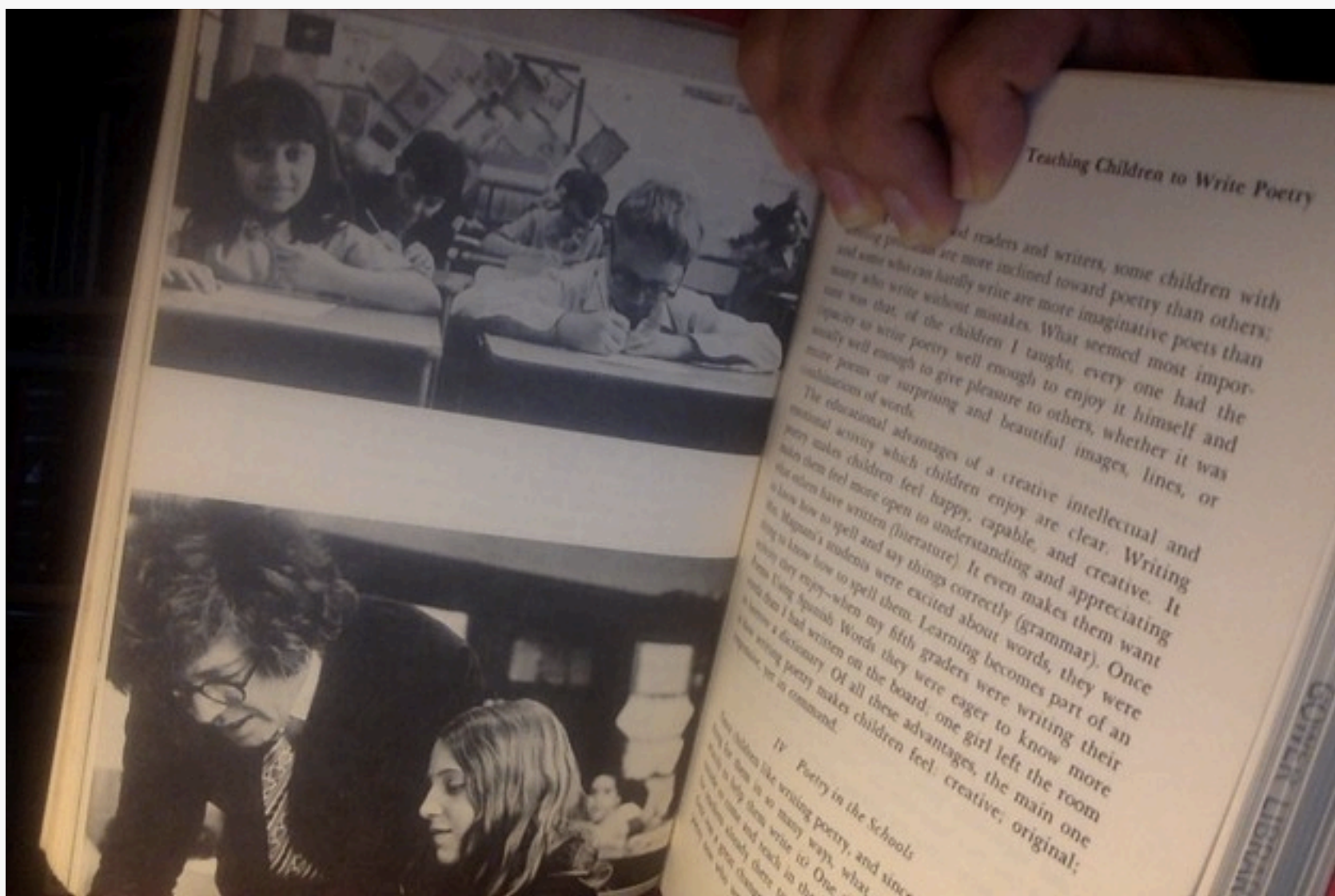


## Twenty-six items from Special Collections

## Exhibit 'T': USA children (20th and 21st centuries)

ANTHONY MADRID



**Comment:** Koch's insight into teaching children how to write poetry was that you have to give the kids some kind of structural gimmick. For example: {"I used to be [such and such] but now I'm [such and such]." Repeat. "I used to be [such and such], but now I'm [such and such]. Repeat.} Also, you have to tell the kids it's kinda better if, uh, heterogeneous ideas are yoked together by violence. (A hat made out of hat? OK. A hat made out of *bees*? Way better.) The result—judging from the anthology that comprises 5%<sup>ths</sup> of the book—is a geyser of A#1 imaginative and expressive poetry, written by people who cry when they fall off their bikes.

I was not skeptical. I, too, am a great believer in the ancient pedagogical technique known as "just do it *for* them at first." However, when I tried to use Koch's methods on my own pupils, I discovered a glitch. It wasn't that my little ones did not produce good poems; they did. It's that they didn't *care*. Koch actually mentions this. He says he could not get his students to write poetry at home. He says the classroom, with its healthy-competition and immediate-response atmosphere, seemed to be essential to his students' desire to write. This was true of my kids as well. They got off on how excited *I* was about their improvised spangablasms, but they weren't specially excited about it themselves. I had taught them to write poems—but not to *be poets*.

