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BOOK NEWS AND REVIEWS

THE YOUNG GIFTED CHILD: POTENTIAL AND PROMISE - AN ANTHOLOGY BY JOAN F. SMUTNY (EDITOR) / PAPERBACK / HAMPTON PRESS, CRESSKILL, NJ, 1998.

The book, edited by Joan Smutny, contains a comprehensive set of forty-one articles on educating gifted children from the preschool through primary grades. In Part I (Perspectives) Smutny states: “ ‘Where there is no vision, the people perish’ is an adage applicable to working in the world of the bright and talented young child. . . .The intent of [this book] is to offer a framework of understanding for the many adults who cherish these children as students, patients, friends, sons, and daughters.” (p. 1). Articles cover such topics as optimizing early learning, a sensibility approach to identifying gifted children, working with special populations, the importance of early identification, parenting young gifted children, meeting their social and emotional needs, and creating effective educational experiences. Some of the forty-eight authors of these excellent articles are Barbara Clark, Maurice Fisher, John Feldhusen, E. Paul Torrance, Stephanie Tolan, Sylvia Rimm, Sally Walker, Judith Wynn Halsted, LeoNora Cohen, Elizabeth Meckstroth, Philip Perrone, Dorothy Knopper, Susan Baum, and Sandra Berger. Although there is much interest among educators and parents in providing stimulating learning environments for young gifted children, there are few up to date resources on current theories and programs. Now, as a result of the writings of Joan Smutny and her colleagues, here is an excellent book that describes many of the current developments in this area of gifted education. *The Young Gifted Child* can serve as a comprehensive reference work for identifying programs, approaches and research studies related to this topic. Moreover, this work is an excellent textbook for graduate courses on the young gifted child and a wonderful resource for designing public school programs for this age level.

It is time that early education programs for gifted children receive the attention they deserve as being an integral part of the overall picture for educating gifted students from the preschool through college levels. The wealth of research on the importance of early education applies to gifted children as well as to economically disadvantaged and handicapped children. Joan Smutny, et al. help to bring education of the young gifted child into alignment with current thinking and research on the importance of early education in developing children's maximum cognitive and social abilities. This is one among many important reasons for reading and using the ideas presented in this book.

A CALENDAR OF WISDOM: DAILY THOUGHTS TO NOURISH THE SOUL BY LEO TOLSTOY. SCRIBNER, NY, 1997.

This Russian author (1828-1910) wrote two of the greatest classics of world literature, *War and Peace* (1864-69) and *Anna Karenina* (1873-76). In 1912 he published *A Calendar of Wisdom* based on his studies of various religions (Christianity, Judaism, Confucianism), writers (e.g., Erasmus, Jefferson, Voltaire, Emerson, Thoreau, Ruskin, Gogol, Goethe) and philosophers (e.g., Socrates, Cicero, Schopenhauer, Kant, Pascal). Because of its religious and philosophical emphasis, this book was suppressed for seventy years by the Communist regime. It was published again in Russia in 1995 and recently translated into English. The English translator, Peter Sekirin, says that, “Tolstoy’s original goal was the delivery of wisdom to the widest possible number of people, ‘to entertain millions of readers.’ This aim remains as compelling now, in this time of increasing spiritual need, as it was then.” (p. 9). Tolstoy’s lifelong interest in educating the masses and his concern with moral values are clearly expressed throughout *A Calendar of Wisdom*. His ideas and favorite quotations are organized by each day of the year. For example, on January 18 he said, “The only real science is the knowledge of how a person should live his life. And this knowledge is open to everyone.” (p. 30). On August 19 he said, “You should do goodness without choosing to whom. Good things, once done, will never disappear, even if you forget about them. There is only one way to be happy, and this is the sure way: to do goodness and to share this goodness with others.” (p. 244). Tolstoy included many quotations from religious works and the writings of great thinkers.

