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A
Cup
of
Comfort
for
Teachers

一杯安慰送老师

Heartwarming stories of people who
mentor, motivate, and inspire

师恩难忘



青岛出版社

QINGDAO PUBLISHING HOUSE

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序

在坎坷的人生道路上,是谁为我们点燃了一盏最明亮的灯;在荆棘的人生旅途中,是谁甘做引路人,为我们指明前进的方向……是您,老师,把雨露洒遍大地,把幼苗辛勤哺育!看这满园鲜花、遍地桃李,无不渗透着您的心血!

通过本书,你将记住那位竭尽全力使学生敞开心扉的老师、那位勇于面对挑战默默无私奉献的老师、那位精心传递知识火种、帮学生到达成功彼岸的老师,那位为学生铺平人生道路的老师……他们或貌不惊人或美丽大方,或和蔼可亲或严厉至极,或沉默寡言或个性开朗,但他们内心所蕴含的殷殷真情无时无刻不感动着学生的心灵,影响着学生的人生历程。

正如爱因斯坦所说:“老师崇高的人格魅力如神奇的钥匙,唤醒我们创新的思维,开启我们求知的心房。”让我们尽情领略本书中不同教师的迥然风采吧。

中国海洋大学 张德玉



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Why I Teach

I know my students. Masses of awkward seventh graders swarm the halls of my rural middle school each day, hauling backpacks over one shoulder, talking and shuffling along the tile hallway floor^① from class to class. I watch them like a general from my post (my classroom door) and smile at the fact that I can call each one by name.

I know their secrets, their stories. Dora slouches^② and is shy, and I know it is because she spends all her time at home trying not to get noticed, so she won't feel the brunt of her stepfather's angry hand. Jay can pitch like a tenth grader, and all the girls swoon when he and his blond hair strut by, but I know he doesn't really even like baseball that much (he plays because his dad wants him to) and he is too scared to ask out the girl he likes. The kids think Keith is just the class clown, but I know of his dreams to become

an astronaut (and I've recommended him for space camp). I know my students because I am their writing teacher. They trust me with their stories and so I am given the privilege of having a secret bond with each and every one of them.

I teach my students about the power of words, and I try to let them find release and expression through writing. We learn to trust each other in writing class because we learn how hard it is to write openly and honestly, and we learn that sharing your words takes courage. I see courage every day in my classroom, and I am always amazed at the words that come from my students' hearts.

One such example of courage took place during author's chair, a sharing session at the end of our writer's workshop in which students volunteer to share what they have written. We had a new student to the school, Al. Al was small and, with his dimpled cheeks and baby face, he looked younger than his classmates.

In fact, when Al was first introduced to the class two weeks earlier, one student said, "You're not in the seventh grade. You're a baby."

To that, Al quickly responded, "I'm Al Billsington, and I *am* in the seventh grade."

Despite his obvious courage, Al had been with us for only a short while and was still trying to fit in, so I was a little surprised when he volunteered to read during author's chair. I had one of those teacher mo-

ments, when I smiled and nodded for him to read, while inside I said a silent prayer that the other students would not tease the new kid after he read. The room fell silent, and Al began to read.

"If I had one wish, it would be to meet my dad. . . ." He started out loud and clear and held the attention of my usually restless seventh graders as he read on for what seemed like fifteen minutes. He told of how he had never known his father, who had left the family when Al was a baby. He shared the intimate details of his struggles to be the only man in the house at such a young age, of having to mow the lawn and fix broken pipes. He revealed to us the thoughts that raced through his mind constantly about where his father might be and why he might have left.

My eyes scanned the room for snickering faces^③ of seventh-grade kids who I knew were prone to jump at a weakness and try to crack a joke, but there were no snickers. There were no rolling eyes or gestures insinuating boredom or pending attacks^④. All of my seventh-grade students were listening, really listening. Their eyes were on Al, and they were absorbing his words like sponges. My heart was full.

Al continued on, telling of nightmares at night, of never knowing a man so important to him, yet so unreal. I could hear his voice growing shaky as he read such passionate and honest words, and I saw a tear roll down one of his dimpled cheeks. I looked to the audience. There were tears on Jessica's face and on

the faces of a few others seated quietly, intently listening.

They are letting him do this, I thought. They are allowing him to share something he perhaps has never shared before, and they aren't judging him or teasing him. I felt a lump in my own throat.

Al finished, struggling now to read his last sentence. "If I had one wish, it would be to meet my dad, so I wouldn't..." His tears were rolling now, and so were ours, "... so I wouldn't have to close my eyes in bed every night just wondering what he looks like."

Without any cue from me, the class stood up and applauded. Al smiled from ear to ear as they all rushed him with hugs. I was floored.

This is why I teach. I teach because I am allowed to learn the stories behind the faces. I teach because I can watch kids grow and laugh and learn and love. I teach because of students like Al.

— Whitney L. Grady

Notes:

① ... shuffling along the tile hallway floor:沿着走廊的瓷砖地面慢吞吞地走着

② slouch: 无精打采, 懒洋洋

③ My eyes scanned the room for snickering faces...: 我扫视了一下屋子, 寻找那些窃笑的面孔.....

④ ... insinuating boredom or pending attacks:暗示出疲倦或攻击



A Pair of Nothings

I held my breath as I watched my brother's finger trace through the newspaper listing of teachers assigned to third graders. I squeezed my eyes shut tight^①. *Please, please, don't let it be Miss Ball.*

"Miss Ball."

My brother's words hit me like a punch to the stomach. Wasn't it bad enough that third graders had to learn their multiplication tables^② before they could pass to fourth grade? No one wanted to be in Miss Ball's class to do it. She was scary.