A different insight. Jon Anderson told us in class (University of Arizona, 1994) that if you want to help kids write good stuff, it's essential to take the pens out of their hands. Instead of making 'em

*write* (which is a ridiculously slow and interruptitive process for a beginner), you *take dictation* from them. Number one, the kids enjoy this, inherently, 'cuz it's as if they're ordering you around, and number two, their thoughts are allowed to flow freely. You still get plenty of kid logic, but the quaint, square-wheeled rhythm goes away. Anderson showed us some kind of sadle-stapled booklet (the production of which he'd been party to) with examples of what happens when you do it his way—and these were quite wonderful.

Below, I have given several of my favorites from the Koch book, as well as a couple Koched-up items from the time I was adopting the master's praxis, and finally two pieces from Anderson's booklet.

As for what it takes to make children actually become poets, I only have one insight. The crucial thing is to show them how to write things that answer *their* needs, not ours. Which probably means having to put up with miles of tasteless and alien zibzib, stuff that makes *children* pee with delight but that makes us wish we were dead.

(And is that not how we became poets ourselves?)

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**from *Wishes, Lies, and Dreams***

**Item 1 (a) & (b) :: Eduardo Diaz (5th grade) :: P.S. 61, Class 5-2 :: 7 January 1969 :: two versions**

(a)  
I go to school at 12 midnight  
I go to lunch at :900  
I go home at :1100  
My name is James Diego Jimmy tom and bill  
I was born part in Saturn part in the Moon part in pluto and a part on earth  
I walk home my friend the bee

(b)  
I fly to school at :1200 midnight  
I run to lunch at 9:00  
I go underground to go home at :1100  
My name is clownaround James Jumpingbean Diego spinnaround Jimmy and flipflop tom  
My head was born in Saturn my arms was born in the moon my legs in ploto and the rest of me was born on the earth  
My friend bee zoomed me home.

**Item 2 (a) & (b) :: Charles Conroy (5th grade) :: P.S. 61, Class 5-2 :: 20 January 1969**

**(a) accidentals regularized**

*What Shall I Chartreuse*

Oh green, yellow, orange, pink, red, black, brown,  
What shall I chartreuse today?  
I could chartreuse with brown and gold,  
Or I could red John in the nose. What could I chartreuse?  
I put a green croak in Pinky's bed. What shall I chartreuse?  
I could put a silver yeow on teacher's chair  
What shall I chartreuse?  
I could ooze the blue toothpaste in Dad's face. What shall I chartreuse?  
What could I chartreuse if I got a paint brush?  
Oh, oh, I just wasted the day on thinking on what I shall chartreuse



But I could always think of something to crown yellow tomorrow.

**(b) from the original manuscript**

*What Shall I Chatruse*

Oh green, yellow, orange, pink, red, black, brown,  
What shall I chatruese today,  
I could chatruese with brown and gold,  
or I could red John in the nose, what could  
I chatruse,  
I put a green croak in Pinky's bed, what shall  
I chatruse  
I could put a silver yeow on teachers' chair  
What shall I chatruse  
I could ozze the blue toothpaste in Dad's  
face, What shall I chatruse,  
What could I chatruse if I got a paint  
brush,  
Oh, oh, I just wasted the day on thinking on  
what I shall chatruse,  
But I could always think of something  
to Crown Yellow tommorow.

**Item 3 :: Collaboration between Two Students :: Questions by Vivien Tuft; Answers by Fontessa Moore (both 4th grade)**

What's inside the moon?  
There's hot water inside.  
What's the sky made of?  
It was made of white snow.  
If you cut the sun open what would you see?  
Terrible looking enemies.  
When you write you look at your words have you thought of  
cutting open a letter to see what's inside?  
No. But if a person was crazy the answer would be yes.  
What's inside colors?  
There's pink stars.  
Where is the end of the universe?  
In back of the swimming pools.  
How old is adventure?  
It is 60,000 years old.  
Which color is older, black or white?  
Black because you can outline me.

**Item 4 :: Socorrito Caballero (4th grade)**

*New York City*

New York, N.Y. is a busy city  
You have to run to catch your show  
You walk the black cat's eyes

You breathe the pollutioned air  
You catch a bouncing bus  
You bounce all the way home  
You open the cat's eyelid with your key.  
You walk inside the cat's tail.  
You catch a house  
In your hand and swallow it down.  
I hate New York and every book  
Because when you open a book,  
Here it is you catch the world and  
Roar, Roar, Roar and Roar

**from when I was first working at A+ Tutoring Service Corporation**

**Tara Lanigan (aged 9), two pieces ("Descriptive" + "Eight Years of Sleep") :: Chicago, 2005.**

English :: Descriptive :: Tara Lanigan :: February 17, 2005

As I was walking past the Candy Store I stopped. I went in to the chocalate ile. I asked if I could by it? I did. It was my favorite piece of candy.

