each person in the circle and if someone doesn't know the names of all the objects, the others can help. The frequent repetition associated with the pictures reinforces the vocabulary to be learned. When the circle is completed, return the pictures to the center of the circle and start the game around again. Reverse the direction so that the children who held only two or three pictures the first time will have more in the second round.

With a more advanced group, discuss each child's choice or vary the verb form by starting out with, "I went on a trip last summer and I took a \_\_\_\_\_." or "If I went on a trip I would take a \_\_\_\_\_."







NAMING OBJECTS

Number of participants: any number

Materials: a number of pictures of objects (drawn or cut from old books and magazines)

Especially valuable for: vocabulary building

Divide the children into two teams and put the pictures in a box, bag, or hat. Draw the pictures out one by one and show them to the two teams. The first person who names the object correctly gains possession of the picture for his team. If no one knows the name, the teacher provides it and drops the picture back into the box. The next time it comes out someone will remember the new word. The teams count their pictures at the end of the game and the team with the most pictures wins.

Talk about the pictures as they change hands or as they are collected at the end of the game. "Umbrella! When do you need an umbrella? Where is your umbrella now? What color is your umbrella?" The pictures can be chosen to represent any category of words which is being emphasized at the time -- kinds of food, articles of clothing, furniture, personal objects, animals, colors, shapes, etc.

SELF-PORTRAIT

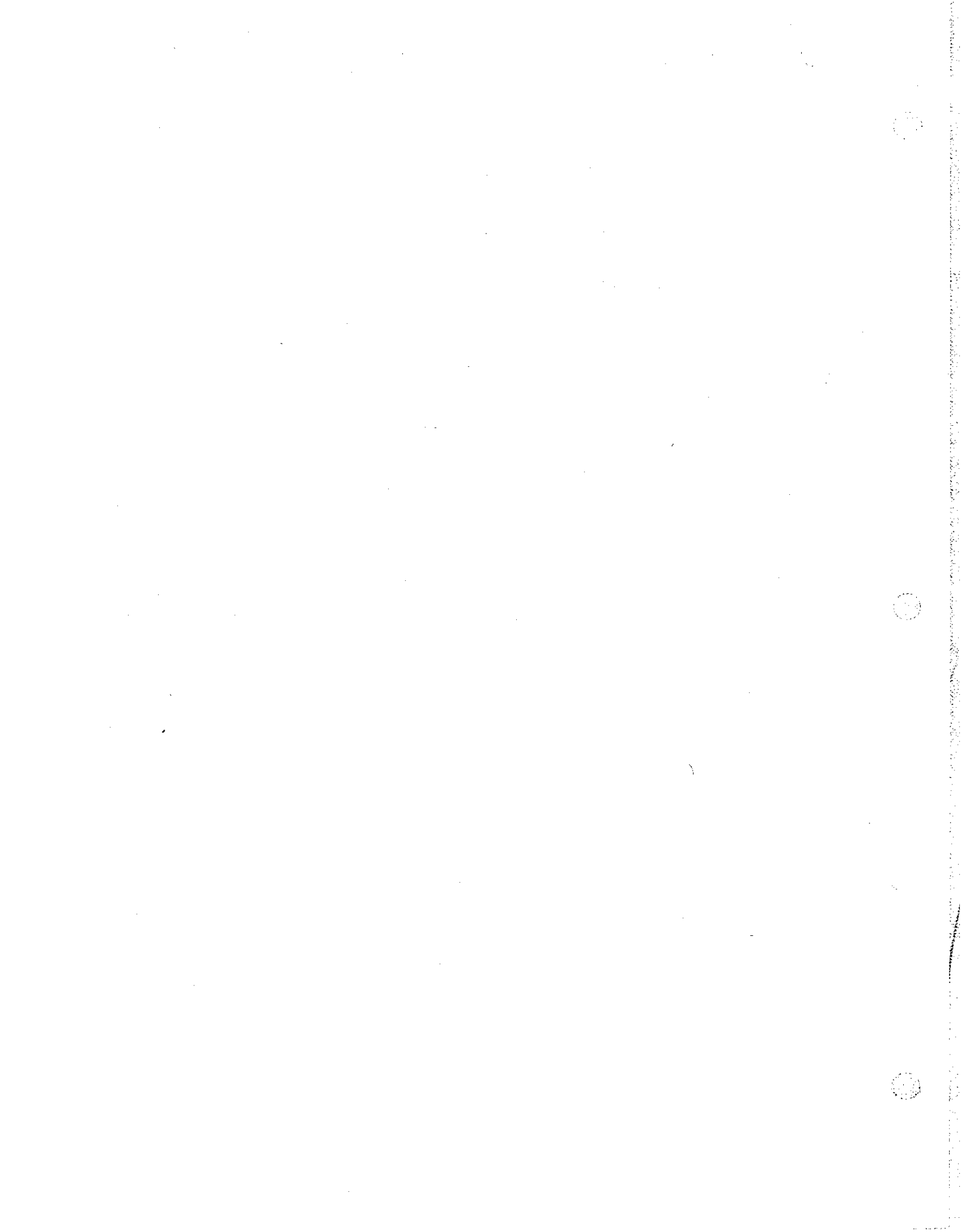
Number of participants: 4 to 6 per adult

