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A Reading Program Designed for Nursery School Children

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A READING PROGRAM DESIGNED FOR NURSERY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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B. Reading Readiness

Up until the 1930's, reading readiness was traditionally viewed as a natural, developmental process which would eventually mature into reading, if the child was left alone (Venezsky, 1975, Pp. 1-2, based upon the findings of Gesell, Goodman, Morphett and Washburne). During the 1930's, however, a shift occurred as educators became concerned with experiential readiness and the introduction of skill-oriented, pre-reading activities and programs. These programs have primarily focused upon helping the child to develop in a number of skill areas which include language, motor behavior, perception, cognitive and social/emotional development. Thus, children were assisted in the development of a variety of skills which were viewed as pre-requisite to initial reading instruction; however the basic intent was to assist them in reaching a certain level of maturity rather than teaching skills directly related to the reading process itself.

There appears to be a current trend toward the development of pre-school programs which address themselves to the teaching of pre-reading skills; those skills most directly related to the process of reading (Venezsky, 1975); in addition to experimental programs for pre-school children which are teaching these skills through direct involvement with reading itself (Fowler, 1971). According to Venezsky (1975):

> "In the current decade, reading readiness has noticeably shifted away from experiential readiness and toward an emphasis upon pre-reading skills; that is those skills which are believed to relate most directly to the specifie processes involved in initial reading instruction."

He goes on to state that:

> "Children who enter Kindergarten without all of the visual and sound pre-reading skills generally do not

> acquire the missing skills through maturation, general readiness instruction, or by discovering them on their own. Direct instruction in the specific skills seems to be required to ensure mastery."

In conclusion, the definition of reading readiness is a contoversial issue. There does appear to be a trend toward the devlopment of new programs which favor instruction that involves letters and words, and those skills considered to be directly related to reading; as opposed to general readiness programs which focus on the development of a wider range of skills.

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This project by Marlene Rubin is accepted in its present form.

Date Jan 23 '79. Principal Advisor Alvino E. Fantini

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INTRODUCTION

This paper attempts to discuss a classroom program designed to inspire four year old children to develop an interest in words and in reading.

Each child enters the classroom with different experiences stemming from varied family, social, and environmental factors. It is believed by the author that learning occurs in developmental stages which are invariant and sequential in nature. In addition, it is believed that although learning occurs in developmental stages, children may vary in their levels of cognitive development due to the rate at which they pass through these stages. Therefore, it is probable that a group of four year old children within a classroom will differ in developmental, social, and emotional needs.

Learning to read can be viewed as an on going process and the successive acquisition of particular skills. Reading is a rule governed process. It involves the acquisition and application of an internally regulated system. "Because a learning process that involves abstraction of invariants or inducing rules is of necessity largely internally regulated, the question of motivation and reinforcement becomes very important" (Gibson, Levin, 1976, p. 265). It is believed that a child goes through a similar process during the process of language acquisition. "If a child must essentially "do it himself," what will make him do it, keep him at it, and tell him when he has perceived a useful relation?" (Gibson, Levin, 1976, p. 265).

According to Bruner (1966), there is an intrinsic motivation for learning. This is what he calls a "will to learn". It is very

interesting to contemplate what inspires a young child to learn to read. "It is the beginning phase of learning to read that we seem to know least about. All the talk is of what the teacher does or should do and not of what happens or should happen in the child" (Gibson, Levin, 1976, p. 214). What seems to be vital is close observation of children in an attempt to better understand the process involved in learning to read and to gain insights into individual learning styles and how these styles affect the development of reading skills.

It was imperative that the structure of the author's reading program be flexible and reflect sensitivity to individual differences in development, and differences in learning style of each and every child.

This reading program took place in a Nursery school classroom over a four month period during the fall of 1978. The author's intent in conducting the program was to:

1. determine if and what a child age four is capable of learning to read.
2. determine the similarities and differences in the ways that individual children approach learning to read.
3. observe what motivates children to develop interest in words and in reading.
4. discover which techniques may be most conducive to initiating the reading process.
5. discover ways in which children can be stimulated to develop positive and enjoyable attitudes toward learning and reading.

6. observe how a bilingual child (Hebrew-English) would respond to the program.

READING

A. Definition

Recent studies have indicated an increased interest in gaining insight into the reading process and the skills involved in that process. Attempts to define reading are few and varied, but tend to disregard the traditional view that reading is a simple process of converting written symbols to sound.

According to Fowler(1971), reading is a highly complex process, requiring the use of both perceptual and complex cognitive skills. "Reading is not simply the decoding of written symbols to sound" (Gibson, Levin, 1976, p. 5). Gibson and Levin go on to define reading as an active, self-directed process, which involves the extraction of information from text for a variety of purposes, such as work or pleasure.(1976).

"Reading appears to have various facets to it:

1. The collection of information about symbols and what these represent; that is, their meaning.
2. The relative high speed ability to recognize this interrelationship between the symbols and their representation.
3. The ability to switch back and forth from audible to visual communication" (Fantini, 1972, p. 2).

Finally, as spoken language is used as a tool for communication purposes, it is believed by the author that reading should be viewed as a means of communication.

C. Pre-Reading and Reading Skills

As reading begins with the recognition of letters and words and progresses into more efficient reading and the comprehension of larger amounts of material, it appears that learning to read must involve the successive acquisition of a variety of skills as the reader progresses, which can be viewed as a continuum of learning.

It is difficult to mark a clear division between pre-reading and reading skills, however, as pre-reading skills appear to involve processes which are directly related to the initial phases of reading itself. Thus, rather than attempt to separate pre-reading and reading skills, we shall view pre-reading skills as those introductory skills located near the beginning of the learning continuum. (i.e., letter sounding).

Venezsky (1975) considers the two most important tasks in initial reading to be sight word recognition and decoding.

> "At a minimum decoding involves:
>
> 1. letter differentiation.
> 2. association of a sound with a letter.
> 3. the blending of sounds to produce words.
>
> The three most important skills related to word recognition are:
>
> 1. attending to letter orientation.
> 2. attending to letter order.
> 3. attending to word detail." (Venezsky, 1975, p. 7)

Thus, children might begin by: learning about the letters of the alphabet, their corresponding sounds, sight reading, and combining letters to form words. Fowler (1971) and Betts (1976), also acknowledge the role of phonology and the perceptual skills required in decoding the

written message, however they also view the syntactic and semantic aspects of language to be important parts of the reading process. Thus, in Fowler's experimental work with four year old children(1971), children learn to combine short, simple, meaningful sentences, in addition to learning to combine letters to form words and learning about letter to sound correspondences. Shulwitz(1977) outlines a variety of skills which are generally incorporated in reading programs for beginning readers, and integrates many of the skills mentioned above. These skills and skill areas include:

1. Oral language development.
2. Whole word recognition.
3. Sense(context) of language. (semantics)
4. Letter names.
5. Auditory discrimination and memory.
6. Visual discrimination and memory.
7. Sound-symbol associations.
8. Sound-symbol context associations(i.e., the phonetic value of a letter may change with its context as in mat-mate).
9. Sequence- left to right and top to bottom progression.

There also appear to be a variety of concepts or rules which children must learn which relate to graphic patterning and the procedure of reading. Fowler(1971) refers to these as: left to right serial order(cat vs. tac), linearity(cat vs. $\begin{matrix} c \\ a \\ t \end{matrix}$), spacing(the cat ran vs. thecatran), top to bottom progression(for reading paragraphs), punctuation, and paragraphing. All of the above skills, with the exception of punctuation and paragraphing, appear to be necessary during the initial

phases of learning to read.

In addition to language development and auditory and visual discrimination skills, which appear to be those skills most basic to the reading process, it appears that thinking and reasoning skills are also considered to be important skills which need to be developed in order to read successfully. This view is supported by Nevius (1976), based upon the findings of Goodman, K. (1965, 1967, 1973) and Goodman, Y. (1970):

> "Predictions, guesses, confirmations, and corrections are all thinking skills that contribute to the formation of a hypothesis. The latter is a synthesis of skills that from Goodman's point of view is essential for effective reading to occur. Therefore, a basis for better reading may very well rest upon a prereading program which uses the child's own language structure and emphasizes teaching for logical thought."

APPROACHES TO READING

A. History

"Starting around the turn of the century and until about 1925, an attempt to understand the process of reading was an important problem for experimental and educational psychology and generated many experiments based on carefully thought out theoretical positions" (Gibson, Levin, 1976, p. 4). However, around 1920 the focus changed from an emphasis on research involving the process, how we learn to read, to an emphasis upon methodology and the value of one teaching method over another. Up until the present a great deal of debate has centered around two basic approaches to teaching reading; the Phonic Method and the Look and Say Method.

B. The Phonic Method

> "This approach was developed in Europe and seems to be especially well adapted to the teaching of languages whose script is fairly phonetic such as German and Italian. However, although the phonic method has been used with success in Germany and Italy, it is not necessarily good for English. This is because the English alphabet is inconsistent in its phonetic values. For example, note the inconsistency in the following: the name of the letter A is pronounced /ay/ which sometimes corresponds in actual words such as in "ate" or "ape", but not at all in "at" or "and". In any case, this method was almost the exclusive method used in the United States until 30 years ago" (Fantini, 1972, p. 3).

Phonic methods stress the importance of learning letter to sound correspondences. There are a variety of phonic approaches which are classified as either synthetic or analytic phonics. Synthetic approaches begin with individual letters and sounds which are then blended to form syllables and words. The analytic approaches begin with the sounding of whole words which are then broken down into component parts. In both cases the child first learns the letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds. Next, the child might work with syllables (ab-ib-eb), blends (hand-sand, hand-sand), or whole words which have consistent spelling patterns and phonetic values.

Through repeated work with letter to sound correspondences and spelling patterns the child learns rules which, when applied, can assist him/her in sounding out and predicting the meaning of new words. As a result a child can expand his/her reading vocabulary to match existing oral language vocabulary and in turn can eventually use reading as a tool for expanding his/her overall vocabulary.

Examples of phonic methods include:

The Linguistic Method, developed by Leonard Bloomfield, is an analytic approach which introduces the child to simple whole words which maintain direct letter to sound correspondences and follow basic spelling patterns. Due to the complexity of English orthography most of these words consist of a simple consonant-vowel-consonant (cvc) pattern as in cat, rat, pet, and let. Bloomfield also employed the use of nonsense rhymes such as hob-nob-fob. It was believed that by exposing children to a number of basic spelling patterns that they would be able to inductively grasp the phonetic rules, in contrast

with earlier attempts to teach rules by explanation. Although spelling pattern approaches had been in use before Bloomfield, his publication of Language, in 1932, renewed interest in spelling patterns for developing phonic skills.

Although this method can be viewed as an attempt to bridge the gap between phonic and look and say approaches, its primary consideration was phonetics, as opposed to meaning and context, and reading material remained limited.

Two modern phonic approaches include the Initial Teaching Alphabet and Words in Color.

The Initial Teaching Alphabet (I.T.A.) was first introduced in England in 1960. It is based upon the use of a modified alphabet which consists of 44 symbols, each representing a single sound. It includes 24 letters from the traditional alphabet (q and z are omitted).

This approach is designed for beginning and remedial reading, although in some school systems it is used beyond the second grade level. Its value is that it eliminates traditional spelling problems and allows children to develop fluency and comprehension in the beginning stages of learning to read. The disadvantages are that children are limited to to reading materials printed in the special alphabet, in addition to having to switch from the use of one alphabet to the other. The I.T.A. may not be suitable for look and say approaches utilizing basic library materials or common words of the child's choosing, as the child may frequently encounter the words in their conventional spellings.

Words in Color was originally developed as a means of teaching reading in foreign languages. Each of the 47 sounds of standard American English is coded by a different color. Charts are used which

group together the spelling patterns corresponding to each sound and each group of spellings is printed in the same color. Thus, if /iy/ is represented by the color red, then ea as in beat, ee as in beet, e as in me, and y as in Mary would all be grouped in the same column and printed in red. Children then progress from the color coded sound charts to color coded words and are encouraged to generate original sentences with the words that have been introduced.

This method may be too complicated for a young child as the child must not only make associations between letter symbols and sounds, but must learn to distinguish between a wide range of colors and shades and memorize the color and symbol associations. However, this method has been successful in teaching reading on the elementary level.

C. The Look and Say Method

"This method approaches reading in quite a different way. It gave up the alphabetic and phonic methods based on the principle that in teaching reading one should treat each word as a unique visual pattern"(Fantini, 1972, p. 3).

Proponents of this method believe that it is best to expose children to the inconsistencies of English orthography from the start. Entire words are introduced to the children, as a high premium is placed on the role which context and meaning play in the reading process. Words are often printed on flashcards and sometimes accompanied by pictures of the objects they represent. A teacher will simultaneously present a card and pronounce the word.

There are a variety of look and say approaches which differ with respect to content(choice of reading material) and to the degree in

which phonics is a part of the curriculum. However, in all cases, phonics plays a secondary role to meaning and the introduction of whole words.

Examples of look and say methods include:

The Whole Word Approach

> "This is a sight word method for teaching beginning reading which begins with the meaningful reading of whole words, short sentences and simple stories. New words (chosen for their high frequency among young children) are pre-taught by the teacher and later appear in the child's reading material. However, Phonics is gradually introduced into the curriculum and becomes an increasingly large part of the curriculum through grades 1, 2 and 3" (Cronin, 1977, p. 4).

Here is a typical excerpt from a whole word reader.

> "Ah, ah! look, look!
> See Tom run.
> Tom runs.
> See Tom run fast" (Cronin, 1977, p. 4).

As evidenced by the above excerpt the content may have a little to be desired in terms of creativity. The constant repetition of a few words may bore a child and negatively affect his/her motivation. Is a child sufficiently motivated by the mere process of learning to read?

A more positive aspect of this approach is that it does combine the actual reading of sentences with phonics. However, like the Linguistic Method, the vocabulary still remains quite limited due to phonetic constraints.

The Language Experience approach was developed as a result of the need to provide children with more stimulating and personally relevant reading material. "It is used in beginning reading, remedial

reading, and as a supplement to other approaches beyond the beginning stage" (Cronin, 1977, p. 4). The child's own language and experiences form the core of the curriculum. Children usually create their own stories which are transcribed by the teacher and eventually parts of them are written by the children themselves. This is similar to what a Nursery School teacher does when children ask for written descriptions of their artwork.

The approach places prime importance upon the use of meaningful reading material and upon viewing reading as a process of communication. In addition to creating their own stories children are encouraged to take interest in other children's stories and to share stories with one another. Whole classrooms also build stories together based upon shared experiences.

The Organic Method was used by Sylvia Ashton Warner in teaching Maori children in Australia. It is similar to the Language Experience approach in that all material is derived from the children. Children select words which are printed on cards and given to them. If they do not remember a particular word it is usually discarded, as Warner feels that the child is probably not sufficiently motivated to learn the word due to a lack of interest in it. After collecting a sufficient amount of words children begin creating sentences and stories.

The main distinguishing element of this approach is that the entire reading and writing curriculum is based upon these organic words. Warner also encourages the selection of highly emotional words such as fear, love, blood, or hate, which she feels have particular significance for the young child.

Warner also reports that her children respond very positively

to the program and exhibit a very high motivational level.

The Individual Approach stresses the importance of reading enjoyment and that reading is not an end in itself. "It is a means of learning, enjoying, of furthering personal growth and extending one's knowledge of life in general" (Cronin, 1977, p. 9).

There is no basic curriculum and materials usually consist of children's library books. Children select their books in addition to any words they may want to learn, and they work at their own pace, receiving individual instruction from the teacher. This insruction may include work on phonics.

The Individual Approach allows for variation in learning style and in interests. It is different from the Language Experience approach in that it encourages children to read material which extends beyond their own personal experiences. The disadvantage of this approach is that it "allows for such limitless variation that teachers using this approach need clerical assistance for record-keeping" (Cronin, 1977, p. 7).

"The basal reader is the most commonly used program today for teaching reading" (Cronin, 1977, p. 7).

Basal Reading Programs are highly structured and sequential in nature. Children are grouped according to level of reading ability and progress from one stage to the next. Materials include reading readiness books, primers, and readers for each elementary grade level. Some programs include materials for the junior high level. In addition there are workbooks, flashcards and other supplementary materials.

A specific amount of vocabulary is introduced at each level in addition to a basic sight vocabulary. Phonetics is integrated into the curriculum and the degree of phonetic work done in the

beginning stages of reading depends upon the specific program. There are both Basal Phonic and Whole Word Basal Programs.

D. Is consideration of phonic or look and say methods an either/or proposition?

It is apparent that both meaning and the application of phonetic rules play important roles in the process of reading. According to Vygotsky, (1962), "a word without meaning is an empty sound; meaning, therefore, is a criterion of word, its indispensable component." Further, if we consider motivation to be an important factor in the learning process, we must question whether or not a child can be sufficiently motivated by the process of learning to read itself; if he/she is presented with material that lacks meaning, as in a purely phonetic approach. Conversely, without phonetic knowledge, we may be unable to derive meaning from the written message beyond the understanding of a limited amount of memorized word patterns. Can a child acquire the principles of word organization through a process of inductive reasoning, without directed exposure to consistent patterns and rules?

Although there appears to be a trend toward integrating the phonic and look and say approaches, there is a vast amount of literature which continues to debate the two methods,in addition to indicating controversy over whether or not we should begin with intensive phonics or gradually introduce it into the curriculum.

"After reviewing many studies related to phonics and sight word approaches Roger Brown concludes the following:

1. What children gain from phonic training and phonetic knowledge is more reliably acquired from direct tuition than by incidental induction from reading whole words.

2. However, it appears that a mental age of about seven is a pre-requisite to be able to benefit

from phonic training. Before that age, the concept of letter-sound correspondence being combined to form words is too abstract. It is difficult, if not impossible, for younger children to understand such abstract entities as letters.

3. Direct phonic instruction produces superior skill in spelling, oral reading, sounding letters, and whatever aspects of reading that call for phonetic knowledge. However, the look-and-say approach appears to foster silent reading which in turn leads to reading speed, reading interest and comprehension. Those areas which teachers have most often neglected.

4. Finally, a combination of the two approaches most surely must be a better way of attacking the total problem."
(Fantini, 1972, p. 4)

E. The Doman School of Thought

The Doman Method is a variation of the Look and Say Method which contains elements of both the Language Experience and Individualized approaches. Doman has developed a structured program which proceeds from the sight reading of individual words to the reading of children's stories and finally the introduction of the alphabet.

The most distinguishing factor of Doman's approach, of particular interest to us, is its application to pre-school children.

Doman speaks of teaching a child as early as 1.8 to read. He notes that young children are capable of receiving messages from written stimuli regardless of whether or not they are articulating speech, as children also begin to comprehend language before they are able to produce it. Thus he feels that young children are capable of discriminating between different graphic patterns, a prerequisite to receiving the message.

Doman became involved with the teaching of young children to read as a result of work he was doing with neurosurgeons and psychologists who dealt with brain injured children. Doman and his colleagues discovered that the process of neurological growth could be speeded up as well as delayed, and that brain injured children could be brought to a state of neurological organization of an average or even superior level through the use of simple, non-surgical techniques. One of these techniques is teaching young children to read.

Thus Doman concluded that teaching "normal" children to read would positively affect and help to develop cognitive functions, at whichever levels the child might be functioning. Doman states that the

"earlier a child reads, the more he is likely to read and the better he reads" (Doman, 1975, p. 85). Based upon his experiments with hundreds of children he concludes that "Children can read words when they are one year old, sentences when they are two, and whole books when they are three years old and they love it" (Doman, 1975, p. 1). He provides interesting insights and convincing arguments with respect to the fact that young children can, want to, and are learning to read. He emphasizes that in providing appropriate stimuli, imparting positive attitudes, and in respecting children's capabilities the adult can help to fulfill the child's innate desire to learn and reinforce his/her love of learning. Further, he states that by underestimating a child's ability or depriving the child of stimulating learning experiences, we can diminish the child's DESIRE to learn and thus inhibit the child's growth. Lastly, Doman implies that a warm, loving, relationship between the adult and child is vital to a successful learning experience.

THE PROGRAM

A. The Classroom

We took a classroom of 22 Nursery School children (ages 4.3 to 4.10) at a Jewish Community Center in Massachusetts, and initiated a reading program over a four month period during the fall of 1978. The children attended school Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. Of the 22 children there were 14 boys and 8 girls, from primarily middle and upper middle class families. The program resulted in a number of the children learning to read sentences and short stories, primarily based on their own word selection, by November 1978.

The reading program was conducted in an open classroom, containing various activity centers. The social structure and discipline within the classroom were based upon Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning and social perspective taking (1976, pgs. 33,34). Kohlberg has proposed three levels of moral judgement and three corresponding levels of social perspective taking, within which are six stages. They proceed in a logical, invariant sequence. The four year old children in the reading program were functioning on Kohlberg's pre-operational level, (i.e., Elements of reciprocity are in a child's repetoire but are interpreted in a physical pragmatic way: "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours."). When being disciplined children were never removed from the classroom or isolated in a corner. Instead, group discussions and individual talks with teachers were used in which reasons for rules were explained, the motivation behind actions explored, and the expression of needs, feelings, and thoughts encouraged. Through

socio-moral perspective taking (i.e., that people think and feel differently and that's all right) it was hoped that the children's level of reasoning would be enhanced and developed.

