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REVELATIONS: CLASSROOM-BASED TEACHER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH STUDENT NARRATIVES

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master Of Arts
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ABSTRACT

REVELATIONS: CLASSROOM-BASED TEACHER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH STUDENT NARRATIVES

Master of Arts
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The professional development of educators has too often occurred in the absence of the students that they teach. Beyond matters of the curriculum, education is fundamentally about people and human interaction.

Perhaps it is possible for professional development to take place in isolation, but it can be far more meaningful if the students are also involved in the teacher’s exploration for greater self-knowledge and personal growth.

Our words are light illuminating our experiences with the world. We reveal something of ourselves and our perceptions when we use words to create whether it be incidentally or through structured activities.

Can meaningful classroom based professional development occur through the medium of Language Arts instruction? What revelations about one’s practice can be exposed through the words of students?

Regardless of how or why the words come to be, classroom based teacher development through student narratives imparts beyond knowledge – but REVELATIONS.
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Revelations: Classroom-based Teacher Development Through Student Narratives

INTRODUCTION

"Good morning Ms. Smith," I said as I came into the classroom.

"Huh ... Oh Good morning." Ms. Smith said drowsily.

She sounded terrible. She didn't look good either, she was wearing long black bell bottoms and a ruffled white shirt topped with a ridiculous looking hat. Also to top that off she was wearing too much makeup. It was like she was going to a Halloween party.

"Um, Ms. Smith could you tell me what you think of my drawing for art?" I asked nervously.

I knew that she would tell me like a million things that is wrong with it and then say one thing good about it.

"Well you see in this part the shading is so wrong and in this part ...", and she went on and on. Finally she stopped then said, "Other than that everything is fine." Then she did one of her stupid laughs.

"Okay bye." I said as I ran off to my desk. I couldn't stand much more of her.

I suppose I could look at the above dialogue that one of my students penned in two ways. First, I could feel pleased that my students feel comfortable enough with me to express themselves fully in my class without fear of retaliation. Or second, I could feel concerned with the teacher that this student has described, for is that the way I am perceived? What about the other students in my class, what are their perceptions? I have always felt that there is the teacher that I am and there is the teacher that I want to be, but in between the two, there is also the teacher of my students' reality.

In answer to the question: is it a worthwhile endeavor to pursue a research project on student narratives and how they inform one's professional development? I believe that through meaningful in class writing both student and teacher can grow and develop within themselves and within the larger community of schooling.
It is said that teachers gain a great deal from discussions with other teachers. In my own experiences I have learned more about myself and my teaching from listening to the voices, both written and oral, of my students. I have found that unlike the polite discussions of colleagues, students can be brutally honest. Once they realize that flattery is as transparent as an overhead, and that you really are seeking truth then they respond with sincerity.

When I use to think of professional development the image that came to mind was one of workshops, PD days, group think and administrative agendas. However, as education continues to move towards the 21st century there will be numerous changes not only in student learning but professional learning as well. Professional development will no longer be something "out there" done to you but rather "professional learning" that is personally and actively pursued. "Classroom-based teacher development (CBTD) is an orientation which situates the professional growth of teachers within the daily realities of classroom life."¹

Teaching does not occur in isolation and should never be thought of in that way. For me, making sense of one's vocation as teacher cannot occur in the absence of the students. What I do in my practice and what I believe in and value have an impact on my students whether I am conscious of this fact or not. My students, like myself, are participants in a relationship of learning. Their participation allows them to serve as primary witnesses to the occurrences in the classroom, and as consequence their insights give testimony from which my own professional development can evolve.

Ms. Smith’s teaching is fun like Paramount’s Canada’s Wonderland. She explains our work just the way authors do in their stories. Yes Ms. Smith marks hard just like a woodpecker pecking. She is fair as a robin feeding her babies. Ms. Smith plans everything just as a camp leader would do. One thing that’s great is she gives us time to work on assignments like a construction crew building a store.

This is another sample of writing composed by one of my students. The assignment was to use metaphor and simile to create imagery. This piece of writing tells me a great deal about this particular student’s perceptions and it gives me yet another window on my own understanding of self. "For CBTD, teachers should recognize that understanding the experiences of students is a metaphor for understanding and consequently developing the experiences of teachers.”

How then can I discover what my students are thinking and their perceptions of events if I do not create a climate that stimulates dialogue, experimentation and transformation. Having always been a student of words and literature I find myself falling back on the familiar. If it is true that through writing we reveal ourselves then do we not also reveal our perceptions of the reality around us as well. To an extent we are all writers drafting our stories as we move along the road of life’s experiences. I have often used the metaphor of a train conductor to describe my feelings of what it is to be a teacher and I am reminded of it now as I sit and compose.

Each September with the start of another school year I meet a new group of students who enter my class ready to embark on a journey. Inevitably they begin as my passengers with the classroom and the larger learning community as the vehicle in which we will travel. There is a definite beginning and end to our time together. As a conductor I have some destinations that I want my passengers to reach, and it is my duty

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2 Thiessen, “Classroom-based Teacher Development,” 100.
to guide us in those directions. Once the journey has started I cannot disembark until all my passengers have exited.

Similar to being on a train we each have our sleeping cars, our space to be alone, but for the most part we are interacting together daily. With time my passengers become so familiar with our surroundings that they begin to function as a crew working together and with me as we journey forward. More importantly however, as the group moves along each individual is embarking on a journey of their own creating not just one conductor but thirty. "Teachers and students construct their own meaning and actions in the classroom. Each teacher or student is the expert on his or her own past, present or future experiences."3

Our separately guided paths are constantly intersecting and it is this intersection of experiences that can inform my professional learning. I do not want to constantly look forward in my act of steering without ever looking back to ask my passengers or crew for their thoughts and ideas about our journey and the job that I am performing.

We forget that a person can be a person only in community. Whether we are aware of it or not, each of us is a community in microcosm. The personhood of each of us is shaped by a moving inward intersection of numerous selves — family and friends and colleagues and strangers. If we are to grow as persons and expand our knowledge of the world, we must consciously participate in the emerging community of our lives, in the claims made upon us by others as well as our claims upon them. Only in community does the person appear in the first place, and only in community can the person continue to become.4

My teacher self inhabits a community of fellow learners, my students. In quiet reflection I can continue to grow as an educator. However, it will only be through

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1 Thiessen, “Classroom-based Teacher Development,” 98.

4 Parker J. Palmer, To Know As We Are Known: Education As A Spiritual Journey. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 57.
acknowledgment of all the authentic voices within the classroom community that transformational development will occur, allowing me to become the teacher I want to be. "CBTD is an orientation which both reconceptualizes how teachers improve their professional effectiveness in the work place and builds on the relationships that matter most to teachers in their development: their relationships with their students."\(^5\)

I began my rationale for why it is important to pursue classroom-based teacher development by relating a brief dialogue that one of my students had written. The assignment was to use dialogue to reveal character. There is a lot of humor to the piece and I could have overlooked the student's thoughts as merely an overactive imagination but that would be ignoring the obvious.

"Teachers and students alike are learners whose mutual development depends on the intersection of their experiences."\(^6\) The dialogue that the student composed is a tangible artifact of the intersection of our experience. Significant improvement in schools will occur only if educators -- teachers and administrators -- are strongly committed to professional growth, from the beginning of their careers to the end. (*Volume III: The Educators For the Love of Learning* Report of the Royal Commission on Learning)

My goal from the onset of my research was to answer the following three questions:

\(^5\) Thiessen, "Classroom-based Teacher Development," 86.

\(^6\) Thiessen, "Classroom-based Teacher Development," 87.
Can meaningful classroom based professional development occur through the medium of Language Arts instruction?

What revelations -- personal knowledge and insights about my practice can be gained through my students' writings?

Can my students' writings inform my professional development?

Through Language Arts instruction, approximately 50 students (12 - 13 years old) had an opportunity to express themselves creatively and have their thoughts and ideas shape the professional development of their teacher. Through student generated creative writing, responses, journals, questions and other specific assignments as part of the regular classroom program, I was able to look through the window of my students' perceptions. The view at times caused me to want to turn away but I could not shut my eyes to their truths.

As a conductor one tends to only look ahead but the journey I had undertaken forced me look behind, for it was the writing of my students that guided me. I had to be open to where their words would take me and be more than just a spectator gawking at the realities that they had created through their narratives. I feared this journey was not for the squeamish at heart but for the truth seekers.

I began this introduction with a student's voice and so I end with one. I have always been proud of my strength and how that manifests itself in my teaching until I read the following response, "I like Ms. Smith because she is fun and kind, and when you make a joke about her she wouldn't care, and plus nothing breaks her heart."

I am still not quite sure why but this student's final words resonate through me -- Nothing breaks her heart. These words tell me that there is something here that I need to
reflect on, something that I would not have known had our two roads not intentionally
crossed. ‘Nothing breaks her heart’ -- there is a title here and I fear it is The Teacher That
I Am. My story begins.
In part, this thesis deals with student narratives, but in its entirety it is my story. Similar to the intersection of our experiences, however, our narratives are also intertwined. Learners can always exist without teachers but teachers are superfluous in the absence of their students. Without first examining my own history, my students’ stories would have no place in my own. I cannot begin my examination of the ‘Teacher that I Am’ without starting at the beginning with the experiences that have brought me to this point.

In the classroom I am a conductor, but now I put on my painter’s cap in an effort to fill my empty canvas. In this self-portrait that I am attempting to paint there are reoccurring themes – hues that colour my canvas. I have discovered that who I am has much to do with what I have lived and is more significantly related to the things I have loved. The teacher that I am did not begin in the classroom. The teacher that I am was in the making long before I ever gave conscious thought to the act of teaching.

I love words and literature, in fact it is my love of literature that has fed and nurtured the part of me that I value most – my soul. Words have grounded me in the universality of human experience and have anchored me in the fast moving stream of uncertainties. For as long as I remember I have always been a lover of words and ideas — they defined who I was and what I believed in. As I paint my history, language and literature are the lines that overlap and intersect across my canvas. As the image emerges the portrait I am creating is one of hard lines, stark contrasts and asymmetrical balance.
As I begin this self-portrait I have to admit some apprehension for I am not quite sure how revealing it will be, or how it will relate to my own students’ narratives. Amongst my hesitation and uncertainties however there is one absolute, my portrait will begin with a story. The first line is drawn and so it goes ...

Once upon a time there was a little ego that grew and became a teacher. In the Oxford Dictionary of Current English the following definition appears for the term ego: "the self, the part of the mind that reacts to reality and has sense of individuality; self-esteem." I offer this definition as a way of promoting greater understanding for what lies at the heart of my story. Perhaps ‘heart’ is not the appropriate word choice, so I will restate that last remark: the definition is offered as a way to comprehend the ego at the centre of my story.

So it continues ... growing up I came from a caring, nurturing environment, and as a result, there was never a time when I did not feel loved, valued or wanted. Whenever I think about my family I am always reminded of some lyrics to a song. The song ‘Loves Me Like A Rock’ was written and recorded by Paul Simon. The chorus goes as follows:

My mama she loved me she loved me
She’d get down on her knees and hug me
She loved me like a rock
She rocked me like the rock of ages
and loved me
You know she loved me loved me loved me

My loving environment gave me a great sense of personal worth and this empowered me. I grew up with a strong sense of self-worth and of self-love. I believed that I could accomplish anything that I set my mind to and that no one could tell me any

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differently. At the age of twelve I remember having to write an autobiography. As young as I was I wrote the following words: “Everyone has heard the saying some people are leaders, while others are followers, well I happen to be a leader and I’m planning to stay that way. Don’t be afraid to be different.” I wrote those words but more importantly, I believed and I lived them.

Throughout school I was a very successful student and that further served to sustain my ego. Although there were many things that I did not consider myself to be adept in, I never felt that my failure at these things lessened my value as an individual in any way. It appears to be somewhat of a contradiction, since on one hand I believed that my value was intrinsic rather than being based on external factors, yet by virtue of being successful in several areas that made who I was even more valuable. It appears that my portrait is framed with contradictions, this is but the first of many.

It is a chicken and egg situation. Was I a success because of my positive self-esteem or was my healthy self-esteem the result of all my successes? Regardless of the answer to this riddle, the fact remained that I graduated highschool with a vigorous ego. Now how exactly did this, not so little anymore ego, become a teacher? So it continues ...

It is a belief that I hold to this day that my profession chose me rather than the other way around. I actually ignored all the signs that brought me into teaching and denied it vehemently to everyone who asked me the question "Do you want to be a teacher?"

"Good God no!" Was always my inevitable reply. But all my actions were contrary to the answer I would give. Every summer job that I worked during university dealt with an aspect of teaching, but despite my relative enjoyment of these positions I continued to
tell myself that I would not pursue teaching for a career. Granted I had no idea what I did want to do with my life but I knew that I did not want to teach.

Why was I so adamant about not entering teaching? I felt that the bureaucracy was much too rigid for an individual such as myself. With my personality I needed autonomy, space and freedom to express myself fully. My ego was afraid of being reined in, and of being encumbered with principals, parents, policies and politics. Although educators whom I had worked with told me that there was a great deal of freedom in teaching, I chose not to believe their words for my instincts told me differently.

During my last year of university I purposely did not apply to any faculties of education. I told myself that the reason was because it would take too much effort to have the applications done, but deep down inside I knew that it was just a step I did not want to take. Since I had no career plans after graduating university I decided to plan an extended trip to Europe for the coming Fall. I suppose going to Europe was my way of easily answering the question, "Why aren't you going to the Faculty?"

"Because I'm going to Europe of course."

As I stated earlier, this profession had chosen me and it would not let me walk away that easily. As it happened, the year that I graduated university there was a crisis in education, namely there were not enough teachers to meet the student demand. Faculties of education in response to the shortage of teachers were taking in more candidates, and some institutions were even creating additional programmes in an attempt to meet the demand for new teachers.

In the summer I graduated, York University was beginning the first year of its Consecutive Programme in Education. Up until that point the institution had only offered a
Concurrent Education Programme that would have had to be undertaken while doing one's undergraduate degree. Since the York Consecutive Programme was established so late in the calendar year, there was a separate application for admissions that was not due until May.

I had not been following the news regarding the demands for teachers since I had no desire to get into that field, and needless to say I was completely unaware of the York programme until a friend of mine attending the university called to inform me of it. I had completed my course of study in April, which left me with ample time on my hands and that is when my ego took over. All the external conditions were favourable for my becoming a teacher, yet had it not been for that part of me that so easily interacts with the world, I would never have begun the journey. Despite my ego however, I still had trepidation.

Did I fail to apply to the Faculty because I was afraid of being rejected? Was it fear? What were my real reasons for not pursuing teaching as a career when once again I was employed as a teacher for the summer? At the time I never did address these questions, but I did complete the York application form just to prove to myself that it was not fear that was holding me back but desire. Another part of me, the ego part of me, wanted to be admitted into the Faculty as confirmation that I was worthy of teaching.

I continued to plan my trip to Europe in an attempt to dismiss from my mind any thoughts about admissions. For the first time I was afraid of failure so I anticipated it. I told myself that since I had not tried hard to get in I would not be successful. Afterall, if I had really wanted to be a teacher I would have worked harder to get better marks and would
have actively pursued it long ago. My lack of effort in pursuing teaching gave my ego an excuse for possibly failing to be accepted.

However, as luck would have it, the York programme weighted interpersonal skills, through demonstration in an interview, higher than grades. With my ego I not only excelled in communications but I thrived on the drama of having to present myself for mass consumption. Needless to say my ego handled my interview extremely well. I remember at the end of the interview I was asked, "Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?"

I replied, "I don't think that is a fair question to ask since if I answer no that will mean that there is nothing more to me than what you've seen, while if I answer yes I would begin on a course of discussion that could not possibly be fully pursued during the confines of this interview. Therefore the question is impossible to successfully answer."

I believe that reply sealed my fate. However, just in case there was any room for doubt, I also had to write a timed paper as a requirement for admissions. This played right into another one of my strengths, this reoccurring theme of words. So I waxed poetically and passionately about my views on education, and with that my application process was complete. Every aspect of admissions to the programme focused on my ego and its areas of strength, the balance tipped in my favour. How could my ego not have been accepted? As I spoke in the interview and wrote that paper, I knew with complete certainty that I had been accepted.

There was a part of me that wondered why things were happening as they were. I have always believed that we are all responsible for our own destiny, that we have the ultimate control in our lives. Yet it seemed that there were so many elements outside of my
control that aided me in becoming a teacher. Was it all merely coincidence graduating at the time that I did, the new programme at York, the interview, the essay. During this time I believe that I continued to be rocked like the rock of ages, not by my mama but by someone else's hand.

Even though I still did not want to teach I wanted to get in, I wanted to be validated and valued in that arena. I did not want to believe that teaching was too good for me or conversely that I was not good enough for it. Had I not been accepted it would have been a real blow for my ego. Of course I would have told myself that it was not important and that it did not speak to who I was as a person, but it still would have been quite upsetting. I still had not fully addressed my feelings towards teaching, but I was excited to be accepted into the Faculty because it appealed to my ego.

Now that I was in, did I want to go and what about Europe? I sought advice from friends and family and the consensus was that I was lucky to get in, Europe would always be there, receiving a teaching certificate would last a lifetime, it was great security and it did not mean that I ever had to use it. The advice made sense. What was one more year of school to receive a valued piece of paper? I could go to Europe the following year, I would never have to teach and besides, I had not as yet chosen an alternate profession.

Now as I stated earlier I had gone to York's Consecutive programme due to the increasing demand for new teachers, so upon graduation there was an abundance of jobs for the taking. In fact for the first time in several decades all the school boards went recruiting at the Faculties. Knowing how much I loved the dynamic tension and drama of presenting myself, I scheduled several interviews with a few boards just to see how well I would do. I had no intention of teaching the following year but my ego still wanted to be offered a
position. I was offered three contracts and that held some satisfaction for me, however, all
the boards were so desperate for teachers that a candidate did not need a healthy ego to get
the job just a pulse.

My interview with the board I am presently employed by lasted approximately five
minutes after which time I was told "We are prepared to sign you to a contract tonight." I
guess I must have made an involuntary nod, for I was immediately escorted to the Human
Resources office and signed to a Probationary Contract. When I left the board office I was
in shock, I could not believe what I had done. I had committed myself to teaching in the
coming school year.

Even though I had gone to the interview telling myself and my family that I would
not accept a position if offered, I had signed the contract. I did not want the job but
obviously my ego did, for it alone had signed that contract. I remember how good it felt at
the time knowing that they wanted me. I liked that feeling of being valued and of being
pursued. There was a real adrenaline rush to the whole recruitment experience which my
ego wholly fed into.

I have never traced back the events that led to my employment as a teacher, until
now and I can recall that as I made my way home from the board office I kept singing the
same song in the car. The tune kept playing in my head over and over again, like a music
box with a lid that won’t close. Only it wasn’t a ballerina that kept turning but a spider that
kept climbing.

The itsy bitsy spider climbed up the water spout
Down came the rain and washed the spider out
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain
So the itsy bitsy spider went up the spout again
As the tune played in my head, I was not singing it the way it was traditionally sung, instead I was singing it the way Carly Simon had done on the movie soundtrack for Heartburn. The words passed through my lips over and over again, as though I could not stop the tape from playing in my head.

As I sang, occasionally I would think about teaching the song to the students I would have in September. They would of course be familiar with the traditional version but I would not want to sing it that way. I had just signed the contract and already I was thinking about issues of voice, my voice, my students’ voices. As a teacher would I be able to sing my own song? I wondered if this was possible.

As my students’ narratives have shown me, it was possible. I wanted to sing the song my way with everything as I like it. Through my students I have discovered that it is my voice that booms over all the others and it is my likes that dominate the classroom. I certainly did sing my own song.

Remembering the song now I think about persistence. The teaching profession persisted with me. It kept coming at me like the spider climbing the water spout even though I tried to wash away all thoughts of it, there it still was this eight-legged wonder that I could not pull away from.

Recalling the Itsy Bitsy Spider reminds me of what brought me to teaching and at the same time of what I do not like about my teaching. As a teacher my ego had status, but being a teacher also meant that my ego had to teach. I once believed that it was my personality that made me a good teacher but as this portrait evolves, I am no longer sure of that assertion.
My ego allowed me to feel comfortable and confident with large groups. My ego allowed me to sift through criticism for its validity. My ego allowed me to exercise control over my environment for my own purpose and pleasure. My ego allowed me much freedom to exercise my love of words in my new profession. My ego continued to live up to my grade four teacher’s comment on my report card. In describing me she wrote, "She shows a charismatic power of holding a group of listeners attentively charmed by her commanding verbal presence." Teaching was a great forum for an ego such as mine.

As a teacher I enjoyed the freedom that the profession gave me to be myself and to live an authentic life. Teaching also provided me with a forum where I could express my own voice and sing the Itsy Bitsy Spider any way that I chose. From the perspective of my ego I found teaching to be a highly enjoyable form of employment.

Emerson refers to one's personal ego as the little fellow ... "which strives to impose its will on the universe"8 This little fellow attempts to gain power through control and manipulation of situations and individuals. My little fellow was such an entity, although I was not always conscious of this. I did not enter teaching situations looking for ways to control them, rather I sought avenues where I could express my personality freely without being encumbered with the dictates of others.

Along with Emerson's notion of the 'little fellow' there is also the 'big fellow' (our higher self). In contrast to the 'little fellow' with which we "strive and manipulate: with the big fellow, we listen and see"9 My 'little fellow' is how I face the world while my 'big fellow' is how I face myself. So my little ego that grew to become a teacher did not make

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that journey alone and perhaps it is that other part of me, my higher Self, that is now seeking answers to the three questions that constitute my inquiry.

Throughout this story I have focused on my main character — EGO, while remaining silent on the supporting character, my 'big fellow' or higher Self. I have always believed that there was much more to me than my ego or what I allowed others to see, but I never put a name to it, perhaps it is because I never revealed it to anyone else but myself.

Contradiction sweeps across my canvas once again. I want my students to have a sense of connectedness and personal power that comes from being in touch with the higher Self within each of them, yet when I teach it is from my ego to their ego. Within the classroom my students are getting a socialised sense of who they are as individuals not a personal one.

Though I strongly believe in the higher Self, I feel that the way I am teaching excludes it. As a student, the educational experience that I was an active participant in had less to do with intuition and feeling and everything to do with expectations and appropriate response. It appears that despite my beliefs to the contrary I have created the same educational experience for my own students.

In many ways I have spent all of my academic and professional life surrounded by the words and ideas of others. Words are how I expressed myself and defined my reality, but words are external trappings and are the possessions of the ego rather than the higher Self. Language can easily be controlled and manipulated for one's own means, afterall I had demonstrated that on numerous occasions. Instead of 'walking my talk', I was in Palmer's words "failing to put my life where my mouth was"\footnote{Palmer, \textit{To Know As We Are Known}, 45.}. I existed in the classroom with ego
intact and wonderful ideals, but I believe that I failed to nurture in my students the higher Self that I claimed to value.

In contrast, I considered myself to be an authentic presence in the classroom. I felt that I was being true to myself, living my truths for the most part. Yet despite my verbal encouragement to my students to live their own lives authentically, my actions in the classroom did not necessarily allow for this to happen. Their narratives have shown me that it is my characteristics that they display as their own and my high expectations that they strive to reach.

As much as I once believed that in the classroom I was a co-creator with my students, mine is always the dominant voice. My version of the Itsy Bitsy Spider is the song that we would all sing. My students express their voices but they are not singing their own songs. "The classroom was not a place for original inquiry but for imitation of authority, not a place of collaboration but of competition between learners." It is always my expectations that need to be met, my standards that have to be risen to. I find that my students are increasingly aware of meeting my specific expectations rather than perhaps exercising their imagination and following their own truths.

This fact became quite evident one afternoon when my students were involved in a study of children's literature. That afternoon, we had been focusing on the books of Leo Lionni. After reading the story aloud I asked my students what I considered to be an open ended question about the story. One student immediately put up his hand and asked, "Do we have to use our imagination or put the right answer?" I knew that by the question what he was really saying was do we give our answer or the one you want to hear.

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1 Palmer, To Know As We Are Known, 33.
My student's remark highlights yet another of my contradictions; the disparity between what I value as a teacher and obviously what I am putting into practise in the classroom. His remark reveals something very specific about me as a teacher. It shows that despite some of my efforts, I have set myself up as the authority in the classroom, especially when it comes to matters of literature. By doing this I am allowing my students to abdicate their right to be free thinkers.

I do not allow my students' problems and questions to deepen within them, to do their own educative work. I forget that genuine solutions and authentic answers can only come from within my students, that to 'educate' them I must speak words that draw out their understanding rather than impose my own.\(^\text{12}\)

I hate this truth about myself and I am consciously trying to teach in the true sense of the word -- to draw out my students' understandings. As a teacher I know what I want from my students, but what I do not know is what do they desire for themselves, and what do they need from me? I want my students to be successful but by whose scale should this success be measured. This would prove to be another recurring theme throughout my students’ narratives. Thomas Merton in his text *Love and Living* wrote that "the purpose of education is to show a person how to define himself authentically and spontaneously in relation to his world— not to impose a prefabricated definition of the world, still less an arbitrary definition of the individual himself."\(^\text{13}\)

My ego led me to believe that I had been living a life of truth, which from its narrow perspective was not a lie. My ego was being authentic in the classroom but my whole self was not. Although I consider myself to be an inwardly centred person, as a

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\(^{12}\) Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known*, 81.

teacher, my actions spring from the level of ego. I have neglected, partly through ignorance and partly through apathy, to put my beliefs into practise and live the truth of my higher Self by teaching from the heart.

What was it he wrote again, “Nothing breaks her heart.” You can’t break what isn’t there – right? Teaching from the surface does not create the perception of affection and understanding. This is yet another theme that is evident in the writings of my students. For while I possess a genuine concern for others, at the same time I acknowledge that compassion and gentleness are two qualities that need to be nurtured within me.

At the level of appearance these qualities of compassion and gentleness are hidden beneath the surface but they are of little good there. Being compassionate and gentle means more than just believing in the concepts, it means putting those words into action by living them with my life, especially in the classroom. I recognise that it is not enough for me to want to be compassionate, because the desire has had little effect on my classroom practise.

It has only been since hearing my student’s words, “Nothing breaks her heart”, that the need for compassion has been fully brought to the level of my consciousness. This demonstrates to me the significance of student narratives on one’s own development as a teacher. In my own reflections I was aware of certain qualities that I lacked and that I needed to nurture in myself. I knew these truths and did make attempts to act on them but somehow when you hear it from someone else, especially a twelve year old, you can’t run away from it. What is it they say about ‘from the mouths of babes …’

I have read many books but one that has stayed with me for a number of years is To Know As We Are Known: Education As A Spiritual Journey by Parker J. Palmer. Although there is no direct reference to the term ego in the book, Palmer writes of a knowing self that
"is full of darkness, distortion, and error; it does not want to be exposed and challenged to change. It seeks objectified knowledge in order to know without being known"\textsuperscript{14} In my experience this has been the case, but in this portrait I have exposed myself in an attempt to change. My students will reveal me soon enough, so I have assisted them in this endeavour by first revealing myself.