We highly recommend the book as a resource for stimulating reflection, conversation and debate about the perennial issues of human existence and behavior. In addition, gifted students should read Tolstoy’s two great novels along with *A Calendar of Wisdom* in order learn about the historical period in which he lived. There is no better writer for learning about Czarist Russia and the ethical issues prevalent in this society than one of outstanding humanists of world history, Leo Tolstoy. Of course his writings have much ethical and moral relevancy to modern life and society as clearly demonstrated in *A Calendar of Wisdom*.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN -- JULY 1998 ISSUE -- Contains an article by Richard Gazzaniga that summarizes split brain research during the last 30 years -- "The Split Brain Revisited" by Michael S. Gazzaniga. This researcher published the original article in SA three decades ago which described the split-brain research of Gazzaniga and two of his colleagues, Roger W. Sperry and Joseph E. Bogen. The article set off a flurry of research and speculation in education and psychology on the functions of the brain's two hemispheres. In his current article, Gazzaniga indicates that neuroscience research over subsequent years supports the original findings based on severing the corpus callosum in animals and humans: the left hemisphere concentrates primarily on language, speech and problem solving, and the right hemisphere deals mainly with visual-motor and spatial organization. Gifted students and their teachers should read this article to learn about the scientific-historical roots of this conclusion. The resulting right-brain, left-brain craze in educational practice was rooted in solid brain research although these applications have taken many unproven turns based more on speculation and clinical affirmation rather than solid research studies.

The July 1998 issue of Scientific American also contains an excellent series of articles on aids research ("defeating aids: what will it take?"), a biography of the great French scientist, Léon Foucault (1819-68) who measured the velocity of light and proved that the earth rotates on its axis, and a fascinating discussion of butterflies' mating strategies.

TIME MAGAZINE -- APRIL 13, 1998 -- The issue is entitled, "Leaders & Revolutionaries: The first in a series of looks at the most influential people of our century." Essays by prominent historians and political writers discuss such world leaders and villains as Theodore Roosevelt, V.I. Lenin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mohandas Gandhi, David Ben-Gurion, Mao Zedong, Martin Luther King, Jr., Margaret Thatcher, Pope John Paul II, Lech Walesa and Nelson Mandela. Other topics covered by the Time editors are concerned with Women Leaders (e.g., Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir), Milestones of the Century and Time Warp (a comparison between 1900 and current demographic and economic statistics). In regard to the time warp comparison, 4000 cars were sold worldwide in 1900 while 54 million have been sold in the 1990's. This issue on world leaders makes a handy resource for motivating students who are gifted in leadership and historical analysis to conduct in-depth studies of political and social leadership.

TRIBUTE TO A DISTINGUISHED EXPERT ON AMERICAN LITERATURE: ALFRED KAZIN (1915-98) **BY MICHAEL E. WALTERS CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE SCHOOLS**

"The task is to *realize* the world without forgetting its mystery." **A Lifetime Burning in Every Moment** by A. Kazin (1994, p. 156).

Recently the United States lost one of the exemplars of the gifted sensibility. Alfred Kazin, the dean of American literary criticism, died about a month ago. The contrast between Kazin and the predominant literary academes, known as the deconstructionists, is a matter of sensibility. Kazin wrote for the intelligent layman who enjoys reading for both its intellectual stimulation and artistic creation. He represented the emerging success of the immigrant working class generation of the 1930's. English was not the language of his home; it was Yiddish, the folk lingua of Eastern European Jews. Because of his giftedness, he attended the best public schools and colleges. At an early age, Kazin discovered the wonders of literature -- especially by American writers. When he was only in his twenties, he wrote a major analysis of American literature, **On Native Grounds** (1942). His style of writing was that of the philosophical essay. During the 1960's, Kazin taught at Amherst College under the sponsorship of Robert Frost. Despite different political views, Frost respected Kazin's writing and teaching skills. His books of literary criticism are works of art in themselves. For example, in **An American Procession** (1984), he traced the history of our literature and celebrated the works of such writers as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Henry James, Mark Twain, Emily Dickinson, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Kazin wrote until his last days. His recent book is about the religiosity of American writers -- **God and the American Writer** (1997). He was part of a group of American authors who wrote literary criticism in a manner that appeals to the gifted sensibility. This group included the following: Van Wyck Brooks (1886-1963), Edmund Wilson (1895-1972) and Malcolm Cowley (1898-1989). These individuals wrote literary criticism in the form of brilliant essays. Their essays included social critiques, philosophical thoughts, analysis of language, popular culture, history, architecture, music, art and psychology.

Kazin composed a book of his journals from the 1930's through the mid 1990's -- **A Lifetime Burning in Every Moment** (1996). It is one of the most thought provoking and artistic books I have ever encountered. It is an intellectual and emotional banquet for all those who are gifted. His observations and commentaries are examples of what is meant by term, "gifted sensibility." Kazin is fondly remembered by his literary colleagues for his love of reading and great respect for American writers. In their eyes, he was a "master reader" -- one who had great respect for the exquisite meanings and stories created by his favorite American authors. The study of Alfred Kazin is a significant journey into the mind and personality of a remarkably gifted individual.