



He saw a different world

By Nancy McAllister

Pablo Picasso is one of modern art's most prodigious artists. He lived a long, productive life and seemed to exercise his artistic genius at his whim. But according to Howard Gardner in *Creating Minds* (Basic Books), Picasso ran into trouble when it came to conventional learning. He despised school and would do almost anything to get out of going.

Learning to read, write, and work with numbers perplexed and frustrated the young Picasso. He related to numbers purely visually. For instance, when he saw a pigeon he saw the eyes as 0s and its wings as 2s, says Gardner, but the idea of numerals as symbols for quantities completely eluded him. He was such a bad student that without extensive private tutoring and a good deal of obvious cheating, it's believed he never would have made it through grade school.

Picasso, ironically one of the most celebrated abstract artists of all time, was never able to master abstract thinking or traditional scholastic material. His parents, however, continued to encourage him as an artist—and the rest, as they say, is history.