

stead of world conflict, as long as our children are brought up on gentle doses of racism through their books.

For the past ten years, critics have deplored the blatant racial bias of the textbooks. Last August, Whitney Young, Jr., executive director of the National Urban League, attacked the trade books as well. In a nationally syndicated column, he berated American trade book publishers for omitting Negroes from their books for children. As an example, he singled out a Little Golden Book, entitled "A Visit to the Zoo", which pictures New York's Central Park Zoo in realistic detail except that no dark face is shown. "The entire book-publishing industry is guilty of this kind of omission," charged Mr. Young.

Are the publishers guilty as charged? To find the answer, I undertook a survey of more than 5,000 trade books published for children in 1962, 1963, and 1964. Surely the effect of Little Rock, Montgomery, and Birmingham could be seen by this time, I reasoned.

As a start, I turned to the seventy members of the Children's Book Council who published trade books for children in each of these three years. Sixty-three of them—90 percent—completed my questionnaire; many gave anecdotal information as well.

Analysis of the replies and examination of several hundred books led to the discouraging conclusion that the vast majority of recent books are as white as the segregated zoo of Golden Press. Of the 5,206 children's trade books launched by the sixty-three publishers in the three-year period, only 349 include one or more Negroes—an average of 6.7 percent. Among the four publishers with the largest lists of children's books, the percentage of books with Negroes is one-third lower than this average. These four firms (Doubleday, Franklin Watts, Macmillan, and Harper & Row) published 866 books in the three-year period, and only 4.2 percent have a Negro in text or illustration. Eight publishers produced only all-white books.

Of the books which publishers report as "including one or more Negroes," many show only one or two dark faces in a crowd. In others, the litho-pencil sketches leave the reader wondering whether a delicate shadow indicates a racial difference or a case of sunburn. It would be easy for some of these books to pass as all-white if publishers had not listed them otherwise.

The scarcity of children's books portraying American Negroes is much greater than the figure of 6.7 per cent would indicate, for almost 60 per cent of the books with Negroes are placed outside of continental United States or before World War II, an event as remote to a child as the Boston Tea Party. There are books of African folk tales, reports of the emerging nations of Africa, stories laid in the islands of the Caribbean, biographies of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis and historical stories about the Underground Railroad. Most of them show a way of life that is far removed from that of the contemporary Negro and may be highly distasteful to him. To the child who has been involved in civil rights demonstrations of Harlem or Detroit, it is small comfort to read of the Negro slave who smilingly served his white master.

Over the three-year period, only four-fifths of one per cent of the children's trade books from the sixty-three publishers tell a story about American Negroes today. Twelve of these forty-four books are the simplest picturebooks, showing Negroes in the illustrations but omitting the word from the text. Examples are *Benjie* by Joan M. Lexau (Dial Press); *Tony's Birds* by Millicent Selsam (Harper & Row); *The Snowy Day* and *Whistle for Willie* by Ezra Jack Keats (Viking).

Those for readers of twelve and up mention the word Negro, and in several the characters tackle critical issues stemming from school integration, neighborhood desegregation, and nonviolent demonstrations. But these books are usually so gentle as to be unreal. There are no cattle prods, no bombings, no reprisals. The white heroine who befriends a Negro in high school enjoys the support of at least one sympathetic parent and an admiring boy friend.

Several books do have outstanding literary merit. Among them are *Roosevelt Grady*, by Louise Shotwell (World), the story of a Negro boy whose parents are migratory workers; *I Marched with Hannibal*, by Hans Baumann (Henry Z. Walck), a boy's report of the brilliant Carthaginian general; *Forever Free: The Story of the Emancipation Proclamation*, by Dorothy Sterling (Doubleday); *The Peoples of Africa*, by Colin M. Turnbull (World); and *The Peaceable Revolution*, by Betty Schechter (Houghton Mifflin), a beautifully written report of three phases of the nonviolent revolution as seen in the work of Thoreau, Gandhi, and the American Negro today.