

with an entire class. I started focusing my comments more.

Andrea Rohla: I noticed that it was so much easier for me to evaluate the students' work when they asked specific questions about what they wanted suggestions on.

Chad Broberg: I found success with the idea of giving the students two positive comments for every comment of something to work on.

Goal: To reinforce best practice ideals in providing meaningful feedback for students to use throughout the process to improve their writing.

Katie Kurtz: The hardest part of being a writing buddy was commenting in a positive way. Through this experience, I've learned that it is not beneficial to the students for me to answer, "nice work." Students need to be told what parts of their work contain quality writing. The first couple of times I had to respond to the writers, I found it hard to say things in a positive way. had a difficult time picking out specific aspects of their writing to comment on.

Katie Powers: As I read the 6th grade books, I saw that some changes had been made since I first read the story, and that was very impressive. It showed me that these students are beginning to understand the writing process, and that was a very positive experience for me.

Jean Sakry: Being a writing mentor was not always easy. There were several times when I found myself at a loss for words. This was not because the writing was horrible, but simply because I wanted to give them more feedback than just the grammatical

corrections. Once I shifted my focus off grammar, I began to struggle. It was not always easy to find something to say that was encouraging. I have found that a good area to focus on is to look at the overall content of the story. Is this an area the students are familiar with? Do they have a good knowledge about this topic? Are they interested in their topic? Did it make me want to read more? Answering these questions helped me find comments I could make.

Nancy Dahlheimer: It was really cool on Tuesday night to see our buddies feel proud for the books they had written, knowing we had helped with them.

Goal: To help the students continue to find their own answers about how to teach writing.

Katie Kurtz: When I was in school, we never had the opportunity to write creatively about subjects that meant something to us. I found it interesting that most of their work is on subjects that are close to their hearts. It amazes me what kids can come up with to say.

Alisa Tenney: I think that this writing buddy program was an excellent way to become familiar with what goes on in a middle level classroom. I enjoyed establishing relationships with my writing buddies and I hope that they learned a lot about editing and revising with another person. I believe that this was one of the most valuable teaching experiences I have had. I learned even more from working with my writing buddies than I did from our books. This program has made me even more excited to have my own class full of writers.

Sandy Hayes, Nationally Certified Teacher at Becker Middle School and MCTE Newsletter Editor

JOYCE SUTPHEN

Another Fall

Once I knew what caused the hint of gold and red in the green leaf an affectation of the light, a slowing in the trunk and branch the broad cold hand of the sky needing, finally, to touch.

I know it is something in the stem, a subtle severing at the base, weakening where it joins the twig. This happens when the river pulled up into the tree decides it has given enough of itself to the sky.

Or when the sun, so long in secret syntheses with green, turns its power down, abjuring the alchemy of air and water. Then the roots sigh and stop drinking up the dark; the pulsing in the trunk subsides, and faultless the leaves fall from the tree.

JOYCE SUTPHEN

In a Rented Car

She drives, and I watch familiar fields go by,
my foot rocking the cool cradle of my sandal.

The car is white, has a blue interior. How like
a cloud it is, carrying us over the hills, racing shadow.

The years between our then and now are thin as paper:
we flip them back and forth like pages in a book.

After a fifty miles, we begin to tell each other the parts
of our lives we like best, we make pronouncements.

We come to decisions about things we have agonized over,
doubting, we invoke the specter of time, slipping away.

Certitude rides at 70 miles per hour: air-conditioned talk.
Circumstances that were slowing us down make us laugh.

A hundred miles deeper into the country, when the small town
of our childhood comes into view, we stop.

The church steeple pokes above the housetops, the water-tower
lifts its pale stomach on thin legs, the one stop-light blinks.

We think of the sidewalks along Main Street,
we have the same memory of never returning home.

JOYCE SUTPHEN

Reading the Faces On the Wall

I ask the postcards on my wall what *they* think.
I'm getting desperate, I don't know who to call.

George Orwell looks doubtful, gazing off into the future.
Dorothy Parker is raising an eyebrow under her hat.

Hemingway hangs gracefully between a set of crutches.
He says it is fall, he has stopped going to the war.

A couple of photos over, Kerouac drags on a cigarette,
pushes a fist deeper into a pocket. He's too cool to bother.

Freud, standing next to a Model T, is looking for the crank,
mentally counting the loss, wondering what to wish.

Shakespeare looks one way and then the other,
says that is not the question, but Yeats persists
and T.S. Eliot insists- it is.

Georgia O'Keefe, her chin on one hand looks prepared
for whatever happens.
Willa Cather folds her arms and waits.

Sylvia Plath sighs; Anne Sexton puts her feet up
as Keats leans down to turn the page. Voices all gone,
they become the silence I need to hear;
they whisper between the lines.

JOYCE SUTPHEN

The Future Comes on Wings

While I was waiting for my life to begin again,
 I noticed that the clouds were moving by as
 usual, or rather that the earth was still spinning,
 with me on it. Everything kept keeping on, and
 nothing went away: not the birds singing, not
 the sound of traffic on the highway, not even
 the voices in the radio. I could feel my pulse
 beating in the small hollow above my eyebrow;
 when I swallowed, the walls of my throat
 came lightly together. My fingers, rubbing
 each other, were like and unlike flowers—more
 like twigs, warmed by the sun.

I decided
 then, in the doorway to the future, that at last
 I would learn the names of all the birds, that I
 would go out early in the morning with people
 who would point up and say: "There! What is it?"

JOYCE SUTPHEN

The Other Half of the Story

But who says a word in behalf of poor Mr. Laura?"

--Mark Twain

It doesn't matter that no one thinks of him.
 He never reads for pleasure, only for evidence of indiscretions,
 and he's found plenty of those in the pages of Petrarch's book,
 the last place he would have thought to look,
 and vents his rages in financial conundrums
 and careful lists of every breach she's made
 along the dreary campaign he called a marriage.
 Mr. Laura needs no one to speak on his behalf.
 He has the better part of every settlement and never loved
 her as he loves the *new* Mr. Laura,
 and Samuel, you'll never hear of her,
 since Mr. Laura would rather keep that quiet.

*Joyce Sutphen, winner of Swarthmore Poetry
 Prize teaches Victorian Literature at Gustavus
 Adolphus College.*