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FREEDOM TO MOVE.

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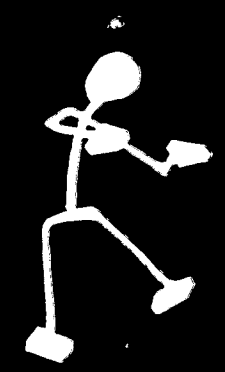
PLAY WHICH INVOLVES NATURAL MOVEMENT HELPS THE CHILD TO LEARN ABOUT THE PROPERTIES OF MATTER AND ABOUT HIMSELF. AN EXPANSIVE AND VERSATILE USE OF SPACE FOR LIVING INCREASES WITH EXPLORATION. FREEDOM TO MOVE IS INTELLECTUAL AND EMOTIONAL, AS WELL AS PHYSICAL. NEW EXPERIENCES ARISING OUT OF CURIOSITY AND INTERACTION WITH HIS OWN FAMILY AND OTHER CHILDREN HELP THE CHILD TO SORT OUT HIS FEELINGS AND RESPONSES. THEREFORE, THE CHILD NEEDS TO LEARN ABOUT THE POTENTIAL USES OF DIFFERENT PARTS OF HIS BODY THROUGH IMITATIVE MOVEMENT (OF TRAINS MOVING, BIRDS FLYING, ETC.) AND DRAMATIC PLAY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE THAT CHILDREN WILL PACE THEMSELVES IN ALTERNATING PERIODS OF MOVEMENT AND REST, IF THEIR ENVIRONMENT IS NOT TOO STRUCTURED. IN A SCHOOLROOM SITUATION CHILDREN CAN CONTROL SOME PHYSICAL MOTION WHEN THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE SOCIALLY AND ARE EXPERIENCING REWARDING MENTAL ACTIVITY. TOO RIGID A SCHEDULE OR TOO MUCH TIME PRESSURE CAN INHIBIT A CHILD'S REACTIONS AND ACTUALLY HOLD UP LEARNING. THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE FOR $0.85 FROM NEA, 1201 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036. (MS)

FREEDOM TO FREEDOM TO MOVE



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FREE

by Ferne Shipley and Ethelouise Carpenter

National Education Association
Department of Elementary-Kindergarten-
Nursery Education

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FOREWORD

This attractively illustrated bulletin presents childhood as a time for moving out into experience and exploration. Examples of natural movement are used to suggest, to parents and teachers, ways of living comfortably and creatively with children.

Recognizing the need for continuity and the changing needs and interests of children at various stages of maturity, the authors do not limit their treatment of the subject to one age level. It is widely accepted that the very young child cannot sit quietly, that it is only natural for the four- to six-year-old to wiggle and squirm. Less sympathy is extended to the older child. But through freedom to move, the preadolescent, too, learns a social comfort, and he then can accept physical controls as essential to attain certain goals.

The Department of Elementary-Kindergarten-Nursery Education is very grateful to Ferne Shipley and Ethelouise Carpenter of Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, for writing this fascinating bulletin and thus sharing with us their experiences in freeing children to move.

Lulu Palmer, President

Department of Elementary-
Kindergarten-Nursery Education
National Education Association

PART I

Today's child lives what is

Today's child lives in a world that is shifting in many directions. Changes in the structure of present-day society have resulted in changes in the patterns of family living. The surroundings that formerly provided guidelines lack stability.

It is likely that the family, during the child's experience in the elementary school, has moved one time or more to another city or state. The child lives in a small house or apartment in an overcrowded neighborhood, with limited space for his belongings and treasures, and even less space for active, vigorous movement and play. Possibly he is really on his own much of the day, assigned to the care of a babysitter, a relative, or an older sibling, with both parents going to dissimilar jobs in distant parts of the city. Or the child may be one of many who live with one parent only: illness, death, work assignments, armed-service duty, and divorce separate many families for prolonged periods of time.

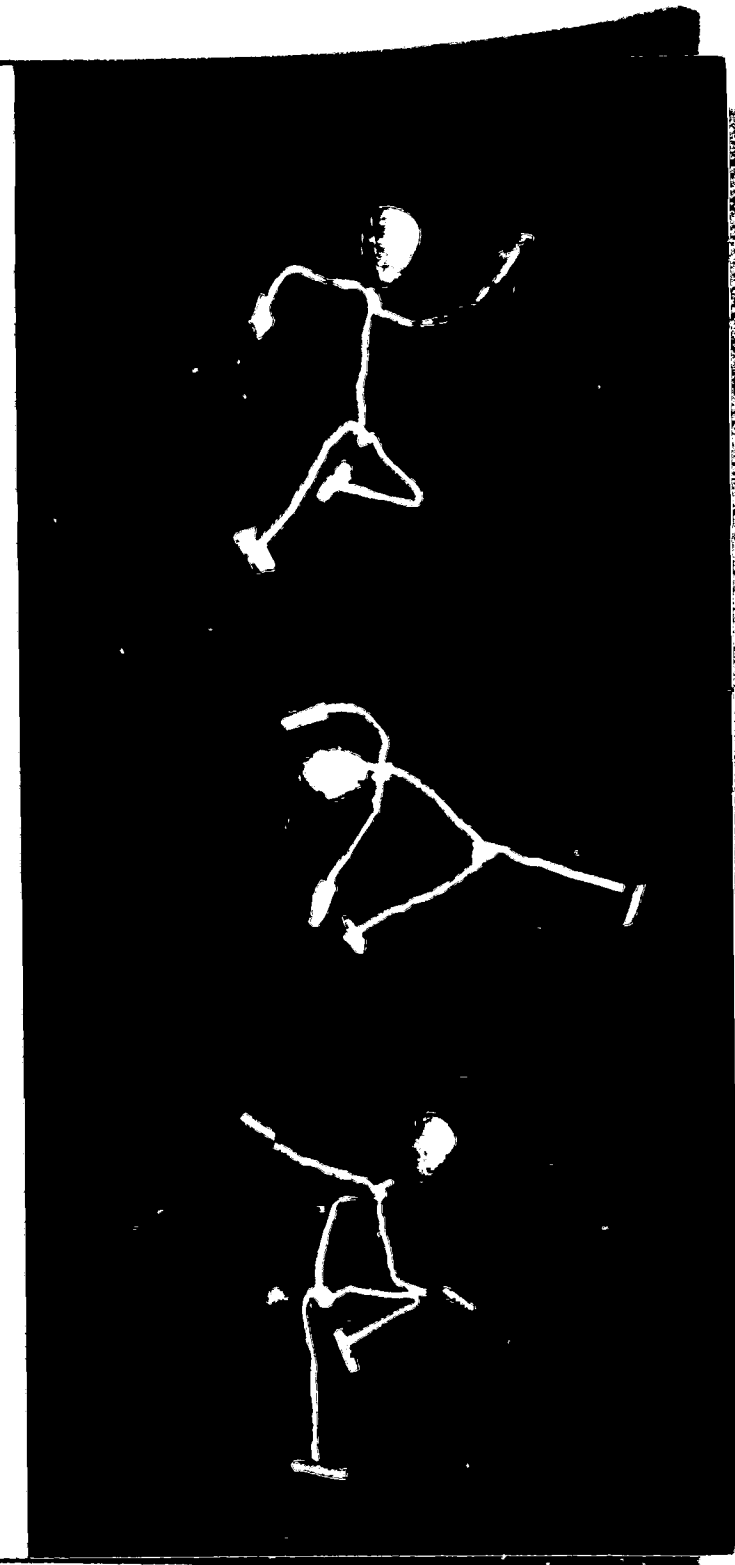
Today's child has acquired considerable diversified, and often confusing, information; people in his immediate world, as well as those in television and radio, the movies, and picture magazines, have bombarded him with an amazing conglomeration of ideas. And yet few adults have had sufficient time to help the developing child sort out facts, internalize learnings, and understand how child and adult may serve each other.

Any combination of changes in the world provides freedom and/or restrictions for satisfying needs of human growth. The pressures of present-day living add new frustrations which

frequently baffle and thwart the child at this period of growing awareness of the total environment.

On entering school at the age of five or six years, the beginner brings with him his interpretation of school as he has received it from all those of his world who have gone before him. He expects, he fears, he desires, he wants, he hopes. He needs space and time and materials. Space is paramount: without it the child is restricted and inhibited; his creativity is confined and limited. Without a reasonable and flexible amount of time over which he has some control, a growing child is thwarted and discouraged. His drives find outlets which do not serve him in normally wholesome and socially approved ways. Without some materials, even those of his own discovery, he tends to find less purpose and reason for developing physically, mentally, and socially.

A child needs parents and a teacher who can give guidance and who will provide the climate and the materials of a stimulating permissive



environment where he can move in his own way toward his self-development and fulfillment.

Movement Is a Fundamental Need

Every human being has need for bodily movement of many kinds. He needs to move or change his position to rest, relax, to get to a more interesting and exciting place, and to learn skills. He needs to move for his own safety and to enjoy the activity of peers and family. He needs to move to satisfy inner feelings and desires and to develop individual talents. The physical body must be developed into a healthy, alert, active machine—controlled to a moderate degree.

All movement serves in one way or another, a single movement often serving several purposes. For example, a child moves to meet his mother, who has been shopping. He greets her with a big hug and smile, or with a comment, "What did you get for me?" or with a tale about what happened while she was gone. His movement is regulated in part by the motivation he feels and his perception of existing relationships. He gets there as fast as he can, or he walks cautiously toward his mother, or he moves away from what he is doing and waits for her reaction. Each of his movements is serving a purpose.