The classroom staff consisted of one head teacher (doctoral student), one assistant teacher (B.S. Education), one aide (A.S. Child Care), two student teachers (Sophomores) attending one day weekly, and a part time volunteer (M.A. candidate) who acted as coordinator and reading instructor. The reading coordinator was present in the classroom on Tuesdays and Thursdays for four months. Most activities specifically related to the program, including indivdual and group work, took place on those days. The head teacher worked closely with the reading coordinator in planning and implementing the program and was soley responsible for any activities related to the program which were conducted on days that the reading instructor was not present.

B. The School Philosophy

The basic philosophy of the school is that play is essential to the learning of cognitive skills and social and emotional growth. The school day is divided into three component parts. The first part consists of time spent outdoors during which children are free to interact in large and small peer groups, play games, and use outdoor equipment. The second component involves art activities conducted in small groups. These activities are planned but unstructured enough to allow the children to express individuality and explore materials. The third component is unstructured activity time during which the children may select from a variety of activities which include: large or small blocks,

legos , puzzles, housekeeping play, art (i.e., painting, cutting), or having books read to them.

It appears that although attention to individual needs and the achievement of maximum potential are valued as important by the school, there is a line drawn with respect to cognitive development and growth when the child reaches a stage of reading readiness. There is a total absence of any activities related to the instruction of reading, writing, or arithmetic. Most parents were in agreement with the school's philosophy and were concerned that if their children learned to read or write at age four that he or she would be bored with formal education upon entrance to first grade. The director was also concerned that most parents, regardless of their initial attitude toward reading, might become overly enthusiastic and develop competitive attitudes, resulting in the pressuring of their children to read at home. This could result in a child's developing negative attitudes toward reading.

C. Rationale

The idea of a reading program began when the head teacher observed that many children were exhibiting signs that they were ready to read (i.e., interest in words, writing letters, and demonstration of acute visual and auditory discrimination skills) and therefore felt that they would be receptive and interested in a reading program. The head teacher and the reading specialist both felt that the children's curiosity and interest in words should not be stifled. We were in total agreement with Doman's view that "We can DIMINISH the child's desire to LEARN by limiting the experiences to which we expose him. Unhappily we have

done this almost universally by drastically underestimating what he can learn." (1975, p. 19). Further, Vygotsky stated; "For each subject of instruction there is a period when its influence is most fruitful because the child is most receptive to it. It has been called the SENSITIVE PERIOD by Montessori and other educators. The term is used also in biology, for the periods in ontogenetic development when the organism is particularly respnsive to influences of certain kinds. During that period an influence that has little effect earlier or later may radically affect the course of development" (1962, p.104). Montessori believes that the "sensitive period" for learning to write and read is age four. Fowler also agrees that, "The mental age of four is close to the watershed of developmental readiness for reading" (1971, p. 123).

Our personal observations of the children, combined with support from literature indicating the appropriateness and success of carefully designed reading programs for pre-school children, led us to initiate our program.

D. Selecting a Method

Our selection of method and techniques was a direct result of the following beliefs.

1. Children of the same age group may differ in developmental levels and maximum learning occurs when a child is presented with material appropriate to his/her level of development.
2. Children may possess a variety of learning styles and may learn most efficiently in different ways.
3. Effective learning is primarily self-directed and intrinsically motivated, therefore motivation plays a key role in the learning process.

4. Motivation can be stimulated by:

   a) the use of material or content which is relevant and meaningful to the child.

   b) respecting a child's capacity to learn and encouraging his/her development.

   c) providing enjoyable and playful learning experiences in addition to fostering positive attitudes toward learning.

5. Children learn through play.

6. Peer teaching is appropriate and an effective way of learning for four year old children.

7. Observation may also be an active way of learning new skills and a way of inspiring children to participate more directly.

8. Through observation we can assess children's needs and gain insights into the ways that they learn. These insights can be instrumental in developing suitable programs for young children.

In summation, we wanted to develop a reading program for the children which would provide for meeting individual needs in developmental levels and in learning style, stimulate motivation and learning through the use of relevant materials and games, and help children to develop a positive interest in words and in reading; that is, reading can be enjoyable and satisfying.

In considering parent attitudes against reading and the school philosophy which prohibited the formal instruction of phonetics or the alphabet, it was necessary to develop a program which involved sight reading and the careful selection of children who demonstrated a real eagerness to learn about words. No child was ever forced to participate.

in any type of activity.

We hoped that all children, regardless of particular learning style, degree of involvement, or amount of material learned, would benefit from the program by developing a positive orientation toward words and the process of learning about words. Words can be fun to learn.

Children were encouraged to feel that they could participate at their own level and in a variety of ways. Different approaches included participation in group games, direct work with the reading instructor individually or in a small group, observation, peer teaching, or working at home. Some children constructed storybooks while others collected words sporadically.

A. The Approach

The method used in this reading program was derived from the works of various educators who have developed and implemented reading programs for pre-school children. These people include Montessori(1964), Warner(1971), Doman(1975), and Fowler(1971).

The Program consisted of two basic components.

1. Large and small group activities, many of which were presented as games specifically designed to: enhance oral language and auditory and visual discrimination skills(i.e., Montessori word matching and sound games), to teach concepts of letter, word, sentence, and graphic rules for combining words and sentences; such as left to right and top to bottom sequencing(Fowler), to integrate the reading program with the daily curriculum, and to stimulate motivation and positive associations with the reading instructor and with words.

2. Individual work which utilized the basic structure and procedure of the Doman Method, with the exception of content; whereas Doman utilized children's library books for reading material, our program focused upon the use of "organic words"(Warner) and stories created by the children themselves.(language experience)

The part of the program which consisted of individual work was broken down into six stages. These include:

1. The introduction of <u>self</u> or <u>body</u> words(Doman); printed on 5"x11" cards in <u>red</u> lower case letters.
2. Organic Vocabulary(Warner), words of the children's choosing, printed on 5"x11" cards in red lower case letters.

3. Organic Vocabulary; reprinted old words and new words on 3" x 5" cards in black lower case letters.
4. Sentence Structure Vocabulary; words suggested by the teacher or child in order to complete sentences made with existing organic vocabulary, and necessary connecting words such as articles and the verb to BE, printed on 3" x 5" cards in black lower case letters.
5. Building of simple sentences and stories; children work with cards and sequence them to form sentences.
6. Books; sentences are transcribed onto blank sheets of paper by the teacher, illustrated by the children, and put into looseleaf folders. Letters are in black and approximately 1¼" in height. Children who do not work with sentences glue individual cards to pages and illustrate them.
7. The sharing of words and stories with one another.

Beginning in stage 2, some children were encouraged to make associations between letters and corresponding sounds (initial and final letter sounds or blends), although the instructor did not mention letter names unless the child made reference to them. The degree of work done on sounds depended upon individual learning styles and developmental levels. For example, some children exhibited knowledge of and interest in letters and in the sounding of words, whereas other children did not.

Due to the individual nature of this part of the program, the following pages will consist of a description of an individual child progressing through the stages outlined above.

B. An individual case study.

Scott was 4.6 at the onset of the program. His parents are upper middle class professionals. He is a small, cute child with a warm, outgoing personality.

Scott is very active physically and was considered to be "immature" by his former teachers, due to an inability to attend to structured activities for the time required to complete them. However, when Scott worked with words, he appeared to become involved with his projects and demonstrated an ability to attend to directed activity more successfully.

Also, Scott became interested in sharing his words and story with other children, during the course of the program, and these shared interests helped to give Scott the opportunity to learn to communicate with his peers in a verbal rather than physical manner. He was able to use words more effectively as a means of communication.

There were three basic rules that were followed when working with Scott and other individual children, for the purpose of maximizing interest.

1. That work be done at a time when the child expresses an interest to do so.
2. That the instructor stop activity if the child begins to exhibit signs of restlessness; before he/she b. comes bored (Doman, 1975).
3. That work is fun and enjoyable.

It must be noted that in an open classroom setting with 22 children, the instructor is not able to attend to all children interested in working at the right moment. Careful observation must be made as to

which children were "waiting" for a turn.

When a child demonstrated interest in the project, he/she was taken to the reading corner; a cozy, bright, sectioned off part of the room which contained a book case, a soft rug, a small table with chairs, several stuffed animals, and a shelf which contained the children's shoeboxes, used to hold word cards and materials related to the reading program.

The basic procedure used in introducing new words in the initial phases of the program (stages one and two) was to display a card to the child for approximately five to ten seconds, while pronouncing the word, and then repeat the procedure once or twice more, taking short breaks between presentations. Children were encouraged to focus on the cards visually while hearing the words. As children progressed into selecting their own words, the instructor would often print words on the spot, therefore a supply of blank cards and pens were always kept nearby. The instructor also kept a notebook at hand to record the new words received by the children and to note the type of activity which the child was engaged in.

The instructor was careful to observe the different manners in which children approached learning new words and followed cues from the children. For example, some children would express a desire to write a word in their notebooks as it was being presented. If the child could not write the word the instructor would stop and either make dots for the child to follow or print the word for the child. Other children would want to hold the cards themselves, or trace the letters of the words with their fingers.

To begin stage one, the introduction of self and body words, a group activity was conducted (see learning experience one) which in-

volved the drawing of human bodies on large sheets of mural paper and the labeling of body parts with respective word cards. As Scott demonstrated an interest in this activity, he was encouraged to begin collecting words of his own which could be kept in his own shoebox.

Once in the reading corner, the child would retrieve his shoebox from the shelf and sit down comfortably on the floor with the reading instructor. On the first day Scott received two new words, foot and knee. He was intentionally given "foot", as he had worked with that word during the group game and was already familiar with it. In subsequent sessions Scott received the words head, nose, and hair. Although the instructor began with all four letter body words and did not give children words beginning with the same letter consecutively, the children were given a choice from a selection of three or four words whenever possible.

Various techniques were used with the introduction of body words. For example, the instructor and child would look at the card and during the short break count to ten rapidly while touching the appropriate body part. It is interesting to note that on one occasion a child questioned the value of counting to ten because the word only consisted of four letters. Therefore, we switched to counting to four instead. We also discussed body parts, their functions, and did a lot of movement. As children could receive the same words during this stage it was possible to work with more than one child at a time, which made games like Simon says a lot of fun.

By the end of the second week and the acquisition of four or five body words, Scott did not seem interested in receiving a new body word

so the instructor let him select a word of his own. He chose two words, snow and shovel, which he was given on the same 5"x11" cards and in red. Following that session we reviewed all of the words which he had recieved. He recognized the body words and could pick out the two words snow and shovel, however he could not distinguish between them. It should be noted that /s/ was a familiar sound for Scott because it is the initial sound in his name.

During the third week of the program the children received colorful letter forms, which we obtained at McDonalds free of charge, and were encouraged to send a letter to a friend. Scott proceeded to do so. During the weeks to follow Scott became very involved with playing post-office in school and at home. On one occasion the instructor received a letter from him when she arrived at school in the morning. He was becoming aware of the fact that letters were a form of communication, and perhaps that words formed letters, and that individual letters (a,b,c) formed words.

Following snow shovel, Scott requested the words snowman, batman, wonder woman, pen and love. It is interesting to note that the child was requesting words containing identical spelling patterns of his own accord. The instructor made these cards for him in addition to an identical set of cards reading batman, snowman, and wonder woman. The second set of cards were cut in half (i.e., bat-man) and used to combine together to form the larger compound words. Since he could now recognize the word man as a separate word, it was written on a 5"x11" card for him.

We often began sessions by reviewing old words in a variety of ways. For example, the instructor would often mix up the cards and line them up and have the child select one as she said the word. Or, she

would arrange the cards face down in her hand as in a card trick, and the child would select one and read it. Occasionally the child would express the desire to act as teacher. Children could be tested by their reaction to a teacher's "mistake". Also, it was felt that this was a good way of reviewing words for children which they did not know, and in a non-threatening way, as the instructor would simply say the word as the child held up a card. There are numerous little games for reviewing words which can be improvised on the spot. If a teacher is alert he/she can often follow the child's lead.

The next important step was to begin developing stories, orally, which incorporated some of the words which Scott had collected. We would often line the words up on the floor and the child would point to the right word as it was mentioned in a story. If the child didn't feel like telling a story the instructor would sometimes begin one. This often resulted in the child's telling the teacher that her version was inaccurate and the child would proceed to tell the story "correctly". The child might also just give the instructor a description of the characters represented on the word cards (i.e., batman), as the instructor was not always up to date with the lives of such characters. This verbal work was used as a transitional step to work which would involve the building of simple sentences and stories.

The next stage, stage three, involves the reprinting of old words onto smaller cards and in black ink (Doman). This reduction is size is important as the child must eventually make a final transition to the small print found in commercial readers. From this point on all new words are printed on these small cards and in black, unless the child

is determined to have large cards or red print, in which case it is felt that he/she may not be ready for the change in size and we may accomodate the child's wishes. It is important that the cards be uniform in size, although 3"x5" size is not imperative. This is because the words will be used from here on to form sentences, and the child cannot get a sense for a well sequenced sentence if the cards are are not uniform. During this stage Scott received a few new words including Superman, fat, and hear.

The final prerequisite stage to the building of sentences was to give the child certain words which he/she would need in order to form complete sentences. The instructor printed up the words is, on, a, and proceeded to line up the sentence Batman is a man. The words were then scrambled and Scott worked on lining the sentence up himself, from left to right. He would read the sentence aloud to see how it sounded, and was usually sensitive to errors and could reorder the cards correctly himself. Initially, as he was learning that sentences were horizontal and read from left to write, he had a tendancy to line up sentences very quickly and incorrectly, paying little attention to the words themselves. However, it was felt that this work was valuable in reinforcing the new spacial concepts that he was learning. We continued generating sentences by making substitutions, i.e., Superman is a man. Occasionally the substitutions were nonsensical and the child found this very humerous, i.e., Superman is a foot. We also came up with Batman is on the snowman.

Later the same day Scott returned to the reading corner and observed some children requesting a line of words which they took from the title page of a Winnie the Pooh story. At that point he decided that

he would like some whole sentences of his own. He wanted, "Trick or treat. Smell my feet. Give me something good to eat." The instructor was a little hesitant to give him so many new words simultaneously, particularly because he had done so much work that day. However, she printed the words for him, which he placed in his box, and they became a source of work for the following week or so. Two weeks later he was able to sequence the sentences correctly with the exception of a give me reversal(me give), and proceeded to correct the error himself. Thus a child's abilities should not be underestimated.

Six weeks into the program Scott could identify 16 out of 24 words which were in his shoebox. He was unable to identify to, the, on, a, love, hear and fat. It is interesting to note that he received the word love on a day that he received four other words first. Perhaps it was too may words or not a word of particular interest. He also made some interesting mistakes which demonstrated that he was cluing in visually to both initial letters and word patterns. He substituted ear for hear, and feet for fat.

Scott's next sentence was Superman is in a book, at which time the teacher initiated stage six, by transcribing the learned sentence onto an 8"x11" piece of paper, and encouraged Scott to illustrate his sentence, which he did. The page was put into a looseleaf folder which was referred to as his book. The second and final page of his book read Superman is flying with boy wonder. At this point he did not desire to put any new pages in his book, although he did continue to engage in other activities related to the program. The same three steps were followed when a child requested a new sentence; the acquisition and learning of new words, the sequencing of the cards into sentences, and the transcription of the sentence into the book.

During the last month of the program the instructor began doing an increasing amount of work with children in small groups. Children shared words, stories, and did a variety of activites. For example, words were printed up for children that they were already familiar with and they worked on combining individual letters to form the whole words. They often exchanged words with their neighbors which reinforced the learning of words which their peers had selected. On one occasion the children were playing with plastic letters and spontaneously got their boxes and used the letters to form words which they had collected in their shoeboxes. Scott usually participated in these small group activities in addition to doing some exceptional individual work.

The children were also becoming accustomed to working alongside one another on independent activities in groups of five or six. Some children glued individual cards to pages of their books, some worked on sequencing new sentences, others illustrated pages of their books or practiced making letters. During one of these sessions Scott was looking at his book and began filing through the words in his shoebox when he noted, "These all match." Thus it was suggested that he line the cards up in sentences on a large piece of construction paper, after which he glued the cards into place. If he was unsure about the order, he used the book as a guide. Scott did the same activity on another day with the other page of his book, and with little assistance. He also painted a picture to be displayed with his large size story and read part of the story to a group of very interested peers. Since these word cards were large enough to see clearly, as opposed to the print in a storybook, the children watched closely as he read to them.

Scott developed a real interest in writing and drawing during the course of the program. As noted earlier, his mother reported that he spent time at home playing post office. His parents also bought him a special pad of paper for writing which he used frequently. On one occasion he wrote his friend's name Laurie and the letters A,B, and C, and his mother was rather surprised. His mother was pleased with the fact that Scott was attending to this sort of activity, as she had been concerned about his short attention span and tendancy to jump around, and felt that he was better able to direct his energy.

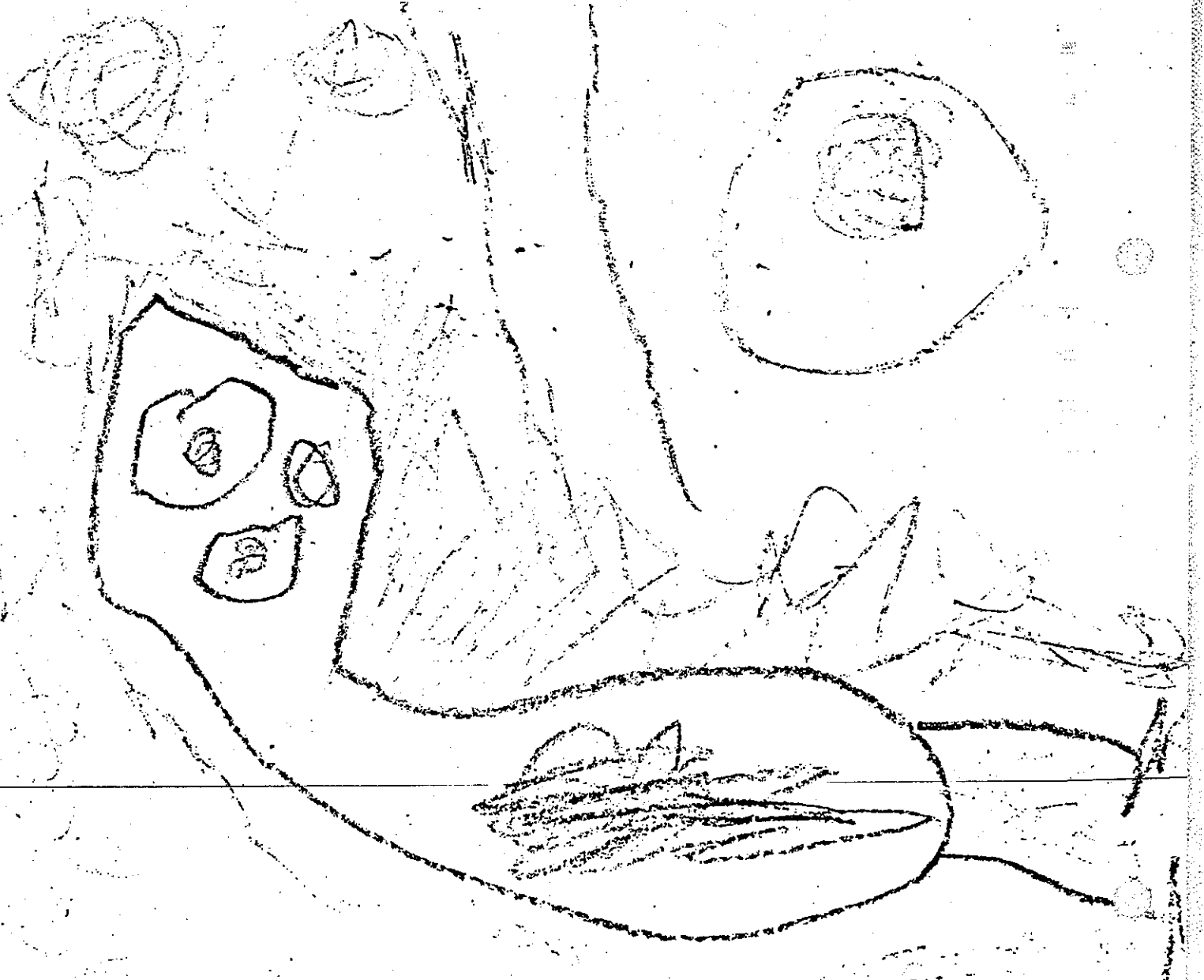
On January 9th., 1979, four weeks after the completion of the program, the instuctor made a follow-up visit to the school and worked with Scott for a fifteen minute period, during which time he wasable to recognize 24 out of 33 words. Scott also read a variety of sentences, (i.e., Trick or treat, smell my feet. Give Wonder woman a pen.), was able to note when sentences did not make sense, and was able to correct word order himself when he made mistakes. He displayed self-initiative in that he wanted to create original sentences, in addition to stopping activity when he felt that he had worked long enough.

It should be noted that Scott did little guided work with his words during the interim period, and yet remembered a fairly large quantity of words. The instructor observed that Scott was using his knowledge of letter sounds in order to identify words and feels that this may be why he was able to identify so many words. For example, when the instructor asked him how he knew that "spaceship" was read spaceship and not superman, he pointed out the /p/ at the end of spaceship. However, Scott did not make reference to sounds of his own accord, and was

in fact reluctant to sound out letters with the instructor. He appeared to be using his knowledge intuitively and perhaps subconsciously. What appeared to be of primary importance to him was understanding the meaning of the printed words. Thus, once he was able to recognize a word and understand it, the way in which he had done it became irrelevant, unimportant, and even burdensome.

