EXEMPLARY SOFTWARE FOR TEACHING WRITING

BY JANINE FREED

Children's Writing and Publishing Center

Address: The Learning Company, 6493 Kaiser Drive, Fremont, CA 94555 (800) 852-2255
Machines: Apple, 128K, 5.25-inch disks ($89.95)
IBM, 512K, 3.5-inch or 5.25-inch disks ($99.95)
Mac, 1 MB, 3.5-inch disks ($129.95)
(Called *The Writing Center*)
Level: Grades two and up

A children's version of a word processor, *Children's Writing and Publishing Center* allows students to write creatively. It includes graphics, word wrap, and layout editing, 26 colors, more than 150 pictures, and various fonts that can be printed on laser, dot matrix, or ink-jet printers. Supplied templates help students create stories, posters, newsletters, reports, and more.

Documentation contains activity ideas, blackline masters, sample classroom materials, a scope and sequence chart, activity sheets, teacher's resources (e.g., magazines that publish children's writing), and an index. Support includes a tutorial and toll-free customer service. This software provides an excellent format for practicing writing skills.

Author! Author!

Address: MindPlay, Methods, and Solutions, Stoneham, MA 02180; (800) 221-7911
Machines: Apple, 5.25-inch disk, 48K ($59.99)
MS-DOS, 5.25-inch and 3.5-inch disks, 128K ($69.99)
Level: Ages 7 to adult

Author! Author! helps students write a play, and create sets, outlines, and playbills. Students may view an example of a play and answer pre-writing questions in the supplied outline before they begin writing. Then they create scripts, along with instructions for stage and character changes. Backdrops, props, and character graphics add color to the play, and students use word-processor features to edit and rewrite the play. *Author! Author!* allows students to view their play. As characters move around and backgrounds change, stage directions and scripts are displayed below the stage area.

Documentation explains how to use the program and includes playwriting terms and activity ideas. The

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teacher can edit the pre-writing outline. *Author! Author!* allows students of varying ability to write simple or complex plays. Because it is easy and exciting, students could spend hours creating stage plays.

Poet's Journal

Address: Hartley, 3451 Dunckel Road, Suite 200, Lansing, MI 48911-4216; (800) 9-HARTLEY
Machines: Apple, 3.5-inch and 5.25-inch discs ($129.95)
Level: Grades four to nine

Poet's Journal helps students write poetry. The 11 disks cover nine poetry topics including echo poems, limericks, onomatopoeia, and cinquains. Each disk begins with sample poems and graphics. Students draw conclusions about the poem from prompts requiring inductive reasoning, and participate in pre-writing activities such as word-webbing. *Poet's Journal* supports the student in his or her first attempts at writing a poem. Students write the poem on screen, edit as necessary, and copy the final draft into a journal. The program offers suggestions for writing poems without computer assistance.

The teacher can view student progress and edit the reinforcers used after questions. Documentation contains instruction on program usage, quick help sheets, and toll-free support. Supplementary materials include creative

suggestions for use, pre-writing guides, word-webbing charts, conference checklists, examples of poems, and pre-writing worksheets.

Senior High Writing Series
Address: MindPlay, Unit 350, P.O. Box 36491, Tucson, AZ 85740; (800) 221-7911
Machines: Apple, 5.25-inch and 3.5-inch disks, 128K ($299)
IBM-compatible, 5.25-inch and 3.5-inch disks
Macintosh, 3.5-inch disks
Level: Grade nine to adult

Senior High Writing Series (SHWS) consists of a word processor and a writing guide. Five lessons cover the writing process, newswriting, descriptive and expository writing, and the writer's basic tools. The word processor includes advanced editing commands such as bold and underline, search and replace, print preview, and page count.

Instructional content is a menu option with information, practice exercises, and suggestions for pre-writing activities. When the guide is activated, the screen is split, displaying both instruction and word processor. Practice exercises include paragraphs or sentences to edit and questions to answer. For example, the writing process guide provides a checklist for reviewing final drafts. In other guides, students write sentences based on the patterns and check their own work. The program does not track student progress or require students to complete lessons. Students may choose whether to use the guides.

Documentation includes an introductory lesson and ideas for instruction and activities. *SHWS* is a helpful tool for teaching writing because it combines word processor and guidance.

BLS Tutorsystems: Grammar 300
Address: Woodmill Corporate Center, 5153 West Woodmill Drive, Wilmington, DE

19808; (800) 545-7766
Machines: IBM-compatible, 640K, DOS, 3.2 CGA, one disk drive, runs on Novell, LANtastic, or NetBIOS ($99.95/Tutorlesson, $1,549.90/grammar series)
Apple II, 65K, one disk drive, monochrome or color monitor, printer is suggested
Level: Remedial grade nine to adult

BLS Tutorsystems: Grammar moves students from third-grade to GED-level grammar. Students can take a test, or teachers can use the normal reading inventory provided to assess the student's instructional level. The program consists of step-by-step drill and practice lessons. The student continues until he or she achieves at least 90 percent on the mastery test. If a student repeats a lesson or question, the same sentences are used for further instruction. After passing the mastery test, students progress to the next level. The interest level is appropriate for high school students and adults.

The teacher

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can monitor progress, assign lessons to the student, and turn on optional instruction during tests. Support includes on-site training, help screens, documentation for program usage, toll-free customer service, and a money-back guarantee.

Essay Ease
Address: MindPlay, Unit 350, P.O. Box 36491, Tucson, AZ 85740; (800) 221-7911
Machines: Apple, monochrome, 5.25-inch disks ($59.00)
Level: Grade four to adult

Essay Ease helps students write formal and informal essays. The teacher assigns one of 16 lessons, and students answer pre-writing questions to create an outline. They organize information into paragraphs and write each paragraph separately, using simple editing commands. Students may include graphics and view the complete essay. The program offers instruction on essay writing and program usage.

Essay Ease is less cumbersome if used on machines with two disk drives because students can store assignments on separate disks.

Teachers can create new outlines and essay assignments. The documentation includes an explanation of the program, information on writing essays, and extra activity ideas.

Essay Ease is appropriate for all levels because students write essays according to their ability. ✍

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