My first trip took my ego on a long successful quest where it eventually arrived in front of a classroom full of eager students. I am grateful that my ego brought me to teaching for I would not have arrived at the profession without it. For nine years I have taught and my ego has held a dominant place in my classroom. Now as I journey onto greater self-knowledge, I must abandon my ego for there is no further truth to be gained if I do not relinquish its hold on me. I will continue to look within and will turn to my students’ stories for the other truths left unknown.

The history that I have revisited has been that of my EGO, but it is what brought me to teaching so it is the fabric of my canvas. The themes that seem to fade in and out of my portrait are broad strokes of over reliance on words, numerous contradictions between beliefs and practise, and teaching from the level of ego sans gentleness. My portrait is not yet over, for I have merely sketched in the background as to how I became a teacher. As I continue this creation I fall back on the familiar in the act of further defining my canvas. Forces Beyond Our Play was the tale of my Ego, now I compose the story of my soul.

\textsuperscript{14} Palmer, \textit{To Know As We Are Known}, 121.
I know the place that literature holds in my life. In fact I could not begin composing this thesis until I had a framework in which to attach my thoughts. I did not have to go far to find that structure, for I simply recalled the texts that I have loved.

‘The play’s the thing …’

*Prologue*

*All the world’s a stage,*  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the *infant,*  
Mewling and puking in the nurse’s arms;  
And then the whining *school-boy,* with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the *lover,*  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress’ eyebrow. Then a *soldier,*  
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the *purd,*  
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon’s mouth. And then the *justice,*  
In fair rounded belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slippered *pantaloon,*  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;  
His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness, and mere oblivion;  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.  
*W. Shakespeare. As You Like It. Act II, Scene vii, 139*
ACT I: 'At first the infant ...'

I am born.

My mama she loved me she loved me
She'd get down on her knees and hug me
She loved me like a rock
She rocked me like the rock of ages
and loved me
You know she loved me loved me loved me  

ACT II: 'And then the school-girl ...'

Scene i

About School
He always
He always wanted to explain things, but no one cared,
So he drew.

Sometimes he would just draw and it wasn’t anything.
He wanted to carve it in stone or write it in the sky.
He would lie out on the grass and look up in the sky and it would
be only the sky and things inside him that needed saying.

And it was after that that he drew the picture,
It was a beautiful picture. He kept it under his pillow and would
let no one see it.
And he would look at it every night and think about it.
And when it was dark and his eyes were closed he could see it still.
And it was all of him and he loved it.

When he started school he brought it with him,
Not to show anyone, but just to have with him like a friend.

It was funny about school.
He sat in a square brown room, like all the other rooms,
And it was tight and close, and stiff.

He hated to hold the pencil and chalk, with his arm stiff and
his feet flat on the floor, stiff, with the teacher watching
and watching.

The teacher came and spoke to him.
She told him to wear a tie like all the other boys,
He said he didn’t like them and she said it didn’t matter.
After that he drew. And he drew all yellow and it was the way
he felt about morning. And it was beautiful.

The teacher came and smiled at him. “What’s this?” she said.

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"Why don't you draw something like Ken's drawing?"
   Isn't it beautiful?"

After that his mother bought him a tie and he always drew airplanes and rocket-ships like everyone else.
And he threw the old picture away.
And when he lay all alone looking at the sky, it was big and blue,
   and all of everything, but he wasn't anymore.

He was square and brown inside and his hands were stiff.
And he was like everyone else. All the things inside him that
   needed saying didn't need it anymore.

It had stopped pushing. It was crushed.
Stiff.
Like everything else.16

This poem speaks to the twelve year old in me who wrote in her autobiography,

"Don't be afraid to be different".

_scene ii_

When I was a student I considered good teaching to be maintaining control of the classroom, having the respect of the students, knowing all the answers and being well prepared. When I look back I cannot imagine that my teachers would not have had every minute of every day planned out to the last detail.

I do not recall my teachers trying to build within the classroom a 'caring community'. In fact, there was no feeling of community, only solitary individuals and a truck load of curriculum to be covered. Although I was able to express myself to a certain degree in school, student input on what occurred in the classroom was never really solicited. We were never really equal participants in our own education.

I have strong opinions about matters of education, especially when it concerns issues of curriculum, voice, individuality, acceptance and self-worth. After all, that is what brought me to Graduate Studies in Curriculum. Although I cannot isolate specific

episodes in my past that my have informed my professional practice, I can in these next few pages try to create an expressionist painting that I hope will illuminate the pervasive mood that colors my childhood memories. "Indeed, the kind of teacher that we are reflects the kind of life that we lead."17

BROWN ANGEL
By: Michelle Suzanne Smith

Once upon a time, not a long enough time to be a legend but long enough to be worth telling, there was born a brown angel. Now Brown Angel was born in a land filled with thousands of other beautiful angels just like herself but this angel was special. Her family had a love for their Brown Angel greater than the blue sea that surrounded their island. Her parents would rock her like the rock of ages and love her — you know they loved her, loved her, loved her.

Now it came to be that in her fifth year Brown Angel left her small island in the Caribbean Sea and traveled by airplane to a far off land. In Canada Brown Angel saw snow for the first time. She was excited by this new land and was happy to be in a country where the leaves on the trees would turn beautiful colors each year as a present for her birthday.

Brown Angel started kindergarten in this new land, but things were different, for she no longer looked like every other child. She did not feel like an angel anymore because they did not know about brown angels in this new country. It seemed that the angels in her new school were not brown. Surrounded by all these fair-haired children made Brown Angel felt like an outsider. To make matters worse, no one asked Brown Angel about where she had come from or what life had been like for her on her island. It was as if all that Brown Angel had experienced up until that time was unimportant and had no place in the classroom.

No one made Brown Angel feel that brown was beautiful. The teachers never talked about anything that made her feel that being brown was valued or worth acknowledging. Although her teachers were nice and treated her well Brown Angel always felt that her background and identity were completely ignored and devalued within the school system.

Even at a very young age she knew that this was not right. Perhaps it was because her parents had instilled in her such a strong sense of self-worth that made Brown Angel question the practices of education. In school there were no books with brown angels or stories about her culture. Everything around her made her feel less than she had always known she was. Of course her family still loved their Brown Angel and continued to make her feel special but at school it was different because she was different.

Brown Angel knew that she could never be like the other students and a part of her knew that she should not want to be, but she needed to show that she had worth. She did not want to cease to be important just because she ceased to see her likeness in anything around her. Brown Angel refused to feel less than valued, she was determined to succeed in spite of school's inequities.

She was very observant and she soon saw that in school it was not the brown or white angels but the bright angels who were special. Of course most (if not all) of the bright angels were white angels but that was besides the point since Brown Angel was determined to be fluorescent. There was more than one color behind those big brown eyes, for she was all the colors in between, so she used her strengths to overcome what her new country had made her handicap. Brown Angel was strong and she flourished by playing the educational game, but she never forgot about the other dark angels that might not have been rocked like the rock of ages and loved as she had been.

She was an imaginative young girl and considered day to day life to be boring, so she would read and read and read and read for hours. Through stories she could escape to other places and push back the

boundaries of her own world far beyond any limitations. Words and ideas meant everything to Brown Angel because they were what set her apart from the others. Even if the words once belonged to someone else she would use them to create meaning in her own life and by doing so she would make them her own.

Throughout her school years Brown Angel continued to excel in all things creative. She was respected because she could write and speak effectively, and she was well liked because she could entertain. By fostering her unique talents, Brown Angel was well accepted in school.

Brown Angel felt good again. She had made herself special once more but this time it was by her own doing. On her little island she had been special because she had been loved and she still had that love and always would, but now things had changed for she was in a new place. She wanted to be special apart from her family, to show that brown angels did exist and were beautiful bright angels too.

When Brown Angel became a teacher she envied the fact that her own students had so many peers that looked as they did and had similar experiences and backgrounds. She did not have this growing up. As a student there had been nothing of her culture in the classroom, no discussions, books, or role models. For a time she had put it aside and forgot that it ever mattered, but it did. It was as if Brown Angel had checked her bags at the airport and had entered her classroom sans history. The door to the room had said, “Welcome to Kindergarten!” What it really said was, “Leave your bags at the door!”

Brown Angel has her own memories as she looks into the face of her niece who had draped a big, white scarf over her cornrows to create the impression of long, flowing hair.

“I want to have long hair. Long hair is prettier.” Her young niece Adria exclaimed.

“Are all people with long hair beautiful?” Brown Angel asked her niece.

“Yes,” was the steadfast reply.

“Where does this kind of thinking come from?” Brown Angel asks herself as she recalls how she once felt as her niece did.

It is not fair that her niece should feel as she did so many years earlier. No child should be made to feel that there is an ideal that they can never possibly attain. She hopes that her niece will not have to wait twenty-eight years, as she had to, before seeing a book in praise of Brown Angels. She also fears that her niece and thousands like her may not possess the inner strength to not only create their own beauty and self-worth but to believe in it.

This is what I remember of schooling.
ACT III: ‘Then the graduate ..’

As I stated previously, an admissions requirement for the Faculty of Education program that I had applied to was an interview. I can clearly recall a question posed to me during the interview. My interviewers, seeing the I had completed my undergraduate degree in English Literature, asked "Who are your favorite authors?" My immediate reply was "William Faulkner and John Irving."

My interviewers never queried as to why I had chosen these two writers but after the interview I wondered why their names had sprang forward so quickly. The answer I concluded to my satisfaction was narrative. I felt that both authors had an unusual yet engaging narrative style and besides, they tell a good story. In my experience, writings about teaching have had little lasting effect on me, but in contrast there are stories and poems that have greatly influenced my teaching. Directly, these texts have little to do with teaching but everything to do with me.

I have always believed that it is important for me to pursue a course of action that matters. I believe that while we do only have but one life to live, that life persists even after we are gone so our actions must be worthwhile. "In the world of eternal return the weight of unbearable responsibility lies heavy on every move we make." Nietzsche considers the idea of eternal return as "the heaviest of burdens."18

Kundera's book has had a significant effect on my views about teaching. The above quotation articulates the weight of existence, which is a state that I value. If we believe that all human action is significant then life suddenly takes on greater substance. If life takes on substance then conversely so to must one's vocation. Without the notion

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of eternal return then what thought do we have to give to our actions since they are afterall inconsequential. "The heavier the burden, the closer our lives come to the earth, the more real and truthful they become."\textsuperscript{19} The burden is the consequence of human actions, actions that signify the corporeality of worthwhile existence.

Part of the excitement that I feel for teaching comes from the numerous challenges inherent to the profession. Every day is distinct and causes me to reflect on my practice. As a teacher each day is different because the human interaction of the classroom is affected by infinite variables. Each new day requires thoughtful responses to the vitality of the classroom. The weight of the continuous needs that must be addressed can at times prove overwhelming but that for me is ironically the attraction of teaching.

Although I did not actively pursue the teaching profession because I never believed that it would satisfy me, I must now confess that it has. Teaching has allowed me to live a life of truth and surprisingly one of personal freedom. Living a life with responsibility is important "conversely, the absolute absence of a burden causes man to be lighter than air, and because only half real, his movements as free as they are insignificant."\textsuperscript{20}

Nietzsche's writing as expressed by Milan Kundera in \textit{The Unbearable Lightness of Being} resonates within me. When I read the book I did not read it from the perspective of "what is this book saying about me? However, I felt as though I had entered into the text and by doing so it became one among many influences in my life.

\textsuperscript{19} Kundera, \textit{The Unbearable Lightness of Being}, 33.

\textsuperscript{20} Kundera, \textit{The Unbearable Lightness of Being}, 5.
I believe in a life of truth and truth is weight. Parker J. Palmer, whom I have previously quoted, believes that to "know truth we must follow it with our lives." But the question that I must ask myself is how do we know what truth is? This question brings me back to William Faulkner. When I answered that William Faulkner was one of my favorite authors, I was thinking of one book that he had written in particular.

_The Sound and the Fury_ remains to this day one of the most intriguing texts that I have read. There are four narrative perspectives in the novel. Faulkner states that he wrote the same story four times, but in actuality each "quarter" adds not only a new perspective but further insight into the original story. _The Sound and the Fury_ forces me to accept that mine is but one perspective of every experience, mine is but one truth among many. "We ourselves are part of the reality we wish to know: does the multiplicity of our modes of knowing suggest a similar multiplicity in the nature of that reality?"22

Faulkner realized that it would take more than one perspective to clarify the story. Just as I realize that it will take more than mine. Despite the additions of three sections however, Faulkner felt that the story was still incomplete -- not only had he failed to tell it once, he had failed to tell it four times. Through the perspectives of the four narrators the story is widened beyond the original picture. The narrative perspectives of the novel do not clarify the story, they magnify it. I think the same will be true by the completion of this thesis. There will be multiple perspectives with no final interpretation the supersedes all others.

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21 Palmer, _To Know As We Are Known_, 43.
22 Palmer, _To Know As We Are Known_, 52.
When I answered my interviewers that John Irving was one of my favorite authors, I was thinking of one novel in particular. For me the character of Owen Meany in John Irving's *A Prayer For Owen Meany* is a creation that tells us things about ourselves. As I read the last page of Irving's novel I clutched the book to my chest. The closing line has continued to stay with me, "Oh God -- please give him back! I shall keep asking You." It seems that like the narrator of the story I am also doomed "to remember a boy with wrecked voice..."

In the closing paragraph of the novel, Owen's best friend John, the narrator writes:

> When we held Owen Meany above our heads, when we passed him back and forth -- so effortlessly -- we believed that Owen weighed nothing at all. We did not realize there were forces beyond our play. Now I know they were the forces that contributed to our illusion of Owen's weightlessness; they were the forces we didn't have the faith to feel, they were the forces we failed to believe in --and they were also lifting up Owen Meany, taking him out of our hands. Oh God -- please give him back! I shall keep asking You."  

I had not realized it until now the allusion in the quotation to weight.

> "Do you remember how we used to lift him up?" she'd asked me.  
> "He was so easy to lift up! He was so light -- he weighed nothing at all! How could he have been so light?"

I could have told her that it was only our illusion that Owen Meany weighed 'nothing at all.' We were only children -- we are only children -- I could have told her. What did we ever know about Owen? What did we truly know? We had the impression that everything was a game -- we thought we made everything up as we went along. When we were children, we had the impression that almost everything was just for fun -- no harm indeed, no damage done.  

Owen was far from being weightless, on the contrary, he had the weight of the world on his small shoulders. For me Owen Meany is such a character who transcends the printed page. Owen spends me spinning inward on a journey of my own self-discovery. "I DON'T WANT TO BE A HERO," said Owen Meany. "IT'S NOT THAT I

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WANT TO BE -- IT'S THAT I AM A HERO. I KNOW THAT'S WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO BE."

If only an individual could be that certain about things. Owen experienced life through his beliefs. In the novel Owen knew truth and followed it with his life. I will never possess Owen's certainty about life and the path that one must take, but from Owen I have learned that there are implicit theories that one may have to guide one's life. There are things that I believe and I believe them implicitly, is it out of Faith? I do not believe so. For me only a small fraction of my beliefs about teaching and learning come from my own experiences as a student. Where the bulk of them comes from I am not quite sure. Owen Meany allows me to accept some of life's mysteries.
ACT IV: 'Then a tyro ...' -

As a teacher I am also a traveler embarking on a parallel journey with my students. I have my own truths to discover by pushing back the boundaries of my world. Some truths that I have discovered are the following: there remains a discrepancy between the teacher that I am and the teacher that I want to be, I have been greatly influenced in my life more by words than by people, and I hold implicit beliefs about teaching and learning.

For as long as I can remember I have valued my own intuitive knowledge. I might have been young and possessed very little experience but that did not mean that what I knew or had to contribute was any less valuable. As a teacher this feeling remained with me. Even though I was never made to feel that truth was somehow within me. Yet there were implicit beliefs that I held about teaching and learning, some of which came from being a student for most of my life others came from reflection.

My first year in teaching began with a grade two class. In my first and subsequent years of teaching I have taught with wonderful individuals who have nurtured me and helped me to grow. I continued to be rocked like the rock of ages.

Just coming out of the Faculty I was acutely aware of the importance of constantly re-evaluating and revising one's personal headset (my constructs and beliefs of teaching and learning). As I continue this process I wonder what have the individuals I have known taught me and to what extent have they affected my personal headset.

In my first year I worked with an individual who was in her 'thirty-something' year of teaching. As a new teacher I felt an immediate affinity towards her. I realize now that perhaps subconsciously I had known her headset without the two of us ever clearly
articulating our beliefs on a professional level. Without ever speaking the word I knew
that she taught authentically.

In the year that we spent together I learned a good deal about what experiences
had shaped her life in education. For me she was the epitome of lifelong learning
because she knew that you never arrived as a teacher for you were constantly involved in
the journey. Her belief of teacher as co-curriculum planner was clearly evident, for she
was constantly questioning the curriculum, the motives, and the means. It was
comforting that often times we would be asking the same questions, and I felt validated
somehow, as though her thirty odd years legitimized what I was feeling.

This experienced teacher taught me that I was right to believe in myself and in
my intrinsic knowledge. She reaffirmed my belief that a teacher must first remain a
student and that change is growth. Above all else she taught me that you can teach
authentically within the bureaucracy of education.

We did not have a mentoring relationship for we were equals and I believe that it
was our common denominator of needing personal relevance not just for our students but
for ourselves that made this so. She reaffirmed things that I believed intrinsically (she
called it ‘commonsense knowledge’) and in one's first year of teaching that is a
comforting experience.

There have been many other individuals who have left a lasting impression on me.
Teachers who have never stopped being reflective practitioners, which was a lovely
phrase that I was told in the faculty but did not actually see in practice until I began
teaching.
ACT V: ‘And then the philosopher …’

“The philosophers have only interpreted the world; the point is to change it.”²⁵

I had originally formed my philosophy of education by looking from the outside in, that is, I had not been immersed in classroom practice therefore my philosophy had very little to do with actual experience. Now of course I recognize that I do possess experience -- that of a student. Having taught for several years I can combine my experience of both teacher and student to construct a philosophy from the inside out.

As with most things the teaching profession has evolved in response to society and the individual. Originally in education teachers were not expected to have personal philosophies because they were simply to be instruments of acculturation. However, today teachers are expected to clearly articulate their beliefs about education and children. Since I am a teacher of this new age I feel that it is necessary for me to have a personal philosophy of education.

I continue to actively construct my own philosophy of education because as a teacher I am both an active learner and reflective practitioner. But I am always hesitant when I have to make indelible my personal thoughts in print. Somehow by committing those thoughts to paper they cease to be mine and take on an existence apart from me. They are no longer the ephemeral impressions of my mind but have body, weight and permanency. So I preface this statement of my philosophy, though I have formulated the ideas they are not the definitive text of my beliefs. Evident by the title of this act is the fact that I am acutely aware of the importance of constantly re-evaluating and revising my personal headset.

MY PHILOSOPHY:

It seems funny to me that at thirty years of age I thought I knew all that there was to know about creating a new life, after all, I was a product of the public school system with its sex education programs. I remember watching the fleet of sperm float across the screen in a perilous journey through the narrow passage of the cervix. Meanwhile the egg cell, which had just been launched from the ovary, is being funneled into the fallopian tube where it gently floats downstream to collide with the remaining sperm that have survived the quest. It is this meeting of egg and sperm that creates a new life.

I actually once believed that there was no more to the act of creation beyond biology but now I know that there is so much more. Procreation produces a receptacle, an earthly body that we are given to store all of our unique properties. One cannot deny that nature provides the anatomy but it is nurture that creates the life. We are shaped by our experiences not merely as teachers but as individuals.

I felt in school that there was no place for my story or anyone else's, but I wrote mine anyway. With each text that I read I added a page to my own narrative. With each discussion and performance a strand was woven into my tapestry of life. I forged my own voice in the classroom. My prior life experiences as a daughter, friend, student and member of a global community have framed my teaching practices and personal philosophy. In keeping with Patrick Diamond's statement that teachers "should be their own best theorists" I continue to build my own theory.

I was born by the joining of egg and sperm, and I did grow strong with the love and nourishment of my family. But there have been so many things that have helped me to grow in ways that cannot be measured each year by a scale or a metre stick. It took the coming together of two individuals to give me life, but I alone can give that life meaning. This is my creation theory, however, "as learners, our life-long task is first to create our own theories but then critically to demolish or replace them." For there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in my philosophy.


ACT VI: ‘The sixth age shifts into the learned and pragmatic practitioner.’

I am an individual who does not learn well in groups and who does not learn well when being directly taught. I must have my own time and space for self-inquiry and reflection, for I need to discover things on my own. I tend to let information pass around and through me, but I am selective about what I retain. I will only internalize data that I consider relevant to my needs and worth keeping in my consciousness.

Frequently I need perspective from the experience in order to gain insight from it. Especially when having to write about my experiences I must have an abundance of time to reflect and to rehearse my thoughts and ideas before I can commit my impressions to paper. A prime example of this fact is that I gathered the data for my inquiry a full two years prior to my finally sitting down and composing this paper.

For reasons that I have stated previously, I am a teacher who tends to dominate a classroom. While I have made a genuine effort to pull back and to make still my voice and actions it has been less than successful. Although I have never consciously professed to my students that I hold all the answers, I have such a strong personality that it tends to overshadow those of the students. I have always wanted my students to be self-directed learners and have tried to teach in such a manner that would encourage this but I know that I am the one that they seek to please and that my judgment is the only one that matters.

I have on occasions been told by my students that I am hard to please. I have a difficult time balancing my desire for my students to be autonomous learners with the accountability demands of my profession and of my own expectations. "The classroom
was not a place of original inquiry but for imitation of authority, not a place of collaboration but of competition between learners."²⁸

I am afraid that the Teacher that I Am still will not relinquish control so that the students become equal partners experiencing life first-hand rather than through me. As much as I would like to believe that my classroom is a place of genuine pursuit of personal truth and self-discovery, I know that it is not. I continue to try to move towards this end so that I may at some point become the teacher that I hope to be.

If I have all the answers then why should the students actively try to seek out those truths when they can merely wait for me to provide it for them. "To educate is ‘to draw out’ and that the teacher’s task is not to fill the student with facts but to evoke the truth the student holds within."²⁹ I do not want for my teaching to require my students not to think. I want to hear the unique voices of all of my students but I have to take care to listen by not cluttering up the learning space with my own words, ideas, opinions, and judgments.

I have a difficult time holding my tongue in any situation. The way I teach encourages talk, after all my ego loves communication and it loves to be heard. While it may not be a quick answer that I respond with, it will always be something. I am sure now that it has to do with the competitive nature of my ego and its need to have the last word. I have to have a comeback for everything, in fact, I am well known amongst the students for doing this.

²⁸ Palmer, To Know As We Are Known, 33.

²⁹ Palmer, To Know As We Are Known, 43.
This would be yet another theme that reoccurs in my students' narratives and it is the most unflattering. I was conscious of it but not to the extent of how conscious my students were of it. It is a difficult truth to accept, that on one level I am actually in competition with my own students. This element of competition is contrary to my beliefs about education but I obviously was not exercising those beliefs within my practise. I see now that by being so quick to talk I had cluttered my classroom with words making it impossible to hear anyone else but myself. This inquiry has forced me to listen to my students, for once it is not my words but someone's else's that will dominate my story.
ACT VII: ‘Last scene of all that ends this eventful history, is illumination and accordance.’

It is not really an end but a beginning. Now that this short history play is over it is time for me to begin my next chapter. It seems that try as I might I cannot escape the EGO at the heart of my story or at the center of my canvas. It will only be upon conclusion of my students’ narratives that I will know if I was correct to title this chapter ‘All’s Well That Ends Well.’
In gathering the data for my research on how student narratives can inform one’s professional development, formal and informal tasks were given to the students to complete. Some were specific assignments related to Language Arts instruction, while others were reflection or inquiry pieces. Throughout the following chapters I will be quoting my students’ words directly as they were written. The selections will be taken from six specific assignments:

- All I Ever Really Need To Know I Learned in Grade Seven
- Life Lessons
- Conversations
- Metaphors and Similes
- Narrative Creative Writing
- Journalling

**All I Ever Really Need To Know I Learned in Grade Seven**

This is an activity I have given to my students annually at the end of each school year. The idea was inspiration from the book *All I Ever Really Need To Know I Learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulgrum. The book is a collection of the author’s insights told through anecdotes gleamed from his experiences. The title of his book comes from his Credo that in fact all you really do need to know to live a healthy and happy life you did learn in kindergarten.

At the end of the year I ask my students to write down one thing that they have learned in Grade Seven. I ask them however, to focus specifically on what they learned from me or in my class. I ask them to go beyond subjects and content and to focus on life lessons and things apart from the curriculum.

| S is for Ms. Smith who I have known for 2 years. I’ve learned how to use self-discipline, how to be more responsible with my work. |
| Appreciate: this year in Ms. Smith’s class I learned to Appreciate others. I learned to appreciate their hard work and their values. That is what I learned. |
**Life Lessons**

This activity is a variation of All I Ever Really Need to Know .... Students are asked to reflect on what they have learned and to jot down just one important lesson that they will take with them as they move on. Again they were asked to focus on lessons beyond the curriculum.

In my endeavor to bring light to the obscurity that prohibits students from fully comprehending what it is their teachers actually do, I make a conscious effort to expose my students to all aspects of my job. I do not want a shroud of mystery surrounding what I do in the classroom. I discuss such notions as incidental learning and teaching, as well as the hidden curriculum as they apply to my practice.

My students are aware of the difference between what the Ministry expects me to teach and what I teach sometimes without any intention of doing so. There are insights that I want my students to learn that are not necessarily part of the curricula. However there are other lessons, as their reflections will show, that they gain from me that I certainly did not want to leave them with.

| Something that I don’t think you meant to teach me but you did (something outside of the curriculum) was to apply my knowledge from school outside of school more often. |

**Conversations**

Understanding the conventions of dialogue and being able to apply them consistently are components of the writing curriculum. As a follow-up to a writing mini-lesson on use of dialogue, the students were asked to recall a conversation that had taken place or to imagine one that might occur. They then had to write the dialogue using the appropriate conventions.

| "D—!" yelled Ms. Smith across the room giving her the come here signal. She was in one of her angry moods. D— could tell by the way she said her name.  
| "ooooohhhhh!" yelled the class thinking D— was in trouble. D— took a deep breath and said,  
| "Yes Ms. Smith." In a worried way.  
| "Don’t worry you’re not in trouble," she said calming her down. "actually you’re being awarded."  
| "What? Me?" said D— confused. She started shaking her head, showing Ms. Smith she didn’t understand. |
“I can see you don’t understand.” Ms. Smith was psychic. She could read other’s minds. She also was a wicked dresser.

“Okay let me explain better. I called you to tell you that you’re my best student.”

“Me as in D--- D---?” she said in shock waving her head making her curly hair go ballistic.

“I know this was your dream and now ...” said Ms. Smith being interrupted.

