

CHAPTER I

STARTERS

(First Day School In a Box or Bag)

First Day School is a very important ingredient in the health and growth of most meetings. It is always difficult to find a starting point. Many Friends wait for children before planning a First Day School so that their efforts are not wasted. If a family with some children does appear on a First Day, visiting parents will not find what they are seeking when they must provide their own childcare during meeting for worship. More likely than not, they won't return.

Starting a program does take effort, but it need not be an overwhelming task. In the event that your meeting already has a very mixed-age group of children or none at all, you may want to start with "the box". To begin, a single volunteer can prepare the box of materials for one of the activities in this chapter, bring the box to meeting, and teach the children of whatever age. If no children appear, retain the prepared activity for the next week, or the next and the next. It is very important to be ready when children, particularly those of school age, do come. The week after is too late. Once youngsters have appeared and the activity in the box has been done, pass this responsibility--the box and a new activity idea--on to another person.

These box activities work for children ages three to teen. Preschoolers will need some help, perhaps from older children. In addition, preschoolers finish a task more quickly than others. Having several alternatives for very young children helps when their interest in the "main event" wanes. These could include play-doh, story books, and finger plays which are always in the box. If your meeting has only perspective preschoolers, use the Sparklers curriculum which is geared to their age level.

Resources for each box activity are listed, not as something you must obtain to make the activity successful, but rather as books to use if you wish. Most can be purchased from Friends General Conference or borrowed from the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Library. (See page G-11 for instructions on how to borrow books.) All of these publications are good additions to a new meeting library.

Another way to welcome children to your meeting is "the bag". Here each child is presented with a personalized cloth book bag prepared by

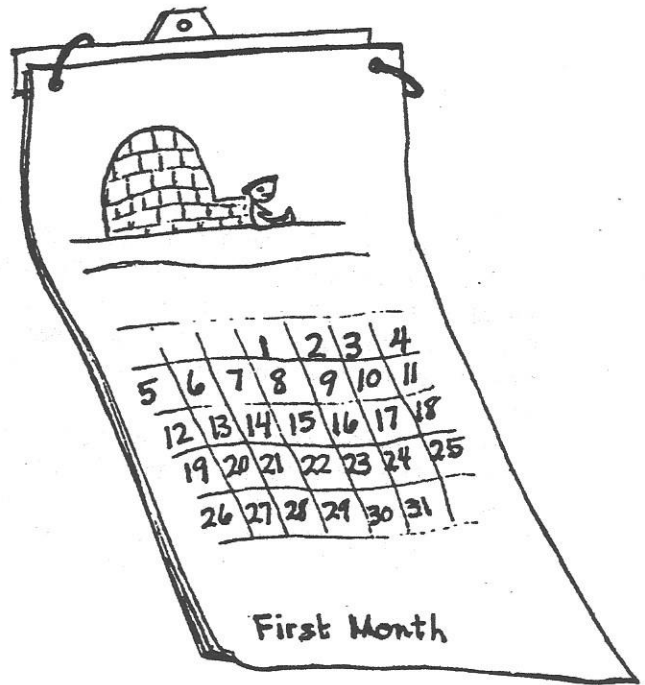
one Friend. Quiet activities in the bag are designed to help new children adjust to meeting for worship. Ruth Peterson prepared such a bag for one young attender in the Abington, PA meeting. Included in her bag were We're Going To Meeting For Worship by Abby Hadley, On Sitting Still by Mary C. Test, and Small Rain by Jesse and Elizabeth Orton Jones. Her particular bag was decorated with an applique of the meetinghouse.

Similarly, one mother writes about how she handled reading during meeting for worship on page B-12. This article may be very helpful for those of you who have the only children attending meeting, particularly if you live in an isolated situation.

Whether you choose "the box", "the bag", or "reading in meeting" as a start, you will find that all of these are hit or miss approaches for hit or miss situations. Initially, it is most important to establish a comfortable place for children and their parents in the meeting community. Once you have a core group of families who attend regularly, your meeting will want a more comprehensive religious education program. Then turn to Chapter 11.