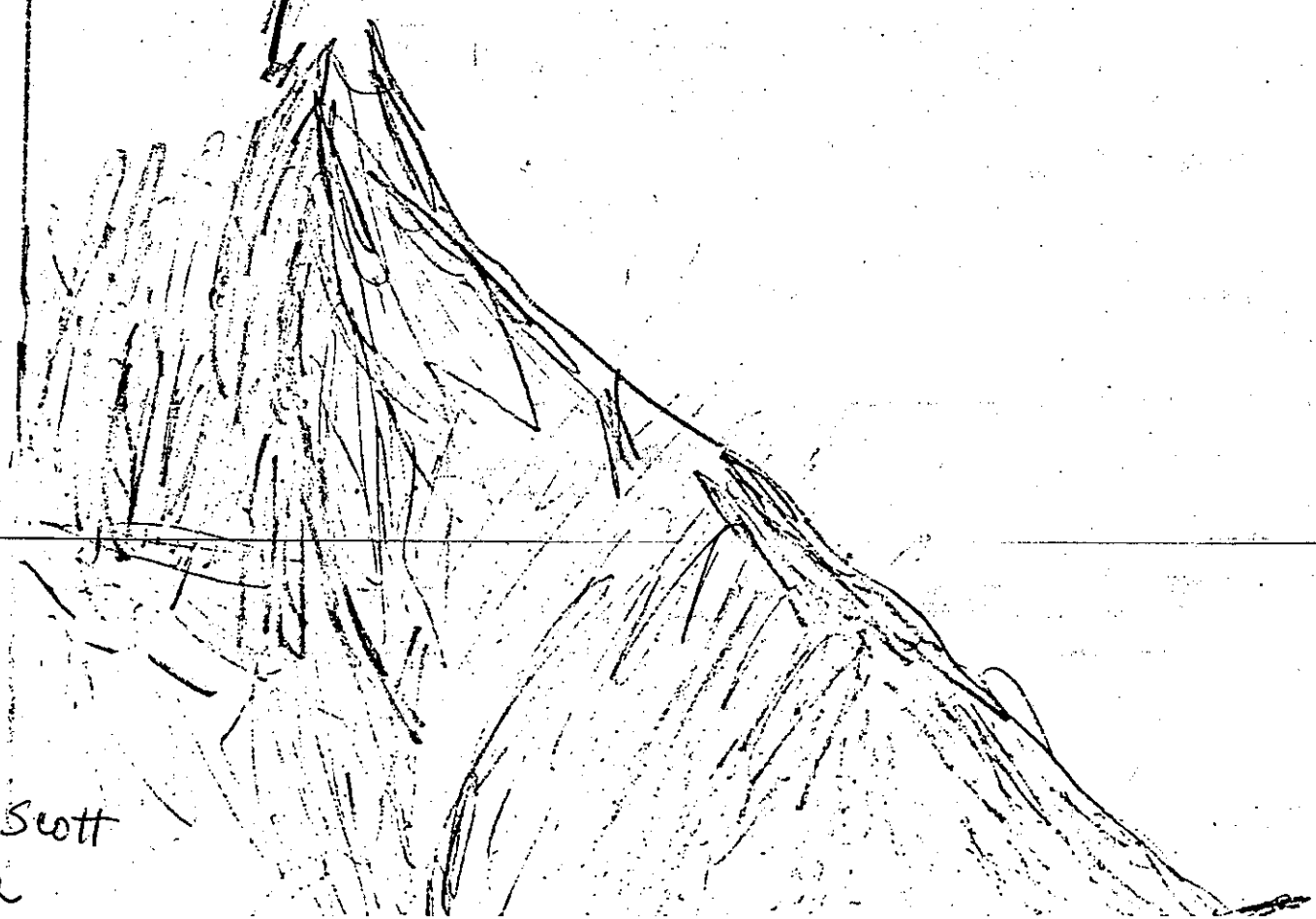
It is believed that Scott's unwillingness to look more closely at words and letter to sound correspondences may be an indication that he is not ready to do so. Thus the instructor feels that although it may be beneficial to encourage Scott's awareness of initial and final letter sounds with the introduction of new words, that any further direct phonic instruction would be inappropriate and probably confusing for him. The above is an example of the way in which we can allow children to help guide us in providing appropriate learning situations for them. In conclusion, it appears that Scott is quite satisfied with his present knowledge of both letters and sounds, and his ability to both recognize words and read a few simple sentences.

Superman is in a book.



Scott

Superman is flying with boy wonder.-



Scott

2

GROUP ACTIVITIES

The following pages consist of the description of nine group activities and the objectives and comments related to these activities. The activities were presented in a game-like fashion and designed to both stimulate interest and to enhance the development of a variety pre-reading skills. These skills include language, auditory and visual discrimination(word matching), social and reasoning skills.

These activities have been included as it is felt that they formed an important and integral part of the total curriculum. By means of these activities we were able to reach all children, including those who did not choose to participate in the more structured, individual component of the program; which focused on those skills more directly related to the reading process itself. The group activities also served to reinforce the learning which was taking place in the individual reading programs.

GROUP ACTIVITY I

Objectives:

1. a) Shoeboxes were used to organize and contain the word cards and other materials which we anticipated giving the children.
   b) To ensure that all materials would be left in school and available to the children when they felt like using them.
   c) To generate excitement for the forthcoming project.
2. To enable each child to identify his/her own creative and colorful product in the reading corner and thus feel included in the project.
3. To introduce the entire project as well as the introduction of a new teacher who would arrive the following day, by means of a "fun" activity.

Type of Activity: Art, painting shoeboxes.

Materials: 22 white shoeboxes, 22 brushes, tempera paint, crayons, 1 book shelf 5ft.x4ft.

Procedure:

Children were given white shoeboxes and encouraged to decorate them in a way that they could identify them. Very few children could actually write their names. Once the children were finished the head teacher wrote each child's name on both the cover and the box with a black marker and set aside an area adjacent to the reading corner for the book shelf. Children randomly placed their boxes on the shelf.

Comments:

We wanted to make this first activity one which was fun. Having fun was an important consideration in planning all activites related to the program and the development of pre-reading skills as it was felt

that helping children to develop positive attitudes toward learning and to discover that learning can be exciting was very important. It was felt that self-confidence and motivation are key aspects in the learning process and therefore the development of positive attitudes was considered as important as the actual material to be learned (i.e., words). In addition, four year old children seem to respond particularly well to material presented as games. As children asked if they would receive surprizes in their boxes we made a point of giving them their notebooks on the following day, again to stimulate motivation.

GROUP ACTIVITY II.

Objectives:

1. To introduce words and the reading program in a non-threatening way, as a game.
2. To encourage small group work and cooperation(i.e., children within a particular group helped others in order that they all get their surprizes) in order to set the stage for peer teaching and to minimize competition.
3. To maximize the probability of success and thus minimize frustration, by using familiar activity centers which could be located easily by the children.
4. To stimulate attention to graphic information and letter differentiation.
5. To introduce or reinforce the concepts of letter and word.

Type of Activity: Matching word game; large group.

Materials: 27 5" x 11" posterboard cards reading; (5)art, (5)blocks, (5)house, (6)pets, (6)games, in red lower case letters, leaving a ½" margin between letters and the edge of cards.
22 small notebooks wrapped in tissue paper with a child's name printed on each one.

Procedure:

Each respective activity center in the room was labeled with a word card in an easily visible place at the children' height. The remaining cards were distributed among the children, and an attempt was made to give children cards which corresponded to their favorite acitivity centers. Groups were formed to include those who displayed an interest in letters and those who did not, peers, boys and girls.

Groups consisted of children who had received the same written word.

The head teacher introduced the new reading teacher to the children who proceeded with the activity. Children were shown the 5 cards that had been put up in the activity centers around the room. The children were instructed to:

1. Go to their shoebox and take the card out.(cards must be placed earlier)
2. Try to find the place where there was a card that looked the same as theirs.
3. Wait for the whole group to get there and sit down.
4. Wait for their surpizes.

Comments:

It was felt important to begin by introducing the concepts of letter and word. According to Meltzner and Herse (1969); "When asked to point out words, a child may indicate letters or whole lines of text"(Gibson, Levin, 1976, p. 242). Gibson and Levin (1976) conclude that "the fact that words are units of speech and also units in a printed text and as such correspond is obviously a basic concept to get across early in the game."

Children were fascinated with the activity and went from center to center in a search for their words. When they discovered which other children had the same card they began to help one another and looked around together. Interesting remarks included: "This looks the same." "This has the same letters." "This is the same but I don't know what it says." The latter comment stresses the importance of meaning.

The children were thrilled with their notebooks and in fact spent a lot of time during the course of the program drawing, making letters, or copying new words in them. They were a source of satisfaction and

pleasure for the children. It should be noted that it was helpful to buy books which had a variety of pictures on the covers so that children could easily identify them. Children also helped one another when they received their surprizes(the notebooks) as they were wrapped in tissue paper and labeled by names. (Some children could read the names of other children who could not yet identify their names.)

The experimentors originally planned to give the children notebooks, and since the children had requested surprizes for their new shoeboxes, the notebooks were referred to as surprizes, in order to maintain their interest initially. However, rewards were not an integral part of the program as it was felt that children should develop the ability to engage in independent and self-initiated activity based upon their own desire to learn. According to Day, Berlyne, and Hunt (1971); "It has been accepted by psychologists for at least a decade that there is "intrinsic motivation" to know, to find things out, to get what is ambiguous, clear; what is amorphous, orderly"(Gibson, Levin, 1976, p. 265). Bruner(1966), writing about the "will to learn", states:

> "Almost all children possess what have come to be called "intrinsic" motives for learning. An intrinsic motive is one which does not depend upon reward that lies outside the activity it impels. Reward inheres in the successful termination of that activity or even in the activity itself"

(Gibson, Levin, 1976, p. 265). The experimentors were in agreement with the above statement.

GROUP ACTIVITY III.

Objectives:

1. To demonstrate that words can represent body parts and reinforce the concept of "word".
2. To teach and reinforce knowledge of body parts, through the use of language, visual stimuli, and physical movement (i.e., hokey pokey).
3. To reinforce the sight reading of body words which were being introduced during individual work with the reading instructor, and to integrate that individual work with large group classroom activities.
4. To encourage letter matching and letter differentiation, and attention to word patterns.
5. To combine an enjoyable art project with the learning of pre-reading skills.

Type of Activity:

Part I. Art; Tracing and drawing in body parts (i.e., eyes, nose); large group.

Part II. Word Matching with body part words; large group.

Materials:

Part I. 12 ft. x 3 ft. of mural paper, magic markers of varying colors, 3 pencils, scissors, 15 5" x 11" cards reading: (3)foot, (3)head, (3)hand, (3)nose, (3)lips, in red lower case. A ½" margin is left between words and the edge of cards.

Procedure:

Three children were selected to lie down on the mural paper while other children traced the outlines of their bodies. We selected two boys and a girl who differ in height and various physical characteristics (curly vs. straight hair and eye color). After the bodies were

traced the children colored them and drew in body parts as they wished. The bodies were tacked to a wall and the hand, head, nose, lips and foot cards were put up on appropriate body parts. It was explained to the children that each word corresponded to the body part that it was next to. They were informed that they would play a matching game the following day.

Part II.

Children were carefully divided into groups differing from the groups in the previous large group activity. We were careful to include both girls, boys, peers, readers and non-readers. There were five groups and five teachers and each teacher was made responsible for a group. Each child received his/her own word card which differed from the cards of the other children in the group. The children proceeded, group by group, to approach the bodies and locate the words which looked like the ones on their cards. When words were found the children held their cards up to the matching words. Each child was then given a pencil, wrapped in tissue paper with his/her name on it, and was instructed to keep it in his/her shoebox for use at school.

Comments:

Children were thrilled to discover that their cards matched the ones on the bodies. They worked together in helping one another to find words. Many children recognized and identified words which had only been up in the classroom for one day. Some children recognized words which they had recently received during individual work with the reading instructor.

Body part words were selected for this activity and as the child-

ren's first sight reading words as they are meaningful to young children. According to Doman(1975), "We begin teaching a small child to read words by using the "self" words because the child first learns about his own body. His world begins inside and works gradually outside, a fact which educators have known for a long time."

This activity was followed up by active games such as the hokey pokey. Also, pencils were given to the children to be used with the notebooks they received the previous week, to encourage scribbling and drawing.

GROUP ACTIVITY IV.

Objectives:

1. To provide an exercise in visual discrimination based upon color, shape, type of print etc., and to reinforce learning by allowing children to physically manipulate real objects which they are familiar with.
2. To convey the idea that labels communicate and mean something.
3. To encourage children to begin observing labelsat home, and thus improve their perceptual skills.
4. To foster a curiosity in words which identify objects.
5. The letter writing activity was used to demonstrate the relationship between words and communication and to encourage writing, scribbling, and drawing.

Type of Activity: Part I. Matching labels; large group.
Part II. Letter writing.

Materials: Part I. 1 can of tuna and 5 identical labels, 1 can of Campbell's soup and 5 identical labels, 1 box of Knorr soup and 4 identical labels, 1 roll of toilet paper and 4 identical labels, 1 pack of Superman slippersox and 3 identical labels. The # of labels must equal the # of children. Any products may be used as long as labels can be easily identified by size, shape and color.
Part II. Stationery and envelopes for each child.

Procedure:

Children were again grouped to include both males and females, peers, readers and non-readers. Each group consisted of four or five children who would all receive different labels. Objects were placed

together on a table so that the children could see them when they entered the classroom. The objects were introduced to the children and they were encouraged to guess what the products were by looking at the labels. We discussed what labels are and then children were instructed to go to their shoeboxes and get the label they would find there. Next they took turns going to the table to find the label which matched their own.

Part II.

Directly following the activity the children were seated together and shown a colorful letter form, the type which folds up and is sealed with a sticker,and we talked about sending letters, post offices and addresses. Each child was then given a letter form and encouraged to send a letter or a picture to someone.

Comments:

Children becamed very absorbed with this activity and very much enjoyed holding the objects. They were pleased to recognize products which many of them had seen at home. Children did not pay particular attention to the words on the labels, but talked about the products (i.e., I have Superman). The Superman slippers were a real hit which suggests that materials should be geared toward the children's interests whenever possible, as it tends to generate excitement. The materials did not take too long to prepare and labels can be easily removed from cans with a little hot running water or steam.

About eight children were very interested in sending letters and proceeded to do so immediately. This was a very important activity as we found that it stimulated many children to play post office throughout

the duration of the program. Interestingly enough, the majority of children most interested with writing letters had already become involved with the reading program through individual work, and were those who maintained a high interest in the program throughout.

GROUP ACTIVITY V.

Objectives:

1. To familiarize children with the alphabet.
2. To associate the alphabet with enjoyable activity.
3. To reinforce learning through large and fine motor activity.

Type of Activity: Alphabet march; large group (22 children).

Materials: A red marker, paper punch, 26 ft. of string cut into 1 ft. pieces, 26 3"x11" posterboard cards with a different letter of the alphabet printed on each card in red ink and in small case. A piece of string is tied to both ends of each card so that the card can be hung around the neck.

Procedure:

The alphabet was divided into four parts; A-G, H-N, O-T, and U-Z, and each of the four teachers in the room was made responsible for one of these letter groups. Each teacher put on the first letter in his/her group of letters and the remaining letters were randomly placed on a table in the room. The children were encouraged to take a letter and put it on. Each teacher then proceeded to get together the children who had selected the letters in his/her group and helped the children to line up in alphabetical order. Musical instruments were then passed out and the entire group filed out of the room in alphabetical order. We marched around the block singing and playing musical instruments.

Comments:

Many children searched for the letter that their name began with and were disappointed when it was not available. The children did not exhibit particular interest in isolated letters unless they were asso-

ciated with a name or a special word(i.e., Superman). Thus the meaning of words appeared to be most important to the children as opposed to individual letters or written words.

Children enjoyed marching with their letters and musical instruments however often changed places with one another and were not concerned with the sequence of the alphabet. Some children felt silly about wearing letters and having to march. However, a month later, while getting ready to go out for a field trip, they asked whether or not they were going to wear their letters outside.

GROUP ACTIVITY VI.

Objectives:

1. To develop auditory discrimination skills.
2. To develop an awareness of foreign language and how different it sounds from one's own language.
3. To help children to develop a sensitivity to people of varying ethnic backgrounds and cultures.
4. To convey that people can think act act differently and that's O.K.

Type of Activity: Language learning(counting from one to ten in Spanish); large group.

Procedure:

Children were seated in the book corner and we discussed language. Children were asked if they would like to hear any special words in Spanish, after the instructor had spoken a few words for them in order to get their attention. The instructor translated several words and short sentences and then counted to ten quickly while children closed their eyes and listened carefully. Then we began counting together.

Comments:

This activity was begun as a result of a discipline problem and proved to be a very successful activity and one which can be used to help develop auditory discrimination skills. A four year old child was mocking differences in children's accents. The head teacher used reasoning skills in an attempt to help the child discover why people speak differently. As an extension of this, the reading instructor began talking about how very different foreign languages sound and demonstrated this to the child by speaking a little Spanish. The child was so fascinated by this that we decided to introduce Spanish

to the entire group.

The entire class was extremely attentive during the activity. They were saying the numbers from one to ten in Spanish within a five minute period. They also responded very well to the listening part of the activity, during which time they closed their eyes and listened carefully to the numbers. They left school marching down the stairs and repeating uno, dos, tres.

This activity and the response of the children led us to believe that the children needed cognitively stimulating activity of this nature.

GROUP ACTIVITY VII.

Objectives:

1.a) To develop auditory discrimination skills through listening activity and increasing the power of recognition (i.e., soft, loud, high and low tones).

b) By listening to the qualities of a variety of voices in order to distinguish their friend's voices from one another and identify them.

2. To stimulate language development.

3. To increase the children's awareness of the quality of their own voices.

4. To promote perspective taking. Selman (1975)

Type of Activity: Story Telling; large group.

Materials: One tape recorder; preferably small and with a built in microphone.

Procedure:

The story was begun by a teacher as follows: "Once upon a time there was a girl walking through the woods and it was dark and scary." The tape recorder was then passed around randomly from child to child, to those children who requested it. We recorded about ten sentences and then played back the tape.

Comments:

The majority of children who were eager to contribute a line to the story had been working most frequently with words and storytelling in individual sessions with the reading instructor.

A teacher began the story because the children had a difficult time beginning it themselves. The children derived great pleasure

from identifying the different voices on the tape when it was played back. This served as an excellent activity for the development of both auditory discrimination skills and language. In addition, the the children were fascinated by the tape recorder itself and the fact that the sounds which they had heard being recorded were able to be repeated back through the recorder without seeing the people speak (i.e., concrete to abstract).

Perspective taking was enhanced as follows: When the tape was played back the children discovered that they could not hear the storyteller if they were all speaking at once, and this frustrated them. Thus, they discovered the importance of cooperation in taking turns to speak and listen to one another in a group. It was felt that these skills would be essential to forthcoming small group activities, such as word matching games and the sharing of words and stories; which would require a lot of patience, cooperation, listening and an adequate attention span.

GROUP ACTIVITY VIII.

Objectives:

1. To stimulate motivation by means of the use of a story which children had created themselves.
2. To reinforce story telling.
3. To use motor activity as a means of introducing written words so that actions could be internalized and associations could be made between the actions and written symbols.
4. To enhance perspective taking.

Type of Activity: Creative drama; large group audience, 5 actors.

Materials: 1 black marker, 5 3" x 11" posterboard cards reading; wolf, grandma, girl, scary, dark, in black lower case letters. A ½" margin should be left between words and the edge of cards. 5 teachers.

Procedure:

The teachers were each given a card and did an impromptu play based upon the story which children had created and taped during Activity VII. Next, one teacher narrated the story while five eager volunteers (children) acted out the drama while holding the word card which represented their role (i.e., the child holding the card saying "dark" turned off the lights at the appropriate time).

Comments:

Perspective taking was enhanced as the children were able to view their teachers in a new role as actresses in a play, and they in turn experienced a new role in being the listening audience. This seemed to cause the children to be in a state of disequalibrium which resulted in a new awareness about people's ability to change behaviors

and assume a variety of roles appropriate to different situations (i.e., being noisy in the block area, playing monster outside, or quietly being the teacher or the learner in a peer teaching situation). This was very important in reinforcing peer teaching and in preparing children for the sharing of stories with one another.

GROUP ACTIVITY IX.

Objectives:

1. To formally introduce and encourage the sharing of words and stories and to stimulate interest in the work of peers.
2. To give children the opportunity to contribute their work to a group and consequently experience a sense of pride and accomplishment in their work.
3. To practice left to right letter sequencing and word combination with familiar words.
4. To encourage peer teaching and the learning of new words from peers.

Type of Activity:

Part I. The reading of original words and stories; small group (5-7 children).
Part II. Combining individual letters to form words; small group.

Materials:

Part I. Books which children had created themselves containing illustrated stories or words.
Part II. 8 3" x 11" posterboard cards; words printed on cards are taken from the children's organic vocabulary. Each child in the group should receive a word that they are familiar with. Use black lower case letters.
An identical set of cards cut up into individual letters.

Procedure:

Children's books were placed on a table in the reading corner. A group of children spontaneously wandered over to look at the books and were encouraged to sit down. They were asked if they would like to share some of their books with the other children and proceeded to do so, one by one.

Part II.

Each child was given a word card with the word written on it that he/she had chosen at one time and was familiar with; in addition to a group of individual letters, which would form the identical word when combined. They were instructed to make the same word with the letters as the word on the card, by matching the letters and placing them directly under the card. When they all finished they exchanged words with a neighbor and put together the new words.