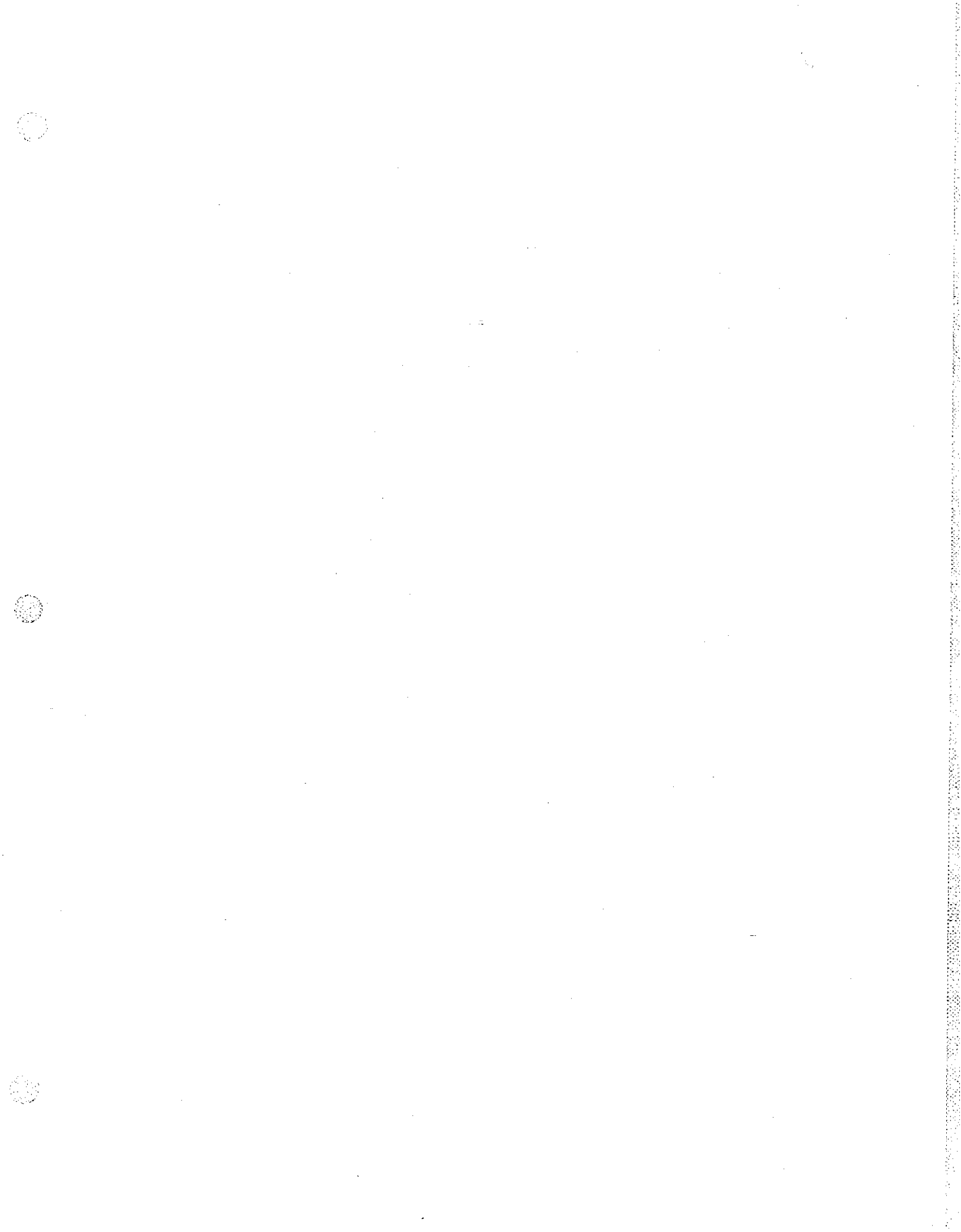
Materials: tempera paint, large roll of brown wrapping paper (or sheets of newspaper stapled or taped together)