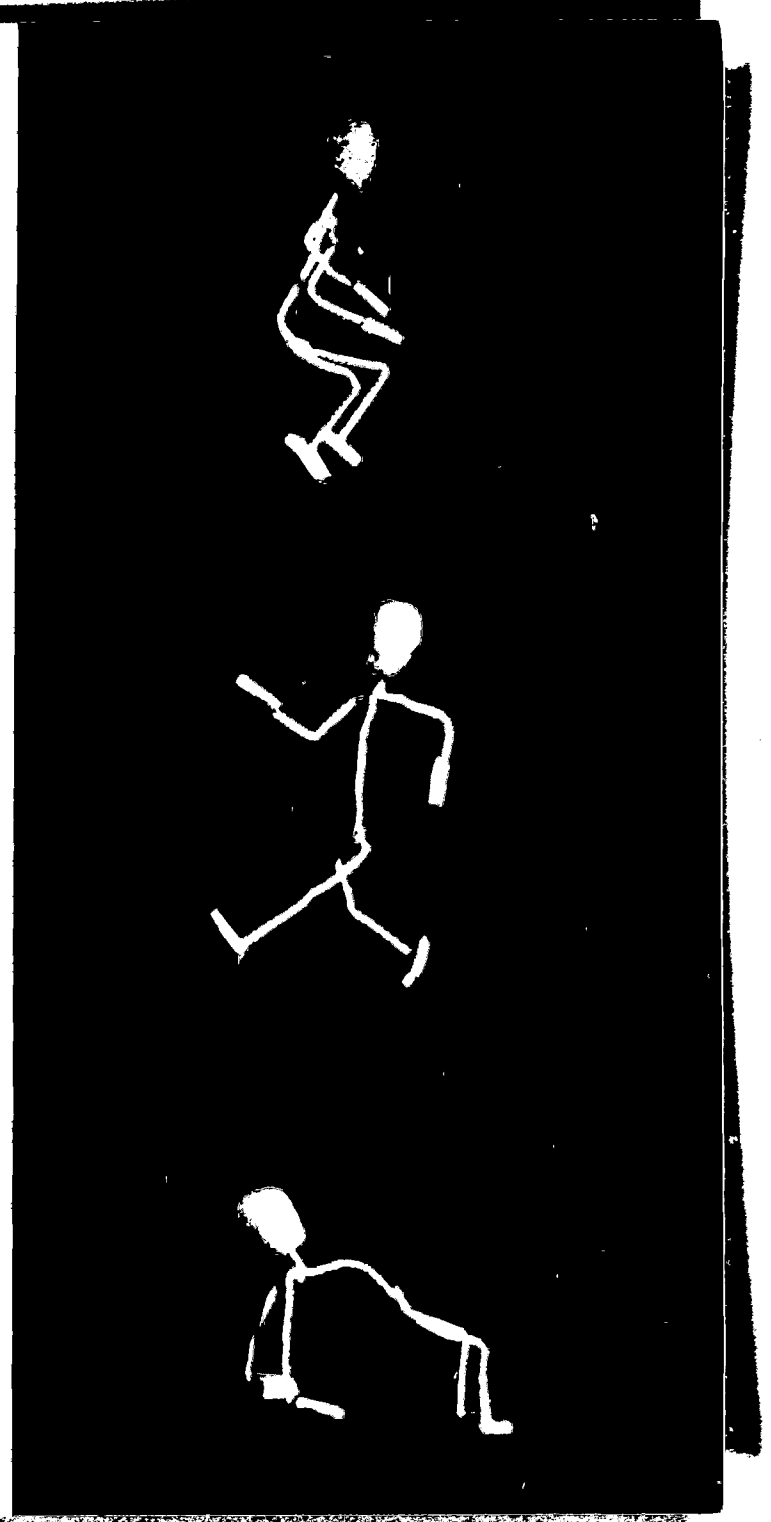
Movement after quiet concentration is inevitable. The child moves to release his tension and finds the change and relief he desires. He leaves one spot for the space more suitable to his next activity. He may go from a highly structured situation to one organized for another purpose. Thus, in his movement he reflects his understanding of directions and his attitudes toward them. He may run, walk, skip, shuffle, or dance in his own way. Or he may follow, as he wishes and is able, the instructions given to him.

The desires of children for specific skills, such as ice skating, bike riding, and swimming, stimulate purposeful movement and practice and help them progress toward higher levels of coordination and body control.

The task of realizing his needs for bodily

movement is often made difficult for the child because those who work with him — parents and teachers—tend to move him about for their own convenience. He is confined to a small play area at home. He is taken to school in the family car, or he rides the crowded school bus. He is very often a spectator as he waits in a line or in a circle to have a turn in a game supervised by the teacher.

He wiggles and squirms through many tedious lessons because he is usually not allowed to leave his seat; he must sit, listen, and watch. Too often, he simply has too little activity or movement to stimulate good body functioning and normal imaginative thinking and doing. Learning in such a climate has less purpose and meaning; creative thinking and behaving are not fostered. Children become passive, negative, explosive, or defensive.



PART II

Play is child's work

The individual child at play is a whole person engaged in taking from his environment what he needs and desires, internalizing these elements, and changing himself and his perceptions of his world in the process. He is a busy, active person. He is not consciously concerned with the fact that there is any division or separation of the functions of play in his life. However, observations of any child at play point to the fact that play is serving more than one purpose for him—that play is indeed meeting several separate and specific needs as it helps him relate to himself, to others, and to his total world.

Play in a free and secure situation is the natural medium whereby the child may dare to discharge the feelings he has. If he is pleased and satisfied, feelings of happiness, well-being, pride, and affection are expressed. Under different circumstances, the feelings conveyed are hostile and disturbed. All human beings desire personal possessions and power over others. A child's emotions are interwoven with the details of his play life; it affords him an opportunity for openly expressing feelings. On occasion he is seen engaging in fantasy play in which he pretends and works through situations that are troublesome for him. In these ways, he attempts to understand others and himself.

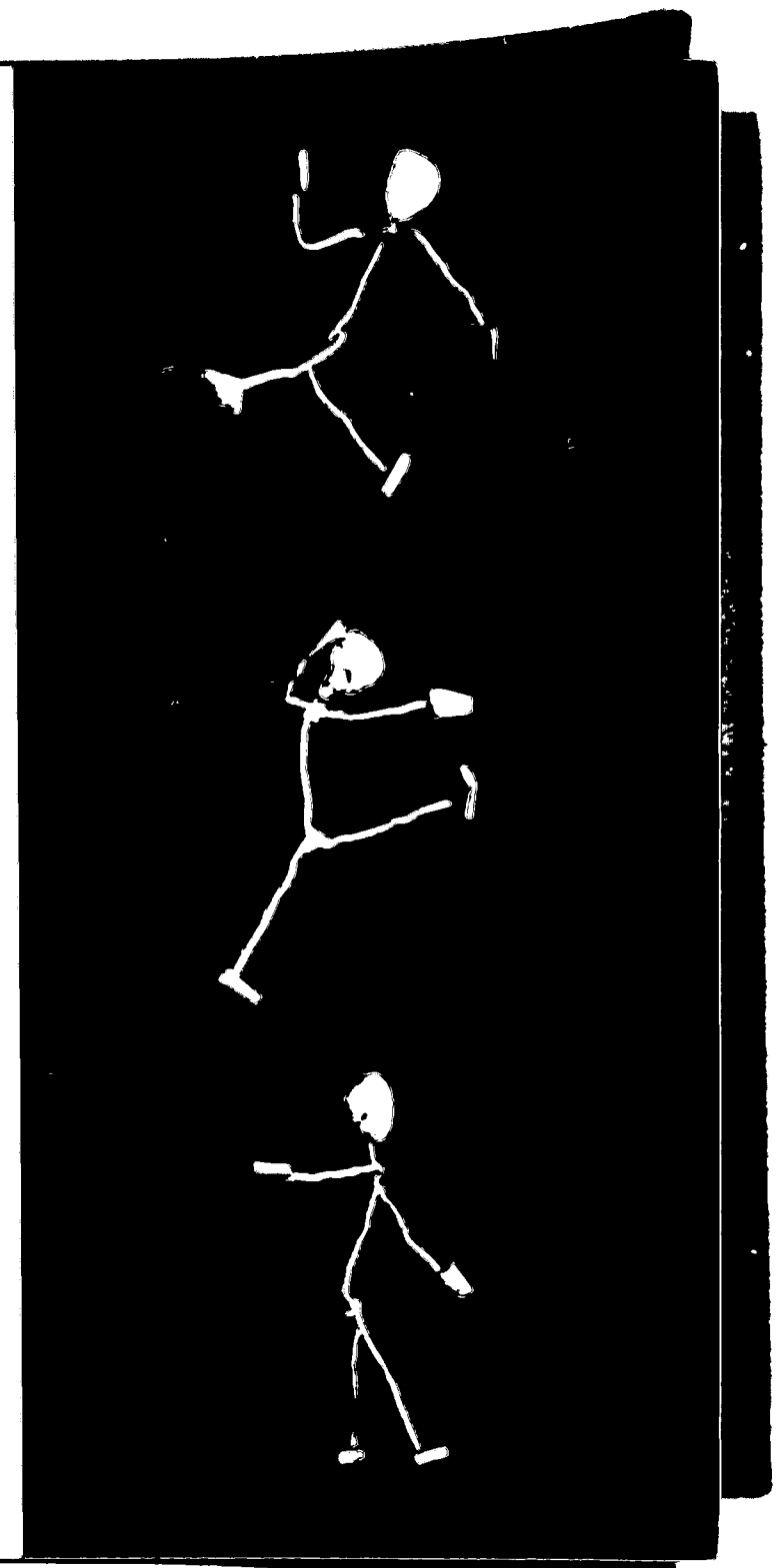
Play is the means a child uses to discover matter and himself. When he lets sand run through his fingers, he is obviously exploring the sand. When he tries to contain it, or to change it by adding water, stones, and sticks, he is finding out what he can do with it. As

he manipulates it, he questions and makes "guesses" about the nature of this matter. In a similar manner he plays with ideas and language and thus establishes an increasingly adequate orientation of himself to his world.

This is a child's work. His learning accrues in direct proportion to his chances for free movement in his play experiences. As he grows, he needs guidance and help with skills and with the setting of limits. However, he continues to need freedom of movement—to do, to be, to see, to discover, to search, to dawdle, to hurry, and to take the time he needs in terms of his own best development. Those who live with the growing child in school and at home are responsible for understanding his rights and needs and for seeing that he moves toward them.

Play Is Doing

Within a few weeks after a baby is born he has tried out many movements. Those that give him satisfaction are repeated. This bodily



activity stimulates growth and makes it possible to engage in other activities that bring additional pleasure. By the end of two years his environment is controlled to some extent. The child has learned to walk, to run, to climb, to be everywhere all at once—exploring, touching, feeling, and learning about his world. Language is limited in spoken words, but he has discovered that the language of behavior serves well. Cries, laughs, chuckles, squeals, and bubbles bring responses to needs and desires. An abundance of affection and approval, a schedule of food and rest tailored to needs, and the opportunity to play freely and safely contribute to the development of well-developed physical beings.