Comments:

These activities were conducted ten weeks after the program was begun and marked a large step forward to group work and the sharing of stories, from what had been primarily individual learning situations. It was hoped that this step would eventually lead to the children's learning to read each other's stories. The children were very proud of their books and the activity was very successful. They pointed out which words each other had learned that were identical.

Children attended extremely well to the activity which involved combining letters to form words. When they exchanged words with one another they were learning a new word which a peer had originally selected. Thus, they also helped one another to form the words. It was noted that the word Superman was a little too long for this type of activity, at this stage, and thus it is suggested that teachers limit the words to five or six letters, unless a child has a strong desire to work with a particular word of interest (in which case the child may not mind the struggle).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

It is the author's belief that both the experimentors and the children found the pilot study to be of enormous value.

The program gave children the opportunity to experience what they considered to be "serious work"(learning about letters, words, reading and writing) in a non-threatening, supportive environment, where they felt free to participate and learn in their own ways and at their own levels. The program was felt to be a success as its main goal was met; that is, children experienced and understood that learning can be fun.

Many children were apprehensive about entrance into Kindergarten and concerned about the amount of work that they would have to do there. It is suspected that these children related to work, and consequently learning, as being terribly serious and unpleasant activity. They were also becoming aware of the competitive aspects of school which some of them feared. However, the satisfaction and pleasure derived from the children's experiences during the program appeared to:

1. Alleviate their fears.
2. Help them to develop more positive attitudes and concepts about learning.
3. Enable them to discover that work and learning could be both rewarding and fun.
4. Stimulate the desire to learn and thus self-initiated activity.

The program helped to confirm the experimentors' (head teacher and coordinator) beliefs that the following factors should be important considerations when planning programs for four year old children.

Children should be left free to:

1. Explore the environment.
2. Develop individual learning styles.
3. Work at their own developmental levels and pace.
4. Demonstrate interest or disinterest and choose whether or not to participate in activities.

Through observation it was learned that when given the freedom, children do indicate what they would like to learn in addition to ways that they would like to learn; and that a child's interest or disinterest may be an indication of his/her readiness to learn the material at hand.

For example, a few children indicated a real desire and a readiness to gain phonic knowledge by frequently asking the instructor for information about letters and sounds. One such child was very conscious of spelling patterns and perplexed when she encountered words which did not have direct letter to sound correspondences. Thus she asked questions such as "Why does this say eye?" Other children, like the child mentioned in the case study, responded to a limited amount of attention given to the initial and final sounds of words, but did not initiate any work on phonics themselves and on occasion they ignored the instruction altogether.

Children also appeared to select activites, and sometimes words,

appropriate to their needs and various stages of skill development. When I arrived at school in the morning the children approached me and requested to work on a variety of things. To quote them directly; "I want to work with words." "I want some new words." "I want to make sentences." "I want to make a new page for my book." "I don't want any words." "I just want to write in my notebook" (draw or make letters).

It is also interesting that some children specifically requested rhyming words, and appeared to do so for a variety of reasons. Some children appeared to be reinforcing auditory discrimination skills by repeating rhymes to themselves and perhaps selected these words as they were beginning to sense a pattern and could most easily recognize these consistently spelled words in written form (i.e., cat, rat, fat). Most of these children were still collecting words and had not moved on to working with complete sentences. However, it was also interesting to note that one child who had already accumulated a large number of words with both consistent and inconsistent spelling patterns, and who was quite comfortable sequencing sentences, also cont nued to work with words that rhymed throughout the program. This is the same child who demonstrated a real interest in learning letter to sound correspondences. It appeared that she was using her knowledge of spelling patterns and rules and enjoyed generalizing these patterns in creating new words, and novel sentences, i.e., the cat is jumping on top of the mat. It is further believed that due to the fact that she accumulated so many irregularly spelled words so quickly, that she may have felt the need to slow down and work with comfortable material that had logical patterns, particular-

ly when she was concentrating on learning the principles of sentence organization. Fowler(1971), in conducting a reading experiment with four year old children, utilized simple rhyming words while attempting to teach children the principles involved in word and sentence organization(i.e., cat = c-a-t-, and left to right word order in sentences). He also suggests that these are highly complex cognitive processes.

In addition to variety in terms of what the children were learning, we discovered that children developed different approaches toward learning. These approaches consist of direct instruction with an adult, observational learning from both teachers and peers, peer teaching, and learning through games. Some children participated in all of the above ways, whereas others had special preferences. For example, certain children engaged in large group activities alone, some observed small group and individual work frequently but did not approach the instructor, and others insisted upon working with the instructor with the same peer on all occasions. When it was felt that children were observing from a distance due to shyness, they were gently encouraged to ask for a word or to join the activity and they were often happy to do so. Otherwise they were encouraged to feel comfortable about observing. It was interesting to note that children observed a lot of what happened in the classroom very closely, and were going home and asking parents to teach them there. Also, it was obvious that children were carefully observing which words their peers had selected, as there was a great deal of word repetition and a few stories centered around the same theme (see Appendix C).

Children also differed with respect to individual techniques and learning styles. These included:

1. A desire to write all new words.
2. The tracing of letters with fingers.
3. The desire to illustrate or find pictures which illustrated the objects that words represented.
4. Oral sounding.
5. Silent reading.

Children also varied with respect to the degree of originality and creativity in their selection of words and story themes, in the amount of words which they collected, and in the pace that they learned new words. Some children showed a lot more concern than others when they were unable to identify old words and wanted to review these words. Other children wanted to continue to accumulate new words even when they were unable to recognize a fair amount of old ones. The instructor acted upon the belief that it was more important to meet the children's demands for new words, and thus stimulate motivation and interest, than to be concerned about the amount of words learned. It was felt that this was a positive initial phase which would later lead into the closer examination of words and desire to decipher the written message. Occasionally, if the child demonstrated an interest in working with whole sentences, the instructor would attempt to limit and simplify the vocabulary so that the child could actually read it.

An interesting example of a child who had the desire to accumulate a large amount of words, when she had not learned to read all of them, is an Israeli child whose native language is Hebrew and who has been

living in the United States for two years. It was reported to us by her mother that she had a rather difficult time when she first arrived here, and that she did not speak in school last year for about the first six months, long after her younger brother had begun to use English. At present Danna's oral English is near fluent and she is working well with other children, although she does speak slowly and quietly. She seems to have benefited immensely from the reading program.

Danna collected about 20 words, which she enjoyed illustrating by herself or by cutting out pictures from magazines. Occasionally she would first select a picture, and the instructor would then print the word for her. Danna's selection of vocabulary mainly consisted of words which represented objects in her school or home environment (i.e., pillow, bed, table), whereas other children tended to select words relating to fantasy (i.e., haunted houses) or the media (i.e., Superman, Batman). She appeared to be reinforcing her newly acquired vocabulary with the acquisition of word cards and accompanying illustrations.

Danna became very enthusiastic about and proud of her words and demanded time of her mother at home to work with her words. Her mother reported that during the program Danna appeared to be developing a sense of pride and confidence with English that she had not witnessed earlier. In fact, due to the child's excitement, she was occasionally permitted to speak English at home with her parents, whereas normally the children speak only Hebrew in order to maintain fluency in that language. Toward the end of the program, Danna began recognizing words by familiarity with some initial letter sounds. Thus if she knew the /p/ in pillow, she could identify that word.

Our observations throughout the program led us to believe that in being receptive to children's cues we could discover a great deal about what a child was ready to learn in addition to ways which we might most effectively teach individual children. Most importantly, it was learned that it was not beneficial to push children to learn if they did not demonstrate real interest, and that in providing a flexible, individualized program, where children had the opportunity to participate on a variety of levels and in different ways, it was not necessary to do so.

Those children who acquired words at a steady pace, two-four a week, and who demonstrated some knowledge of direct letter to sound correspondences appeared to retain more words than those children who accumulated words at a rapid or sporadic pace while paying little attention to initial and final letter sounds. However, the latter group, regardless of the amount of words they could identify, maintained high interest throughout the program and after its completion, and thus benefited from developing a positive orientation toward words and reading.

The school philosophy, which prohibited the teaching of the alphabet or formal reading instruction, affected the program significantly as we were unable to communicate to parents about what their children were doing during the first few months. After a few months, when parents were informed about the program, we were able to gain information which related to changes in children's behavior at home. It is believed, however, that it would have been most beneficial for parents, children, and teachers if the communication had been open from the start of the program.

Due to this lack of communication, some children did not participate in the program because of a lack of support from parents, but began to display more interest in words and in related activites once parents acknowledged the program and encouraged them to participate. In these cases, parental support appeared to be beneficial. In one case, however, it was observed that parent involvement may have negative effects upon the child, should the parent be too concerned with competion, and as a result pressure the child to do work. This boy, who had been asking for words spradically before his mother was informed about the program, reported to school one day and said: "My mother said I should work with you every day you're here." Perhaps this was his way of ensuring that he get attention from the instructor; perhaps not. In another instance, a parent bought a spelling book for her child to be used at home.

One of the most interesting discoveries reported to us by several parents, before they knew anything about the program, was that children were developing an interest in writing and in letters, and that they

had begun to spend a lot of time at home "working" with pencils and paper. In school children had also displayed a great deal of interest in drawing and making letters and were thrilled with the small notebooks and pencils which we gave them to keep in their shoeboxes. According to Gibson and Levin(1976), "Graphic production occurs very early, excites great interest in young children, and shows a sequence of development, given the opportunity, from scribbling to drawing to attempts at copying letters to production of names and words." Thus the children appeared to be following a natural progression and they were encouraged to "write" in school when they displayed an interest or wanted a suggestion for an activity. They very much enjoyed connecting dots to form letters. It is also interesting to note that they began writing and recognizing their names at about the same time, which may indicate that making letters does help children to learn to discriminate them visually.

However, a few parents expressed concern to the head teacher that their children were acting very "serious" at home and choosing to stay indoors and "work" rather than play with their peers. Unfortunately, parents did not report this as it was first occuring. As mentioned earlier, children were displaying signs that they were thinking about entrance into Kindergarten, which may have contributed in part to their desires to "work" at home. When children were asked why they liked the project they responded in the following ways: "Because I like working with sentences." "I like to learn about letters so I can learn how to read." "So when I go into Kindergarten I will know how to read." "I like words but I don't like the boxes "(meaning

that the shoeboxes which contained the words were too childish). In the extreme cases, where parents became really concerned about their children's behavior, it was felt that the children were feeling a need to compete with their peers. However these were exceptional cases and most children did not alter their behavior so significantly.

For many children this experience was an introduction to competition of a cognitive rather than social-emotional nature. As it was believed by the experimentors that competition of this nature is inevitable, it was felt that competition should be acknowledged and dealt with as constructively as possible.

The negative aspect of competition was noted above, when children became rather extremely interested in working with words at home and did not show interest in other types of activity. Kimberly, for example, refused to play with friends or engage in fantasy play for some time. Her mother finally became very upset with her, rather than supporting her work; however this type of reaction did not appear to alter Kimberly's behavior. In a similar case, where the parent remained supportive of the child's interest in words, it was reported that the child made a gradual transition back to renewing his interest in fantasy play.

In the classroom, when children were competing with one another we attempted to reason with them and explained that in sharing words they would all have the opportunity to learn even more words. We shared words together in small groups in addition to reading stories together. Near the end of the program the entire group of 22 children shared words and stories together and with the exception of three children who participated in group games only, each child contributed

at least one word. When Kimberly began working together with her peers and sharing words with them it appeared to have a positive and relaxing effect on her. Her need to compete decreased as she gained confidence in her own work by contributing to and feeling part of a group. Sharing also had a positive effect on those children who were "bragging" about their achievement (i.e., comparing the weight of the shoeboxes or counting the pages in the books). These children discovered that other children had new words that they could learn, even though they may not have had as many.

During the course of the program the children gradually progressed from individual work with the reading instructor, to work in small groups of five or six children, and finally onto the sharing of stories with the entire group of 22 children. The children were developing social skills as a result of their working together in small groups. It is important to note, however, that the children were not ready to work together at the onset of the program. They tended to distract one another, demanded a lot of individual attention, and were possessive of their own words and the reading instructor.

In time the children began to take an interest in the work of their peers and displayed this by asking the instructor for the same words. On one occasion a child came to me and asked for the word space ship which I proceeded to print for him on two separate cards. He reacted by saying that he wanted it on one card, and that he knew I had written for his friend on one card. Children also began to take their boxes from the shelf independently, and would sit down together

in small groups of two or three to write in their notebooks and look through their words. Eventually, while the instructor was working with one or two children in the reading corner, children began to wander over one by one and gathered around to listen, observe, and sometimes participate. Groups were forming very naturally at this point. Therefore the instructor purposely devoted more time to group activity as the children appeared to be benefiting from group instruction more effectively than at the start of the program.

As the children also continued to work on a variety of activities related to their individual programs, they would sit together at a table in groups of five or six, and work on their own particular projects while receiving individual attention and instruction from the reading teacher.

During this time the children were also learning to transfer their work with the reading instructor to other teachers, particularly the head teacher. Previous to this they refused to consult anyone except the reading instructor about words. The reading instructor was commonly referred to by the children as the "word lady". The head teacher noted that the children appeared to be developing more mature or "grown up" relationships with the reading instructor than with other teachers, and felt that this may have been due to their shared interest in words and because the reading instructor was not involved with everyday disciplining and routine. It was felt therefore that an outside instructor had proved to be a valuable part of the program for the children in learning to develop a new type of relationship

with a teacher. It is the author's belief that her relationships with the children were based upon mutual trust, respect, and affection, and that the children very much appreciated her recognition of and interest in the development of their cognitive skills, in which they were beginning to take an interest themselves.

The program appeared to be of great social value to a child named Stephanie, who has not spoken directly to a teacher in nursery school for almost two years. Stephanie has one friend whom she clings to and speaks to a great deal; and who acts as her interpreter. Stephanie often observed the activity in the reading corner, in addition to receiving a few words of her own during sessions with her best friend. Eventually Stephanie became part of small group activities when children were seated around the reading table working. She would also take her shoebox independently and sit with a small group of girls who would often write in their notebooks. Stephanie appeared to enjoy "belonging" to these groups and as a result began to play more often with children other than her best friend and interpreter, during which time she made attempts to communicate with these children verbally.

Peer teaching among children appeared to develop naturally and was encouraged throughout the program. It helped children to develop socially, in learning to exchange roles with one another and in learning to work together in groups. It is interesting to note that those children from our classroom who remained in school for an afternoon session with other children, often congregated together and discussed words. Children displayed interest in the work of their peers and this was evidenced by a large amount of word repetition and

frequency. For example, three different Superman stories were created by three individual children. In addition, peer teaching appeared to reinforce what the children were learning. On one occasion a two year old child came to the class to visit. He began drawing and the children responded by noting that he was still "scribbling" and attempted to show the child how to make letters.

An important discovery made by the children during the course of the program was that writing is a means of communication. Once we initially introduced a letter writing activity to the class, the children began to develop an interest in playing post office and in sending letters to one another. They made reference to the fact that their letters were to someone from themselves. In addition, children began requesting that teachers write more elaborate descriptions on their artwork, and would dictate these descriptions to the teachers as they wrote. It is hoped that this discovery about written communication will transfer to reading, and that children will view reading as a source of pleasure and learning.

In conclusion, it was discovered that a reading program for four year old children is both appropriate and beneficial if it is designed to meet the needs of individual children and conducted in a way that enables children to enjoy the learning process and develop a positive orientation toward words and reading. A head teacher, sensitive to the needs and developmental levels of the children, is essential to the development of an appropriate program for those children. Further, this program proved to be successful in assisting the children through a difficult transitional period, during which they were experiencing fears about future school experiences.

It was learned that a majority of 22 children, of middle to upper middle class backgrounds, were most eager to learn about words, and that many of them were capable of accumulating sight vocabularies ranging from 10 to 35 words during a three month period, in addition to learning to sequence and read short sentences.

All children displayed some knowledge of the alphabet and a few consonant sounds at the onset of the program, however children differed with respect to their degree of phonic knowledge and in the extent to which they were receptive and responsive to phonic instruction. It appeared that a steady accumulation of three to four words a week combined with the knowledge and application of initial and final consonant sounds resulted in maximum word retention, however definite conclusions cannot be drawn at this time. It was further concluded that the program proved to be successful for some children who were unable to recognize all of their words by the end of the program, as these children maintained a high interest in learning about words throughout the program

and were beginning to display some knowledge of initial letter to sound correspondences.

It was learned that both school philisophy and parent attitudes are important considerations to bear in mind if one is planning to develop a pre-school program of this nature. Teachers must have the positive support of the school in order that they may communicate freely with parents about the children's progress both at home and at school, and must inform parents about the importance of supporting a child in working at his/her own level and pace, in an attempt to minimize competition and parental pressure.

The experimentors of this program encountered difficulty and resistance from the school administration at the end of the program when they wished to send the children's books home with an accompanying letter, and as a result some children were quite disappointed. (see Appendix B)

A program of this nature proved to require a great deal of work, particularly due to the emphasis placed on meeting individual needs and reaching all children who displayed an interest, in addition to time spent on planning individual and group programs. It is advised that an outside instructor, not involved with daily classroom management, be responsible for coordinating and implementing the program, so that the total classroom program is not disrupted, and in order that children who do not display an interest in reading be provided with appropriate programming, activities, and attention from teachers. It was observed that the large group activities, designed to promote pre-reading skills within a game-like context, served as an excellent means of reaching the entire group of children and in integrating individualized learning with

the daily curriculum.

It is the author's belief that the attitudes of the head teacher and staff are crucial in determining the success or failure of the program. The head teacher in this classroom was exceptional in giving children the necessary support and encouragement, in addition to demonstrating a belief in the children's capabilities and in imparting positive attitudes about learning. Her knowledge and awareness of individual children's needs were invaluable in assisting the reading coordinator to design and implement the program throughout its duration, in addition to her willingness to share these insights and work closely with the coordinator. This was extremely important as the reading coordinator did not know the children prior to the onset of the program. It must be further noted that the work which the head teacher had initiated from the start of the school year in developing a variety of skills, perceptual, cognitive, social, oral/aural, and reasoning, was of significant value in preparing the children for the program and in ensuring its success.

Finally, and most importantly, it is believed that in conducting a pre-school reading program prime importance must be placed upon:

1. The meeting of individual needs.
2. Helping children to develop a love of learning.

It is felt that our program was successful in meeting the above objectives, as demonstrated by the children's desires to continue the process of learning in a positive and non-fearful way, and as evidenced by the following quotes. "My brother had a hard time reading in first grade but I like what we do here." "Will we work with words in Kindergarten? I like this."

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FUTURE PROGRAM GOALS

Several children expressed a desire to continue learning new words and sentences after the completion of the program and missed the presence of the "word lady". The children also expresses a willingness to learn new words with their classroom teachers, which they were reluctant to do earlier. Due to inadequate staffing, however, it may not be possible that teachers work with individual children on an ongoing basis.

It is the author's intent to return to the school periodically to both follow up the study and to encourage teachers and children to engage in program related activities whenever possible. For this purpose, the author compiled a book consisting of the children's words and stories, which was left in the classroom on January 6th. At that time all of the classroom staff was encouraged to support the sharing of children's stories with another, in addition to utilizing the book during group story time.

It is hoped that children will eventually begin to read one another's stories. The author suspects that this may be facilitated by the children's common interests and the high frequency repetition of a number of words in the stories.

Dear Parents,

These books have been put together by the children. They selected the words which went into them in addition to creating the stories and illustrating them.

As the children began asking about words I allowed them to request words from me and when they did I printed the words on small 3x5 cards and gave the cards to the children. Later, we used many of the same words in the stories. Although many of the children are sight reading the words this was not intended as a reading program but rather as a fun activity.

I know how enthusiastic some of the children are about the books and wanted to let you know how anxious they have been to share them with you. Perhaps they will want to add pages at home or ask you for words which you might print on cards for them. In any case we hope that it will contuine to be a source of pleasure for them and that when they do in fact begin to read that they will enjoy it.

Sincerely,

NOTE: The experimentor's were denied permission to send home this letter and the children's books.

APPENDIX C

THE CHILDREN'S WORK

The following pages consist of the books that children made during the course of the program. It should be noted that many children collected and learned to read a significant amount of words which are not included in the books, but which have been printed on cards and which remain in the children's shoeboxes.