Especially valuable for: developing a sense of identity and building vocabulary (especially colors, clothing, parts of the body)

Each child lies down on a big piece of paper and the teacher or another child traces around him with a big crayon or piece of chalk. The papers are then taped to a wall (preferably outside because this project can be messy and the self-portraits dry faster in the fresh air). Then each child paints himself. Try to make available a range of color that reflects the children's clothing, skin, hair and eye colors. Talk to the children while they are painting. "What color is your shirt, your hair, your pants? That's almost as handsome as the real Adam. Can you tell me something about Adam?" The portraits can be entirely fanciful rather than real. Do not press the child to paint a faithful representation of himself as he appears that particular day. He may be painting how he would like to be or how he feels or perhaps he may not be painting himself at all.

This activity is especially good for shy children or beginners because it is done individually and the child can say as much or as little as he wants. An interesting variation is to have the children paint you or their friends or a member of the family.





OLD MAID

Number of participants: 3 to 6

Materials: OLD MAID cards

Especially valuable for: vocabulary building (names of professions)

OLD MAID cards depict men and women in a wide variety of professions. Each card has its pair, and the object of the game is to accumulate as many pairs as possible. Shuffle the cards and deal. The person on the dealer's left begins by asking any other player for the mate to any card he is holding in his hand. If the other player doesn't have that particular card, the next player on the left takes his turn. If the requested card is handed over, the pair of cards is turned face up on the table and the same person may continue asking for cards from that same player or any other until he gets a negative answer. When all the cards are lying in pairs in front of the players, the game is over, and the winner is the player with the most pairs.

If a child doesn't know the name of the profession he may just show the card, and the teacher or another player may supply the name. A child may show the postman card and ask, "Do you have the man carrying a letter?" Or "Do you have the mad man?" Or "Hey, you got the man with a dog biting his foot?" All these questions are good and can start conversations about postmen in general, or why this one is angry, or about who has received a letter lately. At the end of the game the teacher might ask each player to describe the pairs he has accumulated.