Quaker Calendar



Supplies in the Box

Paper
Pre-ruled calendar pages
Markers or crayons
Rubber cement
Calendar

Getting Started

As teacher, you may wish to begin with George Fox. "Do you know anything about George Fox?" (Let the children know that he was the first Quaker. George Fox can be developed as much as is comfortable for the teacher and the group.)

"Telling the truth was very important to George Fox. He always chose his words very carefully."

He (George Fox) even began asking the meaning of words others never thought of questioning. He found out that the word Sunday had come to be used long before when people worshipped the Sun as though it were a god. Sunday really meant the Sun god's day; Monday meant the Moon god's day; Tuesday the day of Tyr, the war god; Wednesday the day of Woden, or Odin, the father of gods and humanity; Thursday, the day of Thor, the god of thunder.

"I cannot call the days of the week by the names of gods I do not believe in," he said. For this reason, George Fox called Sunday the First Day, and Monday the Second Day, and so on. Even yet, three hundred years after George Fox's time, some Quakers do not speak of Sunday Schools, but of First Day Schools.

(Fahs, 1971, p.20)

"The months are also named after Gods. Do you know who any of them are? George Fox called January First Month. What do you think he called February?" (Second Month) "March?" (Third Month)

"Today we are going to make a Quaker calendar. What will be different from this regular calendar?" (The names of the months will be replaced by number names.)

The Activity

It is helpful to look at a regular calendar to copy numbers into the

Have the children do illustrations on a separate sheet of paper which can be rubber cemented to the back of each calendar page. The teacher may need to help glue the Second Month picture to the back of the First Month calendar grid so that the picture is properly upside down in relation to the preceding month and right side up for its own month below it.

Our older children drew illustrations with great care; the younger took a long time to print numbers, but whizzed through the art work. This project can go on for several weeks or even months if the children are few and attendance spotty.

The finished calendar makes a nice gift for someone in meeting.

Resources
Candles in the Dark by Margaret Cooper Brinton, Mary Esther McWhirter and Janet E. Shroeder. (Hemlock Press, 1964). Contains some seasonal stories.

George Fox: The Man Who Wouldn't by Sophia Lyon Fahs. (Friends General Conference, 1971)

The Friends Journal Calendar

Key to the Prison by Louise A. Vernon. (Herald Press, 1968)

Prospect Hill Meeting of Minneapolis, Minnesota produced the calendar differently as a fundraiser.

Birthdays of everyone in meeting were collected when children interviewed Friends for the "Friends Family Album" (see page G-10). Illustrations were placed next to a calendar.

Childrens' black and white illustrations were placed next to a calendar grid "shrunk" from a regular calendar. Three grids with one illustration for each month fit on a legal size page. These legal size pages were machine copied and sold to members of meeting.

PROSPECT HILL FRIENDS

FEBRUARY 1985

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Martin Schmidt, 1939	2
3 DORIS CHURTON	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 DAVE THURMELLEN	12 BOB PULLIN	13	14	15 LYONE WILFON JEFF THURMELLEN	16
17	18 THOM SCHULTZ	19 B-4	20 Angelo Corio, 1939	21 JILL FLOERCE KATHY FLOERCE	22	23
24	25	26	27 HEATHER WESCOTT	28	SUNDAY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32	MONDAY 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32



Raquel
by Mary

Book Illustrations

Supplies In the Box

Colored paper or tag board
for the cover
White paper for the inside pages
Markers
Pencils or pens
Fasteners



Getting Started

Read or tell a story to the children from a book that has no pictures.
(See "Ways to Tell a Story", page Y-6.)

The Activity

Go back through the story, assigning illustrations to each child. The teacher may have the story prewritten across the lower portion of pages so that only the illustrations need to be added or the story can be paraphrased by the children with words written on the spot.

Read the story again, showing the children their work when they have finished drawing.

Resources

The Bible, particularly Old Testament stories and New Testament parables. (Also see Bible article, page Y-11.)