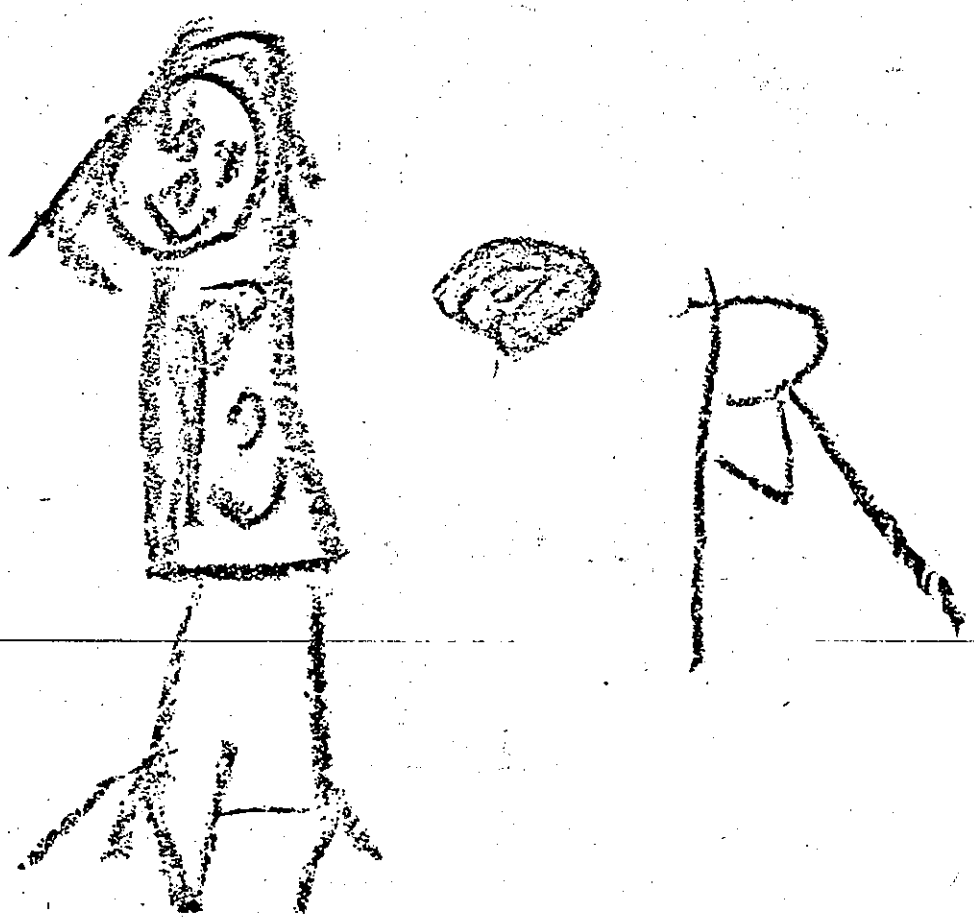
FLOWER

PILLOW

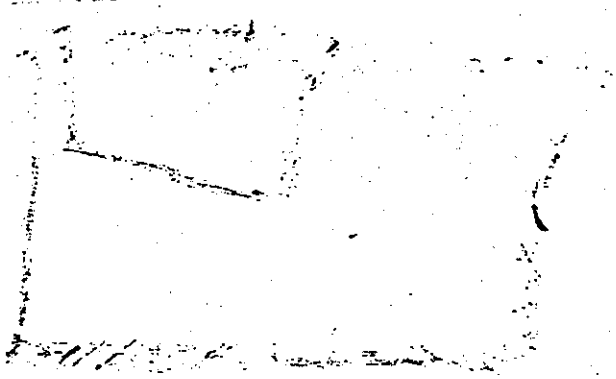
Danna

PLFF

DANNA

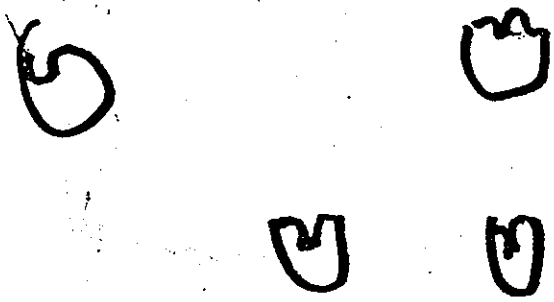


bed



pink

heart



Donna

tiEL

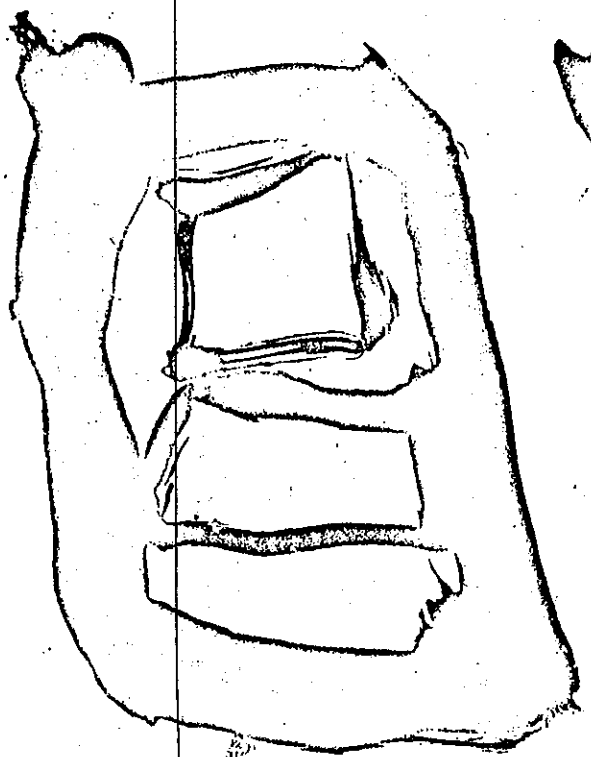
tiELEH

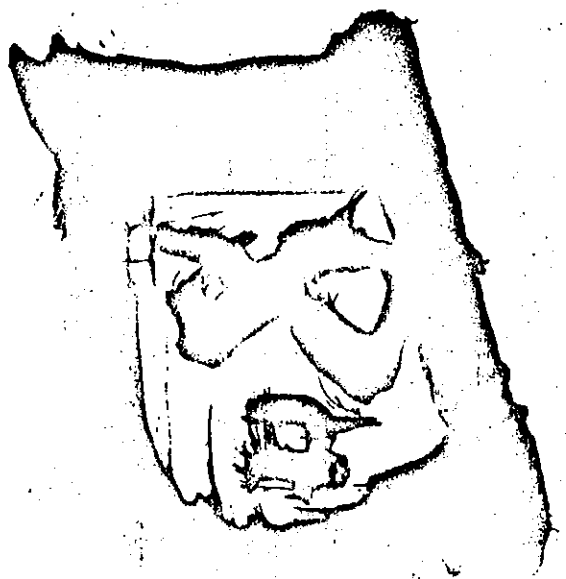
DANNA

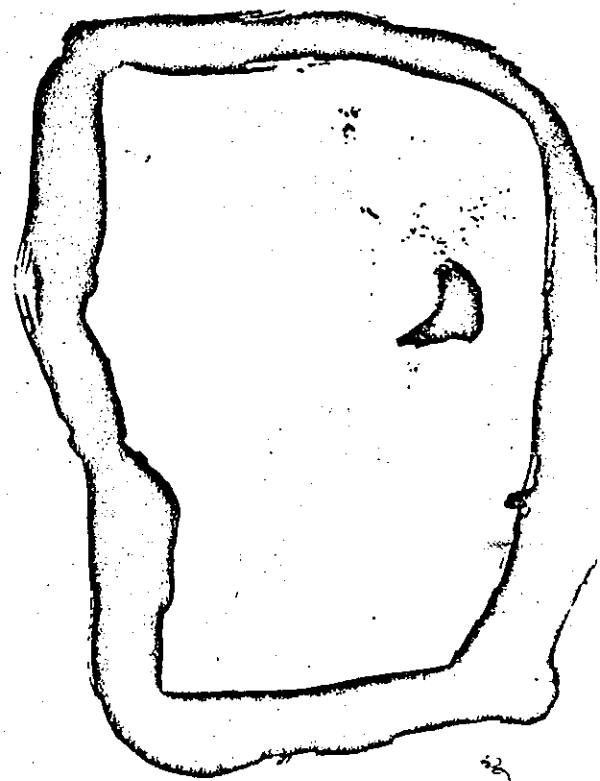
5

a

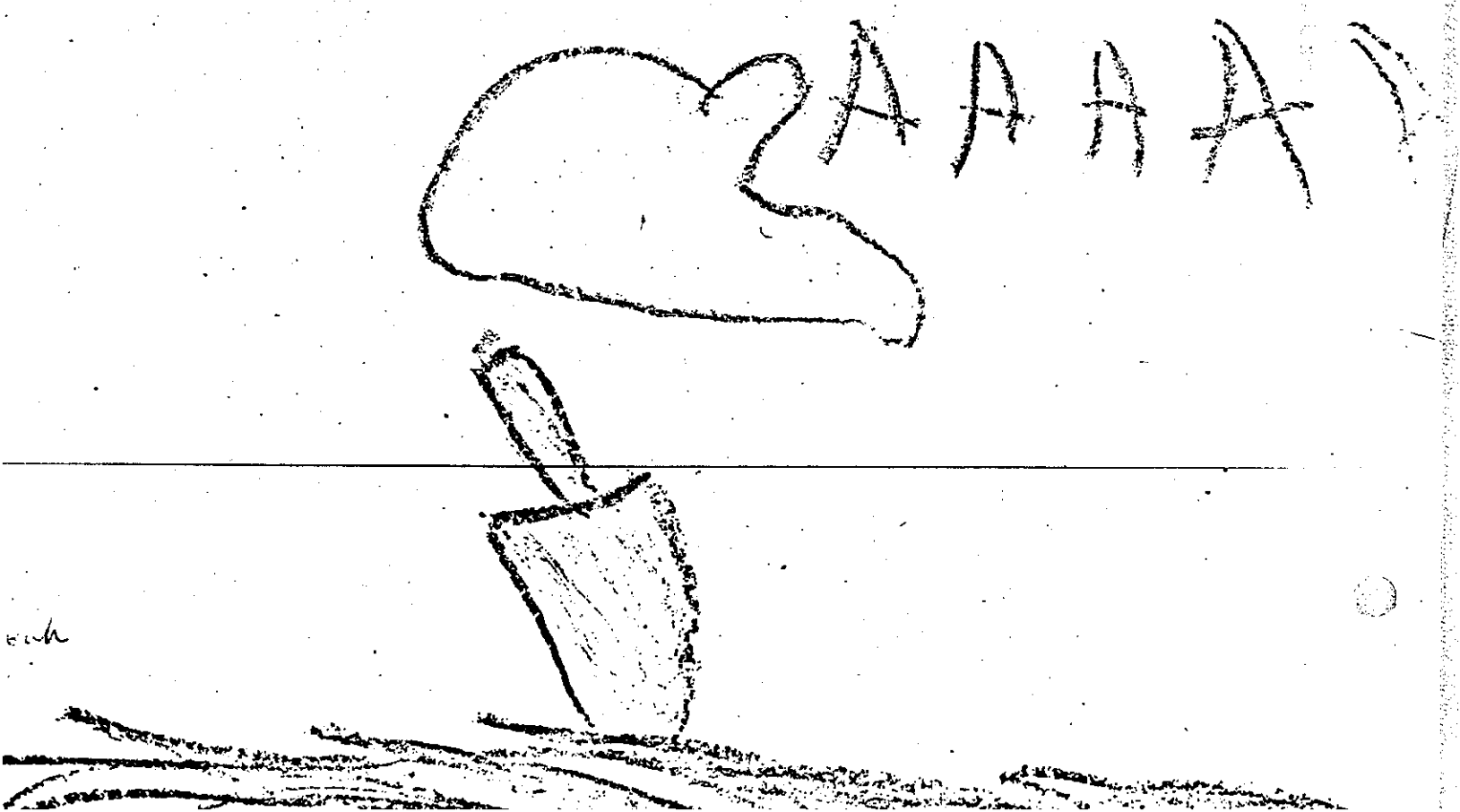
kitche



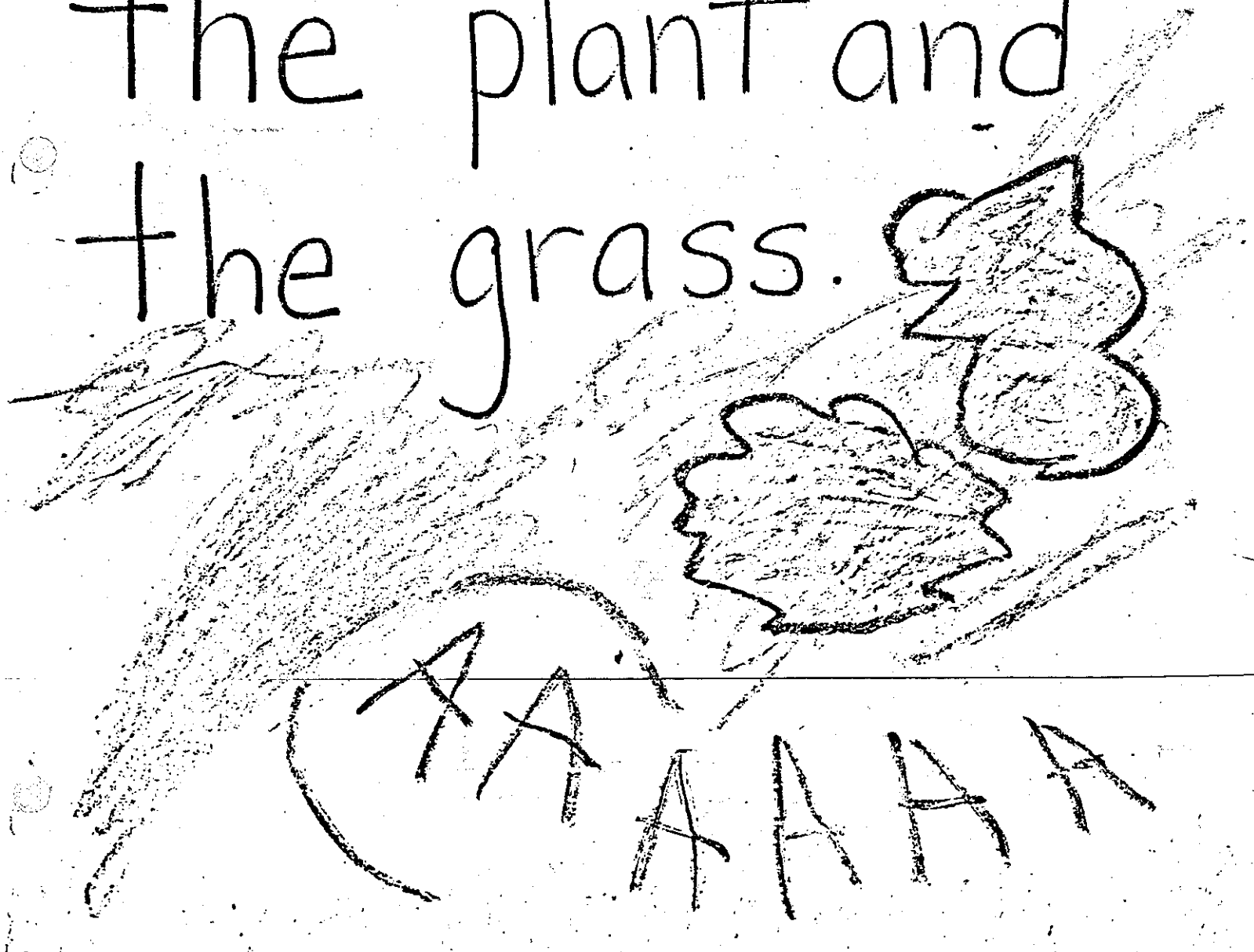




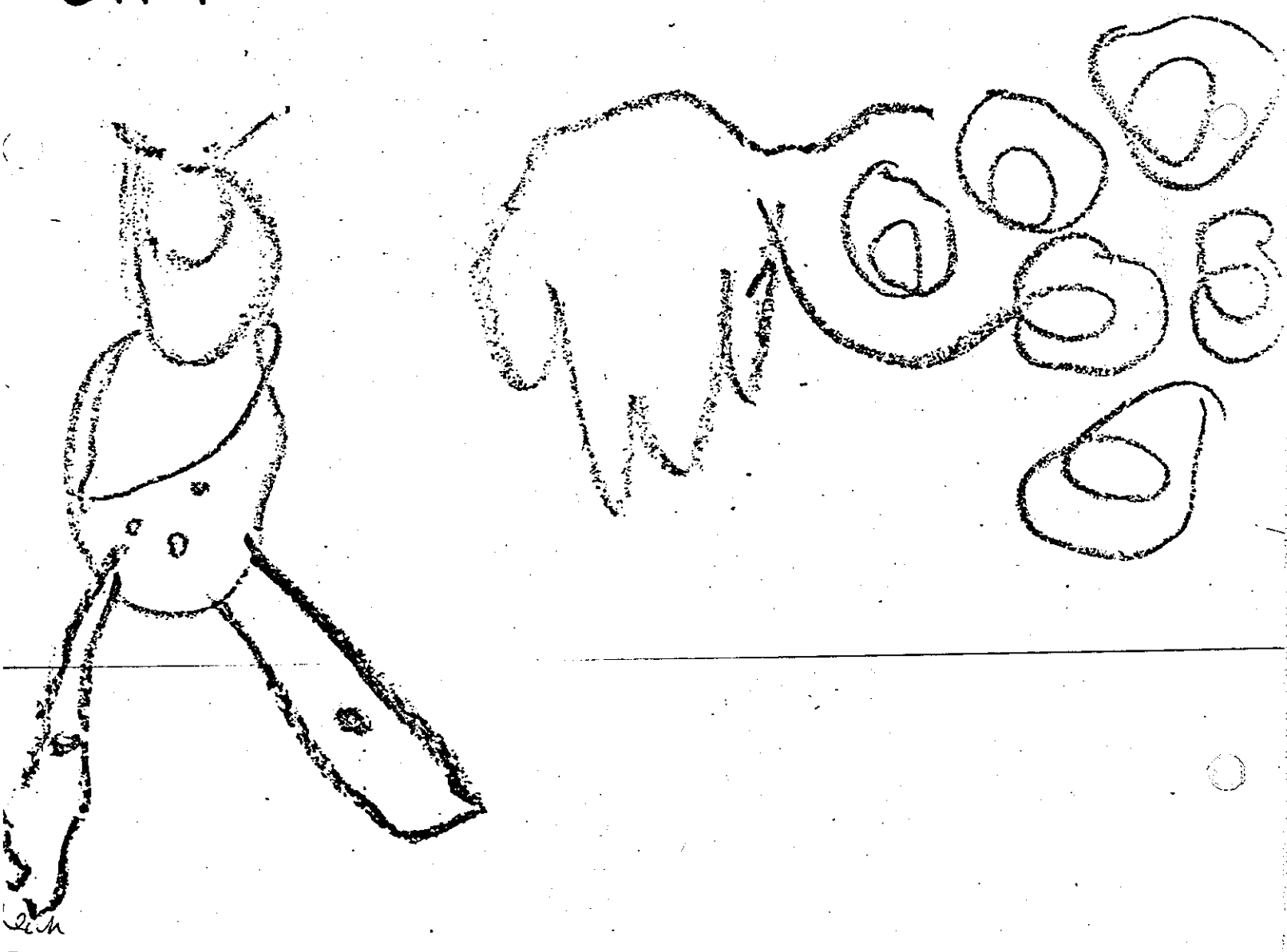
A fire dragon is sitting on the grass.



A fire dragon was sitting on the plant and the grass.

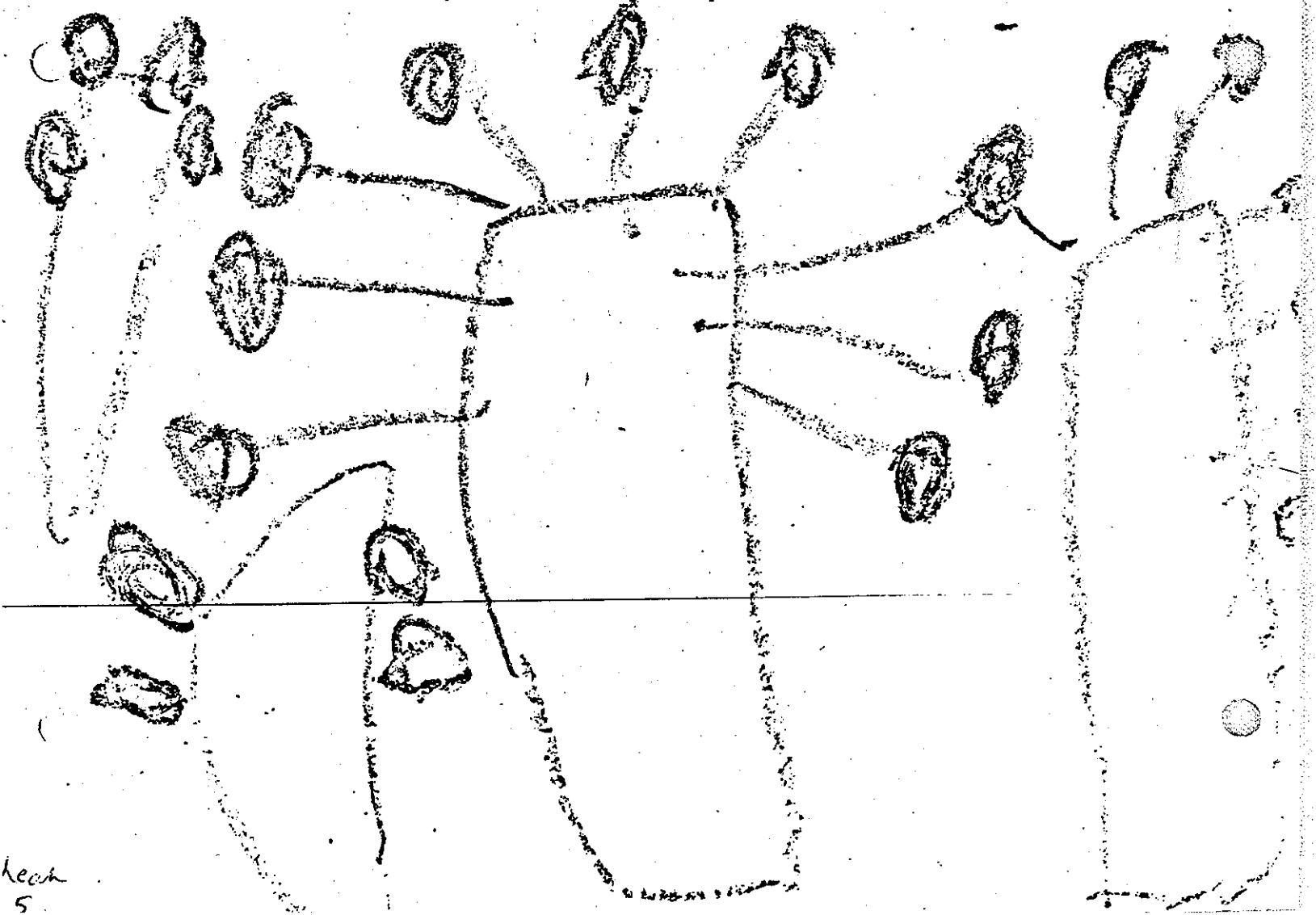


A girl went into the forest and saw a wolf.