According to my father, Miss Ball's badly scarred face was the result of smallpox in her youth. Knowing the cause didn't diminish the effect. Tall and slender, with eyes as black and shiny as onyx and lean fingers that could snap like a rifle shot, she was the most intimidating figure^③ on the entire second floor.

That September I dragged my newly shod feet in-

to class, completely demoralized by my class assignment^④. With such a stern demeanor^⑤, Miss Ball would have even less of a sense of humor than the teachers I'd experienced previously. No tolerance for a creative imagination in her class. I prepared myself to hate every minute of the next nine months.

Reading was the first class. A breeze for me. My older brother Doug had taught me to read when I was four. Geography was a snap, too. Same with history. When we came back to the classroom after lunch recess, there it was on the blackboard: the first row of the dreaded multiplication table. The "zero times." The school chili gurgled in my stomach. By the end of the day, we would be repeating the numbers in that mindless prisoner-of-war style I had learned to resent from my first day of first grade. I planted my face on my fists.

Zero times zero made sense. I could even accept one times zero. But I had to question why two times zero was still zero. I was just a farm kid, but I knew when you had two of anything you had *something*. My hand shot up, wagging.

"Doesn't that two mean anything?"

Miss Ball stared at me, her black eyes unreadable. My classmates stared at me. I held my breath until my vision blurred. Maybe it really was possible to slither to the floor and sink into one of the cracks between those worn hardwood slats.

Then Miss Ball did something beyond my realm of experience. She smiled. A gentle smile. Not that evil smile teachers get when they sense a smart aleck in the class. I'd expected reproach. What I got was goose bumps^⑥. This was definitely new territory for me. Now everyone was staring at the woman at the front of the room and not at me. I could breathe again.

She turned to the blackboard and drew a large rectangle, which she divided into halves. "This," she said, pointing to the blank interior of the left block, "is a nothing. A zero." Next she gestured to include both portions of the divided rectangle. "And these are two nothings. Class, what do you get when you have one nothing and one nothing?"

"Nooothiing, Miiiss Baaall. "

I stared at that divided rectangle long after Miss Ball and my classmates had moved on to discuss other zeroes. A blank domino^⑦. A pair of nothings. I wanted to hug myself with delight. At last, a teacher who could illustrate a point, who could make me visualize rather than merely saying, "Just because." Even back then, before analysis of learning behavior became popular, she was perceptive about some students learning better through visual aids and reinforcement rather than auditory instruction.

In later lessons, when her personal stock of colored chalk appeared, I discovered Miss Ball could draw flowering trees with nests hiding in them, clouds

with exotic birds flying around the sky, and rays of sunshine and rippling water with lily pads that looked real. She could write poems, too. Short poems with exciting new words that expanded my vocabulary and my horizons.

Miss Ball was a kindred soul. A creative soul. A beautiful soul.

Later in the year a box appeared on the activity table. It was full of 3-by-8-inch cards. On each card was a word. On the back of the card was the definition of that word. Nothing in my education to that point had ever struck such a spark of excitement. Words were some of my most favorite things in the world. I found words fascinating, not so much the sounds they made when you spoke them as their appearance, their meanings, how they could be employed in a sentence to alter meanings. These were all new words, big ones, 250 of them. This was not the vocabulary you learned on the farm. Not a single domestic animal resided in their midst. The box represented the lexicon of journalists, scholars, and philosophers.

Like a new kid in class, the words became my friends. I copied them, played with them, and introduced them into my conversation. And, like any other eight-year-old, I'm sure I mistreated them on occasion. I hardly noticed that none of my classmates shared my enthusiasm. The words were my companions on the baseball field and playground as well as in

the library and the classroom.

Tears stung my eyes that final day with Miss Ball. I had more to learn from this wonderful teacher. She had so much more to teach. There were more boxes full of those musical, magical new words.

Fifty years have passed since I sat behind that old wooden desk with notches and initials carved by generations of students and darkened with decades of varnish, ink, and grime. Of all my teachers, I remember Miss Ball most, not for her flawed complexion and intimidating demeanor, but for her ability to spark the imagination of a dirt-poor, pigtailed country girl. Thanks to Matilda Ball, the desire to learn burns as brightly for me today as it did when she drew that simple white-chalk rectangle filled with a pair of nothings.

— *Kathleen Ewing*

Notes:

- ① I squeezed my eyes shut tight: 我紧紧闭上眼睛。
- ② multiplication table: 乘法表
- ③ the most intimidating figure: 最令人感到恐怖的身影
- ④ ... completely demoralized by my class assignment: ……被课堂作业整得筋疲力尽。demoralize, 意为“泄气、沮丧”。
- ⑤ stern demeanor: 严酷的举止。demeanor, 指“举止、风度”。
- ⑥ goose bump: 鸡皮疙瘩
- ⑦ A blank domino: 一个空白的多米诺骨牌。多米诺骨牌: 一个小长方木头或塑料块儿, 其面分两半, 每半或者空白或者刻有一到六个类似于骰子上的点。



Guns and Roses

I retired from teaching after 3,100 students, 63,000 grades, 100 pairs of shoes, and 26 years in the classroom. I had seen everything — at least twice.

I began my career when women jammed their feet into pointy shoes, wrote with chalk, and hung decorations from the light fixtures — not easily accomplished balancing on three-inch steel rods the width of a fingernail. While I was talking about subject-verb agreement and prepositional phrases, permanent press replaced cotton and double knit replaced everything. There is an Illinois landfill still lumpy with my lime green Nehru jacket and skirt. While I was assigning lessons on Shakespeare, Tupperware modulated from clear lids to avocado to orange to mauve to turquoise to navy and slate blue. During my tenure, the first man walked on the moon, a president resigned, the *Challenger* explod-