

Students Show Literary Bent

By REBECCA BRATBURD

Under a clear blue sky, a group of young writers shared their thoughts on topics as heavy as the destruction of adolescence to as light as the feeling of a summer breeze at the ninth annual Fort Greene Park Summer Literary Festival over the weekend.

Anjelika Amog, 16, read a poem that had been spurred by a prompt provided during a NY Writers Coalition workshop a couple of weeks ago. (The prompt: "When do you know when childhood is over?")

"It was Monday, only the second week of eighth grade and already I was tired, more tired than I had ever been. More tired than I ever imagined I could be," she read in front of an audience of 100 or so parents and supporters of the students, who are between the ages of 7 and 18.

Anjelika, a seven-time workshop veteran, told us that her poem, entitled "Childhood Lullabies," was based on experiences with challenging teachers during eighth and 10th grades.

"In both instances, there was something that brought me down and something that kept me alive," she said. "A very concentrated anguish and concentrated growth."

Most of the kids sat on blan-

kets on the grass with books, toys and snacks as they listened to their fellow writers present their poetry and prose, although a few couldn't help but frolic around the towering Prison Ships Martyrs' Monument.

Mariah Thomas, 15, said she was at first nervous about participating in the workshops, but looks forward to a third season next summer.

"There were other people like me who like to write and I wasn't self conscious because nobody judged me," she said. "Afterwards, they would always comment on how good it was and what they liked about my writing, so it was very uplifting."

At the afterparty at Greenlight Bookstore—complete with cake and pink lemonade—a woman complimented Mariah on her poem, "A Small Ball of Tin."

The executive director of the NY Writers Coalition, Aaron Zimmerman, said that hearing the children's work often gives adults a new perspective.

"The writing of kids is like a reflection of the world that's almost purer than the writing of adults," he said. "We [as adults] have so many layers of defenses. We forget what's really going on in the world. Kids respond in a way that is direct and honest because they don't have the same defenses we do."



Students in the NY Writers Coalition writing workshops on Saturday.

Paula Vlodkowski