“You’ve fulfilled my dreams.” Said D--- dancing around the class in excitement.

“D--- stop!” demanded Ms. Smith. “How’d I know you’d be happy.”

**Metaphors and Similes**

In working with students on expressive language we explore a variety of techniques. In this particular activity students were focusing on creating imagery by making comparisons utilizing metaphor and simile. This time however I asked my students to make comparisons based on specific character traits or actions of mine.

| All the work Ms. Smith gives us is like trying to solve a confusing puzzle. |
| Trying to understand her is like listening to a scientific professor speak. |
| As everyone tries to like the way she teaches it is like trying to like a present you didn't expect. |
| Sometimes she is strict and sometimes she is not. Her attitude towards us is like the changing weather. |
| Sometimes her temper is like a steaming kettle. |
| With all the different cultures in my class, Ms. Smith tries to understand us all. I like the way she teaches because it makes me want to learn more. |

**Narrative Creative Writing**

As part of the writing programme the students are given opportunities to compose many stories. I have always encouraged students to write from personal experience. In one particular assignment I asked the students to write a story based on Life in 701(our homeroom). The story had to be based on an event that actually took place, but beyond the original episode they could be as creative as their imaginations would allow.

It was late December and almost the last day of school for the winter holidays. Jamie was a new student. She had registered the day before so this was going to be her first day there. As Jamie walked into room 223, a rush of shyness overcame her.

At the teacher’s desk sat a girl/woman with short hair and very cool clothes. Jamie scanned the room quickly, looking for the teacher. Suddenly she realized the small, young looking person at the desk was the teacher.

Jamie sat beside a small black girl.

“My name’s Shenelle” the girl whispered.

“Jamie.” Said Jamie.

Jamie’s day whizzed by and before she knew it, it was home time.
Later that night Jamie wrote in her diary.

Dear Diary,

Today I started a new school! It is called F——— C——. I am in class 701. My teacher’s name is Ms. Smith. She is Okay. She gives us a lot of work to do. Sometimes she lets her moods interfere with the way she behaves too much. She (Ms. Smith) uses interesting methods to teach basic skills. And did I mention she wears very cool clothes and marks real hard? Well she does. The boys in my class are hyperactive, sometimes obnoxious. Some of them really get on Ms. Smith’s nerves but the girls aren’t perfect. Overall I enjoy being in 701. I think I may get used to it quick.

With a snap Jamie shut and locked her diary and turned out the light. It had been another day living in 701.

Journalling

This was not a specific assignment, rather a system I put in place to address students’ questions. I introduced a class notebook to the students in which they could ask me any questions they wanted and I would respond to their queries in writing. The responses that you will see to the students’ questions were written at the time of the questions and not as I was composing this thesis.

Instead of providing a sample of the journalling, I think it will better illustrate the process and how it was introduced to my students by including a short story that was written about the episode of presenting the 701 journal to the class.

The Day the 701 Journal was Introduced

“Okay class,” yelled Ms. Smith. “Settle down.” Ms. Smith tapped her Le Chateau shoe impatiently waiting for the noise to go down.

Once it came to Ms. Smith’s satisfaction, she said, “We’re starting something new.”

“Oh man.” Came a series of moans from the class.

“Oh man.” Mimicked Ms. Smith with sarcasm reeking in her voice. “Okay let’s get started,” began Ms. Smith, “we’re starting something called 701 journals.”

Ms. Smith stood waiting for an reaction. When she didn’t get the one she was expecting, she looked around at the bewildered looks on the students’ faces.

“Well,” said Ms. Smith, “let me explain. You can write your thoughts and ideas about the way I teach. If there is something you like or are being troubled with, you may write about it in this book. Oh,” continued Ms. Smith, “I guarantee you will get a thoughtful response.”

“Hmmmm …”thought Sadhvi to herself. “What’s one thing I would like to know from Ms. Smith?”

“I think we’re thinking the same thing.” Said Aman, one of Sadhvi’s friends.

“I got it!” exclaimed Sadhvi. Quickly getting out a piece of paper and a pen, Sadhvi began writing.

After a few minutes Sadhvi looked back at the ideas scribbled on her paper.

Rising from her seat, Sadhvi got up to bring the journal to her desk. She wrote down why she was sometimes marked late on the attendance when she was just at her locker.
“I wonder what Ms. Smith’s response will be?” thought Sadhvi to herself.

THE NEXT DAY ...

“I guess she has a point.” Said Sadhvi to Aman.
“About what?” asked Aman, reaching for the 701 response book. Sadhvi had just gotten back the response journal with the answer to her question. Ms. Smith had written you must be inside of the classroom to be in attendance.
“This is a neat idea.” Sadhvi said to Aman “Writing in this would probably be better than hassling Ms. Smith about our suggestions.”
“I’ll write about something I find unfair,” said Aman suddenly, “I wonder what her response will be…”

Students’ Quotes

I did not feel it necessary to try to include every piece of writing that I collected from my students. In some instances I have simply taken excerpts from various student writings that were germane to my own professional development. These quotations will be identified as Students’ Quotes and could have been taken from any of the previously commented on assignments.

I’d say that our class is sort of like a family that needs to learn how to get some self control and a little more cooperation. Yes we occasionally goof off but who doesn’t? I think that Miss Smith, our core teacher, knows how we feel because when we need a break, she’s there to give it to us. If we’ve gone too far and really annoyed her, she’s there to yell at us. Even though she has another class, I think that she treats each of us differently and equally and she doesn’t underestimate any of us. She’s always encouraging us, never telling us what we can’t do.
'Ms. Smith is a rose that grows and never bends for things that surround her.'

**Narrative Creative Writing**

**The Evil Teacher**

Once upon a time there was a boy. His name was Robert. Robert went to F—— C—— Sr. P.S. Robert was now going to grade seven after a very exciting summer.

Then the big day came when Robert was going back to school. Robert’s teacher was going to be Mr. B—— and Mr. B—— was known as a very nice teacher. Robert was very excited.

The first day when Robert was at school, he got the news that Mr. B—— was just the class’s gym teacher and that’s it. He also announced that Ms. Smith was going to be the class’s core teacher.

Robert was very disappointed with the news because he was expecting to be in a nice teacher’s class and Ms. Smith was known to be a mean teacher.

As the day went on Robert was walking down the hall during the period change, he was talking to his friend Rocky. He was saying how this year was going to be so boring with his new teacher.

all his friend Rocky kept on saying, “It couldn’t be that bad she is just a teacher”.

Then the next day Robert finally had Ms. Smith for the first day. Robert was especially scared because she was known to put fear in her students and to keep the fear throughout the year.

Then when the first day when Robert was in Ms. Smith’s class she was not mean but man did she give work. First she said that her class would have to read 2 books every month, write at least 2 stories and Ms. Smith gave a mini project.

Robert was exhausted from working all day in Ms. Smith’s class. One thing that Robert notices was that Ms. Smith was not mean, she was just strict.

Today Robert now is used to Ms. Smith and does not think of her as a mean teacher but she still sometimes gets mad at him for no reason.

**An Afternoon in 701**

“Another sheet of homework.” Whined Rahul.

“And if you whine again you’ll get more. I like to see you suffer Rahul.” Replied Ms. Smith.

Nicole asked “Do you have any more work I could finish?”

“Actually I do. It’s in the bottom left hand drawer by the competitors.” Said Ms. Smith.

“Can I go too?”

“Yes you can go Sherone. I’m the friendliest, kind hearted teacher in this school.” Replied Ms. Smith.

“Yeah right.” Sherone whispered.

“I heard that!” yelled Ms. Smith.

Sherone ran to the computer lab as fast as he could. The whole class started to laugh.
Can't Sweep For Beans

It was 5th period and everyone had just picked up their chairs and put them down on the floor in front of the TV and VCR.

The class sat quietly and waited for Ms. Smith to begin talking. Ms. Smith stood in front of the TV and began to introduce the movie. Ms. Smith told us it was a movie called Legend. She said it was a monomyth. Ms. Smith told us a bit about the movie.

While Ms. Smith talked, Rahul kept interrupting her. The first time Ms. Smith said "this movie is a myth," and Rahul answered "Yeah, I know." In a quiet voice of course, but loud enough to let Ms. Smith hear.

Rahul talked while Ms. Smith was talking and on the 5th time she did that Ms. Smith got angry and said "I had enough of your mouth go outside."

Everyone started to laugh and Rahul didn’t seem to care. He went outside and Ms. Smith began talking again.

While Ms. Smith talked Rahul kept on looking in and waving. People started to laugh. She ignored him, she kept on talking and Rahul kept on looking in and waving. Ms. Smith moved from in front of the room to the door and closed it in Rahul’s face. Ms. Smith finished talking and we started to watch the movie.

In between the movie Ms. Smith told Rahul to come in, she gave him a broom and told him toweep the floor. That made everyone laugh. Rahul could not weep the floor for beans. He used one hand and he dragged the broom back and forth. The class started to laugh.

Rahul said "like you can do better."

Rahul had to sweep the whole room. I guess that was hard for him since he can’t sweep. When the movie was done it was last period and the bell rang for home time. Everyone left except Rahul of course. Ms. Smith wanted to talk to him. He was in deep trouble of course, but he got to leave after a talk with Ms. Smith.

That was the day when we watched the movie.

In looking back I suppose it was somewhat calculated, my effort to structure this paper by first introducing myself and my own story. In a way perhaps I was trying to present my side before giving voice to my students. Having already looked through the data that I collected, I knew the overall tone and hues of their collective insights. From the onset I was well aware that the path of revelations I had undertaken would not be an easy one — not for the squeamish at heart but the truth seekers, were my exact words.

Little did I know how true those words would turn out to be.

Journaling

#3

I hate it when you give us so much work. How do you expect us to do it all? Why do you have to be so noisy? And why don’t you trust some people in this class? Is it because they do bad at school you won’t even let some people go take the attendance down to the office.
Response:

I honestly don’t believe I give you more work than you can handle. But I do give you enough work to separate those students with good work habits from those who do not. I want my students to be challenged and to push themselves. I don’t want things to be easy – I don’t believe that you learn from easy. I don’t want students to think that there are any ‘free rides’ in my class. Any mark they get they have to earn and being successful takes hard work. For a student to be successful in my class they need to be organized and they need good work habits. Now if that’s being unfair then I guess I am unfair. I think that I work hard and I expect a lot from myself. Well I expect my students to work equally as hard as I do.

I agree that I am noisy but that’s my personality. I come from a noisy family. There have been times when I’ve really tried to change but it never lasted very long. Maybe I could tone down a bit if I really worked on it but honestly it did then I wouldn’t really be me. And above all else “To thine own self be true.” I value my students as unique individuals so they have to respect my individuality as well even if it is a bit noisy – all right a lot noisy!

I don’t disagree that there are students whom I trust more than others but that doesn’t mean I like them more. Who I am when I teach is exactly who I am with other people. My personality and values don’t change whether I am in the classroom or out of it. In my life I am not terribly trusting. I give everyone a chance but if they disappoint they probably won’t get a second one.

There are students who demonstrate through their behavior that they lack self-discipline, integrity and a personal sense of responsibility. I am very hesitant to bestow upon these individuals my trust because their past actions do not encourage me to do so. If somebody lets me down (by acting inappropriately, etc.) I’ll think twice before I give them another opportunity to do so.

Perhaps I should be more forgiving but that’s difficult for me because I don’t like to be disappointed. So I agree that I do trust certain students more than others and I am not sure if that’s necessarily wrong but I don’t know. Talk to me about it and as for a second chance. When trust is broken it has to be earned not just given.

#7

Why do you take a spaz at someone else when it is not their fault? Like the time when I asked you my mark for my signs in art you started screaming at me when someone else made you mad.

Response:

I think sometimes that I do have a tendency to sometimes take things out on other people. Sometimes I’ll be having a bad day and then a class will come in and I’ll be in a bad mood, even though they had nothing to do with my mood I might end up taking it out on them. I know that it is not fair but I am human and I make mistakes.

Sometimes it had to do with the timing. If 5 people come up to me to ask me the same question then I might have patience for the first three but by 4 or 5 I’ll snap and possibly take their heads off. Honestly speaking I don’t have very much patience. I was always told that teachers should be very patient people when working with students. Since I am not terribly patient I kind of thought that maybe I shouldn’t be in teaching. I try to be patient and to not to snap but I don’t think I am being terribly successful.

#6

Ms. Smith I think you are a good teacher. I enjoy having you for 2 years but you are uptight and give us a lot of work.

Response:

I agree that sometimes I am uptight. For me teaching is a lot of responsibility – it’s not just a job, it’s more. At the beginning of each school year I kind of dread it because I know that for 10 months I am going to be locked in. For me each year is a journey, it’s like I am a conductor and I am responsible for 26 passengers arriving safely at their different destinations. They all board at the same time but every passenger is different – they’ve got different luggage/baggage and personal histories. They’ve all got different needs and destinations.

I don’t just conduct I have to constantly make sure that all my passengers are on track. And I know that as much as I enjoy the ride, I can’t get off this train until the end of June. I can’t just jump off and
leave the passengers careening down the tracks. So for me for 10 months almost 24 hours a day I am constantly think about teaching, students and curriculum. It's not like I can go home every night and forget about work. So sometimes that makes me uptight. Sometimes I take that out on my students which isn’t fair. But I do love my job and as much as I do not look forward to the ride each September – once I’m on, I do enjoy it. I think it is important to challenge students and part of that is organizing and meeting deadlines.

I have always encouraged my students to be authentic, to express themselves fully, and they have done so in these subsequent pages. In a way I can’t help but be proud of them for taking me at my word and feeling safe and valued so that they could share with me their stories. To that extent at least I did walk my talk and put my beliefs into practice. In thinking back I can now see that my students gave to me what I had given them. They gave me frank criticism that was constructive and also at times hurtful.

**All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Grade 7**

Sitting through Ms. Smith’s class for a year I’ve learned she loves Quietness, and through that I’ve learned not to be loud. With quietness we are able to think of good ideas and finish our work.

What I’ve learned this past year with Ms. Smith is never get under her skin and if you do you’d better duck for cover because she gonna blow.

I guess that what I learned this year was that Ms. Smith can be nice sometimes and I admire that in a person, but if I hand my work in late she’s not so nice of a person.

In the self portrait that I created I alluded to some themes that swept across my canvas. I do not consider it a coincidence that in my students’ narratives those same hues along with some others reappear over and over and over again. What was it I said, broad strokes of over reliance on words, numerous contradictions between beliefs and practice, and teaching from the level of ego sans gentleness. Well my students did not phrase it quite so delicately for they do not yet possess an over reliance on words as I do. However, their thoughts were so succinct and their ability to cut to the heart of things caused me to sit back and take notice.
Life Lessons

Ever since coming to 701 I have started to talk louder. Whenever we’re in class the whole class is talking but it doesn’t bother Ms. Smith and so it doesn’t other us. We like talking. So we always talked and still did our work. That was one of the good things. All other teachers can’t take it. Students talk for one second they start yell their heads off. But Ms. Smith was sort of like she couldn’t hear. Sometimes we would go way over the limit and that was when she told us to stop.

I learned to yell more louder because Ms. Smith yells at us so it makes me yell louder. I learned to be more tougher because Ms. Smith is a tough person and it made me a tough person.

What did I learn from Ms. Smith. Well I did learn important information from the school curriculum, but what did she teach me that she did not want to teach me. Well the most important one I can think of is that she taught me the importance of reading and how I can enjoy it. The in the middle one she helped me become more sarcastic and more creative in my work and talking to others.

Something that I don’t think you meant to teach me but you did (something outside of the curriculum) was to apply my knowledge from school outside of school more often.

I learned to express myself in a variety of ways. I learned that there was more to a novel than its story. The hidden things I’ve learned are sarcasm, put downs and being picky. I leaned sarcasm from you Miss Smith when you were sarcastic about people not doing homework, and the same with yelling. And I learned being picky from you too. You are always being picky about how we perform and not doing our work right.

The hidden things I have learned from Miss Smith is she gives out a lot of sarcasm to out class and to individual people. She is impatient if someone in the class does something immature. Another hidden thing I learned from Ms. Smith is she wouldn’t have sympathy for anyone that has done something foolish. She has no patience with us if we do something foolish. The last hidden thing I have learned is she is preparing us to communicate with the opposite sex and also socialize by grouping the girls with the boys.

Now it is their turn so I throw back the curtain that has been cloaking the portrait of the teacher that I am. There have been glimpses, previews but not the entire canvas for it is far too revealing. Originally I had composed the tale of my EGO and then the play of my Soul but what I now present in the subsequent pages is a portrait of the Teacher that I Am. The collage that I have pasted together with scraps of stories, memories, reflections and insights has laid me bare.

In this collage I am left totally exposed and have an overwhelming need to cover myself but I cannot. For my own professional development which at this point is not egocentric but transformational, I need the engagement in self-evaluation but not in
isolation. The strongest relationship that I have as a teacher is with my students, therefore it is through that interaction that I can gain deeper understanding of myself and of my practice.

From the onset of teaching I knew that I was an individual who could not keep her personality out of the classroom. I knew I had a strong personality which was what brought me to teaching in the first place, and I also knew how important it was for me to live an authentic life. A result of this is that while my students do give me insight into my teaching practices, much of the data gathered focuses on personal and interpersonal development. I suppose it should not be a surprise to me that it is my personality, and strong presence in the classroom that keeps appearing in my students’ words.

I remember a time when I taught grade six and would be teaching grade seven the following September. I was able to take many of my grade six students on with me to the following grade. When I was choosing which students I would move with, I purposely chose to put in other classes those students who I felt needed a more emotionally nurturing environment.

I recognized that my tough manner perhaps was not the best fit for all students and I did not want them to have to endure that for two consecutive years, for I was not sure if their ego could manage my own. I felt these students were delicate and needed a more sensitive hand to guide them.

I failed to see that they were all delicate even the ones that never showed their fragile selves. So I took the strong ones. The ones who could handle my acerbity, humor and toughness. I took with me to grade seven the students who while they could not tame the shrew, they could accept and to some degree understand her.
What comes across when I read my students’ quotes are three key points: strength, attitude, and anger. It is no surprise to me that I am viewed as a strong person. I once thought it had to do with confidence and self-esteem but now that seems a bit ridiculous. You can be a soft-spoken, gentle person and still be strong. However, that was not the case with me. In my situation I am strong just for the sake of not showing my frailties.

This goes beyond my teaching persona, even in my personal life I put up a wall and put on the armor. It is very difficult for me to show the softer side of my personality. I am not quite sure why that is the case but I do know that it has been that way for as long as I can remember. In times of reflection I once believed that the armor was for my own protection for I was so sensitive that I hurt very easily.

There is a great deal of truth to this still, but by distancing myself from others I have to an extent not engaged myself fully with my students. It might appear to be a contradiction but my ego though strong is also fragile. While it did allow me to become a teacher and kept me there on the stage, it also detached me from my students. The title of this chapter could just as easily be called *The Taming of My Ego* for that is what my students were dealing with in the classroom on a daily basis. They never did tame it.

The Oxford Dictionary of Current English defines attitude as a ‘way of regarding, considered and permanent disposition or reaction; posture of body’. However current slang defines ‘having an attitude’ as being arrogant, conceited, and sardonic.

It is not the first time I have heard that I have an attitude. Although I cannot prove it, I am sure that I was born with it. It is funny but every new revelation keeps leading back to the same place. You really cannot teach from a vacuum. Everything
you’ve lived, everything you’ve loved and everything you believe forms your teacher self. The teacher that I am was formed certainly by the way I was raised, the way I was loved, the way I was taught, and the way that I loved.

Brown Angel knew about armor and about protecting herself from the outside in. When you find yourself in a place where you see no likeness of yourself in your peers or in all things viewed as positive and successful, you tend to insulate yourself. When everything around you is insidiously breaking you down then you either crumble or you build yourself up. But in building yourself up you might also shut yourself in and away from the rest of the world. Which is what I did, but teaching is such a profession that makes it very difficult to subjugate your personality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphors and Similes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She acts like a bear when it comes to teaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>She’s as aware as a hawk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Her looks are stern. Her heart is soft. Her rules are firm. But she is dependable when you’re in a spot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith is like a bear when it comes to people who don’t finish their work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith goes red like a burning fire when no one does their homework.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith is mean like a bear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith is a tiger—unpredictable and fierce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith's teaching is like a hawk — she notices everything and nothing gets by her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith teaches like a coach — she yells if you do something wrong.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith is as cruel as scrooge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith is like the waves of the ocean that roar thunderously when the sky has been cast back. When Ms. Smith is angry she is like the thunder in a vicious storm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith is a monkey. Jumps around from one spot to another. Sometimes she is showered with joy, and other times rude as a skunk, not caring about others feelings. Just sprays them with wreak of mean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith voice is loud like an awakening horn.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith cackles like a witch.</td>
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I find it amusing, all the animal imagery that my students created in their descriptions of me. There is some truth in all of their figurative phrases. If someone had asked me to describe myself using metaphor or simile, I am certain I would not have come up with the ones my students had and that I believe is the point of classroom-based teacher development. I can learn much from my own reflections and from my fellow teachers, but I can learn so much more from my students. The authenticity of their words and experiences give credence to student participation in an educator’s self-realization. My students’ versions of our interactions compliment my own by giving multiple perspectives of the events. I am reminded of The Sound And The Fury with its multiplicity of stories. Let us take the classroom as the episode, the critical incident to be revealed. Each character in the classroom has their own version of the events, and one story does not supersede the others. The multiplicity of stories serves to magnify the nature of the classroom interaction rather than obscure it.

**Conversations**

8. “Ms. Smith, I forgot to do my character sketch. I thought it was due tomorrow.” I said timidly.
“What? You mean to tell me that you have known about this for over a week and you have the gall to tell me you’ve waited until the last minute?” Ms. Smith yelled.
“What can I do?” I asked feeling smaller by the second.
“If it’s at home – nothing.” Ms. Smith said flatly.
“Okay.” I said.
“I’ll give you your detention sheet later.”
“All right.”

9. “Ms. Smith, “I asked shyly, “I couldn’t do my homework last night because, well my cat ate it.” I closed my eyes and hoped that she would believe me.
“Pardon me,” Ms. Smith started, “I thought you just said…”
"I did!" I interrupted. Uh oh big mistake.
"Well, I normally wouldn't give you an extension but I'm in such a good mood that you can hand it in tomorrow morning or else. Okay?" Ms. Smith replied.
"That would be fine! Thank you very much." I was so glad that she believed me.

10.
"S——, have you brought in your note?" asked Miss Smith impatiently.
"No but I'll bring it in at lunch." S—— replied hastily not knowing whether her determined teacher believed her or not.
"How many times have I heard that?" muttered Miss Smith disgustingly.
"I promise that I will." S—— quickly added before her teacher added another one of her sarcastic statements.
Too late, her teacher sighed and warned her, "Well just if you should forget your note I'll write a detention slip anyway."

11.
"J please come to my desk please." Ms. Smith in the opening of the day called out.
"Yes Ms. Smith" J , who looked very scared and knew what was going on, asked Ms. Smith.
"I am very disappointed in you. For the millionth time you did not hand in your assignment in." Ms. Smith said.
"See what happened is I was working on the story and then we had to go to my cousin's," J—— was saying before Ms. Smith interrupted him by saying.
"I have heard enough of those excuses of yours. I want that story handed in first thing at the end of the day."
"Can I hand the story in tomorrow morning because I am done the story, but it is at my cousin's house and I am going to my cousin's house today so I can get the story and hand it in tomorrow morning." J—— for a long period kept on saying.
"Fine but if it is not handed in tomorrow I shall give you a detention for a week." The annoyed Ms. Smith said.
"Thanks Ms. Smith."
"Whatever and return to your seat so we can begin class," Ms. Smith said confused because a second later she heard Ring and that was the bell to end class.

12.
"Ms. Smith why do we have to do this?" asked R—— as he sat in his desk doing nothing.
"Because you are here to learn and I am your teacher," replied Ms. Smith.
"Why can't we just do role playing or drawing?" R—— asked.
"We have already done that and I want to try something new." Ms. Smith answered.
"Good answer," R—— said and started drawing on a blank sheet of paper. Ten seconds later R—— asked another question, "Ms. Smith why am I sitting in front of your desk?"
"Why do you think you are sitting there?" Ms. Smith questioned.
"I don't know that is why I'm asking you." R—— replied.
"Well let's see, " Ms. Smith said, "your create trouble around the class."
"I do not." R—— interrupted.
"Oh I'm sure you don't," Ms. Smith said, "you also never do any work at school."
"I get it done."
"But that is not the point you always do your work at home and at school you are always fooling around." Ms. Smith replied.
"Will I ever move from here?" R—— asked.
"Well that depends if you stop asking questions and get your work done you will but if you don't then you will stay right where you are." Ms. Smith answered.
R——'s face lightened up with excitement as he quickly got to work on his assignment. R—— was surely going to move out of there, and a couple of weeks later he did.
When my student wrote "I like Ms. Smith because she is fun and kind, and when you make a joke about her she wouldn’t care, and plus nothing breaks her heart". I believe he was commenting on my armor, the outer shell that surrounds me and protects me from being too exposed. I do not let my students see my heart. I do not wear it on my sleeve, in fact if it wasn’t for the breathing you would swear I didn’t have one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ Quotes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One thing is how she doesn’t let anyone boss her around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Smith was always different. Sometimes she didn’t care about anything but sometimes she cared about everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today she wore her hair spiked up and there were two spikes that looked like the ears of the devil (which she was).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hate your sarcasm, your attitude, the way you look at a student when they ask a question. You look like you couldn’t care less and answer the question so sarcastically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish you would express yourself without an attitude. And don’t get mad when we ask you if something is okay, or if it’s good. You snap at us, and I feel as if you don’t like me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The only bad thing is anytime I say good morning or ask you if I could hand out papers or other things you always reject me. But I always forget but please try to change your attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before I was in your class, your last year students use to say that you are mean, and rude. And they were partially right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stop making fun of the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whenever you are angry you always take your anger out on us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I also think you are full of yourself. I think you need to loosen up and stop taking your anger out on us poor students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Smith you are so boring. You never give us parties, you suck! You say, “I just don’t feel like it.” Who cares what you think. You are selfish and give us way too much work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I also think that you should become a tiny bit nicer. Just a tiny bit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My temperament did little to soften my tin man persona. Loud, uptight, unbending, unsympathetic, impatient, sarcastic, and mean. Those are not my words, they’re my students. I would have described myself as being firm, demanding,
disciplined, focused, dispassionate and task oriented. My description sounds a great deal
inger than my students’ but equally as honest. Ah there’s the rub... words, words, words, words.

Whose words should I believe more? Those of my students who have nothing to
gain and nothing to lose from being honest. Students who for the most part have little
desire to search themselves or their thesaurus for just the right word. Or should I give
more credence to my choice of vocabulary? A highly educated educator who admittedly
has surrounded herself with words and has demonstrated her fluency with language on
more than one occasion.
'Oh she’s that determined short teacher that is the vicious lightening in an electrical storm when she’s mad. She’s the lady who everyone feels comfortable with at first glance.'