The candy was on the third shelf. It had small words. It had informaition. There was a phone number. The colors were brown silver and red. The shape was rectangle. It had foil over it.

This is what it felt like. It was rough. It was so hard It was pointy. Yes it was thick. It was breakable.

It smelled like this. It smelled tasty. It smelled like sugar. It smelled sweet. Oh, it smelled deliouse.

It sounded like this. Like the ocean. Like a rapper. It sounded hard. It tasted like this. Like milk.

Yes chocalate. Yes it tasted sucky. Oh, ya it tasted sticky.

After eating that excellent chocalate I can't wait again. I can't to have another brown, silver, and red foiled again. It was a Hersey.

Eight Years of Sleep :: Tara Lanigan :: April 15, 2005

Once upon a time a Red Bird who was Lauren and a blue bird who was Elena were off on a picnic. Lauren and Elena were flying and talking in the forest. When they met two chicks one of the chicks name was Emma and the other chicks name was Hannah. Hannah always talked to strangers. Emma always ate pie. They also met two bears one of the bears name was Annie and the other one was Emily. Nell and Liz were both princesses. They didn't drive or walk they flew on there wings. Caroline, Meredith, Katie, Christine, and Morgan are dogs. They like to say Moook!

One day everyone met and played Kickball. After the day was over they went to bed and slept for eight years strat. And they lived happiley ever after

THE END

**Erica Camacho (age 7), ["Today at night . . ."] and ["Today I am going on a picnic . . ."], 2004.**

Today at night I saw baby bunny's at the park. They were so small. And then we went back to the park the next day and we saw them in the morening and my dad saw them to. And they were funny and then we whent to the feed store and I saw bunny's and chiks. I was going to by a bunny but my dad sed no but he is going to think about it. I think bunny's are funny and furry. And I think the chiks are small and fuzzy. And then I bought a big bone and bunny food and I got to pet the bunny. The

bunny was soft. And then we went home and I told my dad and he sed maybe you can have a bunny.  
And I said okay and I went on the computer and I saw the bunny's.

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Today I am going on a picnic. And I like walking around and I found a path. So I said "Can I see where the path goes?" and I asked my mom and dad and they said ok. And I went and I saw a river and my mom said "Erica there are baby fish in the river." So I said cool and I got a cup. My mom said you are never going to catch a fish but I did catch a fish. And my mom was very happy for me and I was happy for me too. And then I went to the beach for like an hour.

**from Jon Anderson’s booklet**

**Raquel, age 8, [untitled]; Kevin & Christan, both 11, "The Horse" :: Tucson, Arizona, circa 1990.**

**[untitled] by Raquel (8)**

A toad. I would turn my sister  
into a horny toad. I will take a big  
big big cheese and put it inside a pot  
and my sister will eat it all  
and become a horny toad!

Then I pick her up in my hand,  
I put her in a pot full of hot tar.  
I shake pepper in there and she starts  
to sneeze, she sneezes and sneezes  
then slowly she sinks into the tar  
and I giggle like this  
heh heh heh heh  
and she sinks sinks sinks sinks down  
and she goes into the little  
hole at the bottom of the pot  
and through the hole in the floor  
into the big fire under the floor;  
and then spiders,  
and then bats,  
and then big gigantic flies  
eat her  
and the flies go in her tummy,  
and she's crying help help help  
but she's inside the fly!  
And the fly comes up out of the hole  
and I am waiting, I catch the fly  
and put him in the tar  
and I do it all over again to the fly  
with my sister in it.

**"The Horse" by Kevin and Christan (both 11)**

He'd be black.

He'd be blue.  
And I'd ride him  
to New York, to see snow again, or to  
Australia, to see all there is to see, everything  
green and lots of trees  
and nobody would know, just me  
and the horse.

The horse can find our family a house.  
He can turn into trees, lakes, pools  
and camouflage himself from people. He can talk.  
I'd tell him secrets about love,  
then have him do my homework.  
The horse can do the chores.

And he could be us! Take over  
when I get in trouble—when I want to  
go on a date, the horse stays home  
looking like me, doing homework.

The horse can do everything first  
then show me how, I'd learn  
to gallop,  
to be an animal, a deer, perhaps,  
and how that felt. I'd live in the forest  
and drink from the stream  
and speak to animals that knew how to hibernate,  
I'd ask about the trouble they'd had  
and warn them about hunters.  
And the horse would be at school  
and come home all sweaty.

Over the forest I'd fly, looking for food  
and love, looking for the falls in the forest,  
half person, half horse, doing  
more than we ever do!

Till the magic went out. Slowly  
slowly I am becoming a horse, I will be  
a horse all my life, I used too much magic,  
went too many places, did too many things . . .  
I am becoming a horse, the horse is becoming me,  
he is forgetting he was the horse. In the little  
door of his mind he thinks of  
his past of animals, he feels a little bad,  
but there's a whole new life ahead for him,  
and I am becoming a wild horse, running  
with wild horses, traveling the world.

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*February 24, 2016*

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