

Native American writer N. Scott Momaday, whose mother was Cherokee, has imagined a dialogue between Bear and Yahweh, entitled *In the Bear's House*. In it, Bear asks Yahweh, "Language. How did it happen? How did language begin?" Yahweh answers, "Oh, the children made it one day. Poor Man, he had been trying so hard to talk, for such a long time. Then the children went out and played together. At the end of the day they had possession of language."

Yahweh tells Bear that the children came home, saying to their parents, "This is what you have been trying to say."

To which Bear replies, "Language is child's play."

Yahweh affirms, "There you have it."

Summer used to be the time for child's play, when simply being alone with one's thoughts was perfectly acceptable. No homework, no basketball practice, no school meetings. I could read as long as I wanted in the afternoons, then go roaming to my favorite field and watch the light moving across the land that lay like an open book before me.

Those days are long gone. We have become more and more urbanized, our lives busier and busier. But perhaps we should try now and then to get back into the spirit of those days. As a columnist in *The New York Times* recently noted, "With battalions of therapists, tutors and coaches we have now commandeered most aspects of our children's existence. What has become of their fantasy lives?"

Summer reading programs offer one way to encourage children to begin exploring the world of their imaginations as well as the world around them. Silence helps. No television, no computer games, no ipods plugged into young ears.

A writer once speculated that the great attraction of creative writing courses is that they allow students the quiet time that the world inside and outside the classroom does not. Students yearn to become acquainted with their inner lives through poetry and stories, having had so little opportunity to do so otherwise.

The Australian aborigines speak of the Dreamtime, a sacred time before clock time began, a time when all was being created. We need our own Dreamtime. It is where we dream our best dreams, feel the power of our own inner poetry calling to us. For me, it is always summertime. Sand spurs. Bare feet. Time on my hands, not heavy but ripe and promising as a book read by an open window. And outside a world to be daydreamed into existence, day after day.