**Journalling**

#2
Miss Smith I like the way you teach because you always tell us what is expected of us, what we need to do etc. I also enjoy your dramatic hand movements. They make it more fun to watch you explain the work.

Response:
I am glad that you enjoy the way that I teach. I have always believed in clearly telling students what is expected of them. I also believe that you get what you expect. I expect all of my students to complete their work on time and to the best of their abilities so I feel that I have to clearly lay out my expectations. My dramatic movements are called 'gesticulating'. It is not something that I am conscious of doing when I speak, it just happens. It is a part of my personality.

#4
Why is it that you say you have no teacher’s pet(s) and you’re always favoring them more. Whenever they do something bad/inappropriate you always ignore it. But if someone else is to do the same you get mad at them. It’s unfair, and I think you lied.

Response:
I appreciate your honesty and obviously you feel that I lied so I have to respect your feelings. However believe that I have never knowingly lied to my students. If I said that I had no “pets” it is because I genuinely believe that I don’t. Obviously however the perception is that I do so I must examine what actions I have done that would lead you to conclude that I have “pets”.

I think that have a tendency to perhaps be more kind to students who complete their work, put in 100% effort, don’t have an attitude, are respectful and do not behave inappropriately. These are things that I value so when someone has displayed this positive character, I tend to be more forgiving when at some point they might screw up.

If I have 2 students, one whom I have never seen be disruptive and the other who seems to get into trouble more frequently. Then if something happens chances are I’d believe the first student over the other because their past actions lead me to trust them more. Also if someone whom I have to speak to numerous times gets into trouble chances are I will come down harder on them than I would have if it were another student who doesn’t get into a lot of trouble.

So I guess in that regard maybe I do have “pets” but they would be a majority of students in this class because most of them do work very hard, are not disruptive and I trust them. But that doesn’t mean that I don’t yell at them or mark their work easier or tell them when they’ve screwed up.

I believe that you are judged by your actions. I come down hard on some people because their actions show me that they need consequences and discipline. I try to treat all students equally but sometimes treating students equally means treating some differently. So if you want to say I have pets then so be it – any hard working, self-motivated, self-disciplined, self-directed student is my pet.

As I stated earlier, each summer when I was in university I would work as a teaching assistant in a Primary English As A Second Language classroom. Even then
there were things that I believed intuitively. At the time it really bothered me that there were no stories that I could share with my young students that dealt with moral questions and ethnic characters.

Though I hadn’t yet written Brown Angel at that time, I suppose it was her story that I did not want repeated for my young students. Since I felt that there were no relevant stories for my students, I decided to write my own. ‘As you like it’ is for the most part exactly how I like to do things. If I did not like the way things are then I try to change them to my own satisfaction. I am not an individual who criticizes the way things are yet does little to alter the status quo. If I disagree or dislike something then I make a point of articulating my feelings, and where possible I will act to make change.

As a teaching assistant I was not satisfied with the picture books that were available to me so one summer I decided to write stories of my own. I remember writing several short stories that I would read aloud to my students. For the young ESL children I was working with the stories were completely over their heads, but I suppose I was really writing them for myself.

Even though I told myself at the time that I was doing it for the students, to give them characters that looked as they did and could accomplish anything. In fact, I was writing the stories that I didn’t hear when I, like Brown Angel, was a student in this new land. Outside of my nurturing home I needed to hear that all things were possible for all people not just some. I wanted others to believe in brown angels and a little girl in boy’s hockey skates.
ICE FOLLIES
By: Michelle Suzanne Smith

Once upon a very short time ago, longer than a week but shorter than a year, there lived an ordinary young girl named Adria. She wasn’t the prettiest, smartest or most popular fourteen year old girl in her school. She was simply a girl like any other.

Adria enjoyed playing sports. Her friends and family thought she was a tomboy but Adria knew she was an athlete. She played on several of the school teams but the one Adria most wanted to be on was the hockey team – the Walruses.

Adria loved hockey and she was a good player. When she was younger she would always see her two older brothers playing and while she watched she would ask, “can I play with you? Please let me play.”

“You’re too little.” They’d reply. “You’ll get hurt. Play with your dolls instead. Hockey isn’t for girls!”

But Adria wouldn’t listen and whenever they played she continued to ask, “Can I play with you? Please let me play?”

Soon her brothers, unable to ignore her constant request, gave in and gave her an old pair of skates, a helmet and a hockey stick. Adria practiced everyday with her equipment. At first she had a difficult time trying to do everything at once, things like skating, stick handling and shooting the puck. But she never gave up trying.

Her family thought the whole thing was rather temporary, that she’d soon tire of the game but of course she never did. The more Adria practiced the better she played, and the better she played the more she liked practicing. Soon it was her brothers who were doing all the watching and they couldn’t believe that their little sister was a talented hockey player. In fact, they thought it was cool having a sister that not only liked hockey but was good at it.

Often they would let her play with them, giving her pointers to improve her game. Adria learned quickly. She was skating faster and handling the puck more skillfully. Those who saw Adria play would always remark that she was as good on skates as any boy they had seen.

It was the following Fall and the tryouts for the school hockey team were being held. Adria planned to go for she knew that she was good enough to make the team. When she arrived at the arena Coach Chattergoon took one look at Adria and barked, “No spectators at the tryouts!”

“But Coach Chattergoon I’m not here to watch. I want to be on the team.” Replied Adria.

“You’ve gotta be kidding me … is this some kind of a joke?” Laughed the coach as he grabbed hold of his rolling belly.

“No Coach Chattergoon this isn’t a joke. I’m a good player, please let me tryout and you’ll see.” “I’ll see nothing of the kind young lady because you won’t be trying out,” snapped the coach “I don’t allow girls on my hockey team!”

“But why?” Adria asked.

“Why? Why? Why that’s obvious,” snorted Coach Chattergoon. “You wouldn’t be able to keep up with my boys. And besides what if something were to happen to you during a game? No one wants to see a girl get hurt playing a boy’s game. You can understand that can’t you?”

As the coach was speaking, Adria could feel his eyes staring through her as though she was invisible. As she stood listening she knew exactly what he was telling her for it was what her brothers had told her when she was younger. But she hadn’t listened to them then and she wasn’t going to listen to the coach now. So she told him what she knew he wanted to hear.

“I understand Coach Chattergoon,” Adria uttered “I’m sorry for wasting your time.”

And with that Adria turned on her heels to leave the arena.

“Hey kid!” the coach called out after her. “It’s nothing personal you know. I just don’t think it would be a good idea. Besides, a girl with your spunk would make some kind of cheerleader. Keep it in mind. You’ll see I’m right.”
Adria didn’t bother turning around to acknowledge the coach’s last remark, instead she started running. She wanted to leave the arena as fast as her feet could take her.

“How could the coach believe that he was right. How could he not know that girls can play on a boys’ team” she thought to herself as she ran.

Adria knew this wasn’t true and besides it was unfair because the school didn’t have a girls’ hockey team that she could play on. That night as Adria sat in her room thinking about what the coach had said, she held her old hockey stick, the one her brothers had given her. And as she sat holding the stick, Adria knew what she was going to do.

First she went into her brothers’ room and borrowed some of their clothes to wear to school the next day. Then she went into the bathroom, took out the scissors and one by one cut off her many braids. As she stood staring at herself in the mirror she knew there was no turning back. For at that particular moment in time, her determination to be a Walrus was greater than her desire to be a girl.

Adria awoke early the next morning. She dressed quickly and left the house while her family was still sleeping. She did not want to answer any questions about her new appearance even though she knew her family would understand.

She walked to the arena with her hand-me-down skates and hockey stick. She felt rather strange as she went along, for no longer could she hear the familiar jingle jangle of her hair bobbles clapping together as she walked. She ran her hand over her head - nothing. Just a low tuft of soft, kiky hair.

When Adria arrived at the arena she told the coach her name was Adrian and that she wanted to be on the hockey team.

“Voice hasn’t changed yet huh kid? … well don’t worry about it. It’ll happen” teased Coach Chattergoon jokingly.

“Uh … right.” Adria mumbled in the deepest voice she could muster.

“We’re always looking for talented boys,” continued Coach Chattergoon “but you’re an awfully puny young fella. Are you sure hockey’s your game?”

“Oh I’m sure coach. I’ve been playing with my older brothers ever since I was a little kid.”

Replied Adria.

“Well get on your skates and show me what you can do then.”

“Thanks coach.”

Quickly Adria changed and played shinny with some of the other players. The coach never took his eyes off Adria as she skated around the rink.

“Finally a player who can move the puck and shoot. This year we’re going all the way,” said the coach to himself.

As Adria skated past him he yelled out “Hey sonny where have you been all my life?”

“My family just moved here.” Replied Adria as she skated over to the bench.

“Well who cares cause you’re here now and we’ve got you. Practice is everyday after school and out first game is in two weeks and it’s a biggy. We’re playing last year’s defending champions.”

“Does that mean that I’m on the team?”

“On it? Son you are the team. I’ve waited my entire career for a boy like you to come along. You’re a natural – we’ll be unbeatable together,” rambled Coach Chattergoon unable to contain his obvious excitement.

Adria was thrilled that she was now a Walrus but she was also sad because she knew that it wasn’t her but Adrian who had really made the team. But Adria also knew that being a boy was the only way that she could remain a Walrus.

She practiced with the other players for two weeks in preparation for the team’s first game and no one ever suspected that the Walruses’ star center was a girl. Finally the day arrived and the entire school was there to cheer the team onto victory. Adria felt as though this was the day she’d been waiting for all her life. As she sat lacing up her skates she thought about the first time she had watched her brothers playing and how she had asked “Can I play?” Why had the answer always been no? Her brothers had relented in time but they were family. What about the coach, would his answer always be no.

The Walruses won the game. Adria had a hat trick and assisted on the winning goal. She was the most outstanding player of the game. Her teammates were so happy that they picked her up and skated her around the rink as the fans cheered wildly.
Adria was thrilled that she had played so well but as she glided around the ice on her teammates/shoulders, that sad feeling came over her once again.

"Those cheers," she thought "are not for me. They're for Adrian."

Adria knew that she couldn't pretend any longer so after the celebrations were over she told Coach Chattergoon and her teammates the truth about her identity.

"Why you little cheat!" shouted Coach Chattergoon as his face turned pale, then red, then purple. The veins in his neck began throbbing as he continued screaming. "I trusted you, I even called you son and I've never said that to any of my other players."

"But I had no choice," said Adria "when I first asked you if I could try out you said no."

"Well of course I said no." Snapped Coach Chattergoon. "Girls don't play hockey, it's a boys' game."

"But Coach Chattergoon," exclaimed one of her teammates "Adrian, I mean Adria is the best player we have."

"Yeah that's right!" The other team members chimed in agreement.

"Oh be quiet!" Snapped the coach "What do you guys know?"

"But coach you said so yourself. You told me that I was the boy you'd been waiting for all your life." Adria exclaimed.

"That's right – the boy I'd been waiting for not the girl."

Adria couldn't argue any longer. She felt Coach Chattergoon's answer would always be no. "I'll quit the team" she said and began to leave.

Coach Chattergoon looked at the other players, then he looked at Adria as she neared the door and then he thought about his team's chances at a championship.

"Now, now don't be so hasty young lady. I never actually said that you had to quit the team. Boy, girl what's the difference anyway?"

"Do you mean that I'm still on the team?" asked a surprised Adria.

"Of course you're still on the team. We're going to the championships aren't we?"

"You bet Coach Chattergoon!"

"Eh, why stop at just one girl on the team. You wouldn't happen to have any friends that play as well as you do, would huh?" Coach Chattergoon asked smiling broadly.

Adria and the other players began to laugh. "I'll look into it" she replied. Thanks Coach Chattergoon. I thought your answer would always be no and that I would never be able to play with the others."

"Eh, it just goes to show you that sometimes a player can teach a coach a thing or two."

While I no longer literally put pen to paper and write stories for my students now, I am through my actions channeling to my students the life lessons of *Ice Follies* and many of the other truths that I hold dear. "The last hidden thing I have learned is she[Ms. Smith] is preparing us to communicate with the opposite sex and also socialize by grouping the girls with the boys." (*Life Lessons, Chapter Four*) There is very little that is subtle about me and I am overt in letting my students know what I value: equality, independence, confidence, self-direction and self-belief.
Life Lessons

I learned several things from Miss Smith. One of those things that I learned was how to be confident. Whatever she wears is confident. Another thing is that I learned to stick to my decisions.

Always be confident about yourself. If you want to say something you shouldn’t just hold it in but tell someone and let it out. Always listen to what others have to say.

I learned to be confident and to work harder in oral discussions and conversations and express myself.

One thing that I have learned this year is that the way a teacher acts one day is not what she acts like all the time. You have shown me that because you are mad one day that doesn’t mean you will be mad at me but instead you always leave everything in the past and always start fresh everyday. Also this year I learned from you that I should always express what I am feeling and not keep it cooped up.

Ms. Smith taught me how to be outgoing. I didn’t use to put up my hand or want to answer questions because I was afraid that I would get the answer wrong, but Ms. Smith taught me to have confidence in myself and now when I think I have the answer right, I’ll put up my hand.

I think she has opened a lot of doors that were shut before in Language Arts. Ms. Smith taught me to put more emotion into my writing by asking questions that made you dig deep inside yourself to be able to give the answer to it. I know Ms. Smith has the type of attitude to let everything out and not keep it inside and I think that type of an attitude has rubbed off on me and made me let more out in Oral Language. Ms. Smith has built up my confidence.

For the past two years that I’ve been in your class, after I thought about it I realized that I’ve learned quite a bit from you that you didn’t teach intentionally. From you I’ve learned to look inside myself and open up. Before you taught me that, I used to write responses by ideas from my friends or just basically what I felt. I didn’t really dig deep inside myself to answer these things. I learned not to be shy and to do things independently. I used to never raise my hand in class or participate in class discussions because I was either shy or I didn’t think my answer was right but you taught me that it doesn’t matter what people think and did I need or want to say something I should, I may not always do that but it has gotten better.

In my most idealistic moments I would like to think that in my own way I give to my students what I have always been grateful for all my life, and that is a belief in oneself that no one or nothing can tear you down. Though I am far from being the nurturing, mothering teacher who rocks her students like the rock of ages. I am the teacher who believes that all things are possible for all people.
All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Grade 7

For fearful and brave as I stand tall never knowing what Miss Smith has hidden for us. But strong as a soldier I have prepared myself for the battle Miss Smith has brought us to by overcoming my obstacles that I thought I would never do.

S is for Ms. Smith who I have known for 2 years. I've learned how to use self-discipline, how to be more responsible with my work.

Life is a challenge, not a game. And a challenge is what you get in grade 7.

Always be responsible, responsibility eventually leads to trust. Being responsible means starting your work the day it's assigned even though it is due in a month.

The most important thing I learned this year is really important so you've got to listen. This is as important as the cream filling in an oreo. It is never ever leave your homework for the last minute because if you do you will be up half the night finishing it and you will also get a bad mark.

In grade seven I learned that to stop making up excuses and just come out with the truth because once you get into a lie you probably won't remember what you were lying about when you get too far into the lie. Instead of getting into all this trouble just tell the truth and get it over with.

The hot news that illuminated the depths of my mind was that don't lie about forgetting your homework at home because next time it might really happen and nobody would believe you. Don't lie about your homework when you know you haven't done it yet.

Narrative Creative Writing

It was a cold winter's day. The snow was knee high. Trees were swaying in the heavy breeze blowing all the snow on the roads interrupting traffic. Busses were out of service. Children were walking, and cars were struggling squeezing through lanes.

"How did you get to school Harleen?" asked Bina as the two walked into class.

"I walked." Replied Harleen as she sat down in her seat.

"You walked all the way to school? Isn't it cold?" yelled Bina across the room. Bina was considered one of the loud mouth students.

"Yeah it's freezing outside. It's raining pellets. I froze to death." Said Harleen. Harleen was the most trustworthy person in the class.

"Ha ha. I got a dr..." stopped Bina as Ms. Smith walked into the class.

Ms. Smith was a strict, intelligent, cool, stylish and 90s type of teacher. She was hyper, but knew how to control it. She was a wicked dresser, chose never to wear anything twice. The students often wondered how much she made a year, or whether it was all 'pass me downs' from brothers and sisters.

Today as she walked into the class she bumped into the garbage and hoped nobody saw, until she noticed Devi yelling..."

"Look she's 30 and still can't walk straight!"

"Ha ha ha!" yelled 701.

"Very funny Devi you have a detention and you got a B on your book report." Said Ms. Smith forgetting to control her hyperness.

Devi sat back in her chair quiet as a mouse all mad about her B. Devi was a tall, over sized student. Immature who made corny jokes and liked to be considered as an enhanced student. But unfortunately Hyper Smith never noticed.

All morning the class was obnoxious and acted like fools, but this was nothing unusual for the 701 class. Ms. Smith sat at her luxury seat annoyed. She was sitting on her rolling chair and had her feet up on
another. Her desk was covered with papers waiting to be marked. She was surrounded by students jumping around, and a shelf covered with published stories. On her right was a 2 meter long bulletin board displaying beautiful art work done by 701.

"Okay I've had enough. STOP. I'm no longer giving this class more time to work on book reports. So put your work away." Demanded Ms. Smith.

"What are we going to work on now?" asked Vishal.
Ms. Smith snapping her fingers to get their attention, "put it away NOW!"

"Alrighty then." Said Chris.

"Well I'm going to send a book around. Sonya would you pass this around? In this book I want you to write the things that you like and dislike about me and the way I teach."

"Are we allowed to write that you're ugly?" questioned Sherone.

"Yeah because it doesn't hurt my feelings."

"Okay then." Said Sherone excitedly getting his pencil ready.

Turn by turn everyone wrote their comments.

Sherone wrote: 'You're 30 and still can't walk' and other wrote even more rude ones.

Since Ms. Smith only had 701 for two periods she had planning time and decided to spend it by reading what the class wrote in the book.

Tanveer- go dye your hair pink, purple, or green. Punk!
Matt- You're noisy and mean!
Sadhvi- You're too uptight!
Aman- You think you dress so good!
Jessy- You're too dumb to be a teacher!
Yusra- You're a liar!
Sylvia- You're a short midget like me!
Devi- I love you!
Bina- I hate you!

After Ms. Smith read those comments she went crazy. You see she never knew that the class hated her. She started throwing things around the class. Cereal boxes the class made, pencils, chairs, erasers, the shelf, She flipped her desk upside down and began throwing papers. She went psycho, retarded, mental and insane! She started pulling her hair out of her scalp. Tearing her clothes. At this time the class was so terrified, scared not knowing what to do. There she stood half bald, showing her original black roots in her hair. She looked like Medusa. Until Sherone decided to run out of the class. The students didn't know what came over her. She's never really acted this crazy before.

Sherone had went down to the principal's office, screaming on the top of his lungs, "Ms. Smith is retarded! Help! Help!"

He had caused a commotion in the hallways. Mr. J—, our vice-principal, had finally caught hold of him and found out what had happened. He then decided to announce on the PA system that Michelle Smith had gone crazy, and to beware!"

All the students and staff in the building had ran out. The principal and vice-principal didn't know what to do. So they decided to join the parade and miss out on school. School was canceled for the rest of the day. So the students got to go home. The staff decided to go for a late lunch at Buffet World, across the street, and leave her all alone. Devi on the other hand stayed back to comfort Ms. Smith, hoping she'd be on her good side. Devi's tricky mind was hoping she'd be recommended for the enhanced program.

Devi talked Ms. Smith out of destroying the school which was her plan. She told her to forget about Tanveer's and Yusra's comments and that they weren't important. Last, which did the trick, Devi told Ms. Smith that she loved her.

The individual who wrote Hyper is a student whom I taught for two years. I enjoyed her a great deal and she is one of the students with whom I had a strong impact
on. In two years I saw her become confident, outgoing, independent and self-assured.

She told me that I had a little something to do with that, and it made me feel proud. She put tremendous effort into everything that she did and loved to let her imagination take flight on all creative assignments that she was given. I have included two of her stories in this paper because beyond how entertaining they are to read, in her own humorous way she has encapsulated poignant truths in her narratives. Her second story, which is my favorite, appears in Chapter Eight: Measure for Measure.

Metaphors and Similes

All the work Ms. Smith gives us is like trying to solve a confusing puzzle.

As everyone tries to like the way she teaches it is like trying to like a present you didn't expect.

Sometimes she is strict and sometimes she is not. Her attitude towards us is like the changing weather.

Sometimes her temper is like a steaming kettle.

With all the different cultures in my class, Ms. Smith tries to understand us all. I like the way she teaches because it makes me want to learn more.

Ms. Smith's language arts knowledge is like an English language book.

Ms. Smith teaches like a scientist.

Ms. Smith's teaching is a guide to success.

Ms. Smith's homework is an invitation to death.

Ms. Smith's vocabulary is a living dictionary.

Ms. Smith is the weather -- sometimes nice and sometimes mean.

Ms. Smith's teaching is fun like Paramount's Canada's Wonderland. She explains our work just the way authors do in their stories. Yes Ms. Smith marks hard just like a woodpecker pecking. She is fair as a robin feeding her babies. Ms. Smith plans everything just as a camp leader would do. One thing that's great is she gives us time to work on assignments like a construction crew building a store.

Ms. Smith teaches like a scientist.

As You Like it or at least that is how my students see it. It is not coming up with their answer, it is coming up with what they think I want them to say. I remember one particular student's words: "do we have to use our imagination or put the right answer?"

This question posed to a teacher who prominently displays in her classroom the Storyteller's Creed. In part it reads:

I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge.
That myth is more potent than history.
That dreams are more powerful than facts.\textsuperscript{30}

I tell my students that I want them to come up with their own answers, but I am not certain that I demonstrate whether or not I value this. If I am saying one thing yet only rewarding the ‘right’ answers, then it won’t be too long before my students learn the game of giving me what I want so they can get what they want – high marks.

Imagination is stronger than knowledge and I try to foster creativity in my classroom, but a creative environment needs to be a nurturing one where participants feel safe to try new things. Being an individual who has made countless mistakes I hope that despite my criticisms I do create an environment where students can make mistakes as they learn.

Another thing I learned I had no intention of learning is that no one is perfect. I used to get mad at myself for getting a B or not impressing a teacher but I learned that no one is perfect and no one should try to be perfect because that’s a fight you’re sure to lose. I learned this from teachers who give decent grades and who are nice enough to tell the truth like if your work stinks or something like that. \textit{(Life Lessons, Chapter Six)}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Conversations}

S.
"S_____, come here." said Ms. Smith.
I got up and went to her. But Ms. Smith said, "with your portfolio." So I went to get it. I went back to her desk and Ms. Smith said kindly, "have a seat." I sat.
"Open your portfolio please."
I did. Ms. Smith looked at my reading log and said "Wow, you have done a lot of reading, S_____."
"Thank you." I said.
"I was wondering S_____, when was the last time you read a book which was not a mystery or horror?" asked Ms. Smith.
"Ummmm, I don't know."
"It's been that long hey?" Ms. Smith said laughing lightly.
I laughed with her.

Ms. Smith said after she looked at my current event's sheet, "Why is this inside?"
I answered "I don't know."
Ms. Smith laughed and again I laughed.
"Oh you really should know why you put those things in." said Ms. Smith jokingly.
Ms. Smith said, "S____ when you read, read other kinds of books."
I asked in a small voice "What kinds of books should I read?"
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{30} Robert Fulghum, \textit{All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten}. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), VII.
6.
“D—!” yelled Ms. Smith across the room giving her the come here signal. She was in one of her angry moods. D— could tell by the way she said her name.
“oooooooo!” yelled the class thinking D— was in trouble.
D— took a deep breath and said, “Yes Ms. Smith.” In a worried way.
“Don’t worry you’re not in trouble,” she said calming her down. “Actually you’re being awarded.”
“What? Me?” said D— confused. She started shaking her head, showing Ms. Smith she didn’t understand.
“I can see you don’t understand.” Ms. Smith was psychic. She could read other’s minds. She also was a wicked dresser.
“Okay let me explain better. I called you to tell you that you’re my best student.”
“Me as in D—?!” she said in shock waving her head making her curly hair go ballistic.
“I know this was your dream and now…” said Ms. Smith being interrupted.
“You’ve fulfilled my dreams.” Said D— dancing around the class in excitement.
“D— stop!” demanded Ms. Smith. “How’d I know you’d be happy.”

7.
“M——!” Ms. Smith called from her desk.
“Yes.”
“Okay M—— sit down. I want to discuss your portfolio.”
“Okay.”
“M—— where is your reading sheet?”
“Right there under my ‘I Can Do Anything’ story.”
“M—— where are your comments?”
“I forgot to write them.”
“Okay then I have to give you a B. Okay M—— why did you put this in your portfolio?”
“I don’t know.”
Miss Smith laughs and then continues the conference. “Okay M—— why did you put your timeline in?”
“Because if was on computer and it took a long time.”
“Okay M—— this is not exactly the way I wanted your portfolio to be done. I wanted you to reflect on your work so keep this in mind for next time.”

Students’ Quotes

You’re funny and put pizzazz into learning. You make the most boring things into an interesting thing to learn. You’re so jumpy, jolly and laugh a lot.

I think that the way you teach is very creative. I like the way you do hand movements when you explaining assignments. It really makes it more interesting.

I also learned that if I did not have an assignment that was due that day, I shouldn’t lie about it. I mean Miss Smith always knew, but she usually gave me a break if I told her the truth.

When I got out of grade 6 and into grade 7 I was really surprised. To me you were nothing like Ms. W—— (my grade 6 teacher) because she was quiet like a mouse but you were as loud as I remembered.
'I think when you say it is not the quantity it is the quality of your work. I say you mark opposite.'

In Chapter One, Act V I haughtily stated my personal philosophy. I felt at the time and still do believe that it is important for educators to articulate their convictions and principles. Let me quote myself from the philosopher stage for I see a connection with Measure for Measure. "There have been so many things that have helped me to grow in ways that cannot be measured each year by a scale or a metre stick."

A great deal of my writing from the past had to do with looking at myself as an individual beyond the external judgments and assessments of others. On one level I do not believe I sought my value as an individual from others, yet I cannot deny that I did seek recognition and achievement from the outside. The tale of my ego is a testament to this, despite being rocked like the rock of ages I still needed to be held up and viewed as a success. In times of quiet reflection however, when I sit and write I completely devalue the external judgments of others because ego or not, they do not define who I am.

I remember when I was a student and would receive a poor mark on a particular assignment or test. I do not remember it having any real or lasting emotional impact on me. Even back then, if I did poorly I could always separate the work from the person. If I did badly that did not mean that I in turn was bad or worthy [it is the chicken and egg question again]. Perhaps that was because I had success in other areas or maybe it had to do with my upbringing, whatever the reason, I was able to accept the appraisals of me and
my work quite comfortably. What I now see however, is how that fact has manifested itself in my teaching.