Grandpa, Tell Us a Story by Charles Kohler. (Quaker Home Service, 1983)

Candles In the Dark by Margaret Cooper Brinton, Mary Esther McWhirter and Janet E. Shroeder. (Hemlock Press, 1968)

The Friendly Story Caravan by Anna Pettit Broomell. (Pendle Hill, 1962)

Sparks Among the Stubble by Elfrida Vipont. (Friends Home Service Committee, 1971)

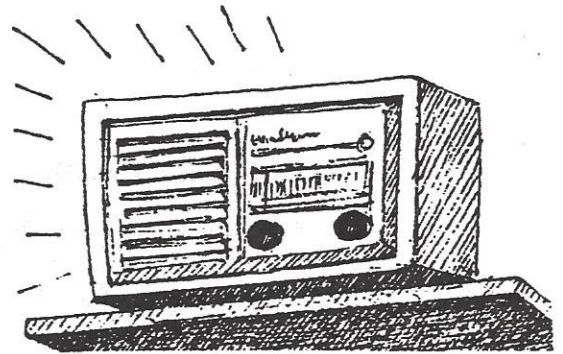
Variations

You may wish to line the children up and have them read the story to Friends at the close of meeting for worship.

Radio Show

Supplies In the Box

Tape recorder
A few items for sound effects such as
old table ware, paper and plastic bags
to crumble (makes a good fire sound)
Story of your choice



Getting Started

Read and discuss story of your choice.

The Activity

Ask the children to make a radio play out of the story. You may have the children cooperatively plan and act out the radio play together, assign specific parts to individual children, or direct the children to work in pairs (an older and younger child). Your organization depends on the number, ages, and personalities of the children.

Encourage sound effects, which are a large part of the fun. Simple items in the room--a waste paper basket, a cardboard box, a jingling bracelet--can make good effects. So can the human body--whistling, snapping fingers, and talking in various tones of voice.

The tape can be stopped at various points to work on the next section. (Use the "pause" button.) Play the tape for the class and then the meeting when it is finished.

Radio plays can be shared with children who are home sick.

Resources

See previous page, B-5.

By Katrina Mason
Bethesda, Maryland, Monthly Meeting

Variations

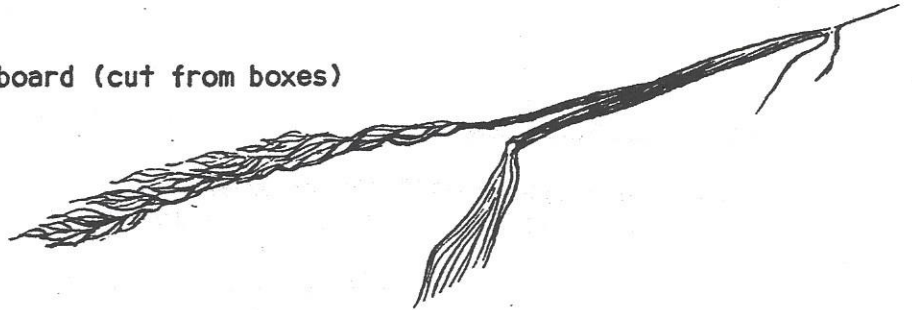
Play a cassette tape of an old radio show to give the children an idea of the sound of real radio drama before doing a show of your own. Cassette tapes of old radio dramas are available at some discount stores and/or record shops.

Add advertisements to your show. Biblical era crafts, food, transportation, and services could be very interesting.

Nature Walk: Creating a Meditative Environment

Supplies in the Box

12" squares of cardboard (cut from boxes)
String
Masking tape
Paper sacks



Getting Started

First, give each child a paper sack and take a nature walk. Ask the children to pick up twigs and other interesting items such as stones, shells, leaves and dried weeds in the fall. For this activity they will need lots of twigs and sticks that are not over 12 inches long.

The Activity

After the walk, the activity might be introduced as follows: "Do you have a special, quiet place where you like to be alone? Can you think of a time when you have felt a sense of peace and wholeness? Imagine that you are a very tiny person. Now where would you like to sit in silence--closed in a snug place or out in the open?"