Mobility increases through the preschool years. The child is a runabout in the truest sense. He drags and pushes things around and has fun pulling and lifting anything he thinks he can manage. He likes to play with dirt and water and enjoys the fun of putting things together. Larger muscles are developing and coordination is improving as he manipulates everything he can. In his own way he balances his day with play that is both robust and quiet.

The five- and six-year-olds in our culture have a busy play life which is noisy and vigorous, but which has definite direction. They enjoy simple games, often of their own making, in which there is plenty of movement. They like equipment—a wagon in which they can pull or push playthings or playmates around; a tricycle to ride up and down the sidewalk for hours at a time; plenty of boxes and boards for creating all kinds of bridges and buildings to run and jump in, off, or on. They like to throw and catch balls and to experiment with roller skates and jumping ropes. During periods of quiet activity they may enjoy books, puzzles, paints, or play of their own creation. They are usually able to establish good proportions between individual and group activities and among active play, quiet fun, and rest.

The seven- and eight-year-olds are full of energy and vitality. Although they are not as continually active as the five- and six-year-olds, they still feel a drive to rush around, to climb,

to jump from heights, or to do stunts on climbing bars and jungle gyms. They enjoy both active and quiet organized games, and they often make their own rules, or variations of the rules. Boys particularly like ball games of all kinds, and both sexes are busy perfecting their skills at bike riding, skating, swimming, and construction of all kinds. Table games—Monopoly, Hearts, Authors, and new favorites coming out each year—are fun and offer experiences in competitive activity. Erector sets; space kits; models of airplanes, boats, and trains; and blocks of all kinds keep boys interested and busy. Girls enjoy many of these same activities, but are also involved in countless kinds of active play with dolls and housekeeping equipment.

The nine- and ten-year-olds are becoming increasingly skillful at sports and games, but wide variations of development and competency are noticeable during this period. Much active, big-muscle play is enjoyable and needed. Sex differences are more apparent now. The boys shout at, punch, and shove each other in

rough-and-tumble, but often affectionate, activity. The girls turn to group games or to roller skating, jump rope, jacks, and the dramatic arts. Both sexes enjoy crafts and workshop projects.

Thus, repetitious body activity is essential in developing the physical dexterity needed throughout life. Spontaneous and enjoyable activity satisfies important developmental needs and opens the way for further endeavors and achievements.

Play Is Adventuring

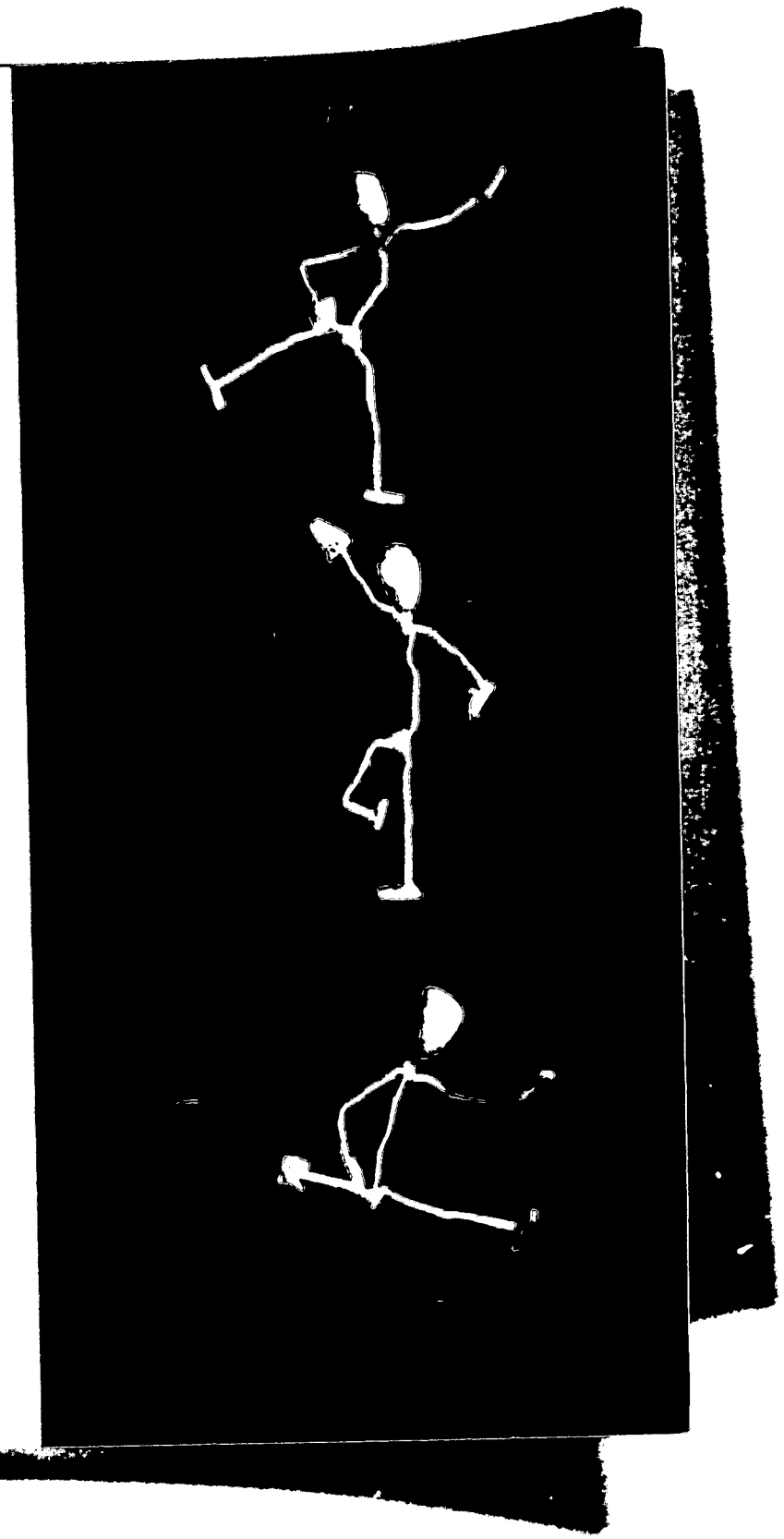
Curiosity is one of the most outstanding and interesting personality traits of the young child at play, even at the ages of two and three. He wants to know about everything, to look at the things he is interested in, and to absorb what he sees and hears. An afternoon walk with him is likely to be a very slow journey. He will wander up sidewalks, try out the neighbor's steps, go after every animal he sees, and pick up various pieces of litter along the way. He enjoys play that contains an element of risk, which he finds even in such simple activities as running, dodging, chasing, and jumping.

The preschool child and the child who is a little older like to make conditions that are even more hazardous than is necessary. This is supported by the fact that they enjoy such activities as sledding and climbing and such various organized games as tag and hiding. Children of these ages like going places; they enjoy climbing the jungle gym at the park, going to a farm to see the cows milked, or meeting Daddy at the airport. They like to experiment with blocks, boxes, boards, and all kinds of materials, and their creations have special significance and meaning to them.

When earlier curiosities have been satisfied, eight-, nine-, and ten-year-olds are ready to tackle explorations of all kinds. They want new experiences—to try things out, to know how they work, how they are made, and where they come from. Tree-house construction and play or the creation and use of a two-, three-, or four-wheel cart or wagon bring satisfaction and

delight to boys. They like the freedom and excitement of camping outdoors, exploring woods for caves, skating on frozen ponds, and other adventuresome activities. Girls enjoy some of these same kinds of play along with such quieter activity as dramatizations of family life. They explore being grown up by dressing up and playing at being adult.

Both sexes enjoy having pets to play with, and they like to devise games with their friends. Books that share the joys and perils of other children in faraway places are important quiet-time interests. All these play activities satisfy the child's deep desire to know and to learn about his world.



Play Is Reinforcing

Anyone who has watched a two-year-old play peek-a-boo with his mother or a three-year-old revel in roughhousing with his father sees family fun at its best for a young child. His willingness to cooperate and his desire to learn are dependent upon love and affection and a

happy relationship with his family. This relationship grows out of a "we-feeling" which is built in as a child shares family jokes and laughter and as all members of the family join together in the enjoyment of such activities as picnics, a trip to Grandmother's, the viewing of a favorite television program, and listening to records. Sharing good books is a kind of fun that takes precedence in some families over any other activity. Still other families build family solidarity and good feeling by going camping or spending week ends at the beach.

As children grow older, they like to have a part in selecting and planning for family get-togethers. Participation in the major decisions that are usually involved adds to the fun. However, surprise activities planned by parents or a favorite relative are always welcome.

The manners, customs, and privileges of the social group to which a family belongs condition the kinds of play experiences the young child may have even within his family. The economic status of his family may determine whether he has adequate play space, but it does not necessarily influence the feelings that exist among the members of the family as they play. Family fun is possible within all social groups and is important to the total development of every child.

