

# Some ABCs

By RON INOUE

## in education

*Editor's Note: Should you have any questions or suggestions about this or a future "ABC's" article, please let the author know by writing him at the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, 99701 or by calling (907) 479-7185.*

Postmasters in Alaskan communities surely see vast quantities of magazines and catalogs come into their towns. Alaskans are not only prodigious readers and consumers of magazines by subscription but also are recipients of catalogs and other mail merchandising "wish books." Parents, teachers, and youth group leaders might well use these printed materials in designing projects for their youngsters.

Magazines are great vehicles for getting students to read. Because magazines come at regular time intervals, they have a sense of being current which attracts many young readers. The subjects are as varied as are the readers. Students who dislike formal reading can probably be found browsing with great interest through a magazine featuring three-wheelers, people, snow-gos, or travel. Magazines are not only highly stimulating reading material for those who like to read, but they can also serve to stimulate some students to want to learn to read.

Students in classes could use magazines for thoughtful analysis. What are the similarities and differences between and among magazines of the same type? Is *Time* the same as or different from *Newsweek*? For whom are the magazines designed and how is that reflected in the layout, articles, the merchandising, and advertising? Do these magazines mold opinion or reflect it? Who owns these magazines?

Once magazines lose their timeliness, back issues can be used in several educational ways. Using a pair of scissors or a pencil, youngsters can spend many entertaining hours clipping

or circling pictures and learning basic classification systems. The teacher can create "games" by having students group objects of the same size, color, function, etc. Older students could build clipping files of articles on topics such as current events, recipes, energy-saving techniques, or the state's permanent fund. Beginner readers or bilingual students can make their own picture dictionaries, "picture dictionaries", of troublesome or new vocabulary. Additionally, bulletin board displays and art collages can be organized from the colorful pictures and magazine articles. Interesting and unusual photos can be used as stimuli for creative writing assignments.

Catalogs are also basic to the lives of most Alaskans. The use of catalogs, or "wish books," requires reading comprehension, mathematics, and consumer skills. Classroom or group activities based on these skills can be easily developed. Comparison shopping by mail, awareness of consumer protection laws at the state and national level, and basic computational skills to determine the least expensive costs of freight transportation, sales taxes, and purchase prices need to be learned.

The youngsters may wish to receive a free publication entitled "Shopping by Mail (number 64 OH) from the U.S. Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, Colorado 81009. Also request from the same center their next free issue of the "Consumer Information Catalog."

If the class or group lacks magazines or catalogs, put up a sign at the post office or local store requesting donations of outdated periodicals. Many people are glad to help by donating their noncurrent materials.

If you have other ways of using periodicals or catalogs which you would like to share with our readers, let me know and I'll list them in a future column.