

(Ruth Prins is well-known for her television programs "Wunda Wunda" "Telaventure Tales," and "Compass Rose" seen in the Northwest and "Mrs. Alphabet" of NBC Los Angeles/Ms Prins is Director of preschools for academically talented in View Ridge and Magnolia)

### BLEEP

The fish were disappearing. Children and teacher alike were most upset. The Science Teacher had just bought some beautiful new fish to add to the fish already in the tank...some zebras, some neons, and some guppies. She wanted the children to observe the odd herding behavior of the zebras. The female guppy was very pregnant. The children were very excited when they left for the day on Monday. On Tuesday, they observed that some of the fish were missing. John, particularly, was most distressed and counted the remainder of the fish very carefully. It was field trip day so the children didn't return until two hours later. John made a beeline for the aquarium. "Oh no!" he cried. "There are two more gone."

The children clustered about the tank and discussed the situation and came to the conclusion that one of the fish must be eating the others. But which? A general discussion ensued and a vote was taken. One of the fish was removed. John protested. "It's that big, grey one," he said. "I know it is." He looks like he's eaten a lot lately."

but the children had voted for another one. The next morning John came early and hurried back to the aquarium. Sure enough! More fish were missing. Now the grey fish was removed and the children kept anxious vigil over the tank the rest of the morning. No more fish was gone. -The

The next morning John's count showed a full quorum. "He was the one, wasn't he?" queried John triumphantly to the teacher. "Yes, John," she said. "He was the culprit."

PRINS

"BLEEP"

ADD ONE

CULPRIT! John's ears pricked up. He mouthed the word. The other children picked up his interest and the intriguing sound of the word. Soon we heard "culprit" used everywhere for the cannibal fish. At playtime one child knocked the balance board askew. "He's the CULPRIT!" chorused the children.

At going-home time, a big school brother came to pick up his smaller brother and heard the sgga of the fish. .Big brother nodded sanguinely, "I'm sure glad you caught the f----r!" He said it as casually as someone might say "guy.!..or "culprit"

How sad. Language can be beautiful and so much fun. We hoped our children would go to/ their homes with their enthusiasm for their new word and that the homes would reinforce our efforts by utilizing the new word and seeking more.