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Pedagogy, Art and Poetry: The Beautiful Side of Teaching

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Abstract

The catalyst of ongoing, enduring, self-perpetuating cycles of learning becomes the highest form of expressive art. Memorable experiences, activities, and words can add the artistic aspect and heart to teaching. Carefully chosen poetry has the potential to engage readers' minds to produce powerful emotional and sensory reactions (Myers, 1997). To a sampling and examination of the most recent and best practices research from Grant Wiggings, Alfie Khon, Robert J. Marzano and others, this presentation intends to introduce a collection of some original and existing poetry and expressive writing to define the art that surrounds the heart of teaching and learning process. Poems and expressive writings, mine and others, can help us relate to those human values that help us build rather than destroy each other, and give voice to the challenge and exhilaration of learning.

Introduction

This presentation is based on the work of researchers who have honed processes and systems that build the scaffolding for learning. They have also identified weak links in existing systems and practices that constitute the barriers to learning, including cultural aspects of society. Under normal circumstances, no one can look at the cultural environment of our society and be pleased with what they find. The phrase "human nature" usually means that something is nasty or negative, and we use it to describe selfishness, competition, and egocentricity rather than cooperation and empathy (Khon, 2008). For example, the emphasis in the expression "I'm only human" indicates that what we fail to do or be seems to us most normal. Acts of kindness and great sacrifices never make us shrug and say, "Well, what did you expect? It's just human nature to be generous." Students should prepare for adult life by studying subjects that suit their talents, passions, and aspirations as well as needs (Wiggings, 2011). However, there is a fear within our society that children who are taught to care about others won't be able to succeed after reaching independence and maturity because of the belief that we live in an insensitive and cruel society. Significant practical benefits to individuals who learn pro social values include positive skills such as sharing and cooperation instead of learning to avoid or defeat others. Children should be encouraged to become responsive to others, to empathize and to share even if this values are never incorporated into the school curriculum, this could greatly improve society. Children are the future of our world and represent hope and change so craved by humanity. The way we teach them now will become the way in which the world will function tomorrow. Pedagogy, art and poetry become a medium through which teachers can communicate values and skills that could steer society in a positive direction.

The Mannequin

Deep into a dusty storage room, standing in an upright and arrogant position exist a stiff looking Mannequin. His expression shows a generic look that could be interpreted in many ways, but for the right type of soul he always looks interesting and friendly. His arms are locked in a welcome gesture that presents a perfect picture of one benevolent dummy with strange affectionate manners never practiced by the rest of the world. Everyone who dares to hang out long enough around him thinks that he is beautiful but too shy due to the quiet nature of his condition. The Mannequin gets to see a cheerful soul from time to time, hungry souls looking to hide from the truth of the outside world. Some talk at the frozen attractive figure, others going beyond the use of reason, turn the hollow slender plastic thing into a handsome prince expert at dancing, and for a magical short moment he becomes the most popular guy of an imaginary royal ball. No expression whatsoever can ever be noticed on the face of the lifeless fashion tool, but everyone who gets to know him always leaves refreshed and ready to face the world. No one comes back to visit their lonely dusty friend after the sentimental escapade illusion has ended, no one pays tribute to his charming therapeutic presence either. He is just an inanimate object, a toy, and a subject so bizarre and mysterious to deserve to be taken home as a friend, too freakish to be seen walking along with at the next Great State Fair.

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The Children

After the autumnal equinox, as dreams of the last cool forgotten spell began to come true over the dry heat stricken land of the South, I saw a group of children running free to greet me calling me by my name and as they stretched their arms to touch my garments, their hands made contact with the deepest regions of my heart. First graders, little droplets of innocence dressed in a rainbow of colors like the sweetest sugary treats from a celestial candy store, as benevolent and pleasant as droplets of life saving honey treasured by a multitude of disappearing working bees. It was just my second visit to their classroom when they were already receiving me like a war hero wearing a purple star, or like a sought after celestial body just discovered by accident through the lens of a small but powerful space telescope. Words fail to describe the feeling of being welcomed and accepted by the most fragile pieces of the creation enterprise, the heirs of purity and the fortunate witnesses of frequent angelic visitations. I desire that their short season of divine revelation lasts as long as supernaturally possible. That is my wish for the little ones who blessed me with love and attention that day; they are all beautiful creatures whose eyes, the windows of the soul, remain still clean to see far beyond the exterior appearance. Children can look clearly through clouds of concealing dust and filthy grime at the core of a mature soul who once sparkled as bright and luminous as the Star responsible for the genesis of the world.