Play Is Interacting

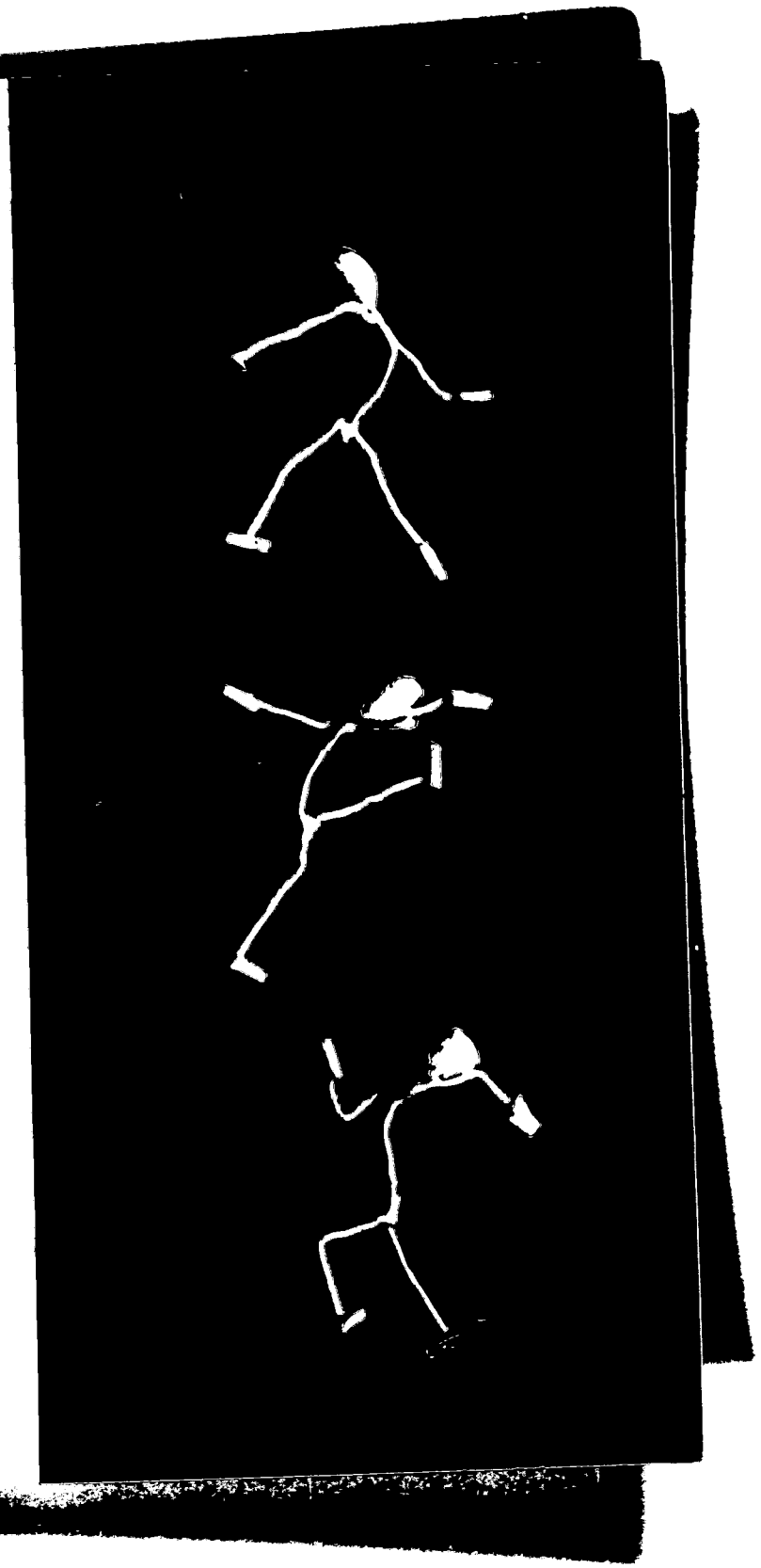
The very young child enjoys being near other children and watching their activities, but does not play directly or cooperatively with them. He may even poke or snatch at their playthings. Through parallel play, companionship is shared.

There is much to be learned about cooperative play in the preschool years. Taking turns, asking for something instead of snatching it, and offering a small friend an object to use in his play are not easy accomplishments for the child. These preschoolers are beginning to be much interested in their peers and often have special friends of the same or opposite sex. But there is frequent quarreling, name-calling, and tattling; running to his mother to tell about what is happening offers the child a chance to test out his perception of himself and his

relations with his playmates. He is learning how to become a social being.

The kindergarten child greatly enjoys group play, even when he is an observer. He stays in a group only as long as it pleases or satisfies him, then seeks other friends or activities or watches from the sidelines. Although quarrels and fights with playmates are frequent, independence in handling situations is developing. Parallel-play activities often merge into group play. Easel painting and building with blocks, as well as play in the housekeeping corner and with toys, provide such opportunities. Through the sharing of laughter, language, and the activities themselves, the six- and seven-year-olds build new peer relationships in the larger world of the school and community. It is much more fun to play in mud, wade in puddles, roll down hills, fall in the snow, and build leaf houses with friends than it is to do them alone.

As the child grows older, play interests focus almost entirely upon peers of the same sex who live in the neighborhood or attend the



same school. Boys swim with boys at the Y.M.C.A. or go to camp with the Boy Scouts; girls seek out girls for friends, join the Brownies, or attend Camp Fire Girls meetings. In spite of the niggardly provision and restriction in some homes and neighborhoods, the play of peers is full of intensive experimentation with peer interaction. Thus skills and attitudes for satisfying boy-girl relationships soon to follow are learned.

Wise parents are cognizant of the importance of play with peers and make it possible for their children to be with other children during all of childhood. Such contacts, combined with those at school and in community groups, give a child a valuable testing ground for what he is learning. As such, play is an integral part of the process of socialization.

Play Is Clarifying

The young child, like all other human beings, is actively engaged in adjusting to his environment. He does not comprehend the conflicts that accompany these adjustments. In the ordinary course of events, he has feelings that leave him frightened, angry, disturbed, rebellious, insecure, or generally unhappy. He has not yet acquired great insight into these feelings or developed sufficient vocabulary to express them. As a result he may act out various roles, expressing openly, through language and actions, his feelings regarding them.

Play in a free and secure situation is a natural and creative medium whereby the young child may dare to discharge the unruly emotions which are inside him. He needs to feel this emotional hospitality as he comes to terms with the reality of himself and his world.

In many activities the child is simply reliving his daily experiences in order to understand them. Much of the dramatic play he engages in is an attempt to clarify the ideas to which he has been exposed as well as to express the emotions that accompany them. After the postman's visit to the home, the child may play postman and bring everyone a letter. He may make mud pies and create other delicacies as

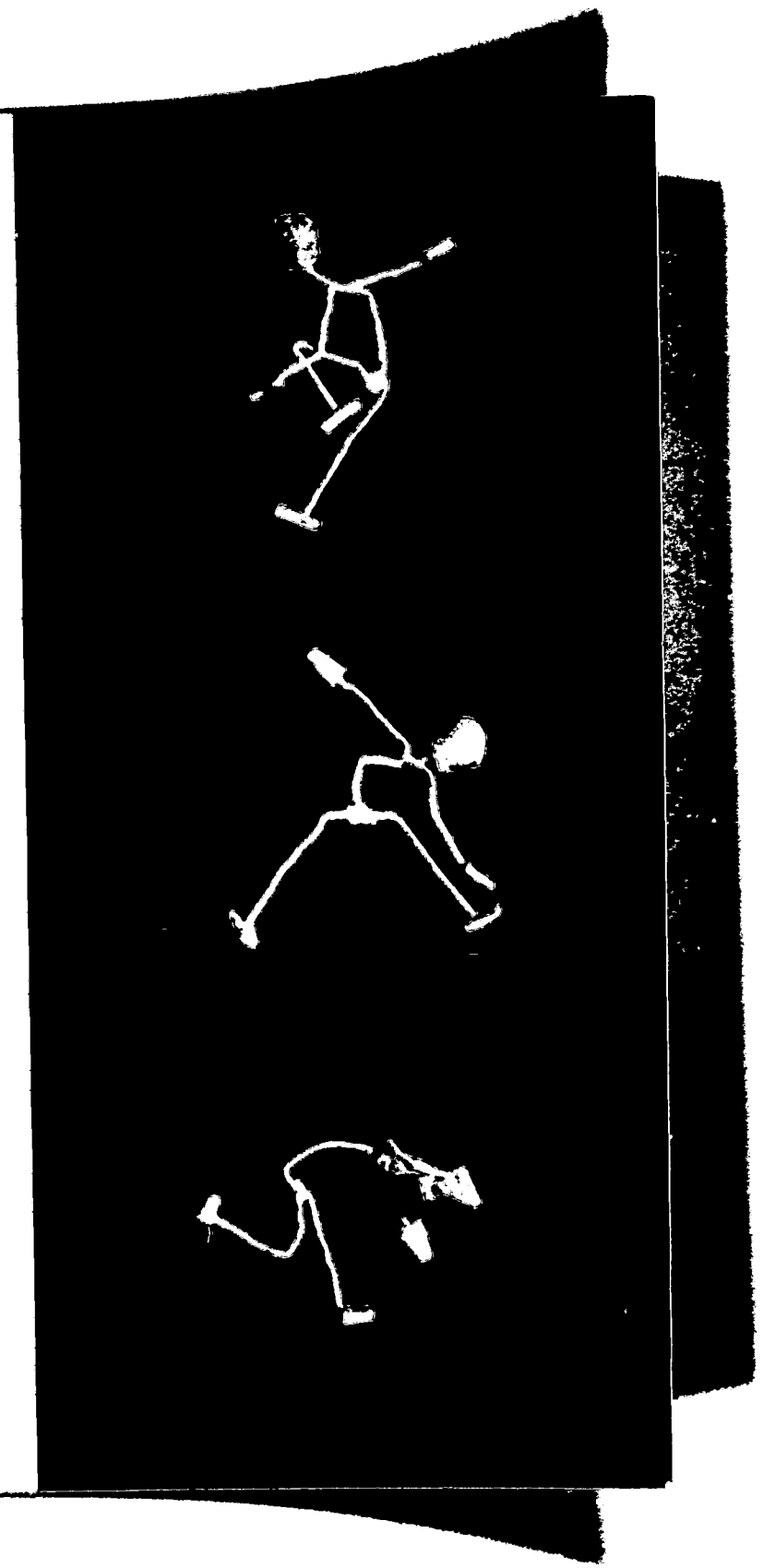
he remembers how his mother worked to prepare a big dinner for company. Few properties are needed to help him assume the role. A cowboy hat and gun can make a child secure enough to run away from his feelings and fears, or they may help him feel brave enough to deal with them.

Imagination is tied closely to play of young children. It helps the child move at his own rate into present situations and provides an agreeable cloak for the release of pent-up feelings and mixed emotions. This kind of play becomes a method of channeling aggressions into forms that are socially acceptable.

Thus the play of children is seen as an effective means of redefining, of releasing, and of redirecting feelings. It also is seen as a valid means of gaining understanding and of satisfying needs.

Play Is Problem Solving

The growing child is ever seeking to find answers to questions, expression for feelings,



and solutions to problems. If he is free to do so, he selects his responses to each situation in terms of what is most satisfying. Both the method and the media which he uses to achieve this end are creative in that they are selected, combined, and used in his unique way. No material or activity is in and of itself better than any other. Choice and value of the media and the methods used depend in large part upon the child's age, his maturity level, his purposes, and the problem he is trying to resolve.

