



END NOTES

"I Won't Read"

Teaching Diary Excerpts

BARBARA FLUG COLIN

May 2007

I test the three mikes on the long table facing ten rows of ten empty chairs. Then I carry the two hundred elementary and high school poetry anthologies to the small table just inside the gym entrance. After eighteen years I finally feel confident organizing this poetry reading assembly. Except the chairs are still wrong. Most of these students, all physically disabled, will have to sit beside them in their wheelchairs.

As students arrive, Allie offers to hand out the books by the door. Some can't hold them. Teachers help me hold the mikes. Computers read for students who can't speak.

Am I present? Can I really see, hear what is happening here?

Pride.

Except for Doshie. She rolls her wheelchair up to the front table the others are seated behind poised to read. *I won't read*, she says with her half-smile, her mask of boredom. Thin bent arms, isosceles. Her small body collected in her wheelchair. This flat-toned refusal was to be expected.

September 2006

In 10-2, Doshie, who is black, finally comments on the Langston Hughes poem. *He's colored, he feels different. At times he wishes he was white. He doesn't feel the same in quality as the white person.*

November 2006

Discussing Wislawa Szymborska's poem, "Miracle Fair." Doshie: . . . *anybody knows what a miracle is; it's something that happens and you don't really know it. At 6 when I was in surgery I almost lost my breathing. But I didn't.*

December 2006

A snowy morning, listening to Bach. Doshie: *I'm bored, nothing's going on.*

January 2007

Doshie: *Anybody can see what that is in that Picasso painting: Two sides of a person.*

February 2007

Doshie: *This* (Basho haiku “A half finished bridge...”) *means something’s not done. They’re still working on it.* She signs her half-finished poem “anonymous.”

March 2007

Doshie is late, so I sit beside her, say *read*. (William Carlos William’s “Complete Destruction: It was an icy day. / We buried the cat. . . .”) She refuses. I read. The others are already writing. *What’s it about?* I ask. She looks down. *Did you ever have a really bad day?* I ask. *You wouldn’t have to tell what happened, just give hints.* Doshie’s bland poem: (“Complete confusion. A cool night. / A crowd of people. / Yelling, screaming. . . .”) is signed with a name nobody in the school knows.

April 2007

Doshie stops me in the hall. *Will you come in and teach us poetry?*

May 2007

I won’t read, she says again, her dark eyes looking straight into mine. The long table like a tennis net between us. Hilary beside me says, *I’ll read for you, Doshie.*

Okay, Doshie concedes.

Writing Poetry Makes Me Feel

DOSHIE, GRADE 10-2

Red goes to light blue fading away
 Winter turns into spring
 Harsh winds turn into tornados, blizzards, storms
 Fading away
 The sun starts to come out
 Daisies blossom

When I was younger it was harder to write
 Speak and express my feelings
 I was caged
 Like a lion in a zoo
 Now it’s like a robin
 Flying to wherever
 A secret place

I write in any season
 In fall confused
 In winter frustrated
 In spring calm, collected
 In summer happy, my thoughts clean
 Like the sky, no clouds
 No traffic