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The Walk

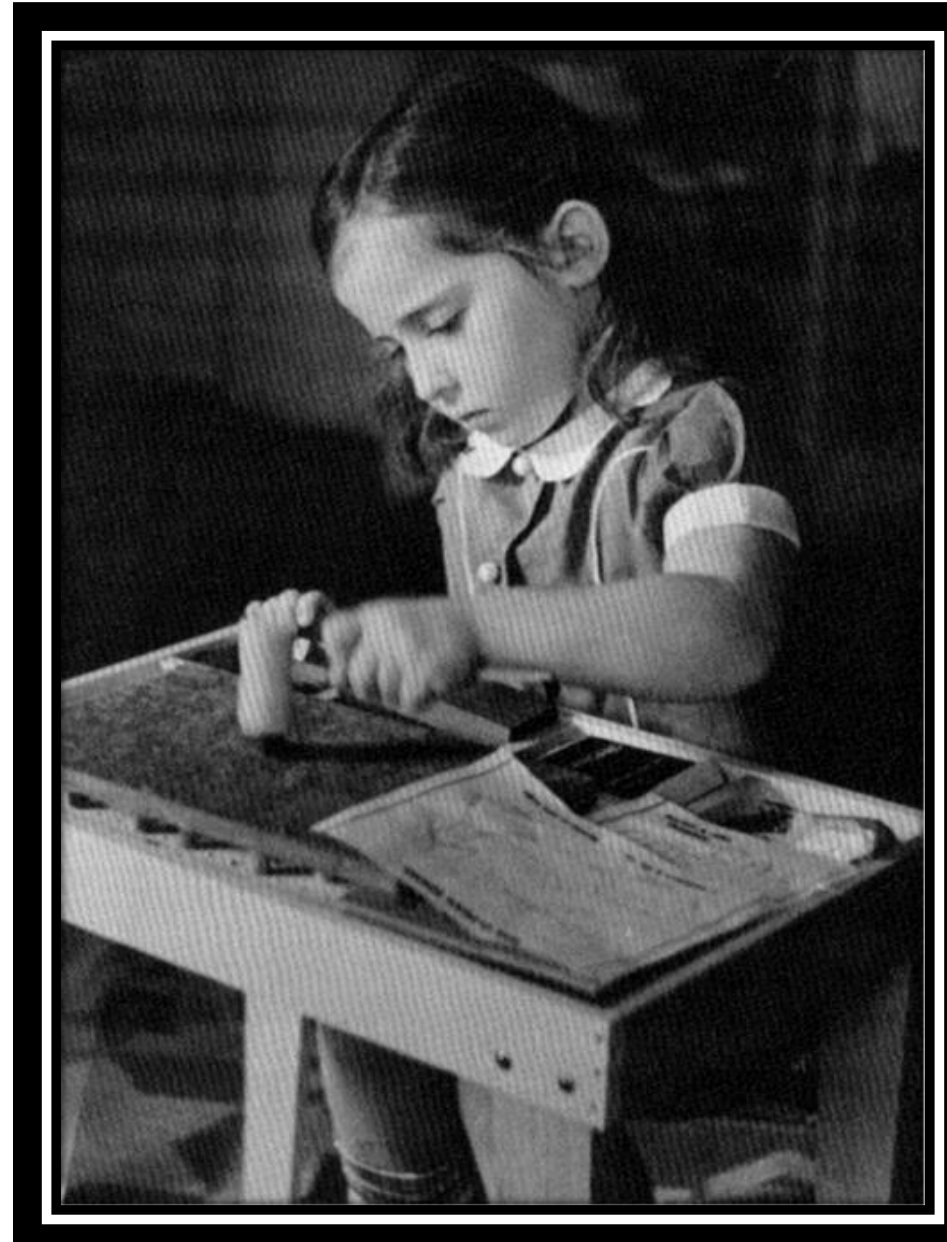
As I walk through inviting pathways along the edge of the mystic lake of life everlasting, the numerous trees along the way resemble friends of old, mere illusions, like recollections of heart melting moments short lived hundreds of years of solitude and serenity ago. I admire the never ending motion of relaxing water ripples being sketched by a beautiful ghostly moon encircling our revolving planet of miracles, wavy products of the romance between two celestial bodies. One is large, earthly but strong and the other small, enigmatic, and luminous, both destined to live together forever in a sea of stars that never sleeps. The escaping breath from my delicate existence turns into an intermittent burst sequence of fine warm mist, generating a hypnotic spell over my imagination through a string of dreams misunderstood by the world around. Time goes by so quickly and so willingly; seconds dissipate just like the beats of my heart, the shape of my words or the age of my most precious memories. Dense clouds hug the smiling sun with such an embrace that the presence of the morning becomes so alluring, almost sublime, and mysterious. Stampedes of wobbling geese cross my path seeking the cradling waters of reflecting innocence, never acknowledging the direction of my footprints nor giving credit to the warm feelings rising within my caring heart. With every step of my journey, my feet leave fresh impressions on the ground that soon disappear behind the shadow of a new hope. The mission of a healing walk discovery goes by in a flash. I will wait for a new day to assemble in silence, at the same place, at the same hour, like a moment in Paradise; and there I shall find company, crave purity, and I will hope for refreshing angelic rain from Heaven.