Give each child a 12" x 12" cardboard square.

"Keep imagining that you are very small. With the things that you have collected, build yourself a quiet place to meditate. Build it on your cardboard square. It should be strong enough to withstand a 50 mile an hour wind. Use string or masking tape if you need something to hook pieces of your environment together."

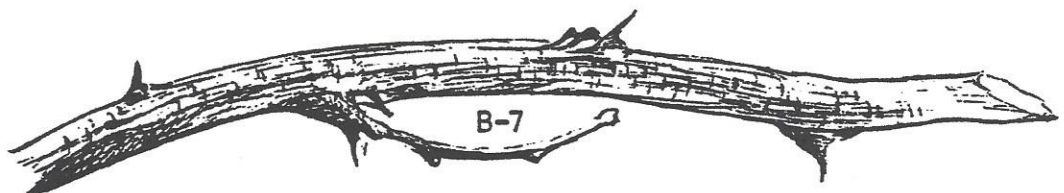
Encourage the children to explain their finished environments to meeting.

Alternatives

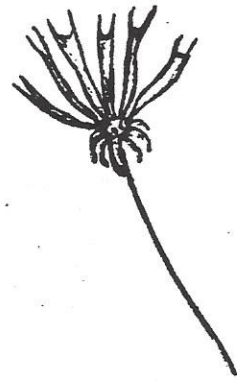
Do this activity in pairs. Partner an older child with one who is younger.

Display the environments on the floor in the center of the next worship circle if your meeting is small enough. Be sure to include the name of the artist(s) on a card next to each creation.

Write poetry inspired by the environments. The poetry can start with a list of words that describe the environment or the feeling a small person would have inside it.



Nature Walk: Prickly Seed Pictures



Supplies in the box

Cardboard pieces--12"x12" or smaller
Plain colored cloth with a nap to cover cardboard pieces
Stapler or glue
Paper sacks or boxes with dividers, e.g. egg cartons
Magnifying glass

Getting Started

Talk about the great variety of "hitch-hiker" seeds and the many ways other seeds find new ground. Perhaps tell the parable of sowing seeds or talk about the other images of seeds in the Bible.

Give each child a paper sack or box and take a nature walk. Ask the children to collect seeds that hitch-hike. Yes, the sticky, prickly kind. With the magnifying glass, examine barbs and hooks of different seeds.

The Activity

Cover cardboard pieces with "fuzzy" cloth that has enough nap for the seeds to grab. The cloth may be either stapled or glued to the cardboard.

Ask the children to arrange their seeds on the cloth in a pleasing design.

Make a display of finished collages for your meeting.

Resource

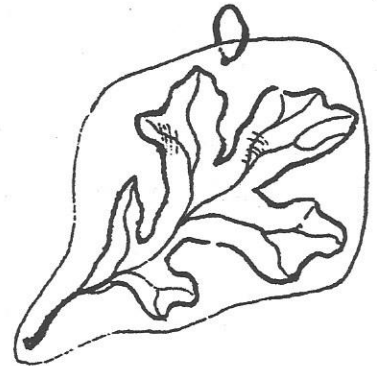
The Wonders of Seeds by Alfred Stefferud. (Harcourt, Brace, 1956)



Nature Walk: Leaf Pendants

Supplies In the Box

Paper sacks or bags
Clear adhesive plastic ("Contact")
Scissors
Yarn or string
Large needle



Getting Started

On a fall nature walk, carry bags and collect attractive leaves from different trees.

Activity

Sort and talk about the leaves.

Select the prettiest, flat ones. Place these on the sticky side of clear adhesive. Space them well. Carefully cover with another piece of clear adhesive. Younger children will need help.

Cut an oval or other shape around each leaf to form a medallion. Make a hole near an edge of each and thread yarn or string through the hole to make a decorative hanging.

These leaf pendants may be worn, hung in windows, or taped to a wall. Scientifically-minded children will want to sort and label their collection.