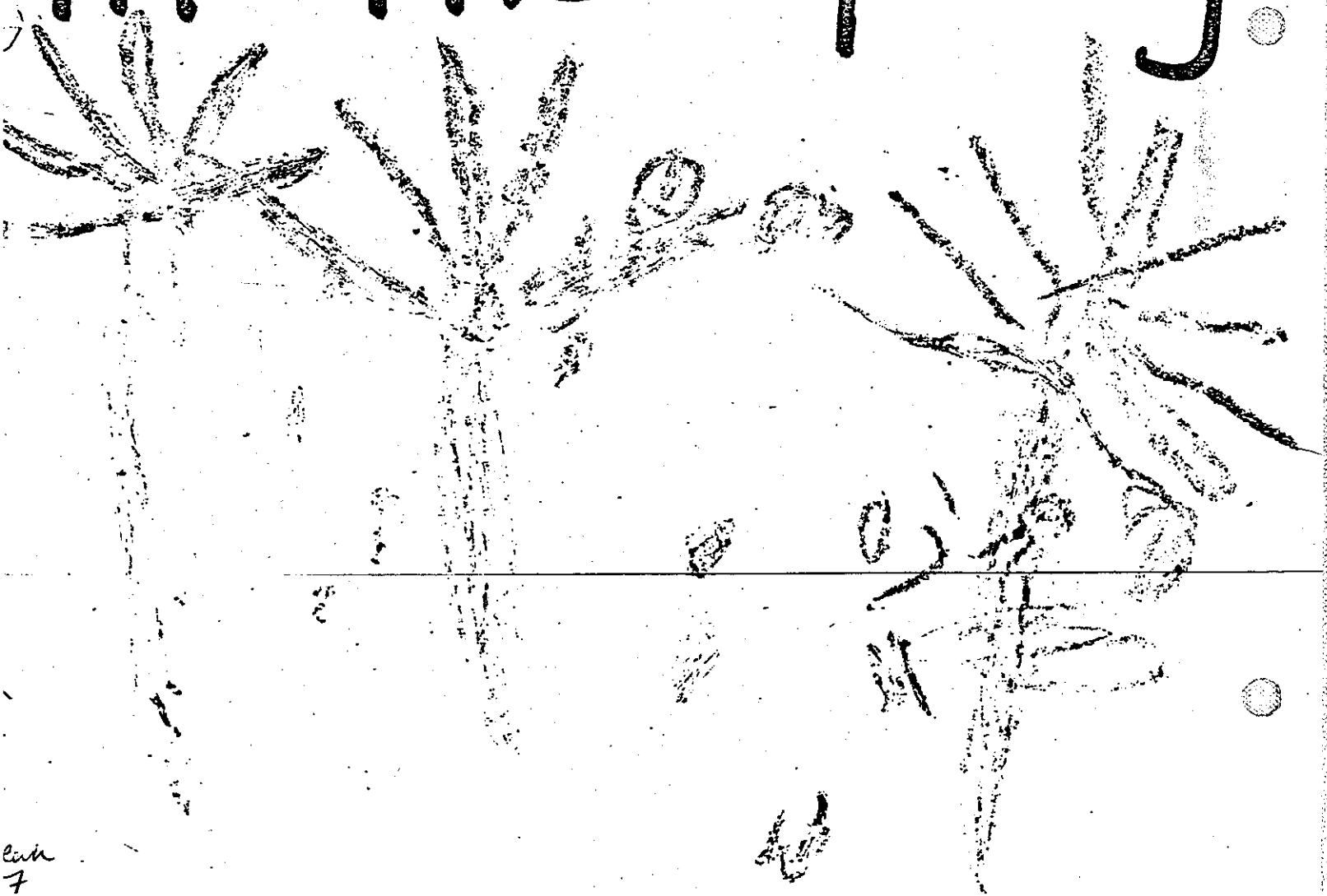
Both got scared

There were lots of trees in the forest.

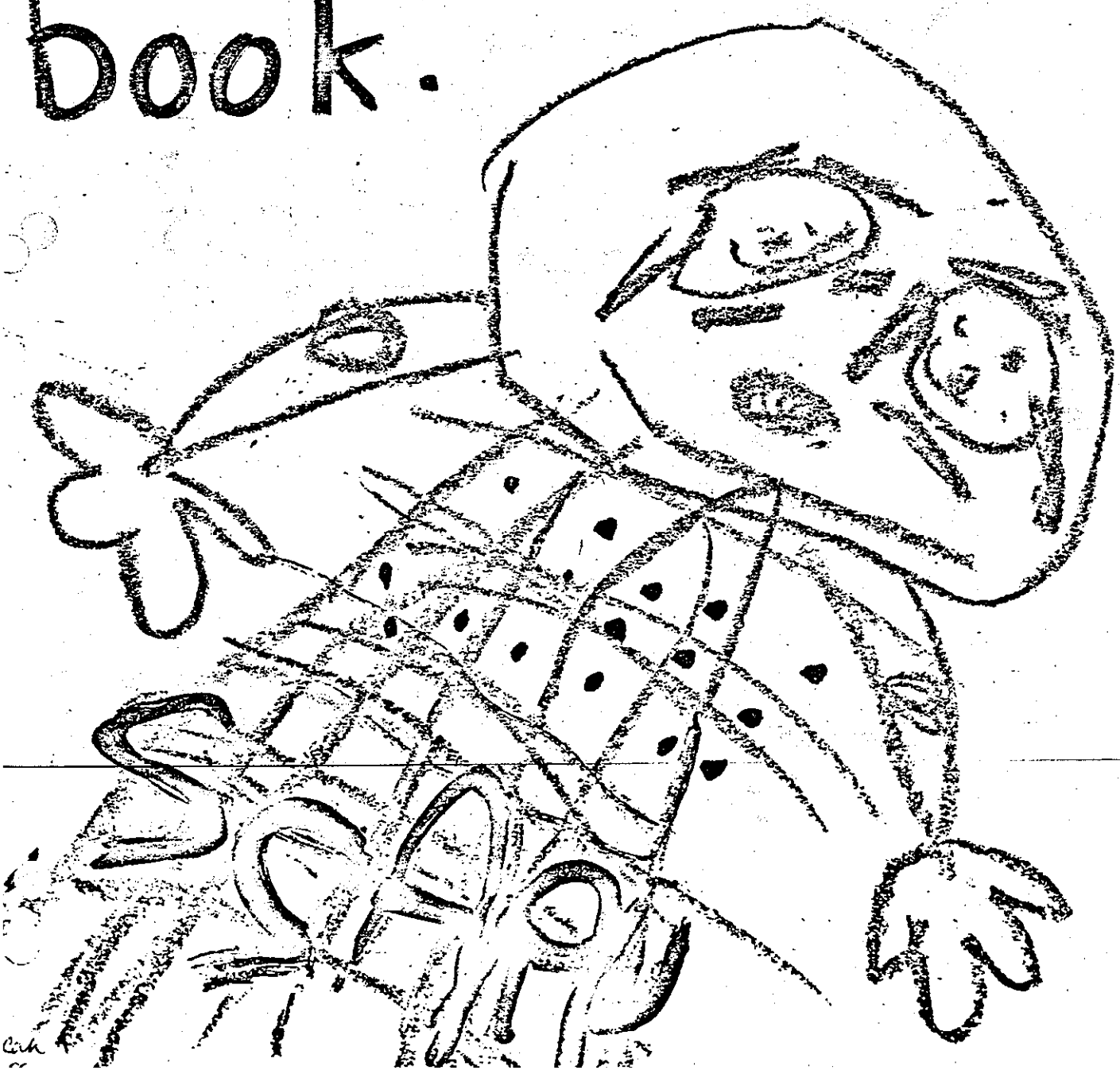


it was dark and scary in the forest.

it was snowing
in the forest
in the spring.



A monster was in Leah's book.



A monster lost Leah's pencils in the forest.

AAAAA

IN los

EAH

ERY'S IN the PENCIL.

Leah
10

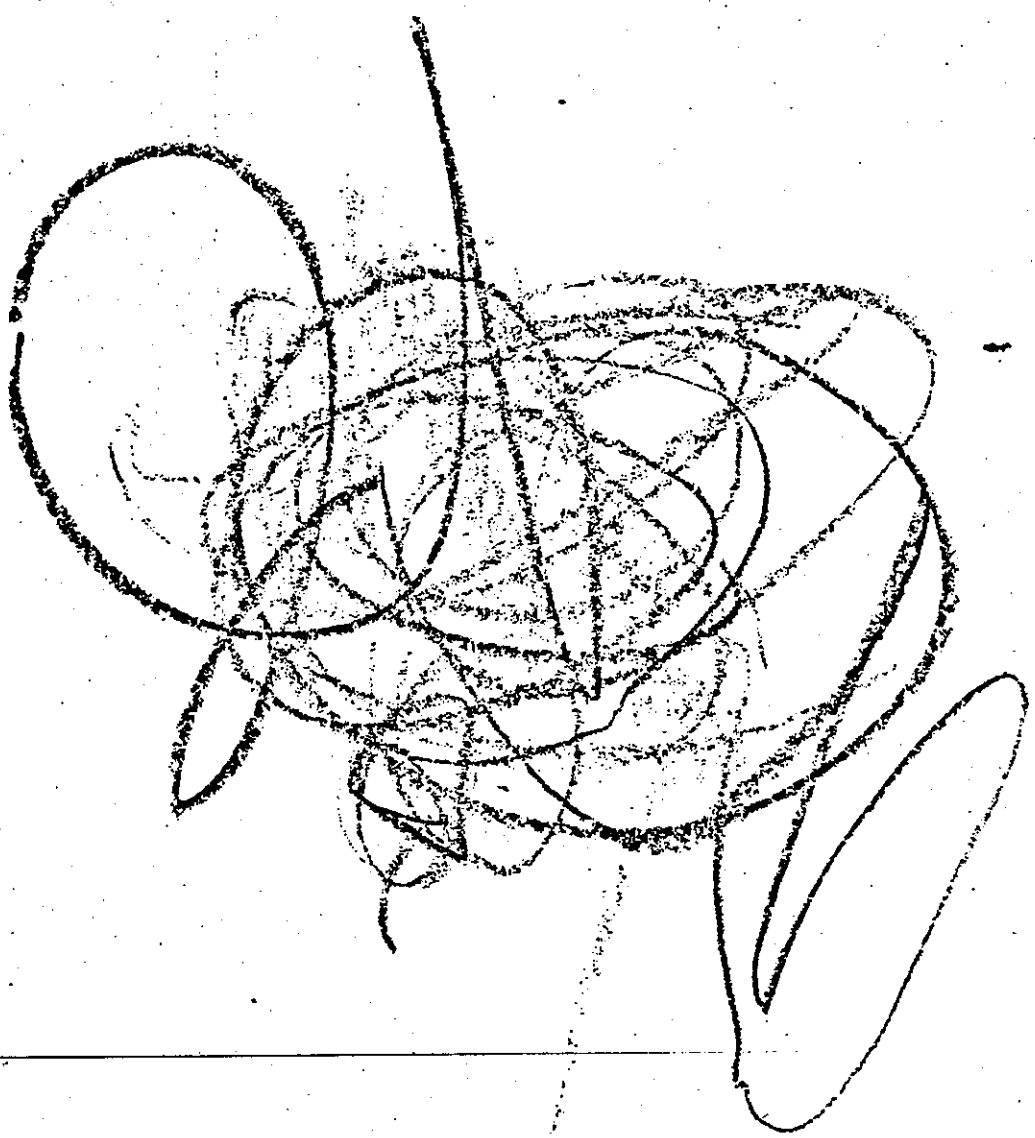
Superman came in a space ship from Cripton.

Ben

He was a super strong baby.

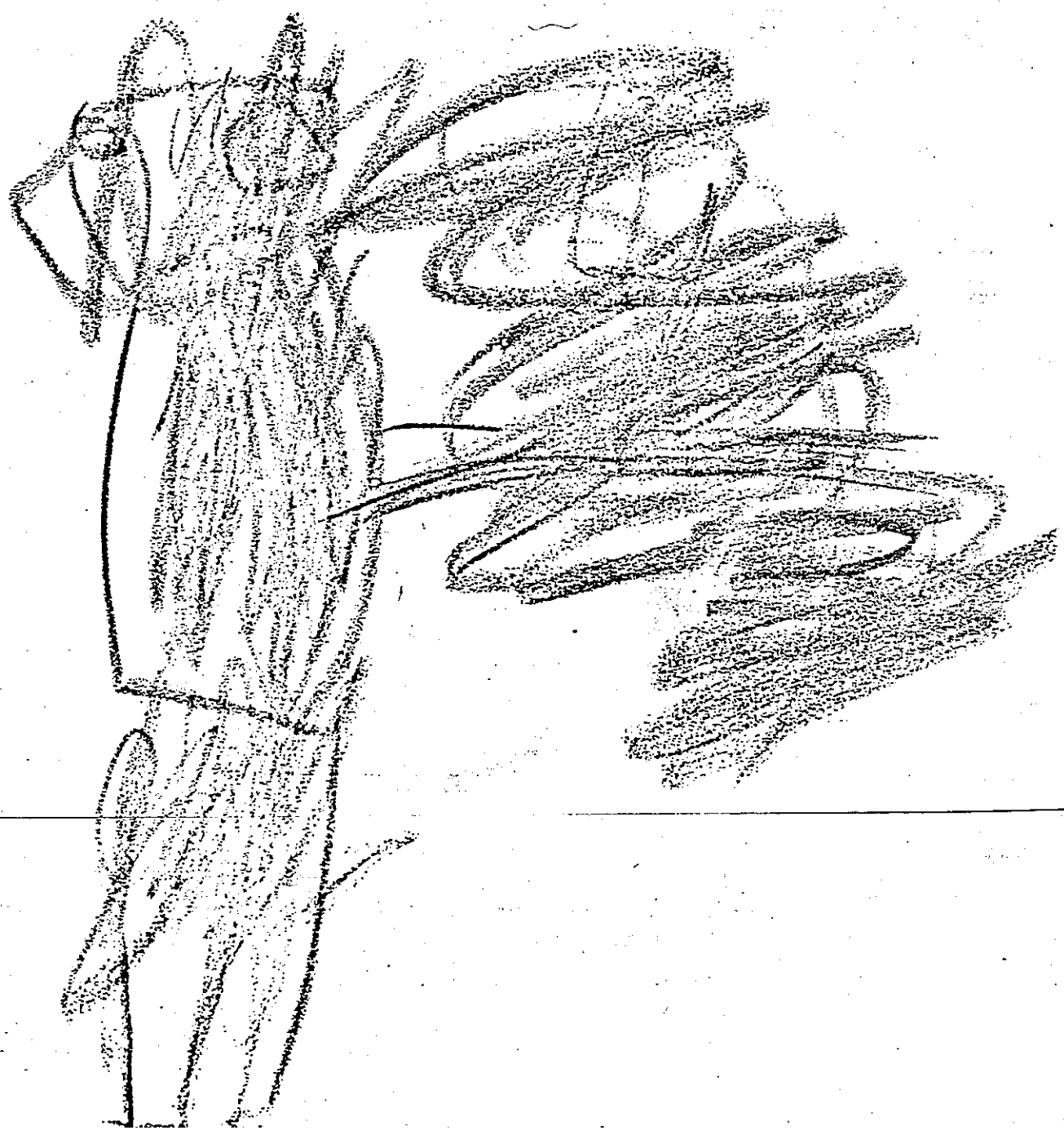
Ben

Cripton exploded.



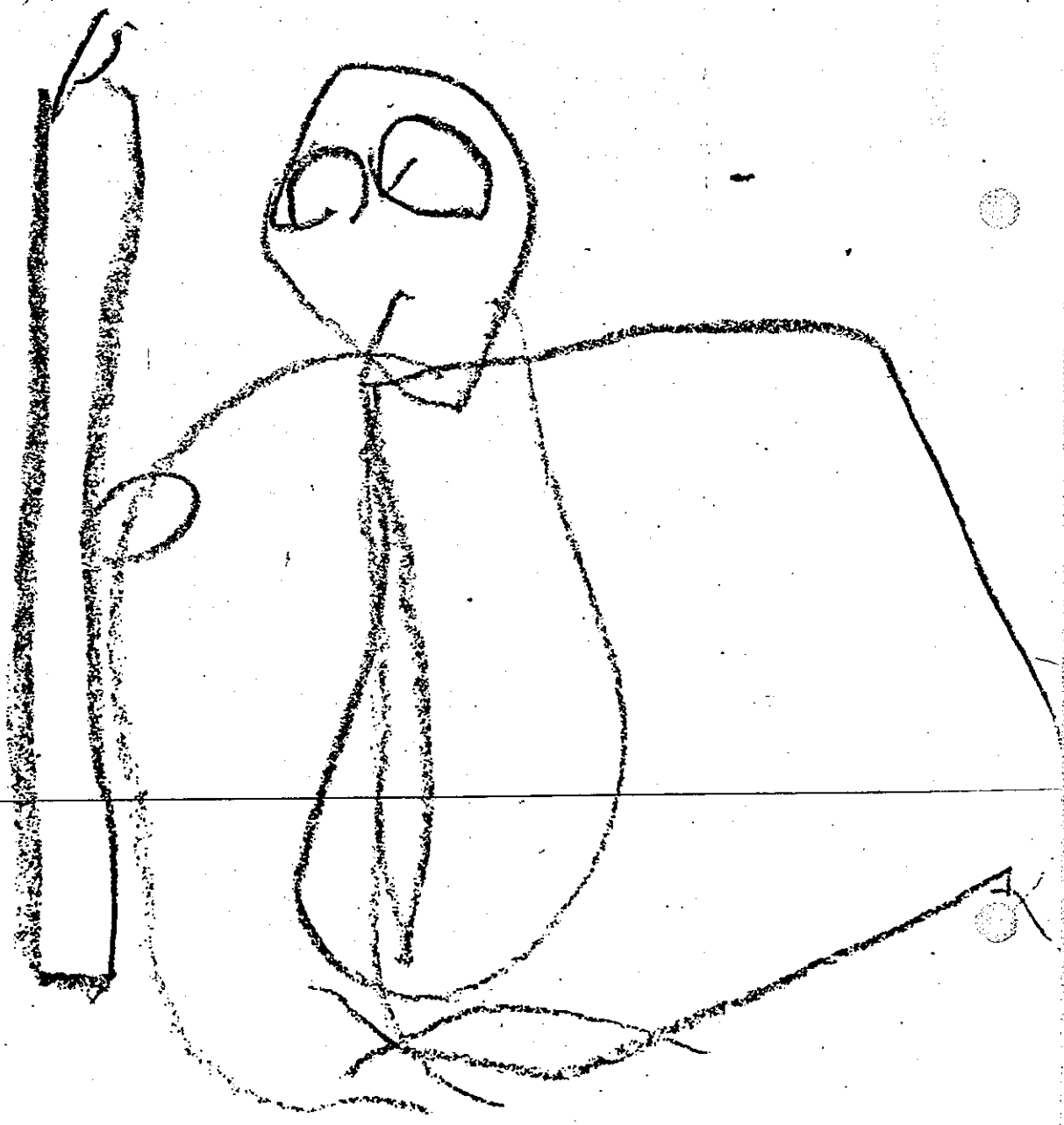
Ben

spiderman



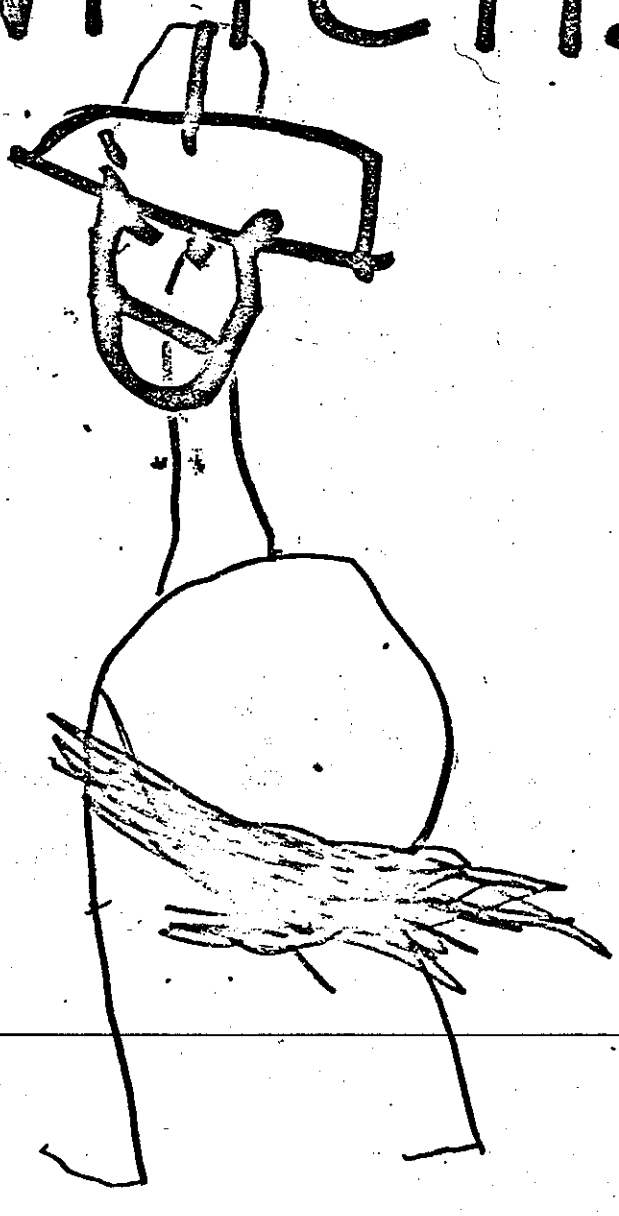
Ben

Planet Cripton exploded.

