

PSYCHOLOGY

Inner Secrets Revealed

Pictures can reveal to the psychologists the unconscious troubles in the minds of teen-agers such as dangerous aggressive drives, shyness, and sex conflicts.

By MARJORIE VAN DE WATER

► THE inner secrets of your personality can be told through pictures such as the two here. The pictures don't look like you, of course. But if you made up a story to fit the picture and told it to a psychologist, he would know a lot about your hidden feelings and drives, even if these are unknown to your own conscious mind.

The pictures and others like them are a series for a new test to learn more about the troubled, inner feelings of adolescents. With the help of the pictures psychologists might be able to pick up dangerously aggressive drives, shyness that can ruin a youngster's life if not detected, sex conflicts and many other important facts about our teen-agers.

Use of pictures for this purpose was devised by Dr. Percival M. Symonds of Teachers College, Columbia University.

If you want to get an idea of how the test works, try it on yourself.

Look at the picture below. What do you see in it? Perhaps it makes you think of the preparations in a family for high school graduation or some other special occasion. Or perhaps the mother is getting one of her daughters ready for her first dance. But what is the other girl thinking? Why is she not taking part in the preparations?

Build Story

Now, show the picture to a teen-age boy (or girl) and ask him to build a story around it. You may be surprised at what he tells you. When high school boys and girls give free rein to their imaginations, they dream up a world filled with aggression, Dr. Symonds found.

Here is what one boy, Jimmy, a 17-year-old student of the academic course, told about the picture of the two girls and woman:

"There is a Cinderella situation here. One girl is the mother's favorite. The other one is neglected. They grow up like that, one disliking the other. One of them marries the handsomest fellow in town; the other one just gets a local boy, no one important. The marriage finally ends in a terrible tragedy. The favorite is killed by the neglected girl because of jealousy. Naturally, the husband of the favorite seeks revenge, and he goes to the house where the other girl lives and makes an attempt to murder her. He is killed by this girl's husband, and the other two are accused of murder. They're executed. The mother realizes that her favoritism caused sorrow to about 12 different people, the families of the dead."

But don't picture Jimmy, on the basis of this story of his, as a teen-age gangster, whose literary fare consists solely of the more lurid comics. He is a well-adjusted boy with an excellent reputation in school with his teachers. He is fond of reading poetry and plays and likes to see plays. He collects books and would like to own complete sets of the poets and classics. Chief worry of his parents about him is that his popularity keeps him from spending enough time on his school work. He speaks warmly of his father and mother and calls them pals.

Reveal Character

The stories thought up by the boys and girls do reveal their character—not a single one like this but a series of them—but they show the deep-seated tendencies, not the surface appearance. In general, when a theme is exaggerated in the stories there is an absence of this trend in the personality of the individual, and vice versa, Dr. Symonds found.

Individuals with stories filled with violence and hostile aggression turned out to be in real life sissies, ingratiating, inhibited and docile. Those who tell bizarre, fantastic stories containing elements of mystery turn out to be quiet, lazy, indifferent and

without initiative or queer, nervous and immature.

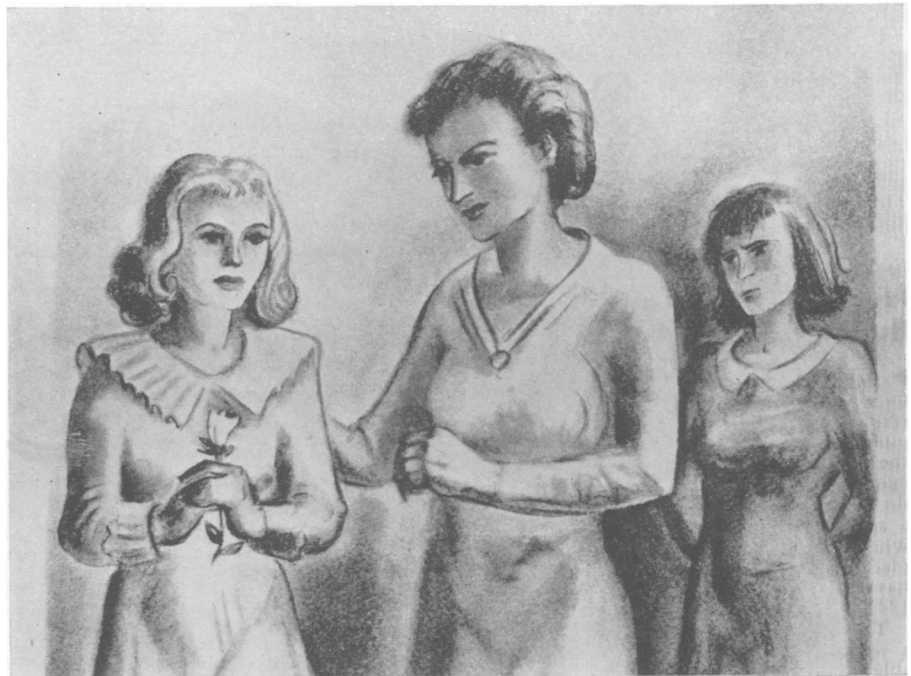
Perhaps you would like to see what a neurotic boy with delinquent trends does with the same picture. This is the story thought up by Jack, 15-year-old junior high student:

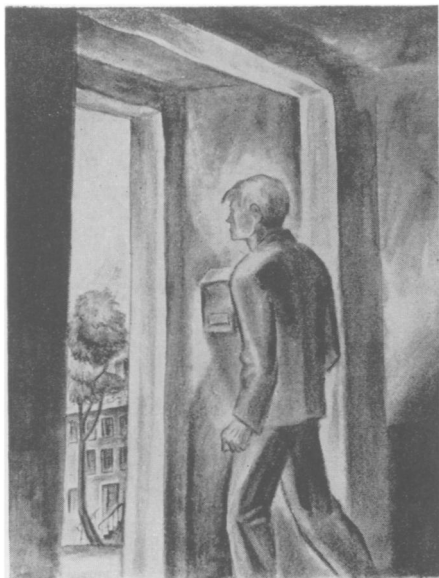
"This woman had two girls. One was younger than her sister. Her mother always liked the oldest girl. So she bought her all new clothes and gave her the best of everything. She gave the younger girl the old clothes which her sister had worn out. The mother always made her do housework while her sister went out with boys. The mother always thought that the oldest girl would marry a rich guy and she'd live with her in luxury. But she got fooled, for when this girl married, she didn't care nothing about her mother. She and her husband moved. The mother didn't know where for she never heard from her. The youngest girl was just going with boys. She stayed with her mother and helped her all she could. When she got married, she done the opposite of the other girl and took the mother into her home. The mother was always sorry she never favored the little girl."

Both boys start out with the same situation of sister rivalry, but how different is the ending!

Now look at the picture on the opposite page. What does it make you think of? You will undoubtedly notice the clenched fist and set jaw and think that the young man is angry and perhaps is leaving home.

Here is what Jimmy saw:





"This man works for a rich farmer. He has been working for him for years. He has been underpaid, beaten, treated mean, but for some reason he never has left the place. The reason is that when he was a little boy he was first brought to this place by his father. He has grown up with the present farmer, his boss now, and the present farmer's sister. As he grew up he grew to love the farmer's sister, and the farmer hates him because of all the attention given him. He is strong and handsome. The farmer hates him because he himself is frail and jealous of the other man's strength. He lived under these cruel conditions, beaten, all because of his love for the sister. Finally the farmer, who had great influence over his sister, was forcing her to marry some man to get his money. This was the day of the wedding. He had just heard that the farmer's sister was found dead in her room. She had killed herself to avoid marriage. The man realized that now he had no reason to stay and that at last he could have revenge without hurting the one he loved. He went into the house and killed the farmer he had grown up with—choked him to death with the powerful muscles of his hands—muscles that the farmer had forced him to build. He did not try to escape from the police after they found that he had murdered the farmer. He confessed to the crime and was hung on a tree right in front of the great house he should have owned. He was buried alongside of the farmer. The farmer's grave separated his and the girl's. They were separated in death even as in life."

When asked where he got the idea for the story, Jimmy said "The beginning is taken almost directly from 'Wuthering Heights.' The end is more my own—more tragic."

Jack also sees a crime story in this picture, but his version, inspired in part by movies and books, is much less violent than Jimmy's and again has a happy ending:

"This boy was brought up in a bad neighborhood. He was adopted by some rich people. While living there, he was influenced by a gang to tell them where the safe was and the combination, for the people trusted him with the combination. The gangsters got caught and squealed on the kid. He was sent to the reformatory. The people wanted to give him another chance, because they liked him. They thought it wasn't his fault. After two years in the reform school he was given a pardon. He got out and now he's working, hoping he can make a new start. He turned out to be a good citizen."