The play of young children may involve the creative, manipulative use of clay, finger paints, blocks, sand, or water. It may also include creative experiences with music, literature, and dramatics. However, every activity an individual engages in offers an avenue of creative expression. The child who wants to get out of his yard may try opening the gate or climbing the fence, or he may call for help and express his wish to leave the yard. In these ways he is creatively seeking a solution to his desires. The child who has mechanical toys often wonders what makes them operate. He may take them apart and reassemble them. He may inquire about their construction and what makes them go. He also may use the parts to make other toys or play materials. His play in these situations is manipulative and inventive and thus is creative in a very real sense.

Summary

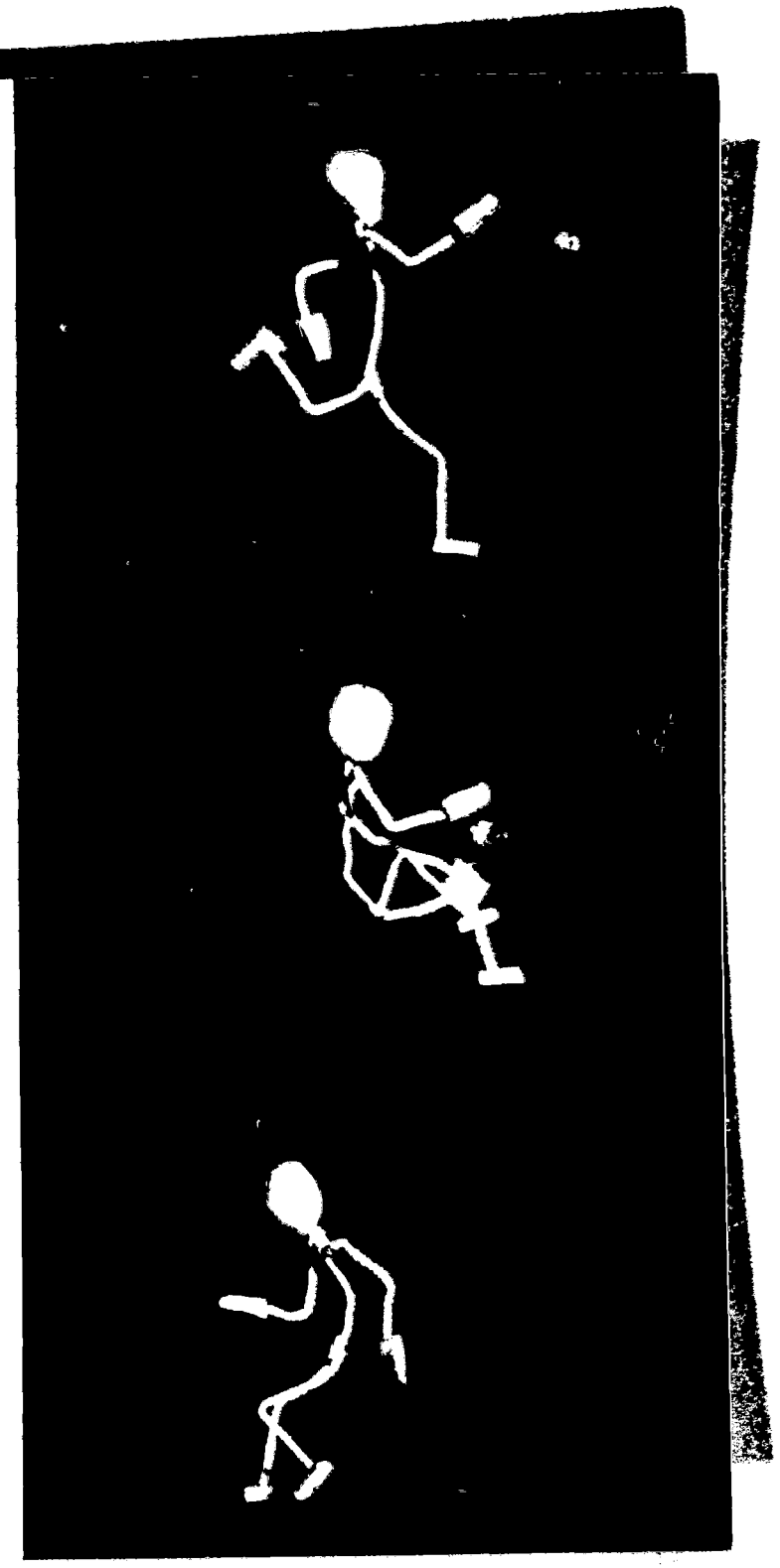
Play is complex and is defined in numerous ways. Play serves the child's developmental needs and desires and makes it possible for him to experience life in his culture at his own pace.

Play roles taken by young children in many of their activities are invented to fit the situation. Gesture, action, and dialogue are spontaneous and satisfying without benefit of audience. The younger child may play house with a doll or pretend he is a horse. Children who are a little older often assign roles: "You be the mother, I'll be the doctor."

The elementary-school child adds to his own experience the experiences of others through the world of books. With the help of a creative teacher, he relives much of our heritage of good literature by role-playing and dramatization. New insights into his own world accrue as he plays out the feelings and thoughts of others.

In the process of play, a child may be able to face and work through problems of his private world and to try out new ideas and experiences. In the course of play, thinking is objectified, experiences are intellectualized, and thoughts and emotions are ordered. The solving of day-to-day problems, the opportunity to test out one's powers with materials as well as with ideas, and the sense of accomplishment these activities bring define the nature and kinds of play essential to all children.

Interested adults can foster creative, inventive play experiences—a quest of all children. Adequate play space, the opportunity to select one's own activities and play materials, the help and the support of an approving adult—all these motivate the child to engage in creative play.



Uninhibited movement in play

A few word pictures may illustrate how children have used space, time, and materials in their play to develop concepts, to try out ideas, to internalize learnings.

In New York City on a short, narrow street in an underprivileged area there is a high fence around a very small yard. Entrance to the yard and dwelling is gained by going through a tall gate and up some high steps. Children whose only play spaces are the city streets have wonderful adventures at this gate and on these steps. At almost any time of day or night the gate is the entrance to a new and exciting experience. The inside area may be the steps to the castle where a knight charges up in all his clanging armor or where a queen and her attendants slowly descend. A few minutes later this same spot is a jail where the latest desperadoes are thrown and where the jailor officiates with great efficiency and dispatch. On other occasions it is the setting for a tea party or a wonderful place for jumping one, two, three steps up or down at one time.

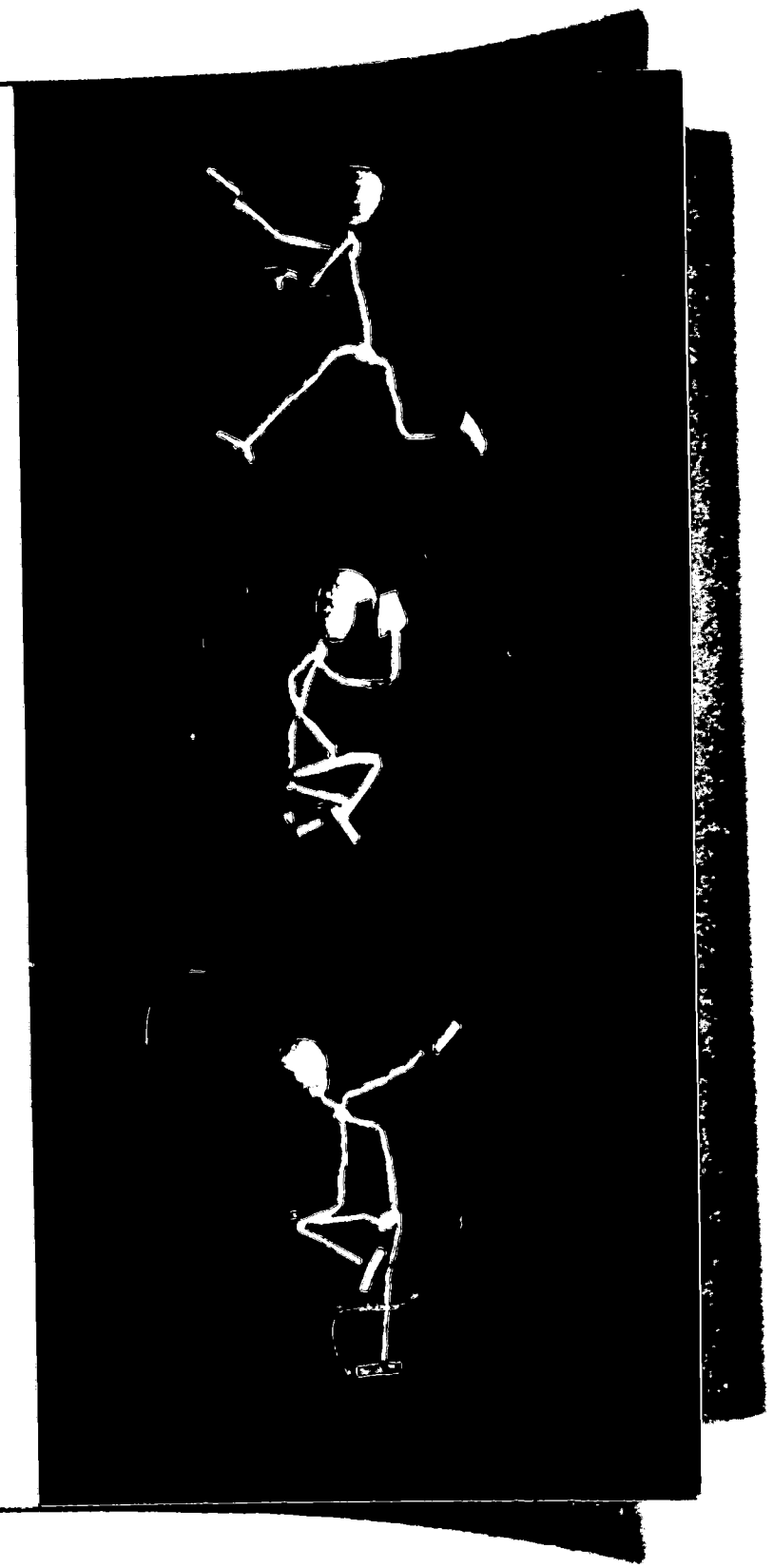
Sticks, nails, cans, or other objects held lightly and run along the fence make wonderful music. At times wild Indians and cowboys ride over the mountains and into the valley. Sometimes cave men kill wild animals and turn away their enemies. Dogs, cats, dolls, skates, balls, boxes, wheels—all the stuff of which creative play is made—come and go, in and out of the gate, from one year's end to the next.