Based on my students’ writings I recognize that because I can take criticism quite easily, I assume that they can as well. It seems that every thing I do in the classroom is somehow tied to the tale of my ego. I continue to grow in ways that cannot and should not be calibrated yet I have failed to recognize that in my own students. I suppose I could defend myself by bringing forth the legal issue of accountability and how important it is for me to be able to demonstrate how each student has grown each year and to what degree. While this is a valid argument it is also a bit of a cop-out.

I have more than covered myself legally in terms of assessment and evaluation but like Shylock in Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice, I want to extract my pound of flesh. I am a perfectionist, detailed to a fault and in my interactions with my students, this character trait is highly apparent. Everything comes down to a mark, a grade, a percentage. I do take evaluation seriously but you would never know it by how casually I dispense grades as easily as greetings.

Conversations
1.
"Good morning Ms. Smith," I said as I came into the classroom.
"Huh ... Oh good morning." Ms. Smith said drowsily. She sounded terrible. She didn't look good either, she was wearing a long black bell bottoms and a ruffled white shirt topped with a ridiculous looking hat. Also to top that off she was wearing way too much makeup. It was like she was going to a Halloween party.
"Um, Ms. Smith could you tell me what you think of my drawing for art?" I asked nervously. I knew that she would tell me like a million things that is wrong with it and then say one thing good about it.
"Well you see in this part the shading is so wrong and in this part ....," and she went on and on and on. Finally she stopped then said, "other than that, everything is fine."
"O.K. bye." I said as I ran off to my desk. I couldn't stand much more of her.
2. "S____," asked Ms. Smith "can you come and get your geography assignment."
"O.K. Ms. Smith, a D." he hollered.
Ms. Smith said, "If you think I'm going to give you a mark for answers like that, you're out of you mind."
"C'mon Ms. Smith, it's nearly Christmas and these answers are very good I thought of them myself."
Ms. Smith replied, "I'm not Santa Claus and can you please read the answer to this question: What is the longitude and latitude line of Quita, Equator?"
I said "44N 64S."
She asked, " Do you know where those lines meet up?"
"NO." I said confused.
"They meet up at Ottawa."
"So that's why I got a D?" I asked.
"Um hm, now you learned an important lesson." I responded.
"Study."

3. "Ms. Smith, Ms. Smith can I talk to you?" I asked.
"Sure you can." Replied back Ms. Smith.
"I got an E on my Iceberg Hermit Diary entry and I was wondering if I can do it again?" I asked in a happy way.
"If you knew you were going to get an E you should have not even handed that in." said Ms. Smith
"So you are saying I can't do it again?"
"That's right."

4. "Ms. Smith, why isn't this assignment related to theme?" B--- asked.
"Well, lets see here, okay, it only talks about believing and that's not theme." Ms. Smith replied
"But that's what the whole book was about, believing in these creatures that lived in the cave" responded B---.
"Well, could it be that the theme is Supernatural instead of believing?"
"Yeah I guess so, " B--- said.
"Yeah I think Supernatural would best fit the book."
"Then should I do this over?" B--- asked.
"Well let's see here," Ms. Smith said looking into her mark book, "even if you didn't do it over you'd still get an A"
"Oh, would I?" B--- said relieved.
"Yeah well, maybe I can give you 3 extra marks for at least understanding what the theme was, so that would give 83 out of 100 which is good, it's an A." Ms. Smith said feeling generous.
"Okay, thanks!" B--- then said walking away.

The following story was written by a student who I spoke about earlier in Chapter Three. This story shows me that even with a student with whom I had a wonderful, positive relationship, there is something about the arbitrary nature to evaluation that she definitely did not like. Although her story is very amusing, the art assignment, the grade and the emotions are all true.
I sub-titled this chapter Love’s Labor Lost because in my need to constantly affix a grade or value to every assignment, I am unknowingly negating or devaluing the student’s labor in completing the work. My students hand in to me their assignments and they trust me with them, in the way that you might entrust your child with a friend. I am their teacher, I am supposed to be gentle and nurturing even when I must be the evaluator.

I mark the work, but for the most part I admit that I often don’t think about how the student feels when they receive the mark – good or bad. In the example of this story, I thought I had given her a very good mark but her portrait was a labor of love and by casually assigning it a number, I failed to acknowledge the true depths of her effort.

**Narrative Creative Writing**

**MEAN TEACHER**

It was a warm sunny morning. The sun shone making the day glow. The palm trees were swaying in the light tingly wind, with their creamy like leaves shading the school ground. The crystal clear pond splashed as the students jumped in screaming with joy getting soaked. All of a sudden the school ground got still. Not a soul spoke. There in front of their eyes stood the meanest, rudest, but yet best dressed teacher alive. Even the principal knew not to mess with that teacher, or else, off with the head.

“Get out of there you rotten, no good, unmannered pieces of scum!” bellowed the teacher like usual. She was single and had no friends.

As soon as the teacher said that, the students immediately stood in single file line, just as she liked and ordered.

“Hello everyone. As you all can see I’m in a great, terrific, superduper, ammaaazzzzing mood. Nothing can bring me down.” Announced Devi in a hysterical way. It seemed as if she was going to blow up in all that excitement.

“Guess who our first period teacher is?” chuckled Rahul rocking back and forth in his chair.

“That oughta pop your bubble and stop you from being so cheery.” He said giving his best shot at disappointing her.

“I know, It’s the witch, but it’s okay because I’m prepared. I finished my art sketches.” Pointed out Devi giving a signal of proud accomplishments. “To tell the truth, my big art sketch of the back pack is wicked and Bina even said so. So ha ha ha!”

“Well, we’ll just have to put the mark that you get to the test!” remarked Jessy as they entered the class of terror.

“Devi bring your sketch to me!” howled the evil, miserable woman. “NOW!”

Devi got up and held out the beautiful sketch of a backpack. It gradually turned from dark to light and the use of lines was creative and awesome. It looked as if it was done professionally.

“Not bad. Actually not good. Here, 33 out of 40. Now sit down and be quick.” She demanded staring her down with an awful dirty look.

“I got a 33 out of 40.” Frowned Devi in disappointment. Devi was so mark crazy. She would never accept anything under 35. Even if her work was bad she still wanted a good mark. She was tall, the tallest in the class. She had shoulder length chestnut brown hair as soft as a baby’s butt. She was smart but
not in math and any subject with the selfish, mean and dumb teacher. She was moody, polite and annoying and thought nothing was fair.

"That's not fair at all. I deserved at least a 36 or 37 and she gave me a 33. Yuck, I hate her. I'm going to kill her!" threatened Devi as she told Melissa and Shruti her plans.

"What did you get Devi?" bragged Rahul as he came up behind her to rub in his better mark.

"That's it, she's dead tomorrow." Whispered Devi.

"You really gonna kill her?" exclaimed Shruti.

"Yup."

It was a dark, gloomy morning. It was all foggy, you wouldn't see anything. All you would see were your own footsteps. The wind was blowing hard, shipping against the palm trees and roaring hard. The Toronto Star newspaper was flying all over the streets interrupting traffic because of the flying papers slapping against the windshields of cars.

"Hi," began a tall figure from the distance down the hall, "it's me Devi."

"Oh hi you scared me, I thought it was some killer." Gasped Bina in fright. "What's wrong? You look depressed."

"I don't know. I should be happy, but instead I'm gloomy." Wondered Devi in confusion. "Look I brought it to school."

"Huh. You brought your gun to school. You have a gun." Said Bina with concern. "Where did you get that from and why'd you bring it to school?"

"Shhhhh. Don't talk so loud. You don't know?"

"Know what?"

"That I'm going to blow Miss Harry Warry's brains out." Reported Devi.

"When?" questioned Bina.

"Today. I'm gonna ask Mr. K-------- if I can to the bathroom. He says yes. I go into her class and she's alone, because she has her planning time. Pow pow right to the head, and she's dead."

Responded Devi.

"Good it's about time somebody shot her!" declared Bina.

"Mr. K-------- can I go to the bathroom. It's urgent?" squirmed Devi in her seat making it look real.

"Sure." Answered Mr. K--------.

Devi walked down the hall quietly not making a sound. She stood her head in her class and saw her by herself sitting with her back towards the door. In perfect position for her not to see Devi. Devi walked in, getting out her blow gun.

"Devi what do you think you're doing? Put that thing away. It's scaring me!" cried the teacher.

"Good it's supposed to," mentioned Devi. "That's what you get for giving me a 33 and for telling me to shut up!" smirked Devi in joy, waiting for this day to come.

"I'm sorry Devi, I'll give you 40," She begged desperately. "if that will ...."

BANG!

Just then an average height lady with orange/reddish hair was on the floor. She was wearing a leather vest and leather pants. It looked pretty spiffy, but too bad soon she was to be buried in those clothes. So Devi did a smart thing. She took off the teacher's clothes, all except her necessary stuff. Put them in a bag, put it in her locker and went back to class.

"What took you so long Devi?" blurted Mr. K--------.

"Um you see I have diarrhea, and all day I've been sitting on the toilet doing ...." told Devi giving details.

"Um you don't have to give that much detail." Laughed Mr. K--------. Suddenly the principal came running into the class yelling: "Wooo hoo great news! The miserable teacher is dead!!"

"hooray Yippee!" echoed the class in sudden joy.

"You actually shot her?" frowned Shruti.

"Yup I did and you know what?" sighed Devi.

"What?"

"It sure feels good." Chuckled Devi feeling good about herself.
Within the next two days they had already replaced the teacher with another. She was great. She was tall, and had dirty blonde hair with streaks of red running through it. She was an agreeable teacher. She would do anything the students told her to do. She gave Devi a 40/40 on her sketch. Which she deserved! Everyone was happy with the replacement. Mrs. Running was perfect. The opposite to Ms. Smith! (ooops I revealed the name)

The experience of marking that particular assignment was such a non-episode in my teaching career. I would have never given it a second thought had this student not chosen that event to write about, for it was her story, not mine. This is the significance of classroom-based teacher development especially through student narratives.

I am but one person in the classroom and it is impossible for me to be an impartial observer. It is impossible to remove oneself from the experience therefore my perceptions will always be colored by my own perspective. Within the classroom there are multiple narrators of the same events and as students re-create their own stories, they inform my own. Had I not given that specific creative writing assignment, I may have never known how this student felt about receiving the mark that she did. In other words, I would never have known to what extent my actions impact my students.

**Journalling**

#1
Miss Smith I think you should give us a little more credit if we really try hard. I know you're a teacher who really gives harsh marks but can you at least give us the benefit of the doubt.

Response:
I don't think that I give marks, I believe that students earn them. I do have high standards and my marking reflects that. I don't think I am doing a student a favor giving them a mark that they don't deserve just because they're a good kid. I have to be honest. I can't say something is good if it isn't. It it's a D then so be it. However there is nothing to be ashamed of if you get a D, you should however be ashamed if you don't learn from your mistakes or if you don't try to do better the next time.

It is very hard a teacher to mark work because I know that there are students out there who work very hard but their marks don't reflect this. Most times when I mark something I can't think about being nice because the student worked really hard on it. I have to think about it in terms of is it correct or isn't it. If someone gets an A it means not only have they worked very hard but they've done the work correctly. A students has to demonstrate that they know how to do something not just that they worked hard at it. There is a place on the report card for effort and that is where I can say if a student works very hard.

I understand what you're saying because sometimes when I hand back work I see the look of disappointment on their faces. I take the blame sometimes because maybe I didn't explain things well
enough or provide enough assistance so that they could succeed. That is why I frequently allow students to re-do assignments because I want them to have every opportunity to do well.

#8
Why do we have to do book reports? I mean what's the purpose of it?

Response:
Good question. For me book reports are a good way for students to demonstrate their understanding of a particular text. There are many higher level thinking skills that I try to get at through specific questions that I ask. There are many processes involved such as: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. A book report is more than language it is THINKING.

#10
Miss Smith when you assign us work, like book reports, could you give us more than a week because the work is a task that needs to have time to be done properly, so people can get better marks.

Response:
I genuinely believe that a week is enough time to successfully complete a book report. Sometimes what happens when you have more time is that you end up wasting more time rather than using it fully. I know sometimes it is difficult meeting deadline and doing something as well as you know you can do it but that is part of life. I would be interested in knowing how long you think is enough time to complete a book report. I am open to suggestions.

#5
Why when you give us assignments we only get limited time to do it, when we may not have enough time?

Response:
I only give a limited time to do assignments because I believe that deadlines build character. It is important to push yourself and see what you're made of and sometimes the tension/stress of a deadline does that for you. Even the youngest child should know what it is like to have to finish something in a prescribed period of time. I don't believe that I would be doing any favors if I gave you an assignment and said 'hand it in whenever'. I don't think that I could ever teach that way unless I had 30 of the most responsible students ever. I tend to be a bit of a dictator when I teach because I am afraid that if I wasn't that way most of the students wouldn't complete their work successfully. I love to lay back more but I am afraid that if I don't put those high expectations on my students then they won't put them on themselves and I hate mediocrity.

#12
Why do you give us so much work when you already assigned us something?

Response:
I agree that sometimes I do assign a lot of work. But I don't believe that I assign more work than you can handle. I believe that you should push yourself and if you don't put high expectations on yourself then you'll never achieve. If you don't expect a lot then you'll get a little. There are times when we have a lot of work to do - that's just how it is, part of the pressures of being a student. But there are also times when we don't have a lot of assignments - like now. I guess the bottom line is that I agree that sometimes assign lots of work and that won't change because I think it is important to challenge students and part of that is organizing and meeting deadlines.

I do have expectations of my students for I believe that you get what you expect and I expect them to give their best effort. My students consider me a teaching machine,
constantly assigning work with very little time to appreciate it. While I admit that I am task oriented, I do not believe in ‘make work’ projects just to keep the students busy.

Metaphors and Similes

Ms. Smith and a machine have a lot in common -- they are always shooting out new assignments.
Ms. Smith is a teaching machine that never runs out of oil.
Ms. Smith is like a printer, she keeps shooting out work.
Ms. Smith gives as much work to her students as a doctor to a nurse.
Ms. Smith gives as much work to us as the government to a garbage man.
Ms. Smith gives homework like a running river.
Ms. Smith gives us homework almost everyday like a mailman.
Ms. Smith is a speeding car always on the go. Meaning: you're always anxious to get work/things over with, fast, and you've always given us something to work on.
Ms. Smith's expectation of a student's work is like an Olympic coach always telling him to be the best.

If I give an assignment it is because I believe it is important and has some value. I am learning however, that I do not have to give students as much work as I have in the past. I believed that more was better than less, time on their hands was time wasted. I did not allow enough time for reflection, time just to take it all in.

I marked as fast as I did because I had so much to mark and to slow down would have meant to drown in the paper work. To my credit if I gave an assignment then I graded it. Afterall what was the point of giving an assignment if it wasn’t going to be marked. If that is the case then you are sending the message that the assignment is not important enough to mark, to report on. As a student I believed this to be true. In recent years however I have started to lose faith in this belief.

More content does not make for a better academic program. By marking everything and marking quickly, I was not taking the time to really examine what the
students were doing and how they were doing it. I knew that I should give more feedback than just a grade, but it was difficult to juggle that with the day to day demands of the classroom. So rather than allowing the time to engage in the work fully, my students learned to work faster to keep up with the pace that I had set, and I learned to judge quickly rather than assessing thoughtfully.

I did not want to be a teacher who wasted class time by not making full use of it. I did not want for my students to be sitting at their desks idle so I took the space — the classroom and filled it. In space there is room to think and to feel, to discover and to question, to imagine and to believe. More than anything, in space there is silence, “words are uttered to fill space rather than open it up”.¹

I am reminded of a description a student had written: “Ms. Smith’s voice is like a train whistle with a high pitch voice, Tooh! Tooh! She reminds me of a parrot that goes on and on and on” (Metaphors and Similes, Chapter Four). I see now that by being so quick to talk, I have been slow to listen. One of the most important things I can do as teacher is to listen. By my over reliance on talk, I encouraged my students to do the same and they did. They learned to talk more and they learned to talk louder so that they could be heard. “I learned to yell louder because Ms. Smith yells at us so it makes me yell louder. I learned to be more tougher because Ms. Smith is a tough person and it made me a tough person.” (Life Lessons, Chapter Four)

One of the mistakes that I made in my practice was assuming that my students were strong from the beginning. I assumed that like me they could deflect criticism and take things in stride. So I was firm and I was tough but it was for their own good. So

¹ Parker J. Palmer, To Know As We Are Known: Education As a Spiritual Journey. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 81.
when I evaluated work I was honest and I was critical because I thought it was my job to point out the weaknesses and the areas that needed to be worked on. I was the arbiter of what was good and what was bad. My grades were the numerical equivalents of talk, they also filled the space leaving no room for genuine discourse.

Though I had grown in ways that could not be measured by a metre stick, with each report card I was assigning a value to my students' growth. Of course I recognize that as educators we must also evaluate, but to a certain extent I failed to look beyond the grades to the individuals. In my zeal to measure, I may have overlooked the emotional correlation between evaluation and self-esteem.

**Life Lessons**

Her (Ms. Smith's) work was challenging and she was a tough marker. That way I had to put more time and effort into my work else I wasn't going to get a good mark.

I learned to put more thought into my work because sometimes I rush through my assignments and it is not as good as it should be. So now I take more time and do my work, and not do it the night before.

I learned to be a little more serious. To be more focused on my work. I learned to be more and more detailed on my work and put twice as much effort as I usually would.

Another thing I learned I had no intention of learning is that no one is perfect. I used to get mad at myself for getting a B or not impressing a teacher but I learned that no one is perfect and no one should try to be perfect because that's a fight you're sure to lose. I learned this from teachers who give decent grades and who are nice enough to tell the truth like if your work stinks or something like that.

Ms. Smith taught me that you don't get marks, you earn grades. To be more judgmental. Observe everything and give something what it is worth.

What I learned is how to get my work done faster because it seems like Ms. Smith just marks our work in the same period and hands it back in the same period. I learned to work faster from Ms. Smith.

Maybe Ms. Smith's quick marking could have affected me because I seem to be able to do my work quicker.

Throughout this chapter my students have shared their impressions of what they have learned as a result of being in my class. In short they have learned to work faster
and harder, to think smart and creatively, to always do their homework and that little bit extra, and to be tough because I am a tough marker.

All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Grade 7

Never just do what Ms. Smith says to do. Always do that little extra.

Extra credit is earned, not handed out. Extra credit is earned by hard work and perseverance, not through last minute work and laziness. The more work you do the further you will get in life. Nothing will be handed to you. You have to work for it.

If there is one thing which I learned this year was that it doesn't kill me to put the extra effort into my work because that could mean the difference between an A and a B.

The Golden most important, the center of the toots roll important value I learned was ... well I'll tell you how I learned it. Being with Ms. Smith for 2 long years has made me a hard worker. The value I learned is ... walk the extra mile for a good mark.

The thing about Miss Smith is you have to use the thing in you head, use it until you get a headache or the end of the year, whichever comes first.

The Golden rule I learned was to get a good mark you must think smart, not how much you write because you have to think hard and write what you think is a good answer if you don't think clear and hard you won't get a very good mark.

I learned that you have to Work really hard and you'll get a good grade.

Hard work is worth staying up at night trying to finish a project that is due that next day. It is all worth it at the end when you get that grade.

What I learned in Grade 7 is the most important thing that I will need in my life. I learned to put all my Energy into my work and never, never do things with leftover energy. The best work is done first, with all my energy, before anything else.

Close to 470 days. About 81 weeks, and 20 months of school ... with the same teacher! Do you know what helped me throughout this time? CREATIVITY, CREATIVITY. You might be thinking, hey I'm creative! But you don't know creative until you've met Ms. Smith. She'll make you work a lot, and sometimes when you write the answer down, it's not the best way YOU think you could have done it. Do dramas, do songs, do whatever you want, but make it good. And trust me when you are creative ... you get the mark you'll want.

Effort this is what I learned in grade seven just getting it done is not enough you have to give 110 percent to everything you do. The best way to leave your mark. Wow them with a great presentation, it gets them every time.

Do your work on time and don't delay. Or Miss Smith will give you more. Until you can't handle it and surrender. So do your work and don't delay.

Handing in homework is hard. Having to do schoolwork after school sounds hideous. Just having to think about school has me horrified. But if you don't do your homework, you will stumble and fall. Handing in homework, hideous, horrifying – is school.
The following is an excerpt from a poem written by one of my favorite poets.

When I was a high school student struggling to come up with a topic for my senior essay, my English teacher suggested that I read some Ferlinghetti. For some reason she thought that his writing would appeal to me, and she was right.

'Truth is not the secret of a few’

you would maybe think so
the way some
librarians
and cultural ambassadors and
especially museum directors
act

you’d think they had a corner on it
the way they walk around shaking
their high heads and looking as if they never
gent to the bath room or anything²

When I read from this poem it reminds me that teachers, like librarians, cultural ambassadors and museum directors, do not have the market cornered on knowledge or truth. In my classroom though I never pretended to be an expert, it was my judgment that mattered. In my ideal classroom knowledge is not be viewed as off in the distance but as near to each student as his/her own breath and I encourage them to see that all that is required is the willingness to breathe it in for it is as easy to consume as air.

If I hold all the answers then my students will think that they should know them too. In my ideal classroom what my students create is valued and appreciated, and this is demonstrated through my actions, for one’s actions can be as discouraging as one’s words. If to educate is “to draw out”, then to evaluate—to ap-‘praise’ should be there as well. Ones’ actions can be as discouraging as one’s words.

² Lawrence Ferlinghetti, A Coney Island Of The Mind. (New York: New Directions, 1958), 82.
Students' Quotes

I have to say is that you're a fair teacher. You do what is right and not what is preferred. You give fair chances. I know you expect good behavior and you get it.

I think you are a fairly good teacher. You try to explain yourself in everything we do. You give us your expectations and I think you help us in the best way you can. What I really like about our marking is you let us give ourselves a mark and then you give us the mark.

What I hate about you is the way you mark, I think it's unfair. I think you are too picky and mark too hard.
'Ms. Smith’s hand gestures are like that of a crazed person with a fly swatter.'

Student Quotes

Ms. Smith a short, intelligent, sharp teacher, who can be polite yet moody at times. She’s a very bright woman and very keen. Michelle Smith is her full name, and she’s single. She’s old about 27 and lonely but seems to get along with others. Michelle is very color coordinated and also dresses exceptionally well. She ’s a very good teacher. She teaches all her students equally (so she says). Michelle Smith is a teacher that everyone wants.

Ms. Smith is a teacher of wisdom she knows what to do and when to do it. She is 30 years old and really looks like she is 20. Her hair is fabulous even thought she hardly has any. Her charm and personality bring a sense of happiness to the class.

"Of the three modes of CBTD [the other two being teachers with teachers and teachers on their own], approaches which involve teachers and students are the least discussed and practiced, yet the ones that have the greatest potential."3 Thiessen further goes on to elaborate on the three different forms of teacher-student development activities: sharing teaching and learning, examining classroom phenomena, and improving what happens.

For my experience my focus has been on examining classroom experience through the evaluating of teaching. I wanted an ‘outside in’ evaluation of my teaching and of my teacher self, one that had to come from the individuals with whom I have the most contact with. Through their narratives, my students provided me with a comprehensive critique of the Teacher that I Am.

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Miss Smith why do you give us so much work and Mrs. P——'s class hardly gets any? There is one reason why I hate being in 704 and that is that we get moved around so much that we have no time to have class parties. Mr. B—— is busy, Mr. M—— has other classes and you have 701. 704 is all work, work, work.

Response:
I don’t know what other classes do and I don’t believe in making comparisons. Sometimes I give lots of work because I believe that hard work builds character. I don’t believe that I give too much work or more work than you can handle. I know it is hard being moved around so much and not having a real place in the school that feel like “home”. I feel badly for 704 because of that because it does affect how all the class relates to each other. I try and think of 704 as my homeroom also because I am a teacher who is very protective of her students and 704 are my students. It’s hard though because it’s like I am divided between two classes.

Because I only have 704 on rotary it does seem like all we do is work, work, work and there is no free time really for other things that would be there if you were my homeroom. Maybe we haven’t had enough fun but I can’t forget the work either. Give me some suggestions of what we could do (within reason.)

When you get into class could you just briefly tell us what to do then if people are not on task tough for them because you keep on repeating what to do several times.

Response:
Sometimes I wish that I could just say “tough for them” but I can’t I have to do everything in my power to help all my students to succeed. Sometimes I feel that I do over explain things but I want to make sure that everybody understands. And if an assignment is done incorrectly then I feel that it is because I didn’t explain it properly. I will try not to over explain things in the future. But if I continue to repeat myself then please let me know.

My approach to classroom-based teacher development [CBTD] is not a quick fix and may have very little implications for the current class in which you are involved with. So in terms of improving what happens in the classroom, I don’t believe it will happen in the short term but rather it has the potential to greatly alter one’s actions and beliefs in becoming the Teacher That You Want to Be.

While my insights are of little benefit to the class that helped me gain them, they are the impetus for transformation and altering the quality and nature of my interactions with students in the future. Oh if I had known then what I know now. “Grown-ups never
understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Metaphors and Similes}

Ms. Smith is like your yearly grass, forever changing.

Ms. Smith is like a vending machine, she makes change.

Ms. Smith's hair is like a chameleon.

Ms. Smith's clothes change like the weather -- very seldomly the same.

Ms. Smith is the Energizer bunny. She's non-stopping, and never quits, just keeps going and going. Never stops, when we put her through misery. She's outgoing.

Ms. Smith is like the rainbow, different and unique.

When Ms. Smith explains our work she is as expressive as a man who sat on a nail.

Ms. Smith's hand gestures are like that of a crazed person with a fly swatter.

Ms. Smith comes up with jokes like a boring comedian.
\end{quote}

I enjoy those descriptions very much, for they speak to what I view as some of the positive and amusing elements of my persona and of my teaching. I believe that change is important and not just superficially changing one's clothes, which is a constant bewilderment to my students that I have as many as I do. But a genuine willingness to change -- anything and everything if need be.

It didn't come as a surprise to my students when I approached them with the idea of having them critique my teaching. They were familiar with my own previous attempts at self-examination and knew that I did not fear truth or change. As an individual they perceived me as someone who is not afraid to be different, and who is not afraid to be criticized for that difference.

I use to change my hair color quite liberally from one extreme to the next, not for any ramifications that I thought it would have in my classroom, merely out of boredom. My students would tease me mercifully and I would joke with them in turn. They spoke their truth and I respected them for that because they trusted that they could say these things to me directly without fear of retaliation. Since I spoke so liberally, I could not forbid my students from doing the same.

I believe that my students were so genuine in their critiques because I have always been completely open and up front with them. They know that when I say something, I mean it, for I modeled that every day. So when I told them that I wanted honesty and their perspectives, they knew that I was being genuine and complied quite eagerly.

**Narrative Creative Writing**

**My Life Currently in 701: Nightmare in 701**

Prologue

All the events that take place in this story are true. This story was printed on December 27th 1995, so all the events that take place were taken before the 27th. This story has been written according to Tanveer Singh Ubhi’s current life in 701. Yes it is a nightmare for him because look who his teacher is, Ms. Smith, she’s not that bad.