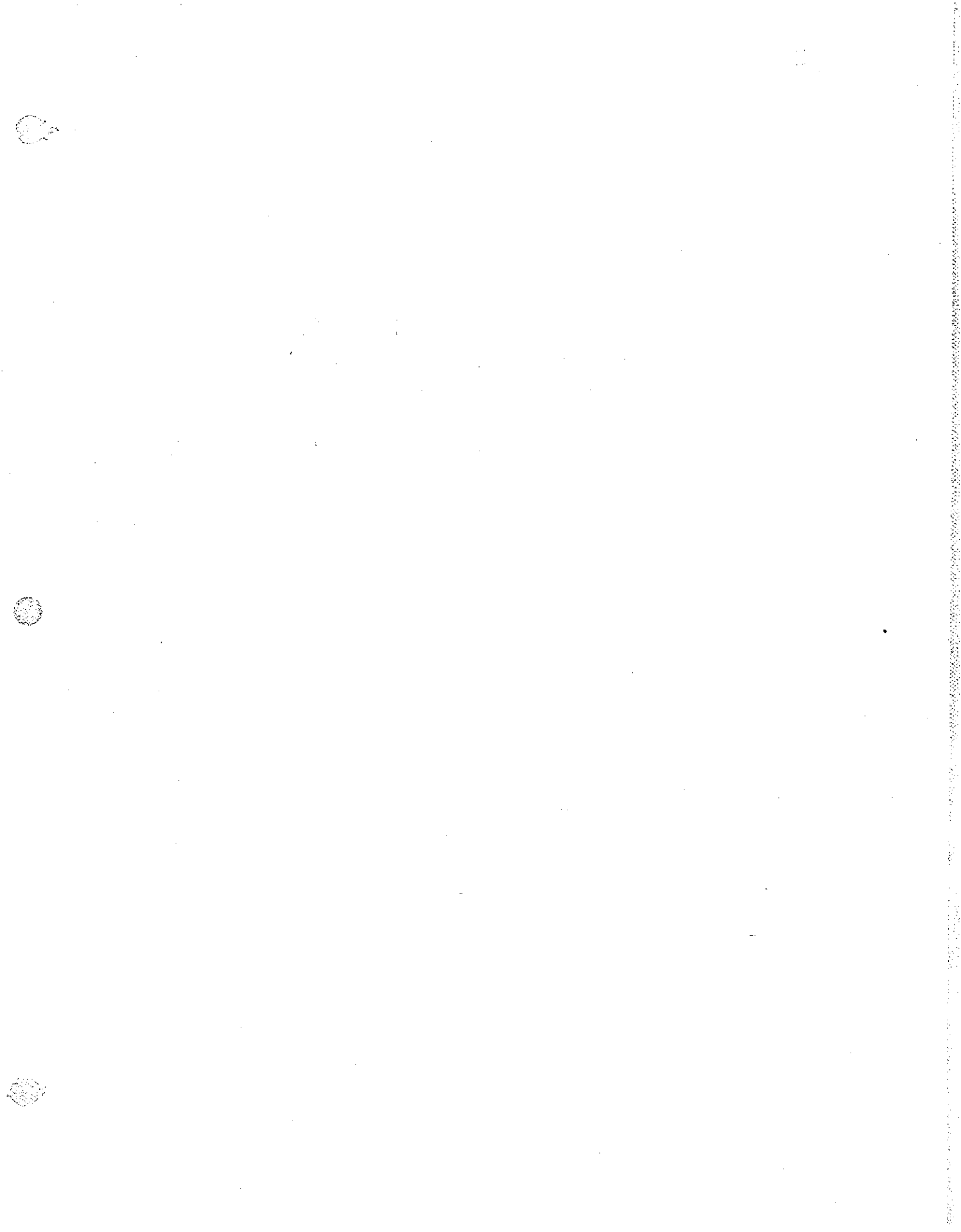
A game called CONCENTRATION can also be played with OLD MAID cards. All the cards are placed face down in rows on the floor. Each player, in turn,

tries to match and name the professions as he turns up two cards. He gets to keep a pair, but a mismatch is turned face down again and the positions are remembered for future reference. The player with the most pairs wins.

A commercially available game known as FISH is played in basically the same way as OLD MAID. One FISH game features animal pairs. Though OLD MAID is very useful in terms of learning about professions, the depictions are quite traditionally sex stereotyped. For this reason the game has come under fire from a variety of critics, and there may well be a new edition by now. Playing by the modified rules described here eliminates the character known as the Old Maid, thus making the game less objectionable.







TWISTER

Number of participants: any number (2 or 3 at a time)

Materials: TWISTER game (or large sturdy colored circles cut from vinyl, card board or construction paper -- the circles may also be drawn on cement with colored chalk or tempera paint -- they should be about one foot in diameter and placed close together on the ground)

Especially valuable for: learning colors and directions

TWISTER is a game that is commercially available, and the rules can be modified to suit pre-schoolers. The TWISTER sheet is a four by six foot piece of heavy vinyl with colored circles printed on it. It can accommodate from one to three children at one time.

Have the children remove their shoes and stand around the edge of the sheet. Choose one or more children and proceed with the directions. "Jump to a red circle. Now put your hands on two yellow circles. Move your right foot to a green circle. Stand up. Jump backwards to the blue circle. Turn around." The children can respond simultaneously to the directions or can be given directions alternately. For a child who is just learning the game or who understands little English, the game can be imitative. Using only one or two colors and movements, give simple directions to the leader and then repeat the command for the beginner immediately afterwards.

TWISTER is active and amusing because sometimes two or more players are aiming at the same circles, and they become hopelessly intertwined. The children who are observing and waiting for a turn can take turns giving directions after they have learned the colors and other necessary vocabulary.