A large empty reel, which had served for holding electric cable, was used for play by a group of children. They climbed on top of

it, pretended it was a toadstool and huddled underneath it, and used it as a huge hoop for rolling across the playground. One day a play about witches evolved from chasing and hiding under the shelter of the top of the large reel. It was discovered that the reel would also revolve on its base. Soon the play became a rhythmic repetition of mixing up some witch magic with 10 children going around and around turning the reel and chanting, "Cook, cook *magic!* Cook, cook *magic!*"

A group of ten-year-old girls regularly drop into a kindergarten room after school. Hurrying to the doll corner, they don high heels and scarves and begin cleaning, rearranging furniture, serving coffee. In the privacy of the doll corner they feel safe and all right about this kind of play—undirected, without organization, without boys.

Two girls don make-up and grown-up clothes and, with purses over their arms, pretend that they are going to the grocery store. Arriving



at the other end of the room, they realize they have no grocery store. "We'll have to build one," they agree. And so—on high heels, all hatted and gloved—the girls proceed to build the store.

Kathy splashes paint on paper to make a design, covering not only the paper but the floor as well. Joe offers to help wipe up, commenting, "She's got too much mess for a sponge."

The teacher suggests that Joe get the large mop. (It takes *two* people to push and pull the bucket with wringer and mop.) Linda offers to help, too.

Linda says, "Here's some you missed."

"I know," says Joe, "but I can't turn the mop around that way. All I can do is back and forth right here." (He swishes the mop.)

Linda asks, "How many pictures did she paint?"

Joe, still mopping with Kathy, replies, "One —only one."

Linda exclaims, "What a lotta work for one painting."

The child explores

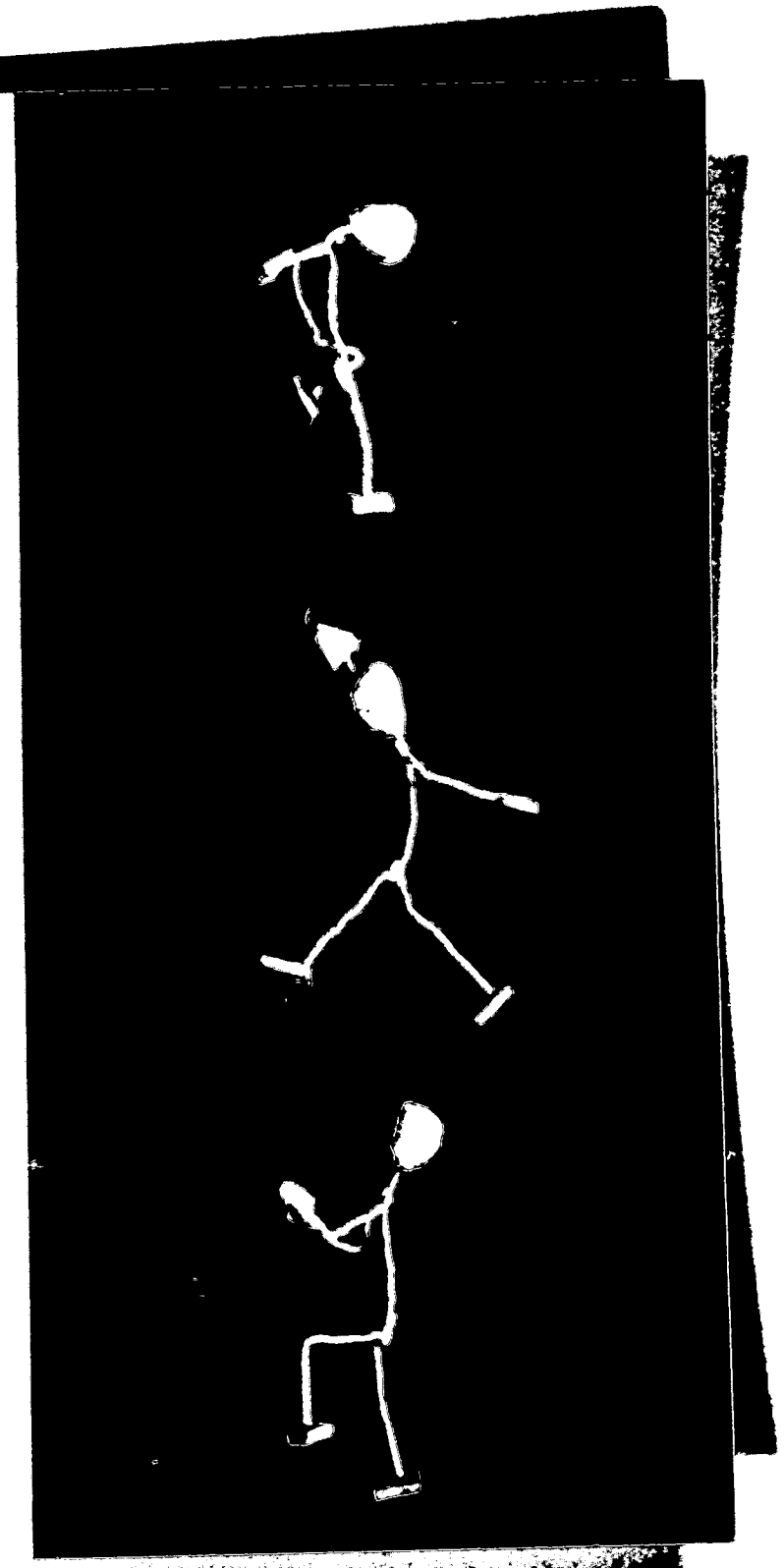
The child in motion is many things to many people. His mobile expression provides the dynamic quality and the individuality of his personality. To the degree the child is able to move freely rather than from demands made by the teacher or parent, space becomes meaningful; an inner comfort and security or a threatening defensive mechanism results. Natural movement of children is quiet and composed or wildly happy—explosive with excitement. It also is very rhythmic and fluid, not necessarily a constant strenuous activity ever straining the limits. Adult threats and order predetermine the amount of freedom a child feels and, consequently, the atmosphere and kind of response he gives.

Teachers live with the pop-up magic of children's mobility; they curb it, endure it, or

through movement

use it as the cue to imaginative adventure. Lining up to go somewhere, efficient though boring, suggests different kinds of movement to explore. If there must be lines, then why *not* glide along with bird wings outstretched, why *not* move like a train, why *not* stoop down and take off into the wind? Children see dramatic possibilities in the drabbest experiences; teachers, too often, are concerned with the traditional, solid ways of moving from place to place—physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Clocks and adult nerves are often the regulators of children's learning in our schools. In a particular phase of any movement the child senses a finish; he also knows when he needs more of the same thing. If an adult fails to feel as a child feels, he often clamps down too soon or changes the pace abruptly because



of his own tensions. Then children lose faith in what they know of themselves and come to rely more and more on an adult to tell them when to stop and start.

The teacher who sees the endless possibilities in the child's effort, through bodily movement, to show what he *is* and to be what he *wants* helps the child to live comfortably with himself and others. The teacher challenges him to use his body to control his environment, to grasp a moment of true imagery, to push out the limits which are unnecessarily hampering him, and to accept those limits which make for more efficient use of what is his.

Learning To Control Space

The child needs many opportunities to control his environment. If a child has a large cardboard box with which to play, he may bang on the sides, climb on top to see whether it can be pushed, try to turn it over, or take a long run and slide through it. Did the teacher plan to have it used as a store, a garage, or a house? This practical use comes later, after an action relationship has been established by the child's testing the possibilities of the material with what he knows of his own body.

Many things bring about spontaneous movement in space: walking to get there, running to cover the distance faster, snatching to possess, stamping a shadow, sneaking up with little steps, pouncing with big strides, stretching to climb over, bending to crawl under. When the opportune time arrives, these may be brought into focus for the whole group and become part of a guided rhythmic activity:

"Let's walk with the wind at our backs."

"Let's dance with a breeze."

"A baby bird is out of its nest. Can you walk gently? Help it to find its nest."

"Walk beside a man with long legs."

"Crawl inside a pipe."

"Walk under a low bridge."

"Step into a box. Sit down in it."

"What's inside the box? Carry it."

"Pull a heavy load over ice. Now pull it through the mud."