In the stories of these high school boys and girls, aggression is followed by punishment in monotonous sequence, Dr. Symonds found. A sequence repeated over and over again was to have the aggression of robbery or personal attack followed by the arrival of police, arrest, trial, conviction and punishment. Punishment meted out by these high school authors is severe—often life imprisonment or the electric chair.

Aggression Themes

Stories were obtained from 20 boys and 20 girls on 42 pictures. Every boy and girl told at least three stories including themes of aggression. But love was a common theme, too. Altogether 17 boys and 19 girls included at least three themes of love in their stories.

Dr. Symonds warns against using stories such as these to divine anything about the life history of the boy or girl telling them. The story teller does put himself into the tale, but caution must be used in interpretation. The boy or girl author may appear in the role of any, or all the characters of his creation. And it is not the least difficult for him to identify himself with a character of the opposite sex or a different age level. In fact, stories contain various displacements and disguises to hide the identity of the actual persons toward whom the feelings expressed in the story are directed in real life.

The psychologist can learn much about personality from the study of such stories, Dr. Symonds concludes, but he must proceed by indirection and must learn all he can about the individual before attempting to interpret his phantasies.

The complete set of the pictures drawn for the purpose by the artist Lynd Ward, together with the results of Dr. Symonds' study of the imaginings of high school boys and girls, are contained in a new book just published, *ADOLESCENT FANTASY* (Columbia University Press).

Science News Letter, August 20, 1949

BOTANY-CHEMISTRY

Heavy Doses Of 2,4-D Kill Water Hyacinth

➤ WATER hyacinth, at once the most troublesome and the most beautiful of the South's aquatic weeds, can be effectively controlled with heavy treatments of the

weed-killing chemical, 2,4-D, where lighter treatments have failed in the past. It promises to rid Southern rivers and lakes of blocking mats of vegetation that do tens of millions of dollars' worth of damage every year.

A team composed of scientists from Tulane University, the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research and the Army Engineer Corps have been conducting experiments under controlled field conditions. They have found that a spray laying down the equivalent of eight pounds of 2,4-D per acre will kill the water hyacinth and cause the masses to sink. It is important that this sinking occur; floating masses of dead hyacinth would be almost as bad as the living mats, so far as channel obstruction is concerned.

Water hyacinth is a tropical plant brought to this country originally as an ornamental. It has spikes of beautiful lavender flowers, and floats by means of air-containing pithy swellings in its leaf-stems, while its long roots trail in the water. Besides blocking navigation on rivers and lakes, it ruins them as habitats for ducks and fish, and also offers favorable breeding spots for some species of mosquitoes.

Science News Letter, August 20, 1949

Words in Science— ANTI-HISTAMINE

➤ HISTAMINE—you say it his-tam-in, stressing the his—is a chemical normally formed in the body. Among other actions, it stimulates stomach secretion.

It is now believed that release of too much histamine in the body can play a part in allergies and can also bring on vomiting and diarrhea.

So the drugs now commonly used against hay fever, asthma, hives and other allergies are anti-histamine chemicals; they counteract the histamine in the body.

Among the anti-histamine chemicals are benadryl, thephorin, trimeton, and thenylene hydrochloride.

Science News Letter, August 20, 1949

F you are interested in acquiring distinguished but inexpensive books for your science library, you will want a copy of Harvey Brace Lemon's *FROM GALILEO TO COSMIC RAYS* for only 98c. This 450-page work was published at three dollars and provides an intelligent, lucid account of the evolution of physics through Galileo, Newton, Boyle, Dalton, Einstein, et al. Gerald Wendt in the N. Y. Herald Tribune says, "In all the years that I have been reviewing scientific books I have often been fascinated but I have seldom used exclamation points. But this book deserves a fanfare . . ." Two other noted books now offered by us at drastically reduced prices: Warren Weaver's *THE SCIENTISTS SPEAK* at 98c (regularly \$3.75) and Raymond Ditmars' *THRILLS OF A NATURALIST'S QUEST* at 98c (originally \$3.50). Add 7c postage per book ordered. Ten-day cash-back guarantee. Send for **FREE CATALOG** listing many other outstanding titles in **SCIENCE, PHYSICS, NATURE, and APPLIED MATHEMATICS**. Savings up to 75%.

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