“Hello hi, my name is Ms. Smith, welcome to 701.”
“Yeah yeah.”
“You’ll have a great time in my class.”

I, Tanveer Singh had an attitude problem. Always vicious, trying to pick fights with anyone weaker than them. If I say anyone acting up in class I always felt left out and just had to follow along. Every year I got stupider and stupider, don’t worry you’ll find out, keep reading.

I, the author when I was writing wasn’t in a good mood so, I didn’t add any boring details I’m just going to get straight to all the good and bad events.

“Okay boys and girls, you will be having to read two books every month so you will be doing a book report at the end of every month.”

“What” How could this be happening? We barely did any book reports with Ms. W------ last year and this year we get one every month.” Tanveer said to himself. “All the other students are right, she is a mean teacher. I’ll bet that she’s going to be giving out detentions every week as well, that’s what the others say she does. I hate being in her class already, what a year this is going to be.”

Well it wasn’t so bad, I had lots of students in this class that I knew very well. They were like the kids I had been with most. The one thing that all of them won’t forget about me is that last year I got kicked out of hockey intramural by being kicked out of two games, well I won’t get into much of that.

Like I was saying before, there was a time when three other students sat beside me in French who had been shooting elastic bands for the past few days, before the incident this is what Ms. Smith had said, “next one to shoot an elastic band will get lines. Two pages both sides no skipping lines.”
I would like to think there was a great deal of humor in my classroom and I feel some of that comes across in the conversations and short story in this chapter. I titled the chapter The Comedy of Errors for two reasons, firstly despite appearances to the contrary, I do teach with a sense of humor about the world and encourage laughter in my classroom. Secondly, I recognize that the errors that I have made in judgment, disposition and practice, were ones made out of nescience and not intention. Our students do learn in spite of us.
Conversations

13.
"Good morning Ms. Smith and how are you today?"
"Good morning to you too V-----, I'm fine thank you."
"Ms. Smith do you have this piece of paper it's the one about Time?"
"I don't know if I have one but I go and check for one. No I don't have one, are you sure I didn't already give you one?"
"No you didn't."
"Yes I did."
"Don't know if I have one but I go and check for one. No I don't have one, are you sure I didn't already give you one?"
"Ms. Smith do you have this piece of paper it's the one about Time?"
"I don't know if I have one but I go and check for one. No I don't have one, are you sure I didn't already give you one?"
"No you didn't."
"Yes I did."
"I'm not."
"Oh because I thought you were."
"Ms. Smith I'm not arguing with you because you know I'll win."
"Ha ha ha really funny. Okay class you can go for lunch."
"Oh I see you're really trying to get off the subject that I can win a fight with you."
"Oh yeah..."
"Never mind I'm going for lunch. Bye."

14.
"Oh Ms. Smith," called S-----, a smart but annoying student. "Can I talk to you a second?"
"Oh no," muttered Ms. Smith. Having experienced with one of S-----'s talks left her seething through her teeth.
"Hi S-----," said Ms. Smith turning around and pasting a fake smile on her face. "What can I do for you?"
"Well since you asked ..." began S----- with a rush of excitement, "I've got a great idea. But sit down because it could take awhile."
"Oh joy," thought Ms. Smith. "Well, she began, "let's hear it." After Ms. Smith encouraged S-----, she soon regretted it.
"Okay," began S-----, blowing some of the bangs off her forehead. "I did a lot of thinking about this and I want you to hear me out."
"Lord!" screamed Ms. Smith silently. "Why are you torturing me?"
"Have you ever considered a trip to a university so we could get a feel of college life?"
"Well, thought Ms. Smith. "How do you tell her that her idea stinks?"
"Ms. Smith," prompted S-----. Ms. Smith had began tapping her foot impatiently, a sure sign that she was getting impatient.
"It figures," thought Ms. Smith that she would be thinking about university already.
"Well?" S----- said again.
"S-----," began Ms. Smith slowly, "how'd you even know if you'll pass grade seven?"
"Even if I don't," said S----- cheerfully. "I'll have you for a teacher again. Won't that be great?"
"Oh don't you worry," said Ms. Smith without hesitation. "You'll pass if it's the last think I do."
"Besides," thought Ms. Smith silently, "there's no way I'm going to have her in this class for two years."
"Oh," said S-----. "I guess you would be too lucky if you had me for 2 years right?"
"Right."
So in the long run Ms. Smith is a good teacher to have. She teaches you all sorts of things that she didn’t mean to teach you. Ms. Smith is a teacher that always has faith in you no matter who you are. She always believes that if you think you can do it, you can. Ms. Smith has taught me billions of things that she didn’t plan on teaching. EVERY CLASS YOU ENTER YOU LEARN A MESSAGE!!!

I remember hearing once the expression, ‘when you know better you do better’. Well now that I have reached the end of this particular journey, I hope that holds true.

When I was at the Faculty on more than one occasion I heard a professor say to the class that the students will learn in spite of what we do. It was meant to comfort us, to show us that despite some of our shortcomings and lack of experience, students will continue to learn.

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**All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Grade 7**

Reading Books will help us in the future. Reading helps us understand certain topics and also helps us get better knowledge of the world. It also helps us stay alive when we are bored and have nothing to do. Reading books helps us in everyday life.

I learned that the assignments you do in class aren't just for a mark, they are for you to Learn and use it for your future.

Ms. Smith has taught me to have patience with my fellow classmates and with myself. If my patience is running low, I use the technique Ms. Smith does with our class; picturing getting away from everybody and relaxing. I know for future use that this technique will help in a simple situation when my patience is on edge.

What I learned in grade 7 is when you’re in a group and don’t get along, try your hardest, run that extra mile and you will pull through.

I learned in grade seven how to respect and listen and understand. I know that respect brought me a long way because giving respect got me respect in return.

Appreciate: this year in Ms. Smith’s class I learned to Appreciate others. I learned to appreciate their hard work and their values. That is what I learned.

I learned that not to be shy anymore. Because if I speak up in a group they will get to know you better. And ask a lot of questions.
I learned that acting foolish will get you nowhere and don’t be a follower be a leader.

I learned to give reasons.

What hit me the most was from the last 2 years Ms. Smith has taught me to be an individual. Not to do things that others do just to look cool. I’ve learned to be my own self and make decisions for myself that aren’t based on my friends’ opinions or what looks cool. I do whatever I want based on my own will!

My professors were right. Our students do learn in spite of us but sometimes what they learn are things that we would rather not take credit for introducing them to. I cannot say that I regret everything I taught my students, but when I take the good with the bad, I unfortunately get ‘the ugly’.

The good is that my students learned:

- to recognize the value of literature
- to think to the future
- to appreciate others
- to listen to each other
- to put forth the extra effort
- to think hard
- to work creatively
- to speak up for yourself
- to be an individual
- to be confident
- to express yourself
- to take responsibility
- to give reasons
- to not fear change
- to be their own leader

The bad is that my students learned:

- to work faster
- to talk louder
- to look to me for approval
- to seek right answers rather than the authentic ones
- to match my sarcasm with their own
- to be competitive
- to unsympathetic, picky and impatient

Not to take all of the credit, but ‘the ugly’ is that they learned these things from me.
When I began this journey the impetus was a description of myself composed by one of my students. That student was special to me because behaviorally he was every bit a challenge, but he had a good heart though at times it was very difficult to detect. He made it almost impossible to like him but I did.

At the time I did not realize it but I see now that we had a great deal in common. His disruptive and attention seeking behavior was his armor, for he did not posses the intellectual efficiency to use words to preserve one’s SELF. I did not have that difficulty, therefore my armor did not manifest itself as an obvious behavioral concern but it was conspicuous in my actions.

He was one of the students that I taught for two consecutive years, primarily because no other teacher wanted to take him from me but deep down I did not mind.
having him in my class again. I have quoted his words several times in this paper and now I will do so again for the last time.

My act of quoting him repeatedly is really an unsatisfactory visual representation of how his voice has resonated throughout my consciousness as I have been writing. If you think you have seen his words before, I know that I have heard them over and over in my head. "I like Ms. Smith because she is fun and kind, and when you make a joke about her she wouldn't care, and plus nothing breaks her heart."

The assignment was to write the description as metaphor or simile but this individual had some learning difficulties which made it almost impossible for him to work within a regular program. So this was his attempt at expressive language and I suppose that is why it is so profound and has stayed with me more so than all the other descriptions that my students have written.

I had not made the connection until now but in a significant way this student reminds me of Benjy Compson in the Faulkner's novel The Sound And The Fury. There are four narrators in the novel but his most intriguing narrator is Benjy. Despite the apparent incoherence of his section, he is the most credible narrator. Benjy is void of any sense of time and his mind is perceptual rather than conceptual; consequently, he is incapable of an association of ideas. Benjy's memories are stimulated by actual physical sensations, by literally re-living the sensation that conjures up the memory. Since he is oblivious to time, judgments, and interpretations, Benjy is the most reliable narrator of the four.

I am in no way trying to do this student a disservice by comparing him to Benjy Compson, what I am attempting to do however is to acknowledge the sheer innocence of
his words. Despite the nature of the assignment and his inability to use expressive language, what he wrote was purely perceptual, and I suppose that is why it hurts so much. As he re-lives the sensation of life in my classroom for two years, his memory is quite articulate. His description of me was the most profound thing he had written in two years and he didn’t even realize it.

I am reminded of something else at this point. I once ended a paper with the following quotation from William Shakespeare’s Macbeth. “It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury Signifying nothing.” (Act V, v, 26) I did not want the narrative that I have woven to be merely yet another exercise in writing without action. Like Benjy I want my story to signify something.

When I began this journey I was not quite sure where it would lead. I somehow knew that it would be enlightening but I did not know how strong the glare of my students insights would be. I have never been an individual who hides in the darkness afraid to be exposed by the light and I won’t start now. I am revealed, my portrait completed. While I am not quite pleased with depiction, I am proud however of the endeavor. I am aware of so many contradictions in my story but I suppose that is the biggest truth of all – I am a contradiction.

Nothing breaks my heart, in fact the opposite is true. “Ms. Smith was always different. Sometimes she didn’t care about anything but sometimes she cared about everything.” I cared a great deal but I just had a difficult time showing it when it came to matters outside of classroom expectations and curriculum.

This story is over and I cannot go back and rewrite the ending or white wash the canvas and start anew. Professional development is not about changing history but rather
it is about understanding the present and transforming the future. For me, this journey has been a meaningful one wrought with introspection.

I recognize that as important as it was for me to be connected to myself and live authentically, it was equally important for me to be connected to my students and allow them to be in union with all of me not just that small part of me that I made available. To live authentically is to engage fully with the world and with others, not just to do what you feel is your innate right as a citizen of this planet. I see that now.

Throughout my nine short years of teaching I have continued to reflect on my practice but it has been through this particular experience that I have gained the most insight. "In CBTD, doing one's job should involve simultaneously developing one's practices. Teachers should work alongside their students as co-learners." For my perception is but one perspective, mine is but one truth among many. Whereas in solitude and reflection I can create the little picture, in union with my students I receive the big picture – the IMAX in Dolby sound.

"How can happiness be bestowed? My own answer is: Abolish authority. Let the child be himself. Don't push him around. Don't teach him. Don't lecture him. Don't elevate him. Don't force him to do anything. It may not be your answer. But if you reject my answer, it is incumbent on you to find a better one. (A.S. Neill: Summerhill)

I am no longer searching for an answer, for my purposes I think I have found one. I know that somewhere in my answer is teaching without armor. I know that somewhere in my answer is the act of leaving the contradictions outside of the classroom. I know that somewhere in my answer there are still the things that love, like Owen and Benjy. I

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know that somewhere in my answer is the teacher that I want to be. With all these answers however, there still remains one question: is this the teacher that I can be? So has it ended well?

I began with my own words so let me now end with my students, and while their words are positive and give me reason to smile, they are not the end for me. Their thoughts show me the things that I should maintain, not disregard. Unfortunately I cannot say this about all of my students, but for these ones at least All’s Well That Ends Well.

**Life Lessons**

This cool woman (Ms. Smith) has not only taught me, but she’s also given me something. Confidence. At first in the beginning of grade 6 I sorta hated the person I was. I wanted to be like my friends. Which now I have to say that I’m proud I didn’t turn out like. Ms. Smith taught me to accept myself as a person, not to be ashamed. I used to try to act like a person that I wasn’t . She told me that I was D—D—, not Amanda Poppy. Actually not in so many words. Now I must say that I am my own person. I don’t act like anyone else but myself. I’m proud of who I am, I’m no longer a phony. I’m happy to say that my name is D—D—

What hit me most was from the last 2 years Ms. Smith has taught me to be an Individual. Not to do things that others do just to look cool. I’ve learned to be my own self and make decisions for myself that aren’t based on my friends’ opinions of what looks cool. I do whatever I want based on my own will!

Another thing Ms. Smith has taught me that change is good. She taught me this by always changing the seating plan that way I got to sit beside everyone in the class and really got to build relationships with them all. Ms. Smith also taught me to have my own style. A way I approach a situation or handle one, she taught me to be myself and not to be just like my friends. I learned this from the way Ms. Smith approaches a situation with her own style or she will have an activity that makes you think about deep down how you would react and how you would handle it. Ms Smith gives a lot of questions that deal with what you think, and I think that has helped me a lot. I have noticed the change in the way I think or act and react to situations.

I learned not to be afraid to be yourself and try other things. An example of this is when Ms. Smith changes her hair color. Another think I had learned was to get more into discussions. Talk more and let others know what you think.

**Narrative Creative Writing**

“Get up Vishal! Why are you always lazy in the mornings?” screamed out Vishal’s older and annoying sister Nesha.

“Ya Ya Whoof Woof to you too!” Yelled out Vishal.

Vishal got out of bed, took a shower, changed his clothes and got something to eat.
“Oh my gosh it’s 8:30 I have to get to school quick” he told himself, then Vishal ran to school as fast as he could and made it just in time for the bell to ring. Vishal went straight to his locker to get his homework out and then went straight to his classroom.

“Morning Ms. Smith.” Man I wish Ms. Smith would change her attitude and say something anytime I say something to her. Vishal told himself.

“Oh Vishal I want you to sit right here.”

“You mean right next to the teacher?”

“Yes that’s right and anyway you said that you won’t mind sitting next to the teacher.”

“Well I did not actually mean it for you to put me next to the teacher.”

“Then you shouldn’t of said it in the first place. Okay class place your homework in the bucket.”

“Ms. Smith do you have the sheet with the songs on it?”

“Didn’t I give you one yesterday?”

“No and I’m sure of that.”

“Are you sure because I remember giving one to someone.”

“Well it wasn’t me and I know that as a fact.”

“Vishal are you arguing with me?”

“No not really.”

“Well because if you were you know that I would win.”

“In your dreams.” Vishal said softly.

“What was that Vishal?”

“Nothing O great one.”

LUNCH TIME

“Yo Vishal are you having fun at you new desk?” said Chris.

“You stop the shouting!” shouted Mr. Johnson our lunch room supervisor.

“Sorry Mr. Johnson.”

“Okay you could go outside now.” Mr. Johnson said.

So Vishal and a couple of guys from Ms. Smith’s class went to play soccer.

“Vishal could we play?” said Sadhvi.

“Okay sure, you want the teams to be boys against girls?”

“You’re on Vishal.” Said all the other girls.

“Vishal are you out of your mind it’s 13 girls and only 8 boys. You think we could actually win?” said Chris.

“Of course we are good and anyway we’re a lot faster than they are and we could dribble the ball better than them.” Vishal said with confidence.

“GAME ON!” shouted Vishal. 1 - 2 - 3 -4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10.

RRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
“Okay go and hurry because you have to get your work done.”

Vishal went as quick as he could, but when he got out the door he just started to walk because he just wanted to get out of class because it was getting too boring. Vishal went to the bathroom and went to get something to drink then went back to class.

“Okay class take you seats the announcements are about to come on so take your seats. Clean out your desks and be quiet. Vishal I said to be quiet or else I’ll give you and office D”

RRRRRRIIIINNNNNNGGGGG RRRRRIIIINNNNNNGGGGG.

“Okay you may leave and remember to do all your homework for tomorrow or you’ll face the consequences.”

“Good bye Ms. Smith and have a great day.”

“Same with you Vishal.”

“Ms. Smith I have to tell you one thing. I really like being in your class and I like how you teach. I just wanted to let you know.”

“Thank you Vishal, that’s really nice.”

“You’re welcome. Well bye see you tomorrow.”
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APPENDIX A

All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Grade 7

1. Do your work on time and don’t delay. Or Miss Smith will give you more. Until you can’t handle it and surrender. So do your work and don’t delay.

2. Handing in homework is hard. Having to do schoolwork after school sounds hideous. Just having to think about school has me horrified. But if you don’t do your homework, you will stumble and fall. Handing in homework, hideous, horrifying — is school.

3. Ms. Smith has taught me to have patience with my fellow classmates and with myself. If my patience is running low, I use the technique Ms. Smith does with our class; picturing getting away from everybody and relaxing. I know for future use that this technique will help in a simple situation when my patience is on edge.

4. What I learned in grade 7 is when you’re in a group and don’t get along, try your hardest, run that extra mile and you will pull through.

5. I learned in grade seven how to respect and listen and understand. I know that respect brought me a long way because giving respect got me respect in return.

6. Appreciate: this year in Ms. Smith’s class I learned to Appreciate others. I learned to appreciate their hard work and their values. That is what I learned.

7. What hit me the most was from the last 2 years Ms. Smith has taught me to be an individual. Not to do things that others do just to look cool. I’ve learned to be my own self and make decisions for myself that aren’t based on my friends’ opinions or what looks cool. I do whatever I want based on my own will!

8. I learned that not to be shy anymore. Because if I speak up in a group they will get to know you better. And ask a lot of questions.

9. I learned that acting foolish will get you nowhere and don’t be a follower be a leader.

10. I learned to give reasons.

11. Sitting through Ms. Smith’s class for a year I’ve learned she loves Quietness, and through that I’ve learned not to be loud. With quietness we are able to think of good ideas and finish our work.

12. What I’ve learned this past year with Ms. Smith is never get under her skin and if you do you’d better duck for cover because she gonna blow.

13. I guess that what I learned this year was that Ms. Smith can be nice sometimes and I admire that in a person, but if I hand my work in late she’s not so nice of a person.

14. Reading Books will help us in the future. Reading helps us understand certain topics and also helps us get better knowledge of the world. It also helps us stay alive when we are bored and have nothing to do. Reading books helps us in everyday life.

15. I learned that the assignments you do in class aren’t just for a mark, they are for you to Learn and use it for your future.

17. Extra credit is earned, not handed out. Extra credit is earned by hard work and perseverance, not through last minute work and laziness. The more work you do the further you will get in life. Nothing will be handed to you. You have to work for it.

18. If there is one thing which I learned this year was that it doesn't kill me to put the extra effort into my work because that could mean the difference between an A and a B.

19. The Golden most important, the center of the toots roll important value I learned was ... well I'll tell you how I learned it. Being with Ms. Smith for 2 long years has made me a hard worker. The value I learned is ... walk the extra mile for a good mark.

20. The thing about Miss Smith is you have to use the thing in you head, use it until you get a headache or the end of the year, whichever comes first.

21. The Golden rule I learned was to get a good mark you must think smart, not how much you write because you have to think hard and write what you think is a good answer if you don't think clear and hard you won't get a very good mark.

22. I learned that you have to Work really hard and you'll get a good grade.

23. Hard work is worth staying up at night trying to finish a project that is due that next day. It is all worth it at the end when you get that grade.

24. What I learned in Grade 7 is the most important thing that I will need in my life. I learned to put all my Energy into my work and never, never do things with leftover energy. The best work is done first, with all my energy, before anything else.

25. Close to 470 days. About 81 weeks, and 20 months of school ... with the same teacher! Do you know what helped me throughout this time? CREATIVITY, CREATIVITY. You might be thinking, hey I'm creative! But you don't know creative until you've met Ms. Smith. She'll make you work a lot, and sometimes when you write the answer down, it's not the best way YOU think you could have done it. Do dramas, do songs, do whatever you want, but make it good. And trust me when you are creative ... you get the mark you'll want.

26. Effort this is what I learned in grade seven just getting it done is not enough you have to give 110 percent to everything you do. The best way to leave your mark. Wow them with a great presentation, it gets them every time.

27. For fearful and brave as I stand tall never knowing what Miss Smith has hidden for us. But strong as a soldier I have prepared myself for the battle Miss Smith has brought us to by overcoming my obstacles that I thought I would never do.

28. S is for Ms. Smith who I have known for 2 years. I've learned how to use self-discipline, how to be more responsible with my work.

29. Life is a challenge, not a game. And a challenge is what you get in grade 7.

30. Always be responsible, responsibility eventually leads to trust. Being responsible means starting your work the day it's assigned even though it is due in a month.

31. The most important thing I learned this year is really important so you've got to listen. This is as important as the cream filling in an Oreo. It is never ever leave your homework for the last minute because if you do you will be up half the night finishing it and you will also get a bad mark.
32. In grade seven I learned that to stop making up excuses and just come out with the truth because once you get into a lie you probably won't remember what you were lying about when you get too far into the lie. Instead of getting into all this trouble just tell the truth and get it over with.

33. The hot news that illuminated the depths of my mind was that don't lie about forgetting your homework at home because next time it might really happen and nobody would believe you. Don't lie about your homework when you know you haven't done it yet.
APPENDIX B
JOURNALING

#1 Miss Smith I think you should give us a little more credit if we really try hard. I know you're a
teacher who really gives harsh marks but can you at least give us the benefit of the doubt.

Response: 
I don't think that I give marks, I believe that students earn them. I do have high standards and my
marking reflects that. I don't think I am doing a student a favor giving them a mark that they don't deserve
just because they're a good kid. I have to be honest. I can't say something is good if it isn't. It it's a D then
so be it. However there is nothing to be ashamed of it you get a D, you should however be ashamed if you
don't learn from your mistakes or if you don't try to do better the next time.

It is very hard a teacher to mark work because I know that there are students out there who work
very hard but their marks don't reflect this. Most times when I mark something I can't think about being nice
because the student worked really hard on it. I have to think about it in terms of is it correct or isn't it. If
someone gets an A it means not only have they worked very hard but they've done the work correctly.
A students has to demonstrate that they know how to do something not just that they worked hard at it.
There is a place on the report card for effort and that is where I can say if a student works very hard.

I understand what you're saying because sometimes when I hand back work I see the look of
disappointment on their faces. I take the blame sometimes because maybe I didn't explain things well
enough or provide enough assistance so that they could succeed. That is why I frequently allow students to
re-do assignments because I want them to have every opportunity to do well.

#2 Miss Smith I like the way you teach because you always tell us what is expected of us, what we need
to do etc. I also enjoy your dramatic hand movements. They make it more fun to watch you explain
the work.

Response: 
I am glad that you enjoy the way that I teach. I have always believed in clearly telling students
what is expected of them. I also believe that you get what you expect. I expect al of my students to
complete their work on time and to the best of their abilities so I feel that I have to clearly lay out my
expectations. My dramatic movements are called 'gesticulating'. It is not something that I am conscious of
doing when I speak, it just happens. It is a part of my personality.

#3 I hate it when you give us so much work. How do you expect us to do it all? Why do you have to be
so noisy? And why don't you trust some people in this class? Is it because they do bad at school you
won't even let some people go take the attendance down to the office.

Response: 
I honestly don't believe I give you more work than you can handle. But I do give you enough
work to separate those students with good work habits from those who do not. I want my students to be
challenged and to push themselves. I don't want things to be easy – I don't believe that you learn from easy.
I don't want students to think that there are any 'free rides' in my class. Any mark they get they have to
earn and being successful takes hard work. For a student to be successful in my class they need to be
organized and they need good work habits. Now if that's being unfair then I guess I am unfair. I think that
I work hard and I expect a lot from myself. Well I expect my students to work equally as hard as I do.

I agree that I am noisy but that's my personality. I come from a noisy family. There have been
times when I've really tried to change but it never lasted very long. Maybe I could tone down a bit if I really
worked on it but honestly it I did then I wouldn't really be me. And above all else "To thine own self be
true." I value my students as unique individuals so they have to respect my individuality as well even if it is
a bit noisy – all right a lot noisy!
I don't disagree that there are students whom I trust more than others but that doesn't mean I like them more. Who I am when I teach is exactly who I am with other people. My personality and values don't change whether I am in the classroom or out of it. In my life I am not terribly trusting. I give everyone a chance but if they disappoint they probably won't get a second one.

There are students who demonstrate through their behavior that they lack self-discipline, integrity and a personal sense of responsibility. I am very hesitant to bestow upon these individuals my trust because their past actions do not encourage me to do so. If somebody lets me down (by acting inappropriately, etc.) I'll think twice before I give them another opportunity to do so. Perhaps I should be more forgiving but that's difficult for me because I don't like to be disappointed.

So I agree that I do trust certain students more than others and I am not sure if that's necessarily wrong but I don't know. Talk to me about it and as for a second chance. When trust is broken it has to be earned not just given.

#4
Why is it that you say you have no teacher's pet(s) and you're always favoring them more. Whenever they do something bad/inappropriate you always ignore it. But if someone else is to do the same you get mad at them. It's unfair, and I think you lied.

Response:
I appreciate your honesty and obviously you feel that I lied so I have to respect your feelings. I however believe that I have never knowingly lied to my students. If I said that I had no “pets” it is because I genuinely believe that I don’t. Obviously however the perception is that I do so I must examine what actions I have done that would lead you to conclude that I have “pets”.

I think that I have a tendency to perhaps be more kind to students who complete their work, put in 100% effort, don’t have an attitude, are respectful and do not behave inappropriately. These are things that I value so when someone has displayed this positive character, I tend to be more forgiving when t some point they my screw up. If I have 2 students, one whom I have never seen be disruptive and the other who seems to get into trouble more frequently. Then if something happens chances are I’d believe the first student over the other because their past actions lead me to trust them more.

Also if someone whom I have to speak to numerous times gets into trouble chances are will come down harder on them than I would have if it were another student who doesn’t get into a lot of trouble. So I guess in that regard maybe I do have “pets” but they would be a majority of students in this class because most of them do work very hard, are not disruptive and I trust them. But that doesn’t mean that I don’t yell at them or mark their work easier or tell them when they’ve screwed up.

I believe that you are judged by your actions. I come down hard on some people because their actions show me that they need consequences and discipline. I try to treat all students equally but sometimes treating students equally means treating some differently. So if you want to say I have pets then so be it – any hard working, self-motivated, self-disciplined, self-directed student is my pet.

#5
Why when you give us assignments we only get limited time to do it, when we may not have enough time?