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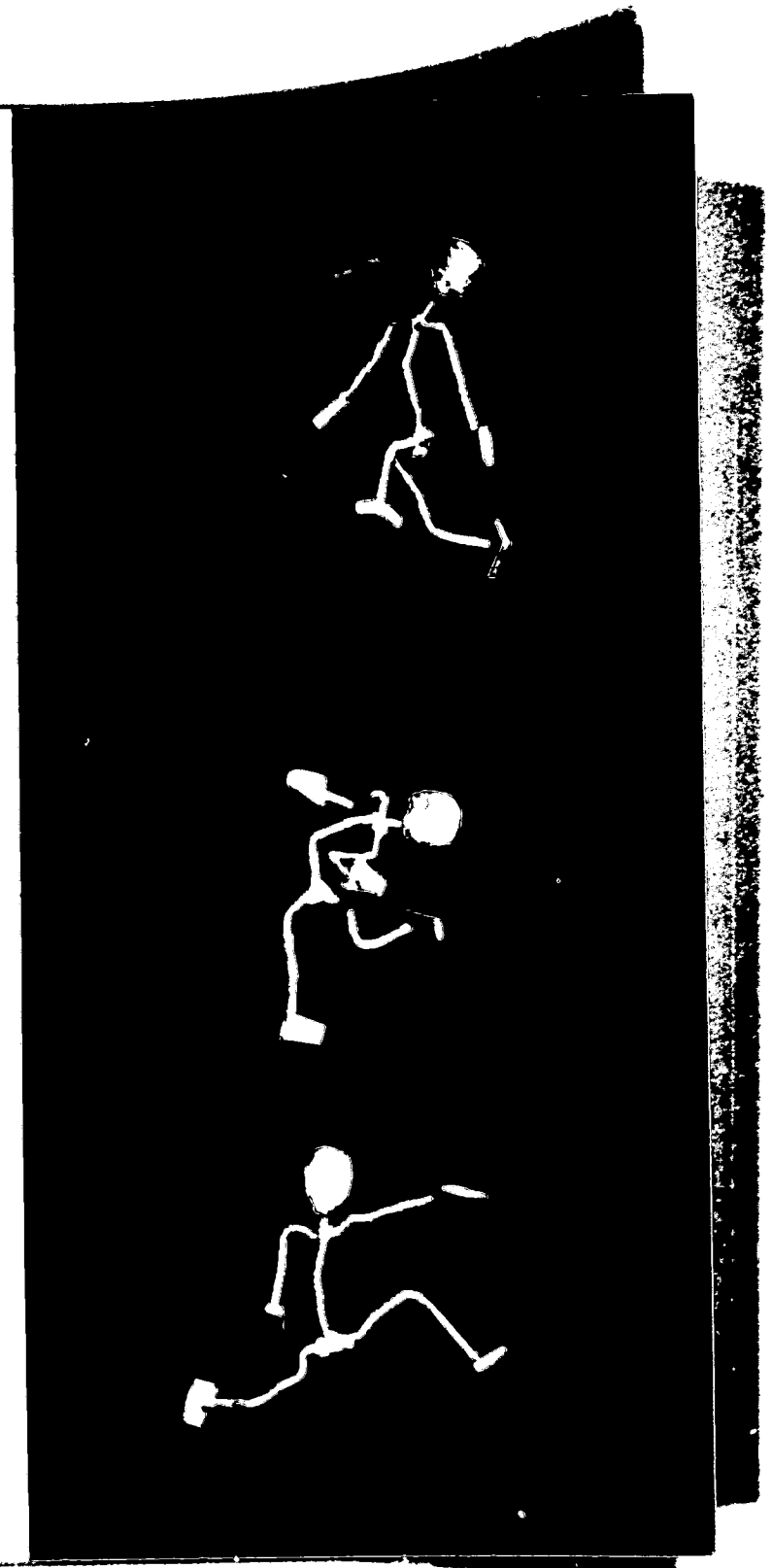
Helping a child see that some parts of his body work more efficiently than others toward particular goals is an outcome of an organized group experience in movement. Kicking may be exhilarating, and it can move lightweight objects across a space without hurting others. But a child learns that sometimes a better result is secured when arms and legs become lifters which are slid under something to raise it into position.

The teacher helps a child to seek rest by a change of pace. He guides the child into creating a comfortable environment for living with others and himself. He remembers that the child's own bodily movement through space is rhythmic and fluid and that his movement through time must be the same. The teacher examines his own attitudes and decides whether the child's free movement is hampered by adult inability to accept a moving learner, by adult failure to see that the child must respond with his whole being. The teacher checks his own inhibitions and sense of values. He seeks to give himself more mobility and to



let children set the pace within the limits of safety, health, and efficiency.

Mobility is not just a physical thing. The control of space for living is dependent upon freedom to move intellectually and emotionally. The school organization may immobilize a child with a rigid daily schedule, grade divisions, and units of work which encourage much inner churning, water treading, and stamping of mental feet while the child waits for the whistle to blow him into action. On the other hand, society and the schools often overmobilize a child as a part of a group—pushing, pulling, hurrying—never really giving him time to bend down and touch his world as he flies over it. In these circumstances he never quite learns where his world spaces are or what he could have done if he had been allowed more freedom to move within them.

Using Imagery

Because the teacher recognizes the importance of free movement, experiences are provided for the child to become more aware of the many ways in which he can use his own arms, legs, head, feet, fingers, toes, trunk, knees. He tries out whole-body movement as an exciting fulfillment of imagery:

"Bring down an armful of air. Can you sit on it? Can you carry it away? What happens if you break it into pieces? Where can you tuck a big piece of air? Can you put a small piece in your pocket? Put it under your shoes. What happens then? Put some inside your shirt, and away you go."

"Can you blow yourself up and burst all over the floor?"

"Can you make yourself disappear?"

"Do you think you could fly?"

"How many ways can you put your whole self on the floor?"

"Push your arms through the walls, through the ceiling. What can you feel up there?"

- The child explores unique characteristics of each part of his body:

"Dancing on toes is fun."

"Can you dance on fingers?"

"Roll your head around and around."

"Move across the floor on your knees, on your hands, on your hands and knees."

"What part of your body can you use to pick up something? Pick up a pin. Pick up a board. Pick up a block. Pick up a sheet of paper."

• The child finds that he can do the same things with different parts of his body:

"What parts of you bend?"

"What parts of you can you wave?"

"What parts of you stretch?"

"With what parts of your body can you push?"

• The child tries himself out when challenged with ideas:

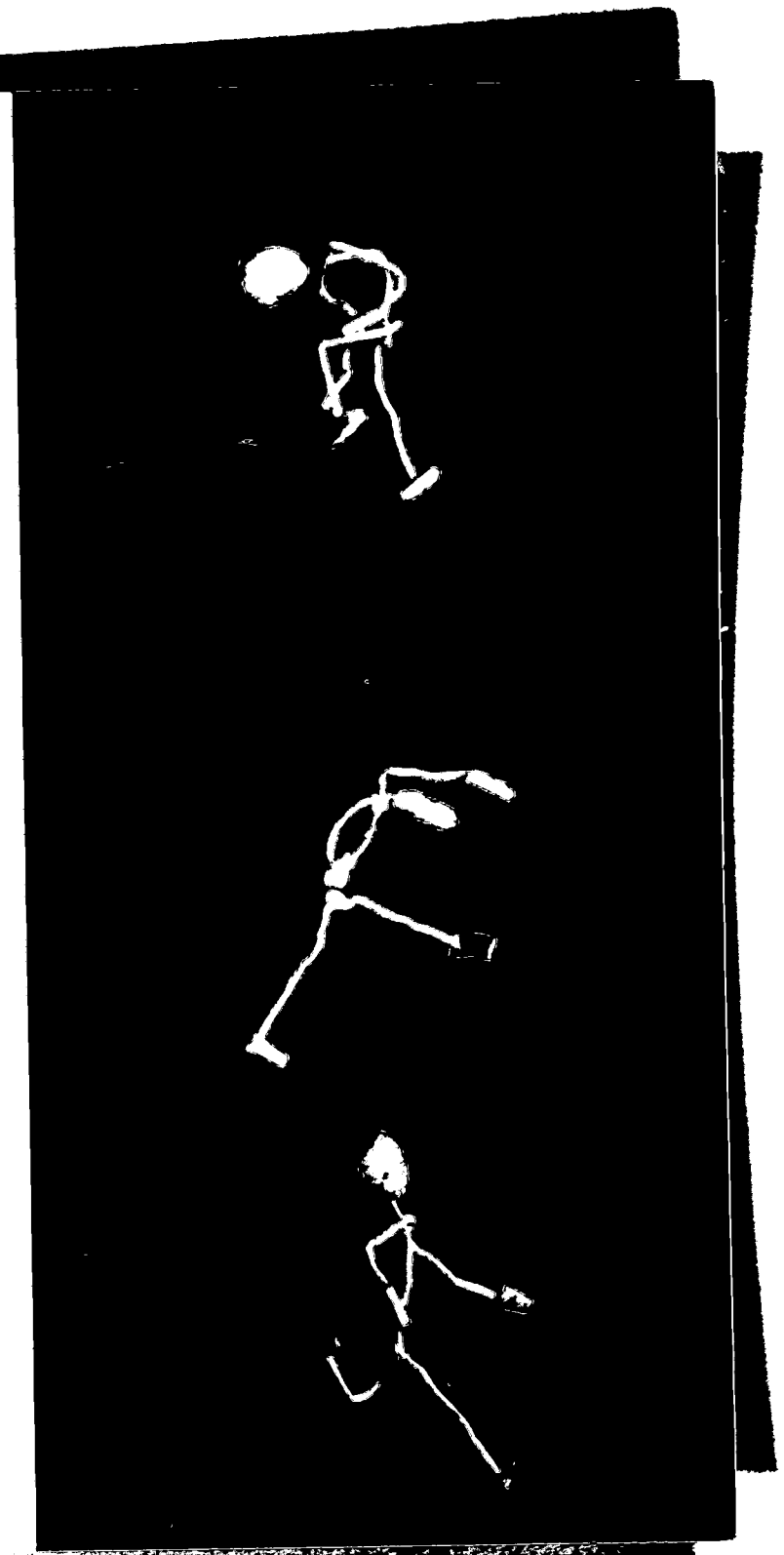
"Push out the space in front of you. Keep moving it out."

"Your hands are stuck together. Pull them apart."

"Your hands are stuck to your knees. Pull them apart."

"Walk with just bones, no joints."

"Now, no bones; just walk in your skin."



"Make yourself stiff all over. What can you do when you are stiff?"

"Stamp, stamp big holes in the ground. Now fill up that space with you."

• As a child accepts limits, he makes real efforts to control himself:

"Run without covering space."

"Someone is sleeping. Can you walk so you won't wake him up?"

"This is a slippery place. You must walk very carefully."

"Dance round and round without touching anyone else."

"Step, step, step as close to the floor as you can without touching it."

"Walk around a puddle."

"Jump on only the blue squares."

"Run so quietly that no one can hear."

"How many ways can you get over a fence?"

