NOTE: This article is reprinted unchanged from a recent edition of Teachers Mac.   It contains descriptions and suggestions for use of some of the material on our "Creative Writing" disk with lots of thoughts about using HyperCard in the Classroom and ideas for creating with HyperCard.

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Writing and Story Projects with the Mac
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                 by Charles Doe

    As a lifelong reader, an aspiring (probably pipe dreaming is a better word) writer, and as a language arts teacher, the writing possibilities   of the Mac and various programs have always excited me the most.   I'm still puzzled at the people who can only envision business, math or drill applications for this wonderfully flexible tool.   Ease of editing, even more than spell or grammar checkers, free writers to put their thoughts down without worrying about the details, then put them in the best light later.   Comparative ease of illustration and nice final copies help too, but most exciting of all is the number of ways of being creative with a computer and words.   Everything from a simple prose story to illustrated or animated stacks are possible with a variety of programs for every age level.

     Whether you're a teacher in a one computer class room, run a Mac Lab or are home schooling creative writing and prose projects, or perhaps creative story and illustrated prose projects is a better way to put it, offer innumerable valuable project possibilities   for your students at nearly every level.   The younger the student, the more you become involved in the process of putting the story into the final form. However, students become able to create with Macs at a surprisingly young age with amazing little instruction.   Public domain, shareware and commercial programs devoted to such projects will be discussed later in this article.

    To some degree, the final product is shaped the program or stack being used   to create it.   However, project possibilities include

1.   Field trip reports, either illustrated or prose.   HyperCard stacks are an excellent medium for such reports and can serve as the basis for later reports.   Stacks could be individual or group projects or each student in a class could contribute information and/or drawings for a single card.   Stack creation could be done by the teacher or parent and information could be typed by students or teachers/parents if student word processing skills are to slow.

2.   Story creation can be handled in much the same way.   Stories can be original, developed through discussion, based on the pattern of another story (especially useful with early elementary students), the modernization of a fairy tale, retelling a move or television program, a further adventure of a comic book, book, television, or movie hero, and so on.   The degree of illustration/animation is only limited by the type of program

you are using.   HyperCard stories especially can easily be made interactive and can be all pictures in a kind of "wordless" story fashion.

3.   The object of either of the above activities can be the story or report itself, or it can include HyperCard instruction, especially in a Mac Lab.

4.   I love add on stories, but they need to be strictly controlled.   Each student could add a card to a stack story.

5.   Another great project is keeping a journal.   HyperCard journals can even have password protection assigned with a minimum of effort so a student can preserve some privacy.
6.   Map and local history projects are great as well.   Our school recently purchased a "xapshot" camera to take photos to use in stacks, but new video and cd technology is making that unnecessary....but that's a subject for another article.

Public Domain & Shareware Writing and Story/Creation Programs

A stack developer named Ralph Gonzalez has created three excellent programs for story creation.   The first is called "Louie Toons" and is freeware.   "Louie Toons" is a HyperCard authoring tool which makes it easy to create animated cartoons or stories using the "flipcard" principle, a basic HyperCard animating technique.   This stack automates part of the process and includes some instruction in using HyperCard's paint tools.   This stack comes with two wordless animations to illustrate the principal.   The finished product is good for early elementary or preschool students.   Adding a few words would be effective as well.   Upper elementary and older students could be taught to use "Louie Toons" to create stories quite easily.

Mr. Gonzalz   created another stack called "StoryBook".   This stack is basically the first and last page of a story.   The stack is copied as the beginning of a new story.   The bottom of each page contains a row of developer buttons which automates the process of creating a story.   These are hidden when the story is complete.   The complete instructions for using this stack and modifying stories created with it make "StoryBook" an excellent, basic HyperCard tutorial as well as a good story creation tool.   This stack is a little more complicated to use but could still be used relatively easily by upper elementary and older children unless you are in a one computer classroom without access to a lab.   Learning to use this stack is not a situation in which you could work with a student for a minute or two and then expect him or her to work independently.

Matthew Ford of "Yin, Yang, and Bob Games" has created a great $5.00 (well worth this small fee!) shareware stack called "StoryBuilder" for creating interactive stories much more easily than beginning from scratch.   That is done by automating some HyperCard

processes.   Illustration is a little limited in these stories but can still be done relatively easily.   "Each 'page' of the interactive story...gives the reader a situation and a number of options. The reader assesses the situation and uses the mouse to click on the button of the chosen option.   The story then moves on to another page.   The result is a tale that evolves as the reader makes decisions."   (from Mr. Ford's notes in the stack.) This stack could be used to create quizzes and other none fiction material in which students are not allowed to progress unless a correct answer is given.   Again, upper elementary and older students can easily be taught to use this stack to create stories.   Perhaps they could share their work with younger students.   Teachers could also use "StoryBuilder" as a tool to create "stack" stories and other fiction and non-fiction material.

In case you're curious about the name "Yin, Yang, and Bob Games", here's Mr. Ford's explanation.

     "Bob is that which is neither Yin nor Yang.   Bob is necessary in a complicated world.   You know those days that aren't really good but not that bad; they just kind of happen?   That's a Bob kind of day.   A Bob movie.   Bob pasta.