Marcello Monterrosa Spring 2015

Voices

Music from an ancient past, voices covered with the dust of time and the weight of millions of sounds from a string of unforgiving generations, echoes from bouncy church walls tell the story of countless souls long forgotten, their dreams, their struggles and their humble victories. There is no mercy, no divine compassion neither unexpected ceremonial benedictions that can stop the journey through time. Slow as the moving clouds on a quiet summer day, our shadows trace the path of a fragile existence under the magnificent Sun, The Giver of Life.

Marcello Monterrosa Fall 2014



Miss Darcy

by Florence Wallach Freed

I'm only five years old
But I can read many words
So you say I can come
To your First Grade Class
My short sturdy legs can barely
Make it up and down the
Huge Blue Bus' high steps
The big kids jeer and laugh
As I bend down to pick up my
Smooth leather pencil case
My white underpants show
But I don't care because
I'm finally going to First Grade
To Miss Darcy's class
You are tall and beautiful
A blue-eyed Queen
Crowned with bright Red Hair
You tell me to read to all the children
Stand up straight and read out loud
Dick see Dick see Dick run
The little Blue Dishes
Once upon a time there was a Princess
Very good reading Florence
You will sit here
First Row First Seat
That's for the Best Reader
All the other children sit
According to how well they can read
All the way up to
Sixth Row Last Seat
You also teach us Arithmetic and
Penmanship
Grownup Cursive not Manuscript
You give us shiny Silver and Gold Stars
And bright Robin and Bluebird Stickers
For Excellent Papers
Every morning you bestow us
A carton of white milk
My cup runneth over
And a chocolate-covered graham cracker
Surely goodness and mercy
You give us recess every day
We hang gloriously upside-down
From the cold metal monkey-bars
God's in Heaven
I love you Miss Darcy
But you are Strict
Fold your paper carefully
Or it's a Zero
No talking unless you raise your hand
No leaving the Room except at Recess
When David can't learn to Read
You say he has cream cheese and sawdust
In his head I believe in you
You put the Dunce Cap on Sally

