

Poetry Day Reflection of sorts

I am far from fond of poetry; and yet, the experience today (Poetry Day) was one not of fear or boredom, but a compelling interest. Eliminating the need to recite a poem, I was allowed to get first-class, front-row seats, and spend a class period listening to poetry.

But as I watched the speakers speak, I noticed little sense of discomfort in their voices — perhaps except those of some Chemistry speakers, who felt obliged by the reward of extra credit. I was especially in wonder because so many readers who casually picked up a poem they liked and just read it. And with such a long line forming, I figured there would be not nearly enough time to finish all the poems, and so I didn't even bother trying to prepare one of my poems or the one that I had printed out from Poetry Out Loud's website. But, somehow, they managed to move along quicker; with a heartbreaking final student poem, Mr. Powers and the guest poet quickly ended the show to account for the approaching bell, too quickly for me to take out my poems, practice a little to calm my nerves, and then run up to stage.

So I even felt regretful from this— why hadn't I taken the courage to just whip out my poem and recite it on the spot? Why hadn't the festive-spirit — in the way the Mr. Powers introduced it, "Poetry Day" seemed almost a holiday— pulled me into it? Was it still my unfounded stage fright? Was it my doubt of my reading abilities, or of the poem? Whatever the cause, I only sat there, quietly, but I felt an unsatisfied obligation to join in on the experience.

Not that this didn't have virtue, of course. Having an uninterrupted time to listen without looming grades nor the possibility of humiliation by an unpracticed poem led me to listen more closely to others, laugh with more hearty humor, feel with a more teary eye. When the seniors Jack and Justin "turn[ed] around" a song into poetry, this did not go unnoticed, and neither did Brian's "short and sweet" poem, nor did Katherine's ironic rhyming poem warning against the dangers of rhyming. In other words, with such a broad range of poetry available to me, I felt more deeply impressed upon. And it wasn't just a single poem— every new one *contributed* to the others by giving another point of comparison, another juxtaposition to lay it up against; and, good and bad comparisons together, it gave a much fuller picture of each poem. And the comparisons do not rely solely on presentation and my understanding of the poem, but also on author's choice and how well it suits them, the nature of their voice relative to the poem, relatability, authenticity, et cetera. There was a broad range of writing and presentational styles, and I thought this saturated the air with a hundred voices, a thousand stories, a million feelings.

And I tried to incorporate a few of the most impactful tidbits I got out of this assembly, from the power of rhyme (and verbal irony) to the simple, short, sweet. And I learned what to stay away from: some of the poems were too abstract from my taste, too unrealistic and far enough from the truth that its possible interpretations and meanings are endless, and therefore too much to comprehend in my teenage brain. Overall, however, I felt that each poem was its own lesson, each deliberate line the author's two cents and a potential asset in the future.