Alternative Fall Walk

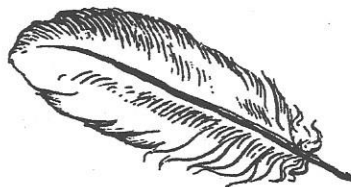
Collect dry weeds. Arrange fall bouquets. Osage oranges poked with holes make good bases if you have access to osage oranges. Otherwise use a flower pot or jar.

Fall bouquets make nice gifts for shut-ins.

By Kay Hollister
Yellow Springs, Ohio, Monthly Meeting



Nature Walk:



Slide Transparencies

Supplies in the Box

- Small paper bags
- Slide frames (purchase from a camera store)
- Clear adhesive plastic ("Contact") and/or hard plastic such as that sold for notebook covers. Either can be precut into rectangles that fit into slide frames.
- Projector

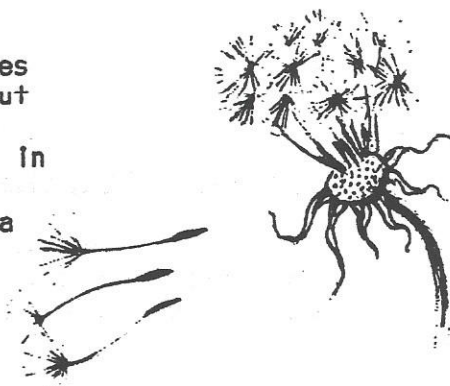
Getting Started

Give each child a paper bag to carry on a nature walk. Ask the children to deposit the tiniest, most interesting things that nature has to offer in their bags. It is a good idea to ask the children to think of examples before you start walking. Ideas usually include dandelion fluff, flower petals, seeds, blades of grass, and grains of sand. Everything must be thin.

The Activity

Give each child at least two precut plastic rectangles and one frame. Direct the children to choose their favorite bits and to arrange them on the plastic in a pleasing manner. When a satisfactory arrangement has been achieved, cover it with a second piece of plastic. Then slide this "sandwich" into a frame.

When everyone has finished, project the slides in a darkened room and let each child talk about his/her creation. It is fun to speak from the darkness. There is often amazement at the way in which forms change with projection. Many are simply silhouettes. I like to show the slides a second time with recorded classical music as a dramatic background. Parents and Friends are generally eager to share in these end results.



Alternatives

Incorporate drawings with the pieces of nature. For example, one child drew a bunny sitting among real, tiny weeds.

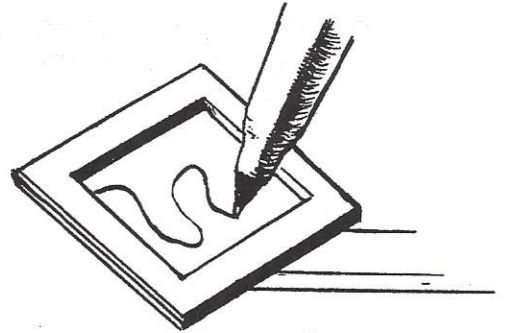
Encase other minute objects in the plastic. These could include yarn threads, cut paper, cellophane bits, and very thin buttons.

Write nature poetry to read during the slide presentation. Each child can contribute one line on a card.

Slide/Tape Production

Supplies In the Box

Clear slide transparencies (These can either be purchased or you can clean emulsion from your own rejected slides with a cotton ball dipped in a strong bleach and water solution.)
Sharp tipped markers which work on plastic ("Sharpies")
Projector
Cassette tape recorder
Cassette tape
Story of your choice



Getting Started

Read and discuss a story of your choice.

The Activity

Go back through the story and assign each child a portion to illustrate. The illustrations can be drawn directly on slide transparencies with sharp tipped markers.

Many children like to rehearse appropriate sound effects to accompany the story while they are drawing. These sound effects may include singing, moans, loud cries, thuds, exclamations, sighs, etc. done either by individuals or the entire group.

Read the story onto a tape while the children add their sound effects. Play back while projecting the slides.