You kick Jackie out for being fresh
You say Donald smells badly
And that Jane cheats
Carol is your favorite
Because she's the prettiest
Not the smartest
And only Barbara is asked to sing
You call Bobby a Baby when he
Throws up in the middle of the
Star Spangled Banner
You say Jimmie looks like
A taxicab with its door open
Because his ears stick out

Oh you are very Strict
But so far I am Safe in my
First Row First Seat
But I worry and worry
That I'll lose it
On Friday when you
Change the Seat
But I worry so much I start
Wetting my Pants in School
I'm squirming and dying in my seat
But you won't let me Leave the Room
Whenever she needs to
That very day you
Change all the seats
It's only Wednesday
Not even Friday
You march me over to
Row Six Last Seat
I can't even see over the
Big Tall Boys
My little brown Oxfords
Can't reach the floor
I'm dying of shame
You walk majestically between
Rows One and Two and say
These are the children
Who are trying and improving
You walk cruelly between
Rows Five and Six and say
And these are the children who have
Something the Matter with Them
And I believe you
God is hiding behind the clouds
Crying millions of teardrops
I hate you Miss Darcy
You are turning into a Wicked Witch
Your red hair is burning and blazing
Like fiery Hell
Yes Miss Darcy you will
Burn Eternally in the
Last Row Last Seat

The Girl

Tonight, while staring at thin air and waiting for melancholy, I discovered a small girl in a beautiful black dress, as lovely as innocence, and bright as a conscience without sin. She was leaping while running graciously over the life saturated grass of promises and hope, and her giggling sounds of gratitude for happiness pierced the hardened shell of my sophisticated and mature soul until my heart burst into tears. Impossible it was to resist the sight of such enchanting illusion, a moment of time captured in eternity, in a flash witnessed by mighty angels, and enjoyed in modesty through the blood smeared windows of my soul. Overwhelmed by the adorable distraction, my attention became fixed on the playful child as if I was witnessing the amazing moment of birth of a lasting hope, or the butterfly fascinating emergence to life everlasting. While my purity impaired conscience attempted to contain the excess stream of long imprisoned tears of joy inside my humanity, I suddenly remembered how lovely flowers look in springtime. With each passing lap in the encircling game of the sweet infant, my mind moved closer to bliss until I lost all trace of life consuming distress. Now, I wonder why time has to be so unforgiving to let that moment escape forever, becoming lost and as out of reach as the key that opens the door to Paradise.

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Conclusion

The Mannequin

The Mannequin was inspired by the fact that even though teachers help us at every phase of our academic development, they are often forgotten and underappreciated by their students. Since I wrote it, I try to stay in contact with my former teachers and to let them know how much I value their knowledge contribution.

The Children

The Children was created after a teaching experience while taking EDUC 3003 with Dr. Mooneyham when I was assigned to teach first graders in the Fall semester at Texas Woman's University.

The Walk

The Walk was created based on a learning experience while taking Walking and Fitness, a class designed to teach everything the benefits of cardiovascular training. This class is taught by Collin College instructor Miss Colleen Cleveland.

Miss Darcy

Miss Darcy is a beautiful literary work selected by my sponsor, Dr. Mary Charlotte Mooneyham. It was written by Florence Walach Freed as a Personal account in prose-poem form about the author's experience as a first grader with an insensitive and cruel teacher.

Voices

Voices was written inspired by the beauty of music from the medieval ages. I feel that there are so many beautiful music types from the past and the present that it becomes easy to forget how beautiful ancient music history and meaning. Today in society, young people tend to look at the new and original music almost exclusively. I enjoy listening to medieval music. It is a treasure that can be appreciated today thanks to the people who has loved it and passed it along over the course of hundreds of years.

The Girl

The Girl was created after witnessing a little girl's gracious movements during a playful moment. It made me wish the best for her life ahead including her future education.

"Consider this curious set of facts about our culture: Someone who thinks well of himself is said to have a healthy self-concept and is envied. Someone who thinks well of his country is called a patriot and is applauded. But someone who thinks well of his species is regarded as hopelessly naive and is dismissed." - Alfie Khon –

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