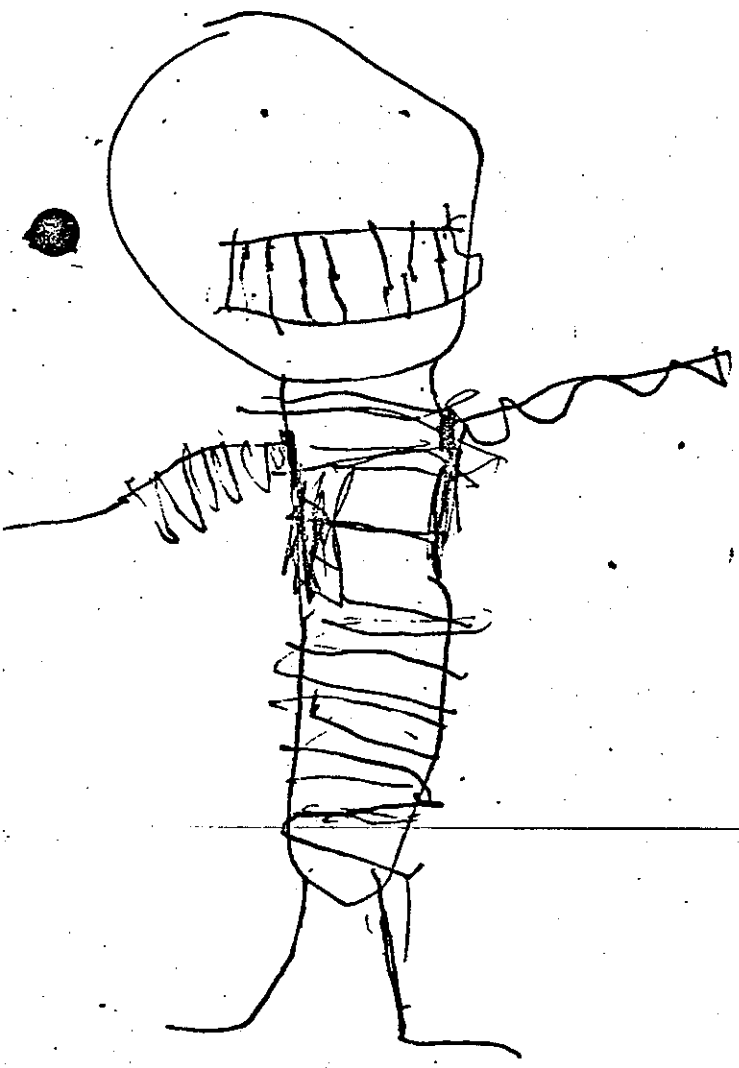


Brian

this is a witch.



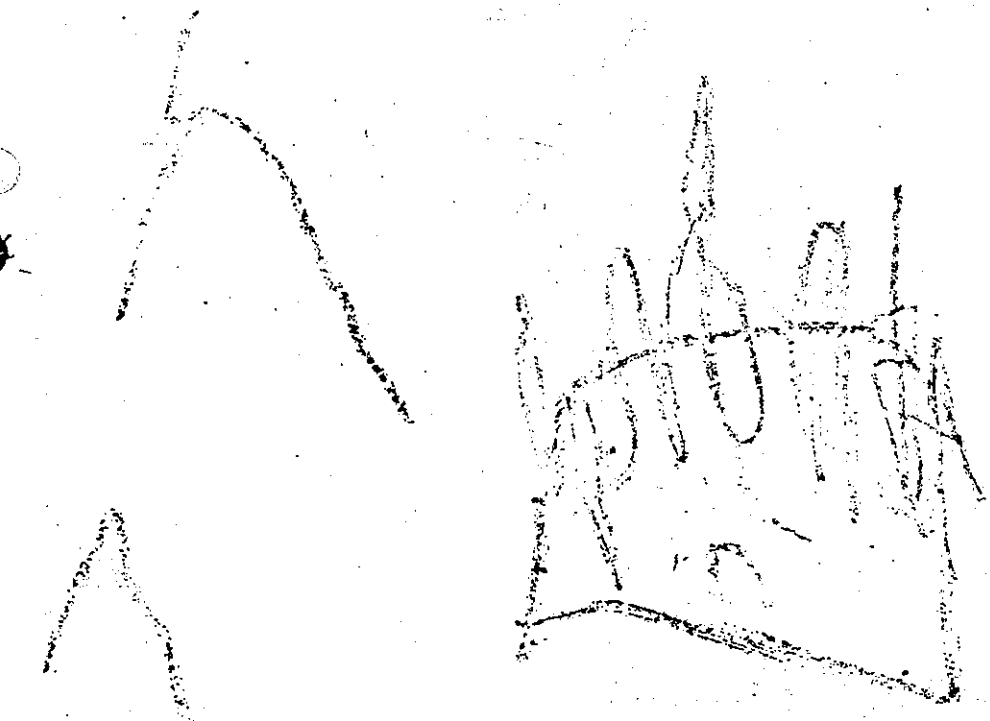
Skeleton



2

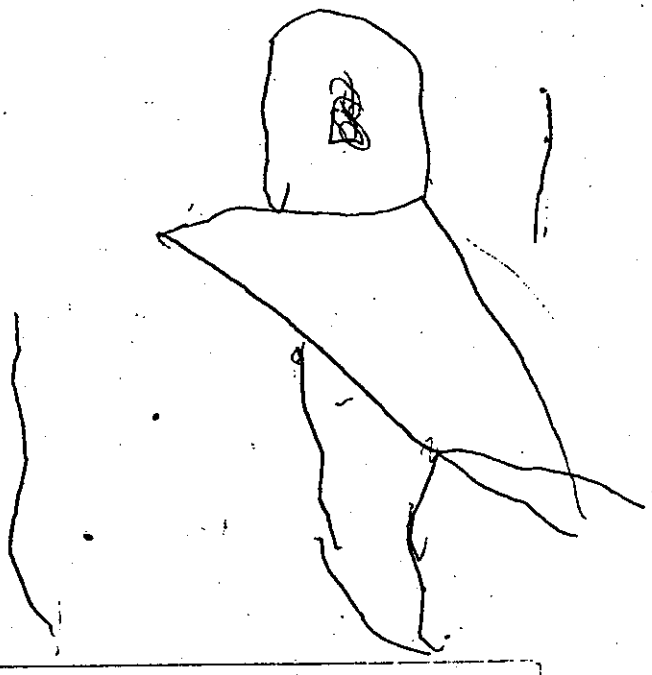
Nathan

this is a haunted house



David

MFOH



witch

David

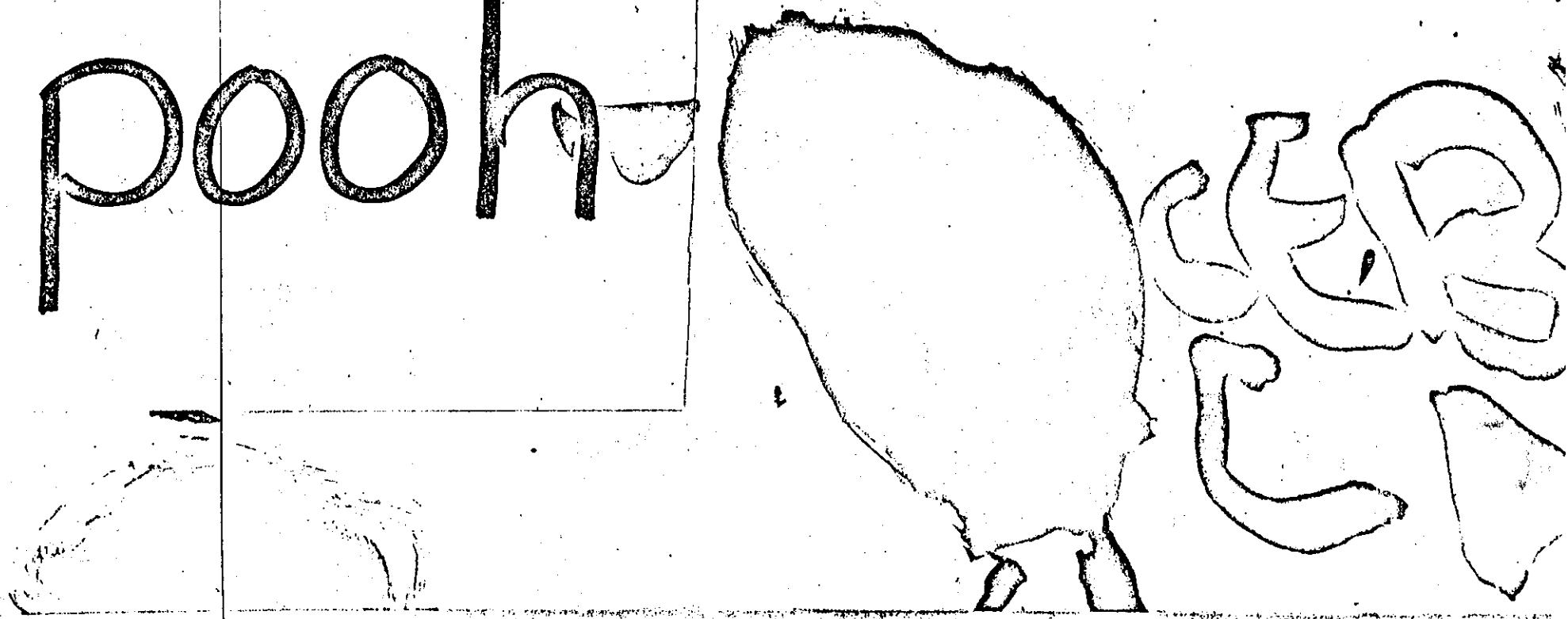
Jason

Winnie
the pooh.

Jason

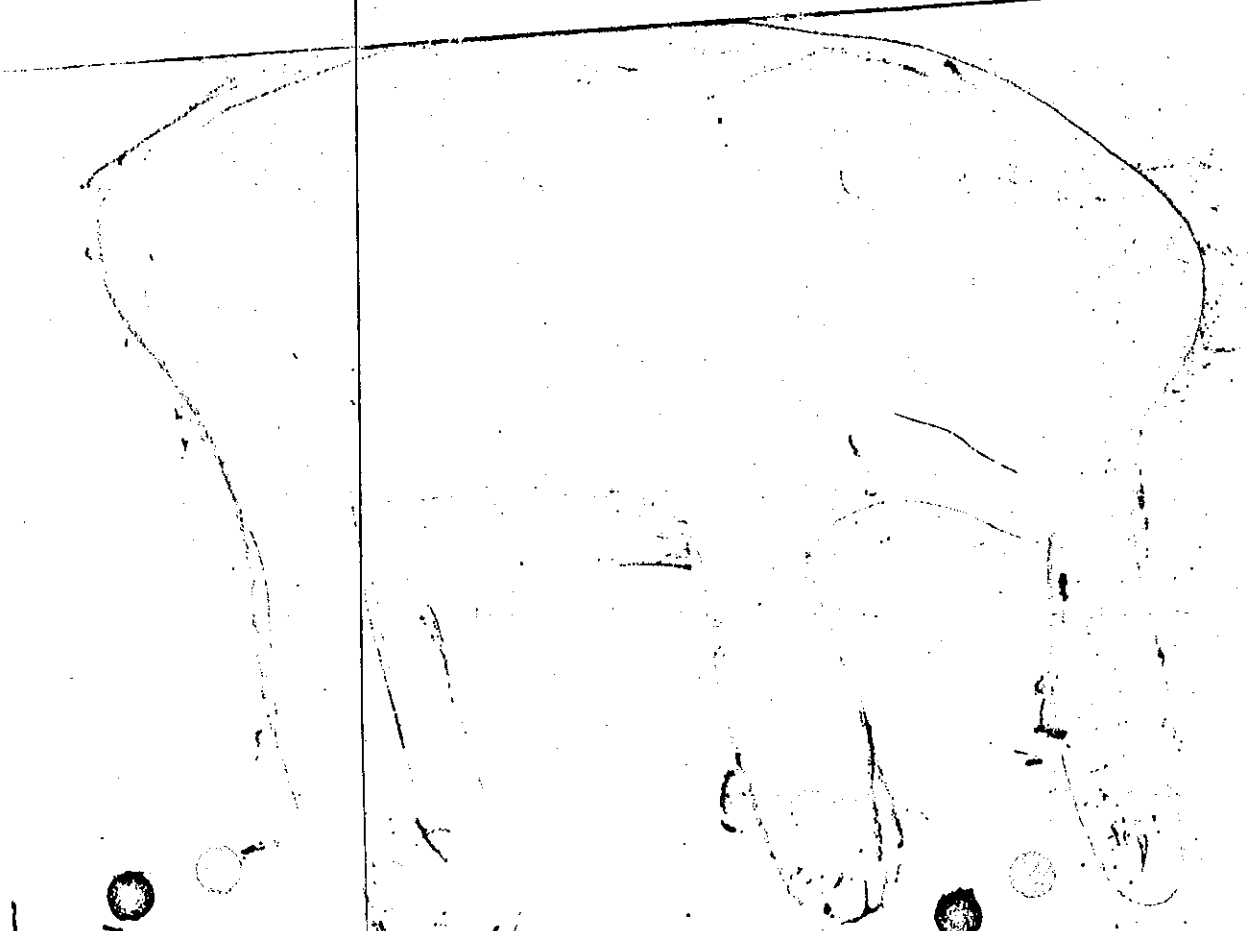
piglet.

winnie the pooh



Peter

a table



Peter

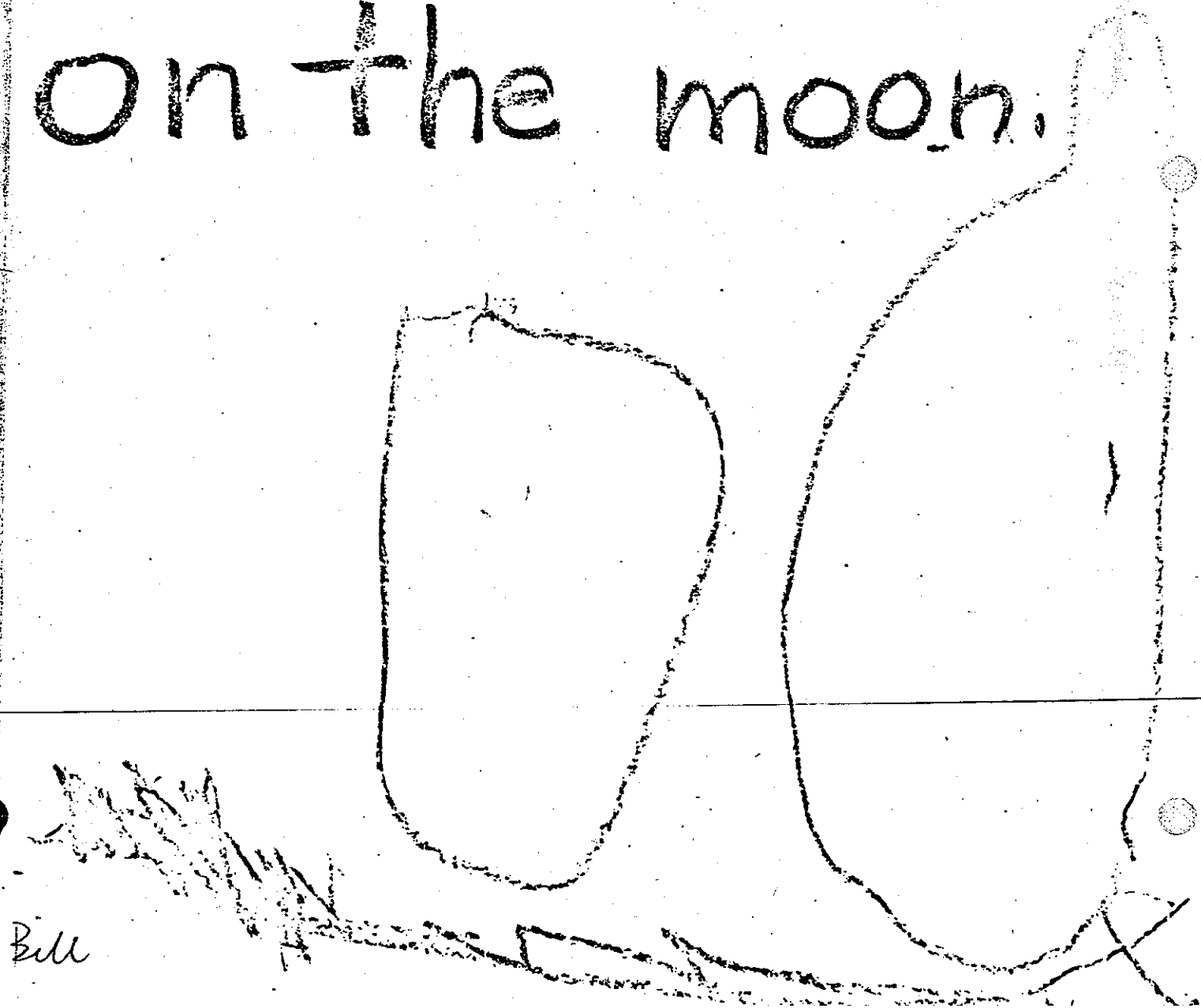
winnie the pooh

Peter

Peter

rocket

on the moon.