Resources

The Bible, particular Old Testament stories and New Testament parables

Grandpa, Tell Us a Story by Charles Kohler. (Quaker Home Service, 1983)

Candles in the Dark by Margaret Cooper Brinton, Mary Esther McWhirter and Janet E. Schroeder. (Hemlock Press, 1964)

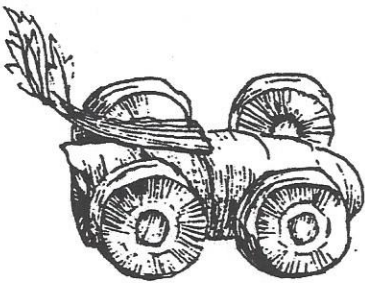
The Friendly Story Caravan by Anna Pettit Broomell. (Pendle Hill, 1962)

Sparks Among the Stubble by Elfrida Vipont. (Friends Home Service Committee, 1971)

Alternatives

Pictures for the visual portion of this activity can be drawn on transparencies for an overhead projector.

The sound portion can be done "live" rather than by recording.



Incredible Edibles

(Good for Potluck Sunday)



Supplies in the Box

Food Items for sculpture may include but are not limited by any of the following:

Raw vegetables: carrots, celery, broccoli, green pepper, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, olives, edible pod peas, cauliflower, lettuce and radishes.

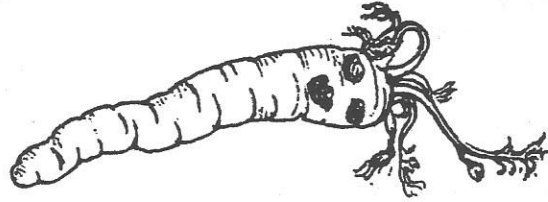
Bread
Crackers
Cereal
Thick Jello
Popped corn
Cold cuts

Fruit: bananas, dates, raisins, strawberries, cherries, melon balls, or other shapes

Cheese

Connectors: toothpicks, cream cheese, peanut butter, dip, honey

Utensils: paring knives, peelers
Paper plates
Cards for titles
Markers



Getting Started

Perhaps begin this way: "In First Day School, we often try to look at things in a new way. Today we are going to make food sculptures. Be sure that your hands are clean before you touch the food." (Check children's hands!)

The Activity

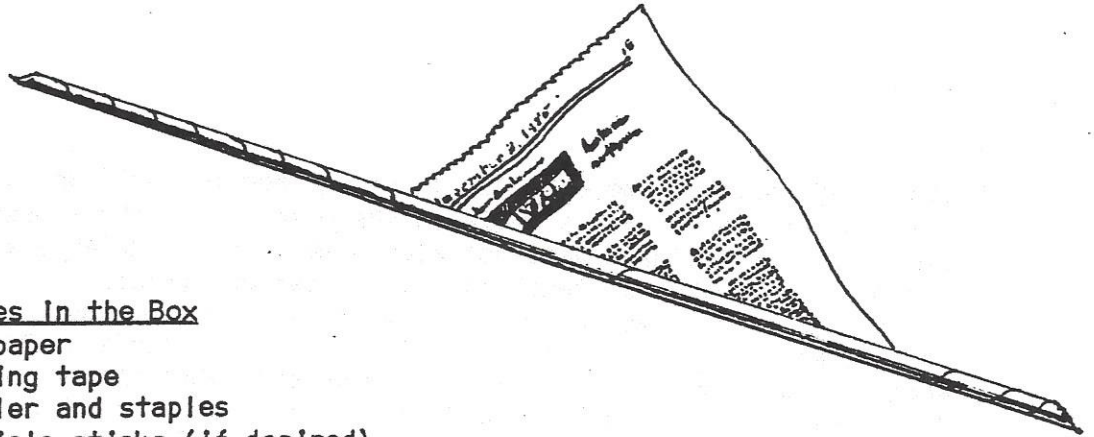
"Now can anyone think of a way to connect two pieces of food that would make them look interesting? Can you add some other pieces?" (Let several children experiment while the others watch.) "When you make your food sculpture, you can create something that we all can recognize or you can put together an interesting shape. Try to make it appetizing so that people will want to eat it. When we have finished, we will display our 'Incredible Edibles' at potluck for everyone to enjoy."