Response:
I only give a limited time to do assignments because I believe that deadlines build character. It is important to push yourself and see what you’re made of and sometimes the tension/stress of a deadline does that for you. Even the youngest child should know what it is like to have to finish something in a prescribed period of time. I don’t believe that I would be doing any favors if I gave you an assignment and said ‘hand it in whenever’. I don’t think that I could ever teach that way unless I had 30 of the most responsible students ever. I tend to be a bit of a dictator when I teach because I am afraid that if I wasn’t that way most of the students wouldn’t complete their work successfully. I love to lay back more but I am afraid that if I don’t put those high expectations on my students then they won’t put them on themselves and I hate mediocrity.

#6
Ms. Smith I think you are a good teacher. I enjoy having you for 2 years but you are uptight and give us a lot of work.

Response:
I agree that sometimes I am uptight. For me teaching is a lot of responsibility – it's not just a job, it's more. At the beginning of each school year I kind of dread it because I know that for 10 months I am going to be locked in. For me each year is a journey, it's like I am a conductor and I am responsible for 26 passengers arriving safely at their different destinations. They all board at the same time but every passenger is different – they've got different luggage/baggage and personal histories. They've all got different needs and destinations. I don't just conduct I have to constantly make sure that all my passengers are on track. And I know that as much as I enjoy the ride, I can't get off this train until the end of June. I can't just jump off and leave the passengers careening down the tracks. So for me for 10 months almost 24 hours a day I am constantly think about teaching, students and curriculum. It's not like I can go home every night and forget about work. So sometimes that makes me uptight. Sometimes I take that out on my students which isn't fair. But I do love my job and as much as I do not look forward to the ride each September – once I'm on, I do enjoy it.

#7
Why do you take a spaz at someone else when it is not their fault? Like the time when I asked you my mark for my signs in art you started screaming at me when someone else made you mad.

Response:
I think sometimes that I do have a tendency to sometimes take things out on other people. Sometimes I'll be having a bad day and then a class will come in and I'll be in a bad mood, even though they had nothing to do with my mood I might end up taking it out on them. I know that it is not fair but I am human and I make mistakes.

Sometimes it had to do with the timing. If 5 people come up to me to ask me the same question then I might have patience for the first three but by 4 or 5 I'll snap and possibly take their heads off. Honestly speaking I don't have very much patience. I was always told that teachers should be very patient people when working with students. Since I am not terribly patient I kind of thought that maybe I shouldn't be in teaching. I try to be patient and not to snap but I don't think I am being terribly successful.

#8
Why do we have to do book reports? I mean what's the purpose of it?

Response:
Good question. For me book reports are a good way for students to demonstrate their understanding of a particular text. There are many higher level thinking skills that I try to get at through specific questions that I ask. There are many processes involved such as: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. A book report is more than language it is THINKING.

#9
Miss Smith why do you give us so much work and Mrs. P—'s class hardly gets any? There is one reason why I hate being in 704 and that is that we get moved around so much that we have no time to have class parties. Mr. B— is busy, Mr. M—— has other classes and you have 701. 704 is all work, work, work.

Response:
I don't know what other classes do and I don't believe in making comparisons. Sometimes I give lots of work because I believe that hard work builds character. I don't believe that I give too much work or more work than you can handle. I know it is hard being moved around so much and not having a real place in the school that feel like “home”. I feel badly for 704 because of that because it does affect how all the class relates to each other. I try and think of 704 as my homeroom also because I am a teacher who is very
protective of her students and 704 are my students. It's hard though because it's like I am divided between two classes.

Because I only have 704 on rotary it does seem like all we do is work, work, work and there is no free time really for other things that would be there if you were my homeroom. Maybe we haven't had enough fun but I can't forget the work either. Give me some suggestions of what we could do (within reason.)

#10
Miss Smith when you assign us work, like book reports, could you give us more than a week because the work is a task that needs to have time to be done properly, so people can get better marks.

Response:
I genuinely believe that a week is enough time to successfully complete a book report. Sometimes what happens when you have more time is that you end up wasting more time rather than using it fully. I know sometimes it is difficult meeting deadline and doing something as well as you know you can do it but that is part of life. I would be interested in knowing how long you think is enough time to complete a book report. I am open to suggestions.

#11
When you get into class could you just briefly tell us what to do then if people are not on task tough for them because you keep on repeating what to do several times.

Response:
Sometimes I wish that I could just say "tough for them" but I can't I have to do everything in my power to help all my students to succeed. Sometimes I feel that I do over explain things but I want to make sure that everybody understands. And if an assignment is done incorrectly then I feel that it is because I didn't explain it properly. I will try not to over explain things in the future. But if I continue to repeat myself then please let me know.

#12
Why do you give us so much work when you already assigned us something?

Response:
I agree that sometimes I do assign a lot of work. But I don't believe that I assign more work than you can handle. I believe that you should push yourself and if you don't put high expectations on yourself then you'll never achieve. If you don't expect a lot then you'll get a little. There are times when we have a lot of work to do – that's just how it is, part of the pressures of being a student. But there are also times when we don't have a lot of assignments – like now. I guess the bottom line is that I agree that sometimes assign lots of work and that won't change because I think it is important to challenge students and part of that is organizing and meeting deadlines.
APPENDIX C

LIFE LESSONS

1. So in the long run Ms. Smith is a good teacher to have. She teaches you all sorts of things that she didn’t mean to teach you. Ms. Smith is a teacher that always has faith in you no matter who you are. She always believes that if you think you can do it, you can. Ms. Smith has taught me billions of things that she didn’t plan on teaching. EVERY CLASS YOU ENTER YOU LEARN A MESSAGE!!!

2. This cool woman (Ms. Smith) has not only taught me, but she’s also given me something. Confidence. At first in the beginning of grade 6 I sorta hated the person I was. I wanted to be like my friends. Which now I have to say that I’m proud I didn’t turn out like. Ms. Smith taught me to accept myself as a person, not to be ashamed. I used to try to act like a person that I wasn’t. She told me that I was D— D—, not Amanda Poppy. Actually not in so many words. Now I must say that I am my own person. I don’t act like anyone else but myself. I’m proud of who I am, I’m no longer a phony. I’m happy to say that my name is D— D—

3. What hit me most was from the last 2 years Ms. Smith has taught me to be an Individual. Not to do things that others do just to look cool. I’ve learned to be my own self and make decisions for myself that aren’t based on my friends’ opinions of what looks cool. I do whatever I want based on my own will!

4. Another thing Ms. Smith has taught me that change is good. She taught me this by always changing the seating plan that way I got to sit beside everyone in the class and really got to build relationships with them all. Ms. Smith also taught me to have my own style. A way I approach a situation or handle one, she taught me to be myself and not to be just like my friends. I learned this from the way Ms. Smith approaches a situation with her own style or she will have an activity that makes you think about deep down how you would react and how you would handle it. Ms Smith gives a lot of questions that deal with what you think, and I think that has helped me a lot. I have noticed the change in the way I think or act and react to situations.

5. I learned not to be afraid to be yourself and try other things. An example of this is when Ms. Smith changes her hair colour. Another thing I had learned was to get more into discussions. Talk more and let others know what you think

6. I learned several things from Miss Smith. One of those things that I learned was how to be confident. Whatever she wears he is confident. Another thing is that I learned to stick to my decisions.

7. Always be confident about yourself. If you want to say something you shouldn’t just hold it in but tell someone and let it out. Always listen to what others have to say

8. I learned to be confident and to work harder in oral discussions and conversations and express myself.

9. One thing that I have learned this year is that the way a teacher acts one day is not what she acts like all the time. You have shown me that because you are mad one day that doesn’t mean you will be mad at me but instead you always leave everything in the past and always start fresh everyday. Also this year I learned from you that I should always express what I am feeling and not keep it cooped up.

10. Ms. Smith taught me how to be outgoing. I didn’t use to put up my hand or want to answer questions because I was afraid that I would get the answer wrong, but Ms. Smith taught me to have confidence in myself and now when I think I have the answer right, I’ll put up my hand.

11. I think she has opened a lot of door that were shut before in Language Arts. Ms. Smith taught me to put more emotion into my writing by asking questions that made you dig deep inside yourself to be able to give the answer to it. I know Ms. Smith has the type of attitude to let everything out and not keep it inside
and I think that type of an attitude has rubbed off on me and made me let more out in Oral Language. Ms. Smith has built up my confidence.

12. For the past two years that I’ve been in your class, after I thought about it I realized that I’ve leaned quite a bit from you that you didn’t teach intentionally. From you I’ve learned to look inside myself and open up. Before you taught me that, I used to write responses by ideas from my friends or just basically what I felt. I didn’t really dig deep inside myself to answer these things. I learned not to be shy and to do things independently. I used to never raise my hand in class or participate in class discussions because I was either shy or I didn’t think my answer was right but you taught me that it doesn’t matter what people think and if I need or want to say something I should, I may not always do that but it has gotten better.

13. Her (Ms. Smith’s) work was challenging and she was a tough marker. That way I had to put more time and effort into my work else I wasn’t going to get a good mark.

14. I learned to put more thought into my work because sometimes I rush through my assignments and it is not as good as it should be. So now I take more time and do my work, and not do it the night before.

15. I learned to be a little more serious. To be more focused on my work. I learned to be more and more detailed on my work and put twice as much effort as I usually would.

16. Another thing I learned I had no intention of learning is that no one is perfect. I used to get mad at myself for getting a B or not impressing a teacher but I learned that no one is perfect and no one should try to be perfect because that’s a fight you’re sure to lose. I learned this from teachers who give decent grades and who are nice enough to tell the truth like if your work stinks or something like that.

17. Ms. Smith taught me that you don’t get marks, you earn grades. To be more judgmental. Observe everything and give something what it is worth.

18. What I learned is how to get my work done faster because it seems like Ms. Smith just marks our work in the same period and hands it back in the same period. I learned to work faster from Ms. Smith.

19. Maybe Ms. Smith’s quick marking could have affected me because I seem to be able to do my work quicker.

20. Ever since coming to 701 I have started to talk louder. Whenever we’re in class the whole class is talking but it doesn’t bother Ms. Smith and so it doesn’t other us. We like talking. So we always talked and still did our work. That was one of the good things. All other teachers can’t take it. Students talk for one second they start yell their heads off. But Ms. Smith was sort of like she couldn’t hear. Sometimes we would go way over the limit and that was when she told us to stop.

21. I learned to yell more louder because Ms. Smith yells at us so it makes me yell louder. I learned to be more tougher because Ms. Smith is a tough person and it made me a tough person.

22. What did I learn from Ms. Smith. Well I did learn important information from the school curriculum, but what did she teach me that she did not want to teach me. Well the most important one I can think of is that she taught me the importance of reading and how I can enjoy it. The in the middle one she helped me become more sarcastic and more creative in my work and talking to others.

23. Something that I don’t think you meant to teach me but you did (something outside of the curriculum) was to apply my knowledge from school outside of school more often.

24. I learned to express myself in a variety of ways. I learned that there was more to a novel than its story. The hidden things I’ve learned are sarcasm, put downs and being picky. I leaned sarcasm from you Miss
Smith when you were sarcastic about people not doing homework, and the same with yelling. And I learned being picky from you too. You are always being picky about how we perform and not doing our work right.

25. The hidden things I have learned from Miss Smith is she gives out a lot of sarcasm to our class and to individual people. She is impatient if someone in the class does something immature. Another hidden thing I learned from Ms. Smith is she wouldn’t have sympathy for anyone that has done something foolish. She has no patience with us if we do something foolish. The last hidden thing I have learned is she is preparing us to communicate with the opposite sex and also socialize by grouping the girls with the boys.
APPENDIX D

METAPHORS AND SIMILES

1. All the work Ms. Smith gives us is like trying to solve a confusing puzzle. Trying to understand her is like listening to a scientific professor speak. As everyone tries to like the way she teaches it is like trying to like a present you didn't expect. Sometimes she is strict and sometimes she is not. Her attitude towards us is like the changing weather. Sometimes her temper is like a steaming kettle. With all the different cultures in my class, Ms. Smith tries to understand us all. I like the way she teaches because it makes me want to learn more.

2. Ms. Smith's language arts knowledge is like an English language book.

3. Ms. Smith teaches like a scientist.

4. Ms. Smith's teaching is a guide to success. Ms. Smith's homework is an invitation to death. Ms. Smith's vocabulary is a living dictionary. Ms. Smith is the weather — sometimes nice and sometimes mean.

5. Ms. Smith's teaching is fun like Paramount's Canada's Wonderland. She explains our work just the way authors do in their stories. Yes Ms. Smith marks hard just like a woodpecker pecking. She is fair as a robin feeding her babies. Ms. Smith plans everything just as a camp leader would do. One thing that's great is she gives us time to work on assignments like a construction crew building a store. Ms. Smith teaches like a scientist.

6. Ms. Smith is like your yearly grass, forever changing.

7. Ms. Smith is like a vending machine, she makes change.

8. Ms. Smith's hair is like a chameleon.

9. Ms. Smith's clothes change like the weather — very seldomly the same.

10. Ms. Smith is the Energizer bunny. She's non-stopping, and never quits, just keeps going and going. Never stops, when we put her through misery. She's outgoing.

11. Ms. Smith is like the rainbow, different and unique.

12. When Ms. Smith explains our work she is as expressive as a man who sat on a nail.

13. Ms. Smith's hand gestures are like that of a crazed person with a fly swatter.

14. Ms. Smith comes up with jokes like a boring comedian.

15. She acts like a bear when it comes to teaching. She's as aware as a hawk. Her looks are stern. Her heart is soft. Her rules are firm. But she is dependable when you're in a spot. Ms. Smith is like a bear when it comes to people who don't finish their work.

16. Ms. Smith goes red like a burning fire when no one does their homework.

17. Ms. Smith is mean like a bear.
18. Ms. Smith is a tiger—unpredictable and fierce.

19. Ms. Smith's teaching is like a hawk — she notices everything and nothing gets by her.

20. Ms. Smith teaches like a coach — she yells if you do something wrong.

21. Ms. Smith is as cruel as scrooge.

22. Ms. Smith is like the waves of the ocean that roar thunderously when the sky has been cast back. When Ms. Smith is angry she is like the thunder in a vicious storm.

23. Ms. Smith is a monkey. Jumps around from one spot to another. Sometimes she is showered with joy, and other times rude as a skunk, not caring about others feelings. Just sprays them with wreak of mean.

24. Ms. Smith voice is loud like an awakening horn.

25. Ms. Smith cackles like a witch.

26. Ms. Smith's voice is hard and memorable like thunder.

27. Ms. Smith's voice is like a train whistling with a high pitch voice, Tooh!Tooh! She reminds me of a parrot that goes on and on and on.

28. Ms. Smith is a rose that grows and never bends for things that surround her.

29. I like Ms. Smith because she is fun and kind, and when you make a joke about her she wouldn't care, and plus nothing breaks her heart.

30. Ms. Smith and a machine have a lot in common — they are always shooting out new assignments.

31. Ms. Smith is a teaching machine that never runs out of oil.

32. Ms. Smith is like a printer, she keeps shooting out work.

33. Ms. Smith gives as much work to her students as a doctor to a nurse.

34. Ms. Smith gives as much work to us as the government to a garbage man.

35. Ms. Smith gives homework like a running river.

36. Ms. Smith gives us homework almost everyday like a mailman.

37. Ms. Smith is a speeding car always on the go. Meaning: you're always anxious to get work/things over with, fast, and you've always given us something to work on.

38. Ms. Smith's expectation of a student's work is like an Olympic coach always telling him to be the best.
APPENDIX E
STUDENT QUOTES

1. Oh she's that determined short teacher that is the vicious lightening in an electrical storm when she's mad. She's the lady who everyone feels comfortable with at first glance.

2. Ms. Smith a short, intelligent, sharp teacher, who can be polite yet moody at times. She's a very bright woman and very keen. Michelle Smith is her full name, and she's single. She's old about 27 and lonely but seems to get along with others. Michelle is very colour coordinated and also dresses exceptionally well. She 's a very good teacher. She teaches all her students equally (so she says). Michelle Smith is a teacher that everyone wants.

3. Ms. Smith is a teacher of wisdom she knows what to do and when to do it. She is 30 years old and really looks like she is 20. Her hair is fabulous even thought she hardly has any. Her charm and personality bring a sense of happiness to the class.

4. You're funny and put pizzazz into learning. You make the most boring things into an interesting thing to learn. You're so jumpy, jolly and laugh a lot.

5. I think that the way you teach is very creative. I like the way you do hand movements when your explaining assignments. It really makes it more interesting.

6. I also learned that if I did not have an assignment that was due that day, I shouldn't lie about it. I mean Miss Smith always knew, but she usually gave me a break if I told her the truth.

7. When I got out of grade 6 and into grade 7 I was really surprised. To me you were nothing like Ms. W--(my grade 6 teacher) because she was quiet like a mouse but you were as loud as I remembered.

8. One thing is how she doesn't let anyone boss her around.

9. Ms. Smith was always different. Sometimes she didn't care about anything but sometimes she cared about everything.

10. Today she wore her hair spiked up and there were two spikes that looked like the ears of the devil (which she was).

11. I hate your sarcasm, your attitude, the way you look at a student when they ask a question. You look like you couldn't care less and answer the question so sarcastically.

12. I wish you would express yourself without an attitude. And don't get mad when we ask you if something is okay, or it's good. You snap at us, and I feel as if you don't like me.

13. The only bad this is anytime I say good morning or ask you if I could hand out papers or other things you always reject me. But I always forget but please try to change your attitude.

14. Before I was in your class, your last year students use to say that you are mean, and rude. And they were partially right.

15. Stop making fun of the students.

16. Whenever you are angry you always take your anger out on us.

17. I also think you are full of yourself. I think you need to loosen up and stop taking your anger out on us poor students.
18. Miss Smith you are so boring. You never give us parties, you suck! You say, “I just don’t feel like it.” Who cares what you think. You are selfish and give us way too much work.

19. I also think that you should become a tiny bit nicer. Just a tiny bit.

20. I have to say is that you’re a fair teacher. You do what is right and not what is preferred. You give fair chances. I know you expect good behavior and you get it.

21. I think you are a fairly good teacher. You try to explain yourself in everything we do. You give us your expectations and I think you help us in the best way you can. What I really like about our marking is you let us give ourselves a mark and then you give us the mark.

22. What I hate about you is the way you mark, I think it’s unfair. I think you are too picky and mark too hard.

23. I think when you say it is not the quantity it is the quality of your work. I say you mark opposite.

24. I remember you saying that you are fair and don’t have favorites, what a farce that turned out to be.

Miss Smith’s class was a challenge. It was like I was on a game show and it was up to me to get the right answers.

25. You give the same type of work to everybody. I mean if a person is a slow learner, mark him on the work that he is able to do, not hard work that fast learners would learn.

26. I like the way you try and make your teaching tailor the students in the class.

27. I’d say that our class is sort of like a family that needs to learn how to get some self control and a little more cooperation. Yes we occasionally goof off but who doesn’t? I think that Miss Smith, our core teacher, knows how we feel because when we need a break, she’s there to give it to us. If we’ve gone too far and really annoyed her, she’s there to yell at us. Even though she has another class, I think that she treats each of us differently and equally and she doesn’t underestimate any of us. She’s always encouraging us, never telling us what we can’t do.

28. What I really like about your class is that you don’t treat us like kindergarten kids. Instead you treat us our age. Your teaching style is like no other teachers I’ve been with because you know we are not children so you treat us our age.
APPENDIX F

NARRATIVE CREATIVE WRITING

It was late December and almost the last day of school for the winter holidays. Jamie was a new student. She had registered the day before so this was going to be her first day there.

As Jamie walked into room 223, a rush of shyness overcame her. At the teacher's desk sat a girl/woman with short hair and very cool clothes. Jamie scanned the room quickly, looking for the teacher. Suddenly she realized the small, young looking person at the desk was the teacher.

Jamie sat beside a small black girl.
"My name's Shenelle" the girl whispered.
"Jamie." Said Jamie.

Jamie's day whizzed by and before she knew it, it was home time.

Later that night Jamie wrote in her diary.

Dear Diary,
Today I started a new school! It is called F—— C——. I am in class 701. My teacher's name is Ms. Smith. She is Okay. She gives us a lot of work to do. Sometimes she lets her moods interfere with the way she behaves too much. She (Ms. Smith) uses interesting methods to teach basic skills. And did I mention she wears very cool clothes and marks real hard? Well she does. The boys in my class are hyperactive, sometimes obnoxious. Some of them really get on Ms. Smith's nerves but the girls aren't perfect. Overall I enjoy being in 701. I think I may get use to it quick.

With a snap Jamie shut and locked her diary and turned out the light. It had been another day living in 701.

The Evil Teacher

Once upon a time there was a boy. His name was Robert. Robert went to F—— C—— Sr. P.S. Robert was now going to grade seven after a very exciting summer.

Then the big day come when Robert was going back to school. Robert’s teacher was going to be Mr. B—— and Mr. B—— was known as a very nice teacher. Robert was very excited.

The first day when Robert was at school, he got the news that Mr. B—— was just the class’s gym teacher and that’s it. He also announced that Ms. Smith was going to be the class’s core teacher.

Robert was very disappointed with the news because he was expecting to be in a nice teacher’s class and Ms. Smith was known to be a mean teacher.

As the day went on Robert was walking down the hall during the period change, he was talking to his friend Rocky. He was saying how this year was going to be so boring with his new teacher.

all his friend Rocky kept on saying, "It couldn’t be that bad she is just a teacher".

Then the next day Robert finally had Ms. Smith for the first day. Robert was especially scared because she was known to put fear in her students and to keep the fear throughout the year.

Then when the first day when Robert was in Ms. Smith’s class she was not mean but man did she give work. First she said that her class would have to read 2 books every month, write at least 2 stories and Ms. Smith gave a mini project.

Robert was exhausted from working all day in Ms. Smith’s class. One thing that Robert notices was that Ms. Smith was not mean, she was just strict.

Today Robert now is used to Ms. Smith and does not think of her as a mean teacher but she still sometimes gets mad at him for no reason.
The Day the 701 Journal was Introduced

"Okay class," yelled Ms. Smith. "Settle down." Ms. Smith tapped her Le Chateau shoe impatiently waiting for the noise to go down.

Once it came to Ms. Smith's satisfaction, she said, "We're starting something new."

"Oh man." Came a series of moans from the class.

"Oh man." Mimicked Ms. Smith with sarcasm reeking in her voice. "Okay let's get started," began Ms. Smith, "we're starting something called 701 journals."

Ms. Smith stood waiting for an reaction. When she didn't get the one she was expecting, she looked around at the bewildered looks on the students' faces.

"Well," said Ms. Smith, "let me explain. You can write your thoughts and ideas about the way I teach. If there is something you like or are being troubled with, you may write about it in this book. Oh," continued Ms. Smith, "I guarantee you will get a thoughtful response."

"Hmmm..." thought Sadhvi to herself. "What's one thing I would like to know from Ms. Smith?"

"I think we're thinking the same thing." Said Aman, one of Sadhvi's friends.

"I got it!" exclaimed Sadhvi. Quickly getting out a piece of paper and a pen, Sadhvi began writing.

After a few minutes Sadhvi looked back at the ideas scribbled on her paper. Rising from her seat, Sadhvi got up to bring the journal to her desk. She wrote down why she was sometimes marked late on the attendance when she was just at he locker.

"I wonder what Ms. Smith's response will be?" thought Sadhvi to herself.

THE NEXT DAY...

"I guess she ha a point." Said Sadhvi to Aman.

"About what?" asked Aman, reaching for the 701 response book. Sadhvi had just gotten back the response journal with the answer to her question. Ms. Smith had written you must be inside of the classroom to be in attendance.

"This is a neat idea." Sadhvi said to Aman. "Writing in this would probably be better than hassling Ms. Smith about our suggestions."

"I'll write about something I find unfair," said Aman suddenly, "I wonder what her response will be..."

An Afternoon in 701

"Another sheet of homework." Whined Rahul.

"And if you whine again you'll get more. I like to see you suffer Rahul." Replied Ms. Smith.

Nicole asked "Do you have any more work I could finish?"

"Actually I do. It's in the bottom left hand drawer by the competitors." Said Ms. Smith.

"Can I go too?"

"Yes you can go Sherone. I'm the friendliest, kind hearted teacher in this school." Replied Ms. Smith.

"Yeah right." Sherone whispered.

"I heard that!" yelled Ms. Smith.

Sherone ran to the computer lab as fast as he could. The whole class started to laugh.
Can't Sweep For Beans

It was 5th period and everyone had just picked up their chairs and put it down on the floor in front of the TV and VCR.

The class sat quietly and waited for Ms. Smith to begin talking. Ms. Smith stood in front of the TV and began to introduce the movie. Ms. Smith told us it was a movie called Legend. She said it was a monomyth. Ms. Smith told us a bit about the movie.

While Ms. Smith talked, Rahul kept interrupting her. The first time Ms. Smith said “this movie is a myth,” and Rahul answered “Yeah, I know.” In a quiet voice of course, but loud enough to let Ms. Smith hear.

Rahul talked while Ms. Smith was talking and on the 5th time the did that Ms. Smith got angry and said “I had enough of your mouth go outside>”

Everyone started to laugh but Rahul didn’t seem to care. He went outside and Ms. Smith began talking again.

While Ms. Smith talked Rahul kept on looking in and waving. People started to laugh. She ignored him, she kept on talking and Rahul kept on looking in and waving. Ms. Smith moved from in front of the room to the door and closed it in Rahul’s face. Ms. Smith finished talking and we started to watch the movie.

In between the movie Ms. Smith told Rahul to come in, she gave him a broom and told him to sweep the floor. That made everyone laugh. Rahul could not sweep the floor for beans. He used one hand and he dragged the broom back and forth. The class started to laugh. Rahul said “like you can do better.”

Rahul had to sweep the whole room. I guess that was hard for him since he can’t sweep. When the movie was done it was last period and the bell rang for home time. Everyone left except Rahul of course. Ms. Smith wanted to talk to him. He was in deep trouble of course, but he got to leave after a talk with Ms. Smith. The was the day when we watched the movie.

My Life Currently in 701: Nightmare in 701

Prologue
All the events that take place in this story are true. This story was printed on December 27th 1995, so all the events that place were taken before the 27th. This story has been written according to Tanveer Singh Ubhi’s current life in 701. Yes it is a nightmare for him because look who his teacher is, Ms. Smith, she’s not that bad.

“Hello hi, my name is Ms. Smith, welcome to 701.”
“Yeah yeah.”
“You’ll have a great time in my class.”

I, Tanveer Singh had an attitude problem. Always vicious, trying to pick fights with anyone weaker than them. If I say anyone acting up in class I always felt left out and just had to follow along. Every year I got stupider and stupider, don’t worry you’ll find out, keep reading.
I, the author when I was writing wasn’t in a good mood so, I didn’t add any boring details I’m just going to get straight to all the good and bad events.
“Okay boys and girls, you will be having to read two books every month so you will be doing a book report at the end of every month.”
“What” How could this be happening? We barely did any book reports with Ms. W—— last year and this year we get one every month.” Tanveer said to himself. “All the other students are right, she is a mean teacher. I’ll bet that she’s going to be giving out detentions every week as well, that’s what the others say she does. I hate being in her class already, what a year this is going to be.”