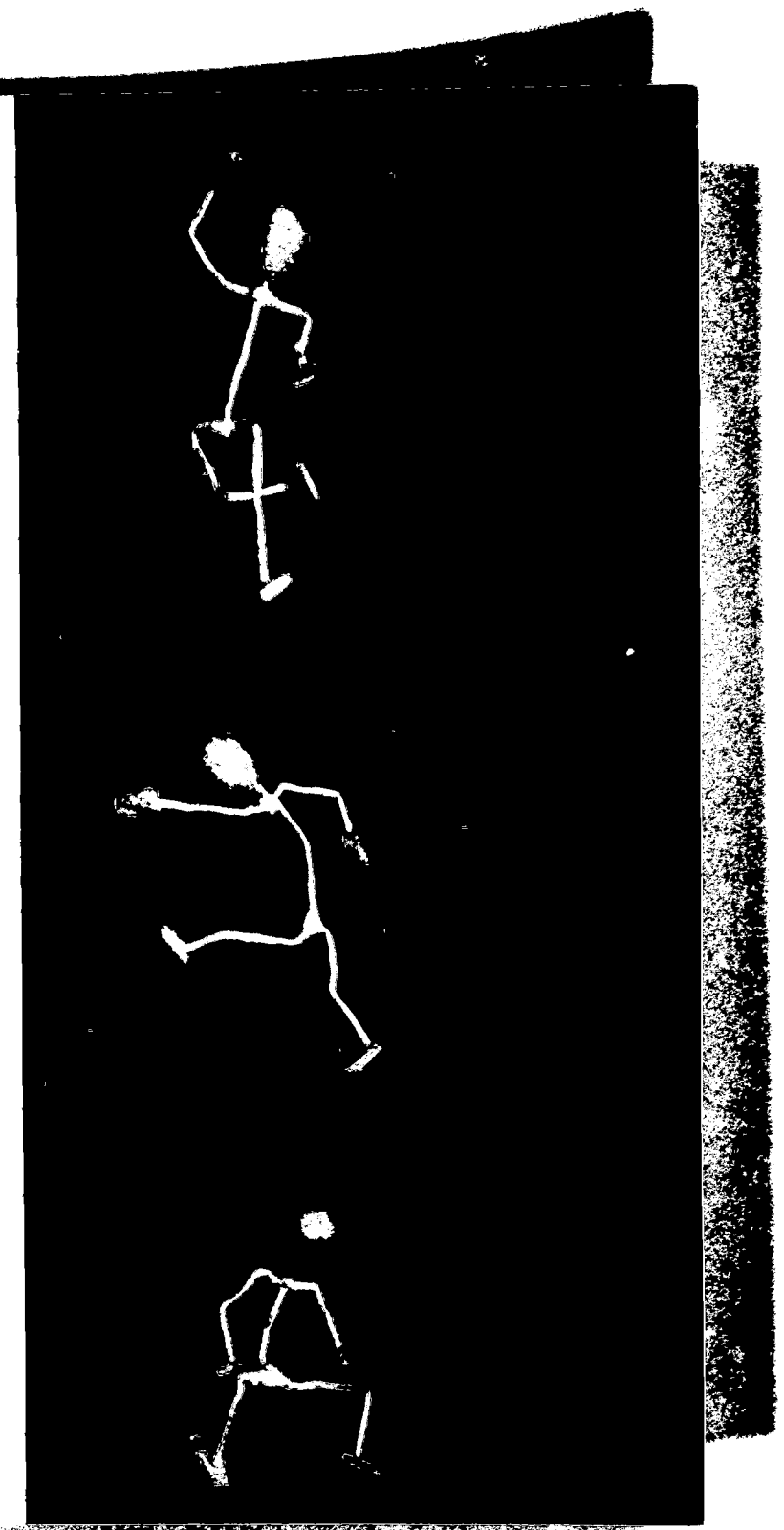
In the work-and-play world everyday happenings are dramatic moments in themselves. Unspoiled by the inhibiting sophistication of adult daily doings, the child shows an ever-fresh excitement in making the most of each opportunity to move. He has not yet established many habits of motion. Getting out of a chair is a flying motion, a quick shove of the hips, a leg-over-leg maneuver. Designs in the hall floor can be hopscotched, line-walked, zigzagged, or jumped over when the child goes walking without supervision. As the territory becomes more familiar, as the child grows older, and as he seeks group approval, indoor movements are more controlled, but freer patterns show up in outdoor play.

A dramatization of family life means yanking drawers open, whirling and giving orders to other children, shaking mops hard, carrying water across the room in a teacup, running with the doll carriage, walking on high heels, chasing intruders. All movement dramatizes the ordinary. Every experience with science equipment and art materials and in language arts and music carries with it a kind of movement necessary to the full enjoyment of the experience. Most of our schools today provide a different kind of mobility from that found in schools of the past.

Working Through Space

It is not enough to say that children today have more, or less, freedom to move than children of former years. Freedom to move should carry with it a growing understanding of the intricacies and potential of one's self as a whole being. The imaginative teacher helps children to deal with themselves creatively through the elements of movement as he gives them opportunities to try out tempo, direction, focus, and levels. He does this through carefully planned rhythmic experiences and through challenges to movement in everyday living with children.

The teacher sets up situations which require the child's concentrated effort to make the best use of his body. He also sets up problem-solving situations through arrangement of furniture, materials, and interest areas. He watches how children move and notes with gratitude that they *do* move. There are opportunities to carry water across the room, to reach high, to carry a quantity of books, to



pound nails, to stir wheat paste, to throw clay, to play the piano, to beat a drum, to scrub tables, to dig ant hills, and to chase butterflies.

A person's physical dimensions and capabilities determine the extent to which he uses his space, but expansion and versatility in use of space increases with movement and its exploration. A child learns that movement is sometimes limited when more than one person uses the same physical space. It is important that he sense another kind of movement which allows him to occupy space with other people. Imagination, discovery, and invitations to *try* foster an ability to move out emotionally and mentally.

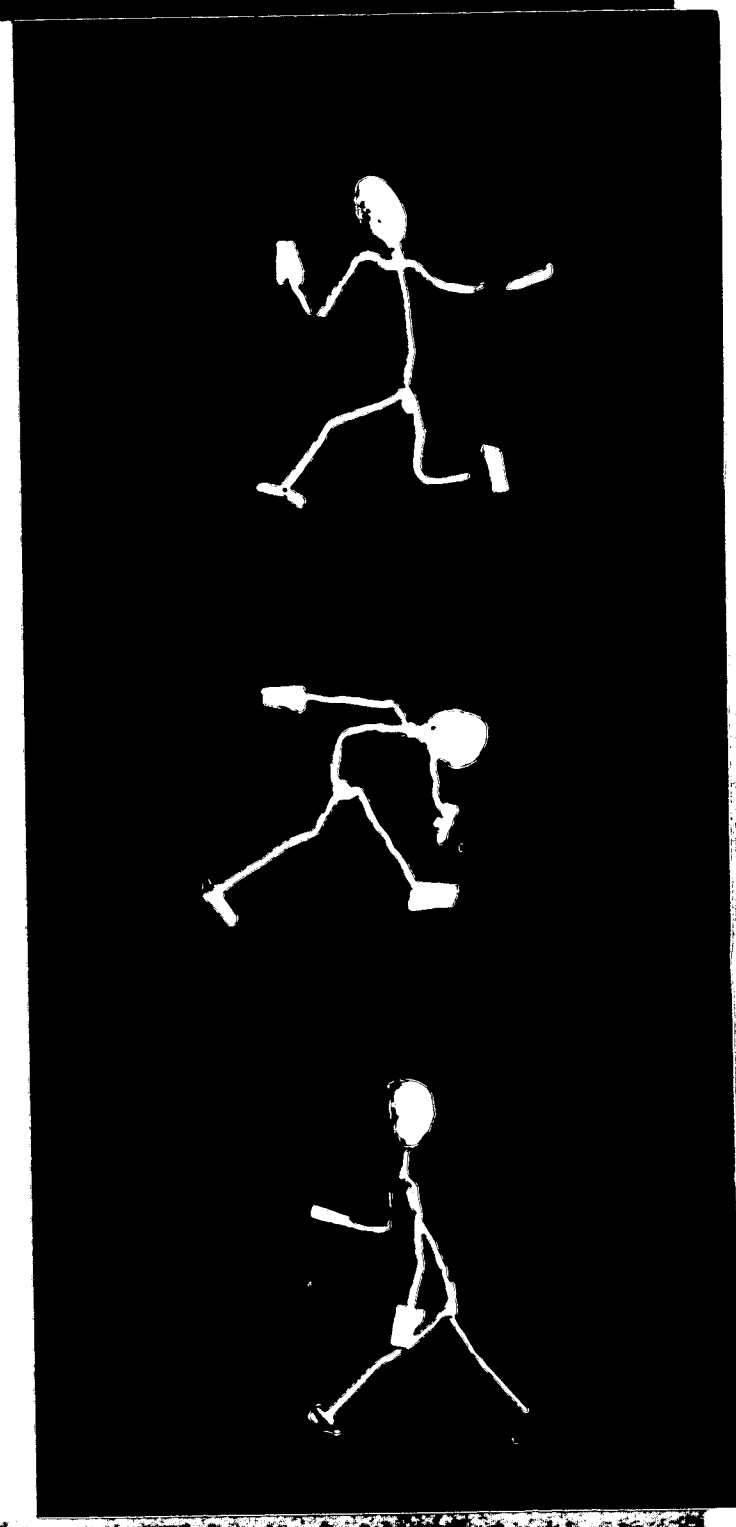
Early childhood has a generally accepted license to wiggle, change positions often, and move its parts at will. The kindergarten environment, for example, permits and encourages free movement because without it the teacher cannot know each child as he reacts, questions, verbalizes, and decides on his own. Social assurance is so desirable that the kindergarten is designed to make it possible for children to know each other and to communicate through activities. Children have freedom to move within their spaces and are not hesitant about moving into other peoples' spaces if necessary.

As the child later finds himself somewhat confined to assigned spots in a schoolroom, he can control some physical motion because he now feels more comfortable socially. He learns that physical controls make mental activity more productive at times and that some forms of communication and intellectual expression, such as listening and reading, require sitting positions. Society now plays a part in expecting certain emotional controls, but it does not wish that children live in an emotional vacuum.

The later elementary years, with increased information, with competitive challenges to physical prowess, with lively imaginations, are more creatively explosive than ever. Word pictures come alive as groups make a dance of the changing seasons or use violent motion to try out their feelings about erupting vol-

canoes, floods, and hurricanes. Spontaneous movement arising from a descriptive literary passage and its development into a social and cultural experience bring individuals into a group experience in movement. These children now know what they feel, they know how their own bodies can move to express ideas and reinforce information, and they have fluency in movement. They know what of the world is solid or soft and what can stretch, float, or bend. They make themselves a part of all this, knowing that everyone has unique ways of controlling and electrifying the environment.

As each child's world shifts in many directions, it is stabilized for him according to the inner satisfactions he has gained in trying himself out through natural movement.



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