

# Children at Willowbrook put spring into their words

By GAELE HUMMEL

Childhood and spring go hand in hand at Willowbrook State School, where youngsters recently published what they have called the "Spring Times."

The "almost monthly" publication, as Nicholas De Ruiter describes it, is put out, under changing titles, by the students in the school's reading clinic which De Ruiter heads.

"Some of these youngsters

—enrollment varies between 60 and 70 — entered the clinic a year ago unable to read," he said. "Now they are not only reading but writing their own stories."

Students, who range in age from 8 to 19, decide what each publication will be called and what it should feature. One issue, beset by problems, was christened "Hard Luck Times."

There are book reviews, letters to the editor, sports news, a crossword puzzle, cartoons

and drawings, essays and stories.

But it is more than a newspaper, according to De Ruiter, who regards it as an outlet for the children to gain both confidence in their own abilities and the respect of their readers — their fellow students.

In an essay, "Why Green Means Spring," a 19-year-old girl wrote, "Green in the spring... tells me new things appear. It is like a new life coming. Beautiful green grass is like dreaming of birds

flying..."

A boy of 12, also, talks of the season in "Spring," a brief article, which reads a bit like a Haiku poem: "In the spring we have pretty flowers. The snow melts and flowers grow."

As do most of the articles, this one gives the essence of a subject in simple and moving language.

In an illustrated article, another girl of 15 reported on a plane trip to Disneyland with her parents.

Another drawing heads a "Book Corner" column of

student book reviews. In it, a boy of 12 tells about "The Hole in the Hill," a story about a family who lived in a cave.

Two articles on a book, "Barfoot Boy," by a girl and boy, both 10, and a story, "Linda's Air Mail Letter," by a 13-year-old miss are featured along with riddles by a girl of 12.

One riddle asks: "Why should secrets not be told in gardens?" Answer: Because of the beans that there."

Timely articles on "Spring,"

"Easter," "Matzos" and "Passover" also appear in the student publication.

The 15-year-old boy who serves as "Spring Times" art editor not only wrote a sports story and furnished the eight illustrations in the mimeographed paper. He also drew an amusing cartoon of a boy in a classroom, holding a globe, dancing and singing. "He's Got the Whole World in His Hand" while a frowning teacher admonishes him to "Sit down."

Sports stories include an account of "A visit to Madison

Square Garden" by a boy of 13 who saw the New York Knickerbockers defeated in a valiant fight against the Philadelphia 76ers in a basketball game.

A 19-year-old youth wrote of a game he saw between the Yankees and Boston Red Sox at Yankee Stadium. The Yankees lost, but the boy came away with a baseball that was hit into the stands.

Not only did his story make the class newspaper, but the ball is on display in the Willowbrook State School Gymnasium.