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# Children Can Make Art And Literature, Too

**T**HE current issue of the literary magazine "Stone Soup" features stories about a black South African prisoner, a daughter coping with her father's mental illness and a stuffed horse that chases the sharks out of child's bedroom. This diversity of subjects is held together by a common thread — the authors are all under 13 years old.

The staff of the Children's Art Foundation in Santa Cruz has been publishing "Stone Soup" since 1973, and the magazine has about 10,000 subscribers worldwide. The foundation exhibits children's art from around the globe, and the magazine is illustrated with drawings and paintings that are part of its permanent collection. The criteria for publication are just as tough as those of an adult magazine, said William Rubel, co-director of the foundation and an editor of "Stone Soup."

"We accept about one out of every 200 manuscripts we get," Rubel said. "We look for fiction that has an interesting story where the characters and places are well-described and thoroughly imagined, and the language is varied and appropriate. We look for truthful writing, like any literary magazine, as complex as the author's own life."



**Detail of work  
by Malawi child**

Rubel believes child writers are often very isolated, and seeing their work in print encourages them to feel that what they're doing is important.

"Our whole culture underestimates children," Rubel said. "The greatest stifling influence is placing them into narrow developmental categories. There's a lot of talk about literacy, but really more fundamental is, 'Did you write this because you have something to say to someone?'"

The magazine, which is produced every two months during the school year, also prints poetry and book reviews. Although most material comes from the United States, submissions from children in other countries are encouraged.

"Every issue includes a lot of cultural variety," Rubel said. "I'd like to see more writing from particular groups of kids in the United States. We're publishing our first special issue in March; the writings are all from Navajo children."

By soliciting manuscripts from children with similar backgrounds, Rubel said, "We can create material that didn't exist before, that might not have otherwise been created."

And that, Rubel believes, is more productive than the best class essay about "What I Did Over My Summer Vacation." •

—Anne Gelhaus

*The Children's Art Foundation, 915 Cedar St., is currently exhibiting prints by Lithuanian students.*