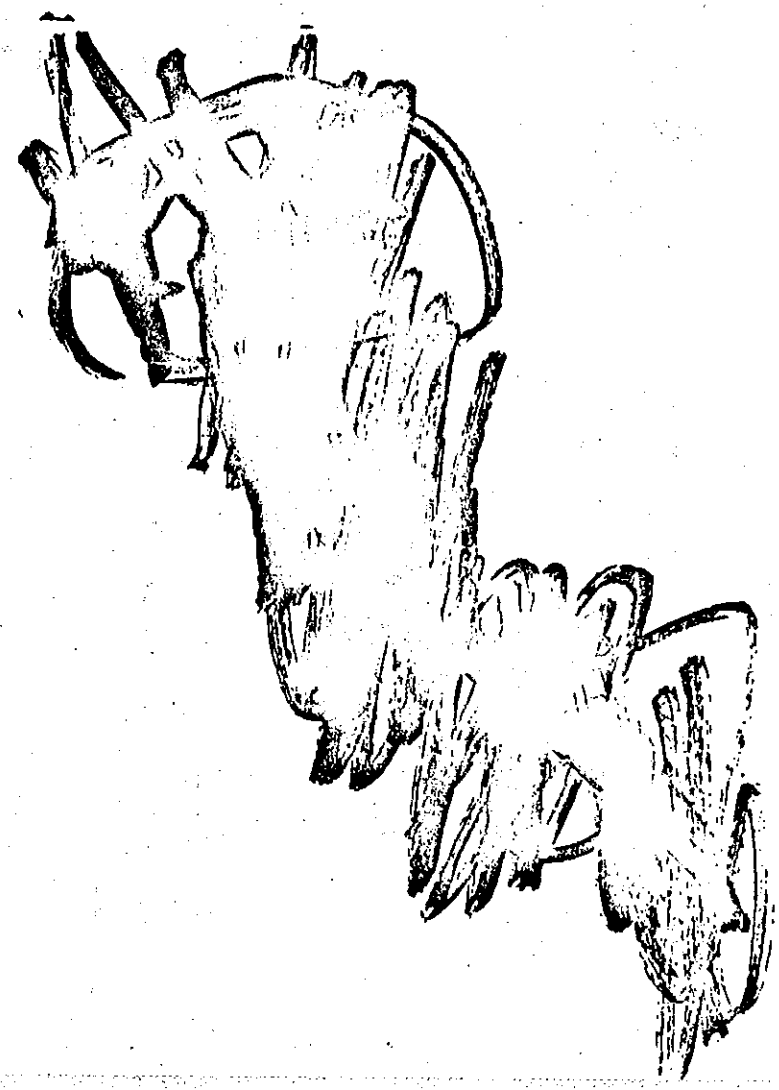


Bill

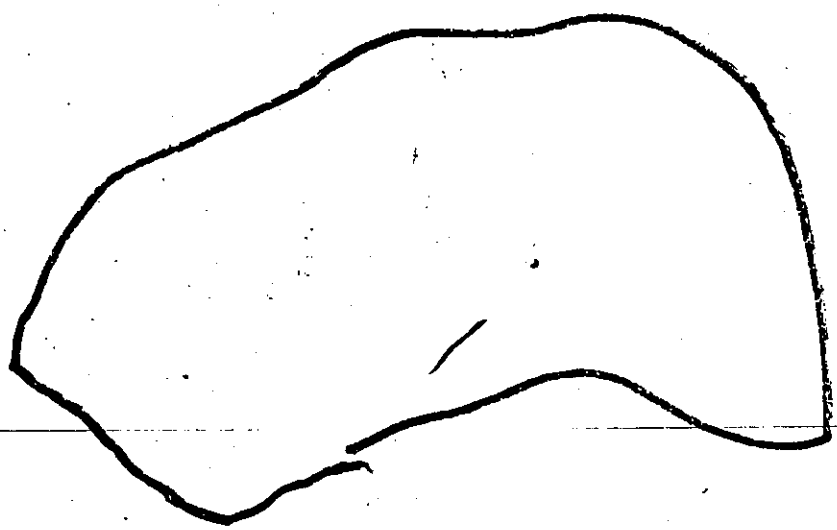
the

mean

crocodile



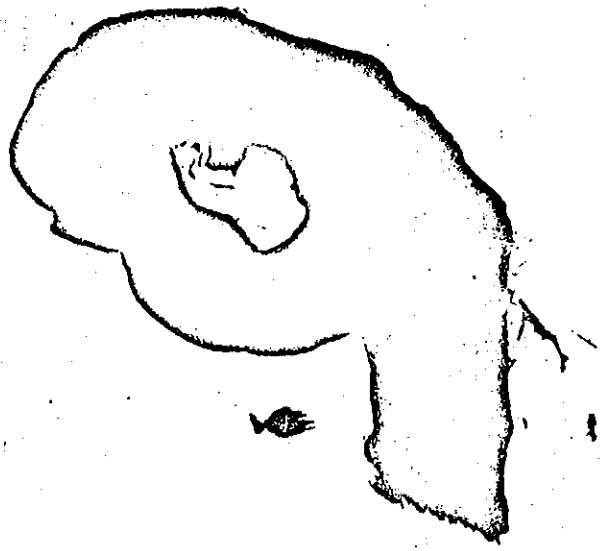
rocket

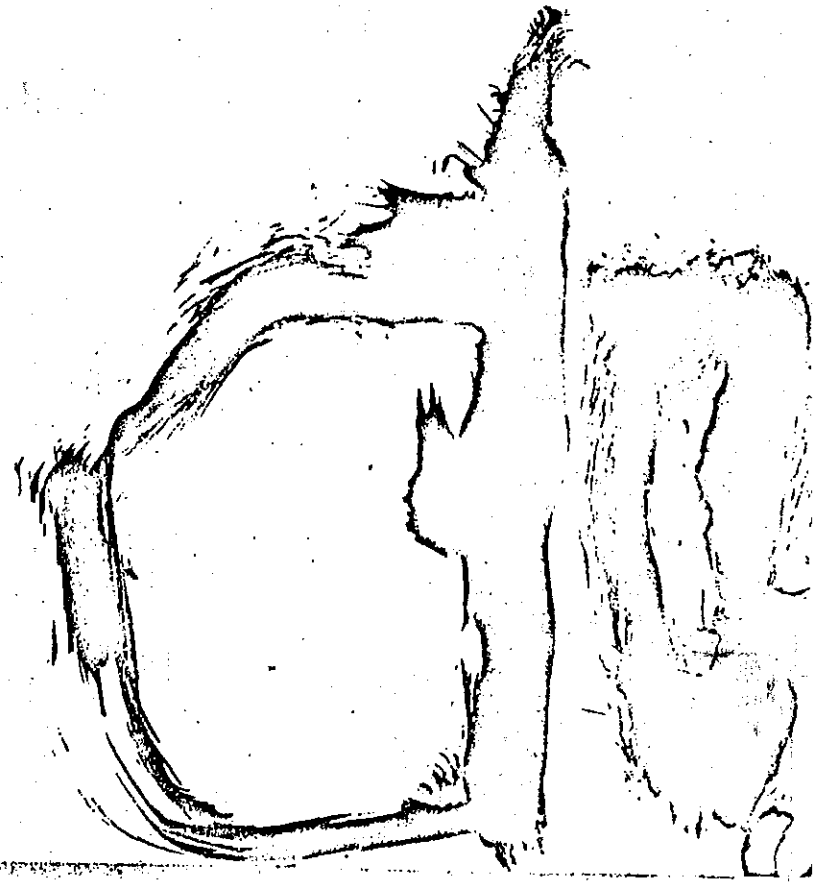


DanL.

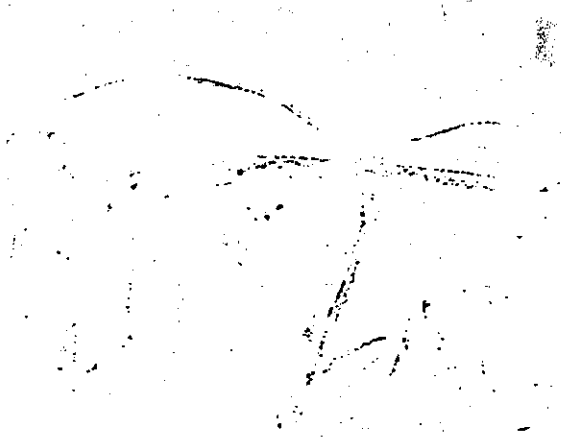
a

dog



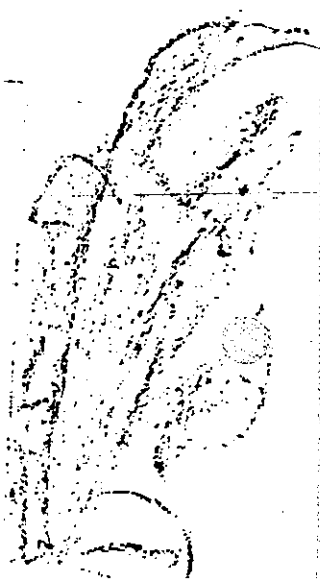


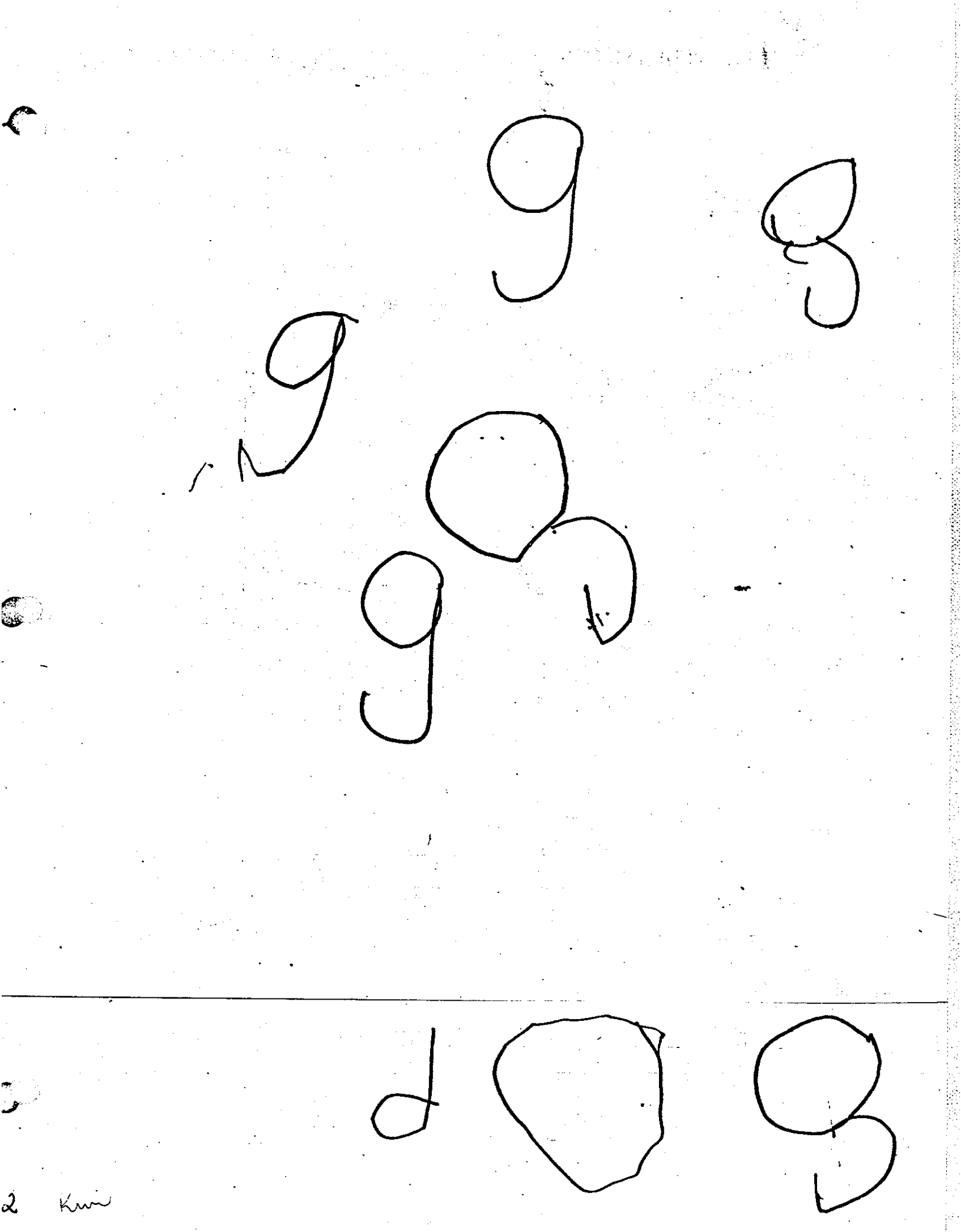
dog



dog

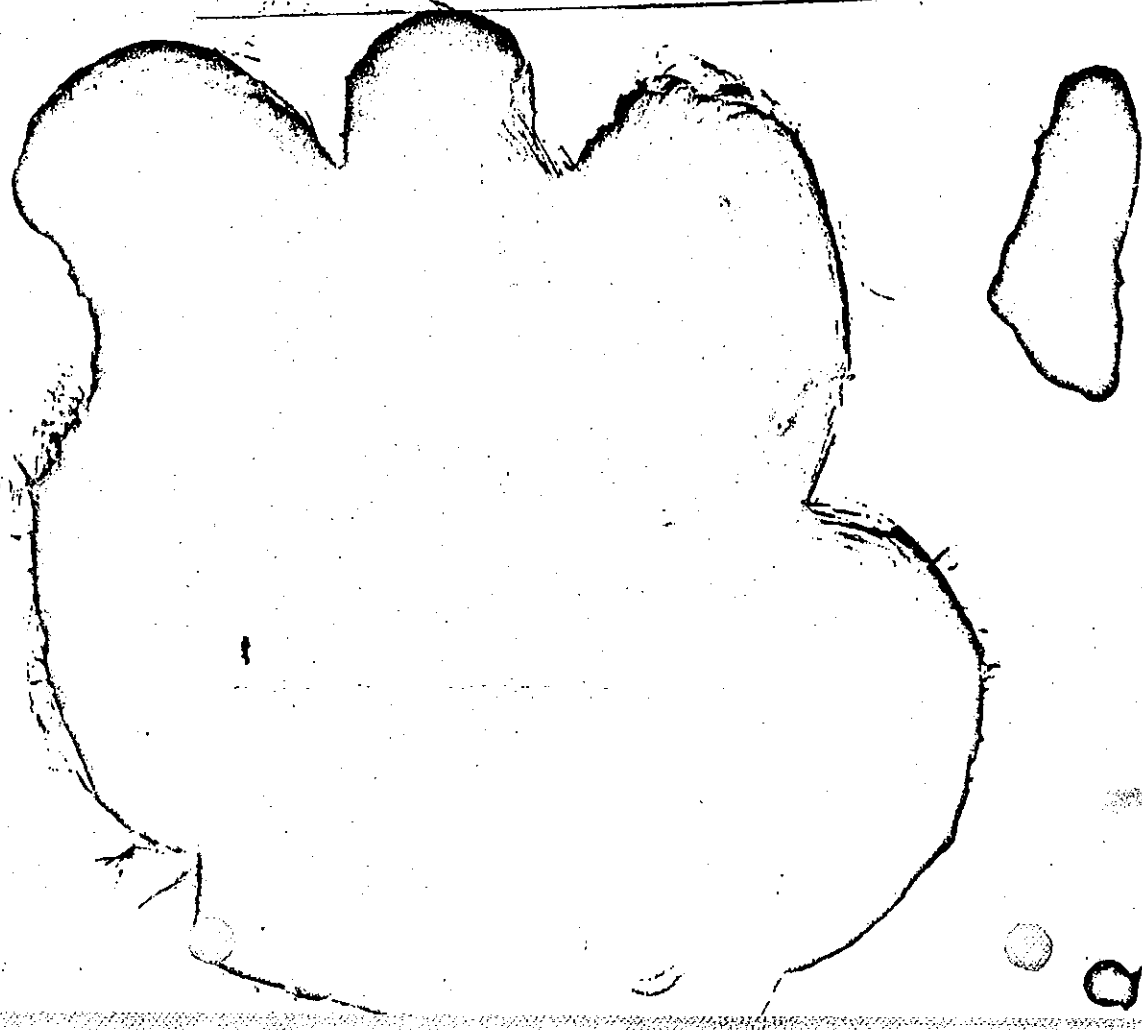
tree



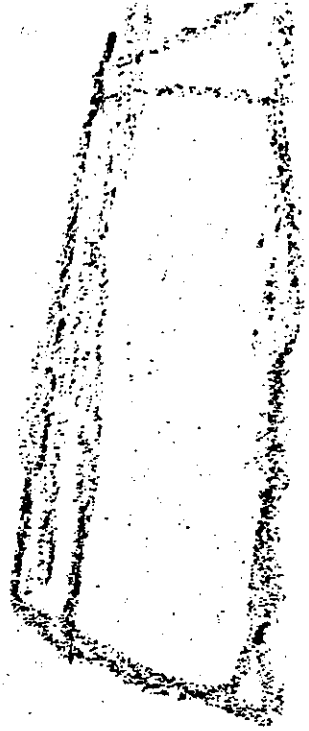


a

hand



book

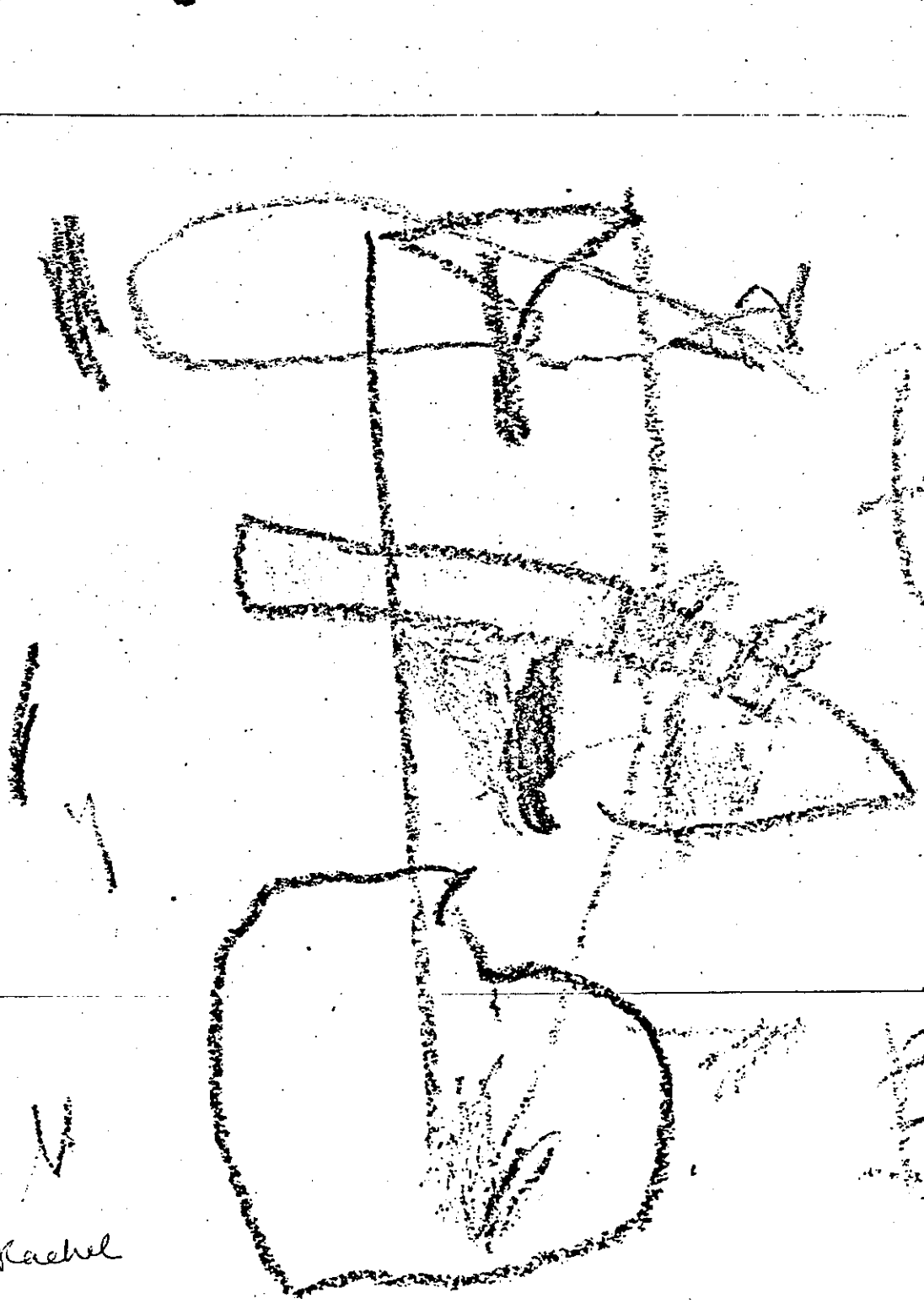


4

picture

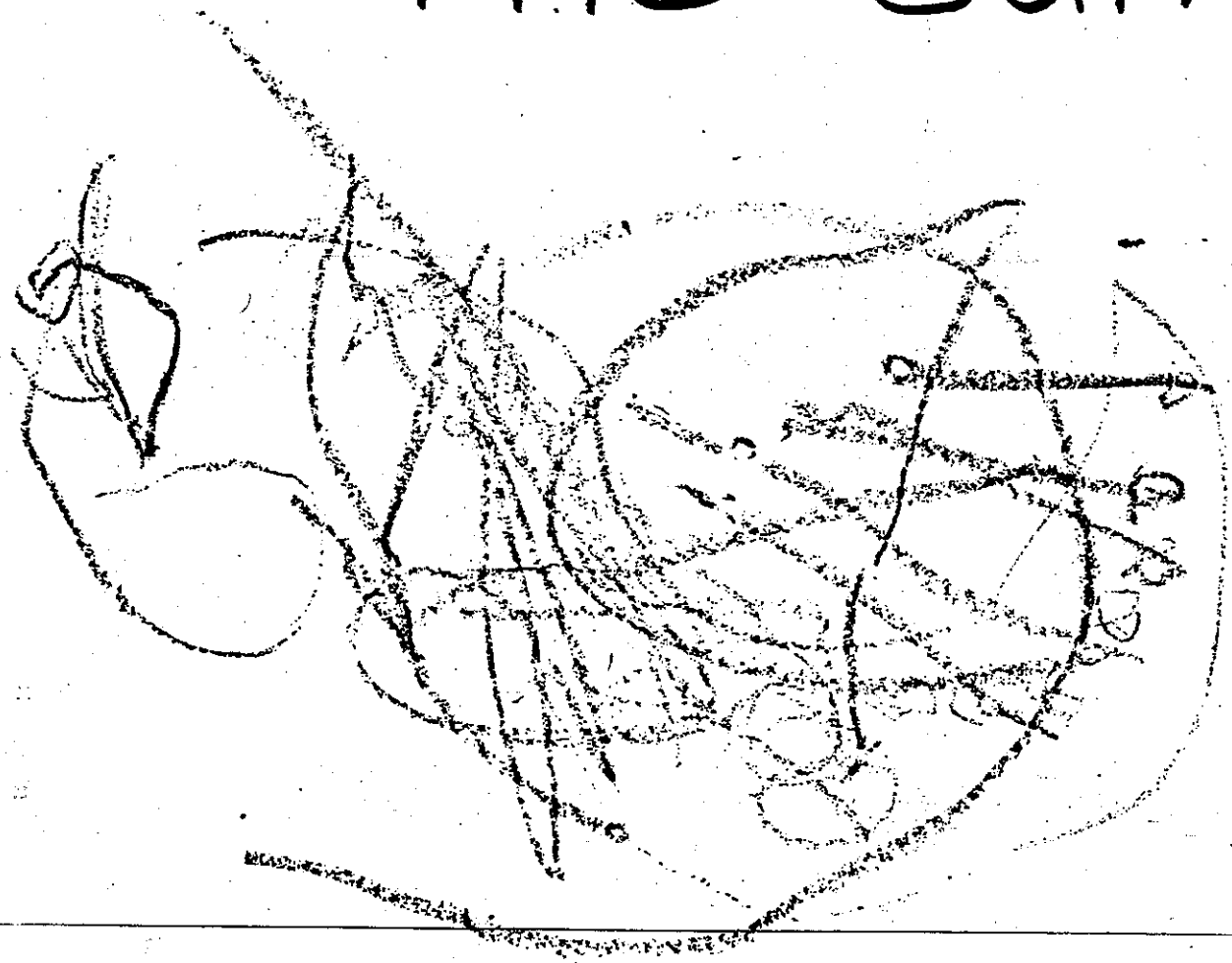
5 Kim

foot



Rachel

people are in the car.



Rachel

people are in the house.

nose.

Steph