Each child will probably want a paper plate to use as a base. When a sculpture is completed, ask the sculptor to "Think of a name for your Incredible. Write its name and yours on a card."

Set up the display so that Friends can admire and eventually eat these creations.

This activity usually takes about 20 minutes. Add a story.

Strut Building



Supplies In the Box

Newspaper
Masking tape
Stapler and staples
Popsicle sticks (if desired)

Getting Started

Perhaps begin by talking about the Friends decision making process. "This activity is designed to help you think about working in a group. How do Friends decide what the meeting is going to do?" (meeting for business, consensus) "Who usually leads the meeting for business?" (clerk) "What can Friends do when they cannot agree?" (go into silence)

If you have more than five children, divide into two groups with a "clerk" for each group.

The Activity

Roll sheets of newspaper diagonally into struts. One sheet makes one strut. The ends may be reinforced with popsicle sticks if you want your structures to be long lasting. You may roll struts ahead of time or ask the children to do it. There should be at least ten struts per person.

Now ask each group to talk over what they could build with their struts. Stress that the group must plan and build cooperatively. To build, the ends of the struts are simply stapled or taped together. A few loose sheets of newspaper can be incorporated into the sculpture. Sometimes I ask them to include at least one moving part. After the group has used Quaker process to determine a plan, they may proceed.

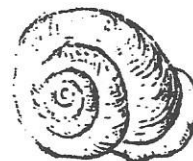
Strutbuilding is very popular with all ages. It is something that our early teen group found particularly absorbing. Although this activity requires space, it is blissfully quiet.

Have each group tell meeting about their sculpture. They may want to think up a name and a story to go with it.

Variation

Drape a large strut structure with sheets. Project slide transparencies onto the irregular surface. (See "Slide Transparencies", page B-10 or "Slides", page B-11 for two techniques to make transparencies in class or at a retreat. Abstract hand drawn slides can be particularly interesting.) Play fanciful background music during your show.

Reading in Meeting



There have been years when our children were the only ones to regularly attend meeting. It seemed silly to bring them for half an hour then all retire to another room; we could do whatever we did there just as well at home. But the children were not always able to sit quietly and profitably for a whole hour. Reaching into my own childhood, I did what we all so often do; I followed my mother's example. In one drawer of her desk she kept several colorful booklets of Bible stories. We were permitted to take them to meetings for worship when there was no First Day School. And so I gave my children permission to read in meeting for worship. Anne enjoyed reading her copy of The Children's Bible (Golden Press). Tom preferred stories of Quakers or others meeting crises with courage and faith. Will was eclectic in his tastes.

We had firm ground rules. The children were only to read for the first half hour. Then they were to close their books and meditate upon what they had read. If a Friend spoke while they were reading, they closed the books on their fingers and listened. The choice of books was closely monitored. They had to be ones which I felt would encourage spiritual awareness and growth. Riding home after meeting, we often discussed what they had read or the spoken messages.

Reading in meeting is not without its critics. Turning pages can rustle very loudly and annoy some Friends. Other children occasionally appear who sit through the entire hour with Nancy Drew or science fiction. It has been argued that only by experiencing the discipline of sixty minutes on a hard bench or chair without any external entertainment can children grow up to be proper Quakers.

Obviously, reading in meeting is not the perfect solution to the perennial dilemma of religious education in a small meeting. But given the situation of parents who want to attend meeting, children who love to read but have difficulty praying or meditating for a whole hour, and the lack of other First Day School alternatives, with careful parameters, reading in meeting can offer an interim solution. In our mobile society new families can suddenly appear. Eventually the children get old enough to realize there is enough inside of themselves to draw on for an hour of prayer and meditation. If we do it "right", not only can they profitably use the hour of silence, but they can also develop a love of reading the Bible and other "good" books.

By Marty Grundy
Cleveland Monthly Meeting