     "Bob is not   the Tao.   The Tao is dynamic and full of nice surprises; Bob is just Bob.   In fact, "Bob" is the only adjective that truly describes the noun "Bob".

      "Bob is not this Dobbs guy either.

      "I chose the name "Bob" because it's spelled the same way backwards as forwards.   ("Otto" is too sinister-sounding and "Ava" too blissful.)"

     The third and most complicated   of Mr. Gonzalez's stacks is a $10 shareware stack called "BookBinder" which is probably most suited to creating "non-fiction" material. "BookBinder" contains detailed instructions and a relatively easy way to make an index, table of contents, and footnotes.   The idea is to use "BookBinder" to create a stack that is a book as well.   This is a great beginning place for reports of any kind.

     Keeping "electronic" journals is another great way to get kids writing on Macs. "Journal" is a simple, freeware, stack by an unknown author which serves that purpose admirably.   It is also open-ended as to how long it needs to be keep.   Teachers could copy "Journal" and rename it after each student so each student would have their own stack.   Or, to make checking easier, a new journal for an entire class could be created each week or month.   Password protection could be added to individual stacks to insure privacy although this stack could be treated as an "electronic writing folder" rather than a diary.   Each card can be locked to prevent changes and printed for submission to the teacher.   A special note field for teacher or peer comments can be

summoned by clicking a button at the bottom of each card.

JournalWrite by Mark Starr is a shareware ($20) journal which is much more structured than "Journal".   It is a "simplified word processor customized with features for maintaining a journal, diary, or other type of sequential date oriented type text records."   The stack is organized to contain text entries for one year, dated my month and day.   The original stack should be copied before text is entered.   It can then be copied again for the following year.   I don't think this stack is as flexible or useful in classroom or lab situations, but may be useful for Homeschoolers and others using their Macs at home.

Another example of a writing aide for the Mac is "LetterWriter", a shareware ($15), HyperCard stack by Steve Nelson, that helps organize correspondence.   It will keep records of letters received and sent, store the text of letters in a single file,   and automatically format letters.   They can be loaded in to the clipboard and copied into another word processor for fine tuning.   Automatic personal and business letter styles can be created with customized closings as well.   This may be more useful for home use unless students have the luxury (in my district at least)of lots of computer time at school.

These are just a few of the countless public domain and shareware creative writing aides available and some of the simpler.   Students can create stories from scratch with HyperCard if you've the time to teach them and much more complicated tools exist if the time is available.   Generally, however, lots of wonderful projects and stories can be created in much less time with tools like those describe above.

Commercial Products

Extensive discussion of commercial writing products for students on the Mac is beyond the scope of this article, but here are a few.   Again a criterion for selection and discussion is relative ease of teaching children to use, the amount of time involved to create a project, and the programs flexibility.   Among the many available programs are

The Writing Center from The Learning Company (School version 94.95, Home Version, 54.95 with no Thesaurus) is an outstanding children's desktop publisher.   It comes with a 100,000 word spell checker, a 220,000 word thesaurus, 220 color school oriented graphics, multiple columns and more.   It is a full featured word processor which can take advantage of all the fonts in your system folder and can import text and graphics. A Spanish/English bilingual version is available as well.   If classrooms and labs had no other desktop publisher or even word processor, this would fit the bill.

Story-Mation (B&W-31.95, Color 38.95) allows students to create animated stories.

Voices can be added and it comes with a paint palette.

Storybookweaver(Home $34.95, School 54.95) is a software tool for writing and illustrating storybooks.   It comes with lots of images, scene combinations and sounds. Its aimed at grades 1-7.

The Talking Once Upon a Time ... Series is helps six to thirteen year old students write and illustrate their own voice.   In addition, a digitized voice helps with reading skills. Each volume has a different graphics theme.   Volume one is farm, main streat and safari, volume two contains underwater, dinosaur, and forest graphics and volume three has space, medieval and wild west graphics.

Kid Works 2 (Home 35.95, School 59.95) is children's word processor (pre-k to 4) with a paint program and text to speech.

Kid Pix (37.95) and Kid Pix Companion ($31.00) from Broderbund take a different and less flexible, but wacky and fun approach to creation.   Kid Pix is essentially a children's paint program with a lot of fun extras.   Its aimed at younger elementary and pre school children, but everyone has fun with it.   Kid Pix companion among has a "slide player" among other things.   It allows children to take previously created and saved Kid Pix creations and combine them with sound and some other special effects to create a slide show.   These are not really animated but can be effective stories that kids can create themselves.

In general, the commercial programs are by far the most powerful in the combination of features and guidance provided.   On the other hand, the public domain and shareware stacks discussed above offer a lot of flexibility because of their simplicity and will certainly help if your budget is tight.

All public domain and shareware programs discussed in this article are availble from SchoolHouse Mac (5236 Coats Grove Rd, Hastings, MI 49058).   Many of them are also available from other user groups and America Online as well.   The commercial programs are availble from most   mail order companies which handle Mac software. One of the largest is Educational Resources.   Call 1-800-624-2926 to order or request a catalog.   Their prices compare favorably with most mail order houses and are generally much less expensive than from stores which handle Macintosh software.