Well it wasn’t so bad, I had lots of students in this class that I knew very well. They were like the kids I had been with most. The one thing that all of them won’t forget about me is that last year I got kicked out of hockey intramural by being kicked out of two games, well I won’t get into much of that.
Like I was saying before, there was a time when three other students sat beside me in French who had been shooting elastic bands for the past few days, before the incident this is what Ms. Smith had said, “next one to shoot an elastic band will get lines. Two pages both sides no skipping lines.”

Oh well this is what happened. The three were to shoot an elastic band when I decided to join them, when the French teacher turned her back we fired at a girl who thinks so highly of herself. I nailed her in the head and it bounced off her head and hit Devi and she told, the others hit her as well. We had to clean the desks after school and guess what happened when Ms. Smith found out?

“I told you guys not to throw/shoot elastic bands and I also told you guys what will happen so you guys are receiving lines.”

I still remember what lines, “An elastic band is not a toy to be whipped at girls with gleeful joy.” Lines actually work, Every since that day I have stopped throwing elastic bands, except at home.

I, Tanveer, have the record for lines so far this year. 5 pages. The second time I got lines was when I forgot to bring back my permission form to go to the library. It was my fault because she had told us like a couple of hundred times. Anyway I got lines. I still remember the rhyme, ‘Bring back my form that’s all I had to do, now I’m writing lines ... Boo hoo hoo.” Oh how did I get five pages? Well you see I forgot to bring back my first tow pages of lines so I got another page. I almost forgot. I almost got five pages. Ms. Smith had just changed desks, I was to sit beside a kid called Shaquille O’Neal by our science teacher. The kid’s name is really Sherone. We were acting up in class so much that Ms. Smith gave us lines but we apologized and got away.

Check this out.

“Students, I have made up my own detention slips so if anyone gets one of these for misbehaving in class they will meet me in my room the next day.”

Again, just because I was too lazy to take back a form that I brought in forgetting to put the OHIP number on the sheet I didn’t take it home so when I had to pass it in it was incomplete. So I got one of those class detention slips. My first detention.

There actually was time that wasn’t bad. We had a party for one period, only because it was Ms. Smith’s birthday and she had turned the age of gray. But it was the most boring, most lame party I had ever been to. Some kids were just walking around while others were just playing some board games. What a party.

Report card day. My did ever feel so stupid. Getting more Bs than As. This report card was my worst ever. 7 Bs and 3 As. My worst ever. Before this report card my worst was 5 As and 5 Bs. My am I eve getting dumb.

Well this is all. What a nightmare it has been. All this has happened in 77 days and could you imagine what is still to come in the 109 days left. What a nightmare

Yeah right I’m getting you a Christmas present, Merry Christmas, well not so merry I know that’s dumb also, not a Happy New Year JOKES! Look in your stocking, whatever’s there I gave it to you.

I’M DEAD.

“Get up Vishal! Why are you always lazy in the mornings?” screamed out Vishal’s older and annoying sister Neshia.

“Ya Ya Whoof Woof to you too!” Yelled out Vishal.

Vishal got out of bed, took a shower, changed his clothes and got something to eat.

“Oh my gosh it’s 8:30 I have to get to school quick” he told himself, then Vishal ran to school as fast as he could and made it just in time for the bell to ring.

Vishal went straight to his locker to get his homework out and then went straight to his classroom.

“Morning Ms. Smith.” Man I wish Ms. Smith would change her attitude and say something anytime I say something to her. Vishal told himself.

“Oh Vishal I want you to sit right here.”

“You mean right next to the teacher?”

“Yes that’s right and anyway you said that you won’t mind sitting next to the teacher.”

“Well I did not actually mean it for you to put me next to the teacher.”

“Then you shouldn’t of said it in the first place. Okay class place your homework in the bucket.”
“Ms. Smith do you have the sheet with the songs on it?”
“Didn’t I give you one yesterday?”
“No and I’m sure of that.”
“Are you sure because I remember giving one to someone.”
“Well it wasn’t me and I know that as a fact.”
“Vishal are you arguing with me?”
“No not really.”
“Well because if you were you know that I would win.”
“In you dreams.” Vishal said softly.
“What was that Vishal?”
“Nothing O great one.”

LUNCH TIME

“Yo Vishal are you having fun at you new desk?” said Chris.
“You stop the shouting!” shouted Mr. Johnson our lunch room supervisor.
“Sorry Mr. Johnson.”
“Okay you could go outside now.” Mr. Johnson said.
So Vishal and a couple of guys from Ms. Smith’s class went to play soccer.
“Vishal could we play?” said Sadhvi.
“Okay sure, you want the teams to be boys against girls?”
“You’re on Vishal.” Said all the other girls.
“Vishal are you out of your mind it’s 13 girls and only 8 boys. You think we could actually win?” said Chris.
“Of course we are good and anyway we’re a lot faster than they are and we could dribble the ball better than them.” Vishal said with confidence.
“GAME ON!” shouted Vishal. 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10.
RRRRRRIIIIIINNNNGGGG RRRRRRIIIIIINNNNGGGG.
“Oh well we win 10 to nothing. Oh you didn’t hear that Sadhvi – 10 to nothing!”
“Yes I heard it that time and it’s still ringing in my head.”
After that Vishal went up to Ms. Smith and was just about to say good afternoon but he said to himself, “don’t bother it’s a waste of time”.
Then all of a sudden Vishal heard someone say “Good afternoon Vishal”.
“Oh my gosh Ms. Smith you actually said it. I’m proud of you. Actually you should be rewarded how about one whole day without me coming to school?”
“Nice try Vishal”.
“Come on it would be fun, well for me, I’m not too sure about you.”
“My answer is no as in nip, no, no way, I don’t think so.”
“Ms. Smith are you arguing with me because if you are you know that I will win.”
Then Ms. Smith started to laugh.
“Okay class I’m giving you these two periods to finish up what ever you have to finish up, okay get to work.”
“Ms. Smith may I please go to the bathroom?” said Vishal in a hurry.
“Hold on let me think about it.”
“Let me help you – YES”
“Okay go and hurry because you have to get your work done.”
Vishal went as quick as he could, but when he got out the door he just started to walk because he just wanted to get out of class because it was getting too boring. Vishal went to the bathroom and went to get something to drink then went back to class.
“Okay class take you seats the announcements are about to come on so take your seats. Clean out your desks and be quiet. Vishal I said to be quiet or else I’ll give you and office D”
RRRRRRIIIIIINNNNGGGG RRRRRRIIIIIINNNNGGGG.
“Okay you may leave and remember to do all your homework for tomorrow or you’ll face the consequences.”
“Good bye Ms. Smith and have a great day.”
“Same with you Vishal;”
“Ms. Smith I have to tell you one thing. I really like being in your class and I like how you teach. I just wanted to let you know.”
“Thank you Vishal, that’s really nice.”
“You’re welcome. Well bye see you tomorrow.”

**HYPER**

It was a cold winter’s day. The snow was knee high. Trees were swaying in the heavy breeze blowing all the snow on the roads interrupting traffic. Busses were out of service. Children were walking, and cars were struggling squeezing through lanes.

“How do you get to school Harleen?” asked Bina as the two walked into class.
“I walked.” Replied Harleen as she sat down in her seat.
“You walked all the way to school? Isn’t it cold?” yelled Bina across the room. Bina was considered one of the loud mouth students.
“Yeah it’s freezing outside. It’s raining pellets. I froze to death.” Said Harleen. Harleen was the most trustworthy person in the class.
“Ha ha. I got a dr…” stopped Bina as Ms. Smith walked into the class.
Ms. Smith was a strict, intelligent, cool, stylish and 90s type of teacher. She was hyper, but knew how to control it. She was a wicked dresser, chose never to wear anything twice. The students often wondered how much she made a year, or whether it was all ‘pass me downs’ from brothers and sisters.
Today as she walked into the class she bumped into the garbage and hoped nobody saw, until she noticed Devi yelling…”
“Look she’s 30 and still can’t walk straight!”
“Ha ha ha ha!” yelled 701.
“Very funny Devi you have a detention and you got a B on your book report.” Said Ms. Smith forgetting to control her hyperness.
Devi sat back in her chair quiet as a mouse all mad about her B. Devi was a tall, over sized student. Immature who made corny jokes and liked to be considered as an enhanced student. But unfortunately Hyper Smith never noticed.

All morning the class was obnoxious and acted like fools, but this was nothing unusual for the 701 class. Ms. Smith sat at her luxury seat annoyed. She was sitting on her rolling chair and had her feet up on another. Her desk was covered with papers waiting to be marked. She was surrounded by students jumping around, and a shelf covered with published stories. On her right was a 2 meter long bulletin board displaying beautiful art work done by 701.
“Okay I’ve had enough. STOP. I’m no longer giving this class more time to work on book reports. So put your work away.” Demanded Ms. Smith.
“What are we going to work on now?” asked Vishal.
Ms. Smith snapping her fingers to get their attention, “put it away NOW!”
“Alrighty then.” Said Chris.
“Well I’m going to send a book around. Sonya would you pass this around? In this book I want you to write the things that you like and dislike about me and the way I teach.”
“Are we allowed to write that you’re ugly?” questioned Sherone.
“Yeah because it doesn’t hurt my feelings.”
“Okay then.” Said Sherone excitedly getting his pencil ready.
Turn by turn everyone wrote their comments.
Sherone wrote: ‘You’re 30 and still can’t walk’ and other wrote even more rude ones.
Since Ms. Smith only had 701 for two periods she had planning time and decided to spend it by reading what the class wrote in the book.

Tanveer- go dye your hair pink, purple, or green. Punk!
Matt- You’re noisy and mean!
Sadhvi- You’re too uptight!
Aman- You think you dress so good!
Jessy- You’re too dumb to be a teacher!
Yusra- You’re a liar!
Sylvia- You’re a short midget like me!
Devi- I love you!
Bina- I hate you!

After Ms. Smith read those comments she went crazy. You see she never knew that the class hated her. She started throwing things around the class. Cereal boxes the class made, pencils, chairs, erasers, the shelf. She flipped her desk upside down and began throwing papers. She went psycho, retarded, mental and insane! She started pulling her hair out of her scalp. Tearing her clothes. At this time the class was so terrified, scared not knowing what to do. There she stood half bald, showing her original black roots in her hair. She looked like Medusa. Until Sherone decided to run out of the class. The students didn’t know what came over her. She’s never really acted this crazy before.

Sherone had went down to the principal’s office, screaming on the top of his lungs, “Ms. Smith is retarded! Help! Help!”
He had caused a commotion in the hallways. Mr. J—, our vice-principal, had finally caught hold of him and found out what had happened. He then decided to announce on the PA system that Michelle Smith had gone crazy, and to beware!”

All the students and staff in the building had ran out. The principal and vice-principal didn’t know what to do. So they decided to join the parade and miss out on school. School was canceled for the rest of the day. So the students got to go home. The staff decided to go for a late lunch at Buffet World, across the street, and leave her all alone. Devi on the other hand stayed back to comfort Ms. Smith, hoping she’d be on her good side. Devi’s tricky mind was hoping she’d be recommended for the enhanced programme.

Devi talked Ms. Smith out of destroying the school which was her plan. She told her to forget about Tanveer’s and Yusra’s comments and that they weren’t important. Last, which did the trick, Devi told Ms. Smith that she loved her.

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**MEAN TEACHER**

It was a warm sunny morning. The sun shone making the day glow. The palm trees were swaying in the light tingly wind, with their creamy like leaves shading the school ground. The crystal clear pond splashed as the students jumped in screaming with joy getting soaked. All of a sudden the school ground got still. Not a soul spoke. There in front of their eyes stood the meanest, rudest, but yet best dressed teacher alive. Even the principal knew not to mess with that teacher, or else, off with the head.

“Get out of there you rotten, no good, unmannered pieces of scum!” bellowed the teacher like usual. She was single and had no friends.

As soon as the teacher said that, the students immediately stood in single file line, just as she liked and ordered.

“Hello everyone. As you all can see I’m in a great, terrific, superduper, ammaaaaaazzzing mood. Nothing can bring me down.” Announced Devi in a hysterical way. It seemed as if she was going to blow up in all that excitement.

“Guess who our first period teacher is?” chuckled Rahul rocking back and forth in his chair. “That oughta pop your bubble and stop you from being so cheery.” He said giving his best shot at disappointing her.

“I know, It’s the witch, but it’s okay because I’m prepared. I finished my art sketches.” Pointed out Devi giving a signal of proud accomplishments. “To tell the truth, my big art sketch of the back pack is wicked and Bina even said so. So ha ha ha!”

“Well, we’ll just have to put the mark that you get to the test!” remarked Jessy as they entered the class of terror.

“Devi bring your sketch to me!” howled the evil, miserable woman. “NOW!”

Devi got up and held out the beautiful sketch of a backpack. It gradually turned from dark to light and the use of lines was creative and awesome. It looked as if it was done professionally.
“Not bad. Actually not good. Here, 33 out of 40. Now sit down and be quick.” She demanded staring her down with an awful dirty look.

“I got a 33 out of 40.” Frowned Devi in disappointment. Devi was so mark crazy. She would never accept anything under 35. Even if her work was bad she still wanted a good mark. She was tall, the tallest in the class. She had shoulder length chestnut brown hair as soft as a baby’s butt. She was smart but not in math and any subject with the selfish, mean and dumb teacher. She was moody, polite and annoying and thought nothing was fair.

“That’s not fair at all. I deserved at least a 36 or 37 and she gave me a 33. Yuck, I hate her. I’m going to kill her!” threatened Devi as she told Melissa and Shruti her plans.

“What did you get Devi?” bragged Rahul as he came up behind her to rub in his better mark.

“That’s it, she’s dead tomorrow.” Whispered Devi.

“You really gonna kill her?” exclaimed Shruti.

“Yup.”

It was a dark, gloomy morning. It was all foggy, you wouldn’t see anything. All you would see were your own footsteps. The wind was blowing hard, shipping against the palm trees and roaring hard. The Toronto Star newspaper was flying all over the streets interrupting traffic because of the flying papers slapping against the windshields of cars.

“Hi,” began a tall figure from the distance down the hall, “it’s me Devi.”

“Oh hi you scared me, I thought it was some killer.” Gasped Bina in fright. “What’s wrong? You look depressed.”

“I don’t know. I should be happy, but instead I’m gloomy.” Wondered Devi in confusion. “Look I brought it to school.”

“Huh. You brought your gun to school. You have a gun.” Said Bina with concern. “Where did you get that from and why’d you bring it to school?”

“Shhhhh. Don’t talk so loud. You don’t know?”

“Know what?”

“That I’m going to blow Miss Harry Warry’s brains out.” Reported Devi.

“When?” questioned Bina.

“Today. I’m gonna ask Mr. K—- if I can to the bathroom. He says yes. I go into her class and she’s alone, because she has her planning time. Pow pow right to the head, and she’s dead.” Responded Devi.

“Good it’s about time somebody shot her!” declared Bina.

“Mr. K——— can I go to the bathroom. It’s urgent?” squirmed Devi in her seat making it look real.

“Sure.” Answered Mr. K———.

Devi walked down the hall quietly not making a sound. She stood her head in her class and saw her by herself sitting with her back towards the door. In perfect position for her not to see Devi. Devi walked in, getting out her blow gun.

“Devi what do you think you’re doing? Put that thing away. It’s scaring me!” cried the teacher.

“Good it’s suppose to,” mentioned Devi. “That’s what you get for giving me a 33 and for telling me to shut up!” smirked Devi in joy, waiting for this day to come.

“I’m sorry Devi, I’ll give you 40.” She begged desperately. “if that will …”

BANG!

Just then an average height lady with orange/reddish hair was on the floor. She was wearing a leather vest and leather pants. It looked pretty spiffy, but too bad soon she was to be buried in those clothes. So Devi did a smart thing. She took off the teacher’s clothes, all except her necessary stuff. Put them in a bag, put it in her locker and went back to class.

“What took you so long Devi?” blurted Mr. K———.

“Um you see I have diarrhea, and all day I’ve been sitting on the toilet doing …” told Devi giving details.

“Um you don’t have to give that much detail.” Laughed Mr. K———.

Suddenly the principal came running into the class yelling: “Wooo hoo great news! The miserable teacher is dead!”
“hooray Yippee!” echoed the class in sudden joy.
“You actually shot her?” frowned Shruti.
“Yup I did and you know what?” sighed Devi.
“What?”
“It sure feels good.” Chuckled Devi feeling good about herself.

Within the next two days they had already replaced the teacher with another. She was great. She was tall, and had dirty blonde hair with streaks of red running through it. She was an agreeable teacher. She would do anything the students told her to do. She gave Devi a 40/40 on her sketch. Which she deserved! Everyone was happy with the replacement. Mrs. Running was perfect. The opposite to Ms. Smith! (ooops I revealed the name)
APPENDIX G

CONVERSATIONS

1.
"Good morning Ms. Smith," I said as I came into the classroom.
"Huh ... Oh good morning." Ms. Smith said drowsily. She sounded terrible. She didn't look good either,
she was wearing a long black bell bottoms and a ruffled white shirt topped with a ridiculous looking hat.
Also to top that off she was wearing way too much makeup. It was like she was going to a Halloween
party.
"Um, Ms. Smith could you tell me what you think of my drawing for art," I asked nervously. I knew that
she would tell me like a million things that is wrong with it and then say one thing good about it.
"Well you see in this part the shading is so wrong and in this part ....," and she went on and on and on.
Finally she stopped then said, "other than that, everything is fine."
"O.K. bye." I said as I ran off to my desk. I couldn't stand much more of her.

2.
"S_____," asked Ms. Smith "can you come and get your geography assignment."
"O.K. Ms. Smith, a D." he hollered.
Ms. Smith said, "If you think I'm going to give you a mark for answers like that, you're out of you mind."
"C'mon Ms. Smith, it's nearly Christmas and these answers are very good. I thought of them myself."
Ms. Smith replied, "I'm not Santa Claus and can you please read the answer to this question: What is the
longitude and latitude line of Quita, Equator?"
I said "44N 64S."
She asked, "Do you know where those lines meet up?"
"NO." I said confused.
"They meet up at Ottawa."
"So that's why I got a D?" I asked.
"Um hm, now you learned an important lesson."
"What's that?" I responded.
"Study."

3.
"Ms. Smith, Ms. Smith can I talk to you?" I asked.
"Sure you can." Replied back Ms. Smith.
"I got an E on my Iceberg Hermit Diary entry and I was wondering if I can do it again?" I asked in a happy
way.
"If you knew you were going to get an E you should have not even handed that in." said Ms. Smith
"So you are saying I can't do it again?"
"That's right."

4.
"Ms. Smith, why isn't this assignment related to theme?" B— asked.
"Well, lets see here, okay, it only talks about believing and that's not theme." Ms. Smith replied
"But that's what the whole book was about, believing in these creatures that lived in the cave" responded B—
"Well, could it be that the theme is Supernatural instead of believing?"
"Yeah I guess so, " B— said.
"Yeah I think Supernatural would best fit the book."
"Then should I do this over?" B— asked.
"Well let's see here," Ms. Smith said looking into her mark book, "even if you didn't do it over you'd still
get an A"
"Oh, would I?" B— said relieved.
"Yeah well, maybe I can give you 3 extra marks for at least understanding what the theme was, so that
would give 83 out of 100 which is good, it's an A." Ms. Smith said feeling generous.
"Okay, thanks!" B— then said walking away.
"Yes.
1 your
"Because
''O,,.
7. D- took a
"M--!
"What?
Okay
Me as in
'7 D-
''D--
Don't
moods.
That
I asked Ms.
Ms.
I answered "I don't know." Ms. Smith laughed and again I laughed.
"Oh you really should know why you put those things in." said Ms. Smith jokingly.
Ms. Smith said, "S_____ when you read, read other kinds of books."
I asked in a small voice" What kinds of books should I read?
"You can read books by ____________"
That was the end of the meeting.

6.
"D-- !" yelled Ms. Smith across the room giving her the come here signal. She was in one of her angry moods. D-- could tell by the way she said her name.
"ooooohhhhh!!" yelled the class thinking D-- was in trouble.
D-- took a deep breath and said, "Yes Ms. Smith." In a worried way.
"Don't worry you're not in trouble," she said calming her down. "actually you're being awarded."
"What? Me?" said D-- confused. She started shaking her head, showing Ms. Smith she didn’t understand.
"I can see you don't understand." Ms. Smith was psychic. She could read other's minds. She also was a wicked dresser.
"Okay let me explain better. I called you to tell you that you're my best student."
"Me as in D-- D--?" she said in shock waving her head making her curly hair go ballistic.
"I know this was your dream and now ..." said Ms. Smith being interrupted.
"You've fulfilled my dreams." Said D-- dancing around the class in excitement.
"D-- stop!" demanded Ms. Smith. "How'd I know you'd be happy."

7.
"M-----!" Ms. Smith called from her desk.
"Yes."
"Okay M----- sit down. I want to discuss your portfolio."
"Okay."
"M----- where is your reading sheet?"
"Right there under my 'I Can Do Anything' story."
"M----- where are your comments?"
"I forgot to write them."
"Okay then I have to give you a B. Okay M----- why did you put this in your portfolio?"
"I don't know."
Miss Smith laughs and then continues the conference. "Okay M----- why did you put your timeline in?"
"Because if was on computer and it took a long time."
"Okay M----- this is not exactly the way I wanted your portfolio to be done. I wanted you to reflect on your work so keep this in mind for next time."
8.
"Ms. Smith, I forgot to do my character sketch. I thought it was due tomorrow." I said timidly.
"What? You mean to tell me that you have known about this for over a week and you have the gall to tell me you’ve waited until the last minute?” Ms. Smith yelled.
“What can I do?” I asked feeling smaller by the second.
“If it’s at home – nothing.” Ms. Smith said flatly.
“Okay.” I said.
“I’ll give you your detention sheet later.”
“All right.”

9.
“Ms. Smith, “I asked shyly, “I couldn’t do my homework last night because, well my cat ate it.” I closed my eyes and hoped that she would believe me.
“Pardon me, “ Ms. Smith started, “I thought you just said .”
“I did!” I interrupted. Uh oh big mistake.
“Well, I normally wouldn’t give you an extension but I’m in such a good mood that you can hand it in tomorrow morning or else. Okay?” Ms. Smith replied.
“That would be fine! Thank you very much.” I was so glad that she believed me.

10.
“S----, have you brought in your note?” asked Miss Smith impatiently.
“No but I’ll bring it in at lunch.” S---- replied hastily not knowing whether her determined teacher believed her or not.
“How many times have I heard that?” muttered Miss Smith disgustingly.
“I promise that I will.” S---- quickly added before her teacher added another one of her sarcastic statements.
Too late, her teacher sighed and warned her, “Well just if you should forget your note I’ll write a detention slip anyway.”

11.
“J please come to my desk please.” Ms. Smith in the opening of the day called out.
“Yes Ms. Smith” J----, who looked very scared and knew what was going on, asked Ms. Smith.
“I am very disappointed in you. For the millionth time you did not hand in your assignment in.” Ms. Smith said.
“See what happened is I was working on the story and then we had to go to my cousin’s,” J---- was saying before Ms. Smith interrupted him by saying.
“I have heard enough of those excuses of yours. I want that story handed in first thing at the end of the day.”
“Can I hand the story in tomorrow morning because I am done the story, but it is at my cousin’s house and I am going to my cousin’s house today so I can get the story and hand it in tomorrow morning.” J---- for a long period kept on saying.
“Fine but if it is not handed in tomorrow I shall give you a detention for a week.” The annoyed Ms. Smith said.
“Thanks Ms. Smith.”
“Whatever and return to your seat so we can begin class,” Ms. Smith said confused because a second later she heard Ring and that was the bell to end class.

12.
“Ms. Smith why do we have to do this?” asked R---- as he sat in his desk doing nothing.
“Because you are here to learn and I am your teacher,” replied Ms. Smith.
“Why can’t we just do role playing or drawing?” R---- asked.
“We have already done that and I want to try something new.” Ms. Smith answered.
“Good answer,” R---- said and started drawing on a blank sheet of paper. Ten seconds later R---- asked another question, “Ms. Smith why am I sitting in front of your desk?”
“Why do you think you are sitting there?” Ms. Smith questioned.
“I don’t know that is why I’m asking you.” R—— replied.
“Well let’s see,” Ms. Smith said, “your create trouble around the class.”
“I do not.” R—— interrupted.
“Oh I’m sure you don’t,” Ms. Smith said, “you also never do any work at school.”
“I get it done.”
“But that is not the point you always do your work at home and at school you are always fooling around.” Ms. Smith replied.
“Will I ever move from here?” R—— asked.
“Well that depends if you stop asking questions and get your work done you will but if you don’t then you will stay right where you are.” Ms. Smith answered.
R——’s face lightened up with excitement as he quickly got to work on his assignment. R—— was surely going to move out of there, and a couple of weeks later he did.

13.
“Good morning Ms. Smith and how are you today?”
“Good morning to you too V——, I’m fine thank you.”
“Ms. Smith do you have this piece of paper it’s the one about Time?”
“I don’t know if I have one but I go and check for one. No I don’t have one, are you sure I didn’t already give you one?”
“No you didn’t.”
“Yes I did.”
“No you didn’t.”
“V—— are you arguing with me?”
“No I’m not.”
“Oh because I thought you were.”
“Ms. Smith I’m not arguing with you because you know I’ll win.”
“Ha ha ha really funny. Okay class you can go for lunch.”
“Oh I see you’re really trying to get off the subject that I can win a fight with you.”
“Oh yeah…”
“Never mind I’m going for lunch. Bye.”

14.
“Oh Ms. Smith,” called S——, a smart but annoying student. “Can I talk to you a second?”
“Oh no,” muttered Ms. Smith. Having experienced with one of S——’s talks left her seething through her teeth.
“Hi S——,” said Ms. Smith turning around and pasting a fake smile on her face. “What can I do for you?”
“Well since you asked …” began S—— with a rush of excitement, “I’ve got a great idea. But sit down because it could take awhile.”
“Okay,” began S——, blowing some of the bangs off her forehead. “I did a lot of thinking about this and I want you to hear me out.”
“Lord!” screamed Ms. Smith silently. “Why are you torturing me?”
“Have you ever considered a trip to a university so we could get a feel of college life?”
“Well, “ thought Ms. Smith. “How do you tell her that her idea stinks?”
“Ms. Smith,” prompted S——. Ms. Smith had begun tapping her foot impatiently, a sure sign that she was getting impatient.
“It figures,” thought Ms. Smith that she would be thinking about university already.
“Well?” S—— said again.
“S——,” began Ms. Smith slowly, “how’d you even know if you’ll pass grade seven?”
“Even if I don’t,” said S—— cheerfully. “I’ll have you for a teacher again. Won’t that be great?”
“Oh don’t you worry,” said Ms. Smith without hesitation. “You’ll pass if it’s the last think I do.”
“Besides,” thought Ms. Smith silently, “there’s no way I’m going to have her in this class for two years.”
“oh,” said S——. “I guess you would be too lucky if you had me for 2 years right?”
“Right.”