

Our Deepest Fear

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?

Paradox of Noise

It is a paradox that we encounter so much internal noise when we first try to sit in silence. It is a paradox that experiencing pain releases pain. It is a paradox that keeping still can lead us so fully into life and being. Our minds do not like paradoxes. We want things To be clear, so we can maintain our illusions of safety. Certainty breeds tremendous smugness. We each possess a deeper level of being, however, which loves paradox. It knows that summer is already Growing like a seed in the depth of winter. It knows that the moment we are born, we begin to die. It knows that all of life shimmers, in shades of becoming—that shadow and light are always together, the visible mingled with the invisible. When we sit in stillness we are profoundly active. Keeping silent, we hear the roar of existence. Through our willingness to be the one we are, We become one with everything.

Love in the Classroom

Afternoon. Across the garden, in Green Hall, someone begins playing the old piano-- a spontaneous piece, amateurish and alive, full of a simple, joyful melody. The music floats among us in the classroom.

I stand in front of my students telling them about sentence fragments. I ask them to find the ten fragments in the twenty-one-sentence paragraph on page forty-five. They've come from all parts of the world--Iran, Micronesia, Africa, Japan, China, even Los Angeles--and they're still eager to please me. It's less than half way through the quarter.

They bend over their books and begin. Hamid's lips move as he follows the tortuous labyrinth of English syntax. Yoshie sits erect, perfect in her pale make-up, legs crossed, quick pulse minutely jerking her right foot. Tony, from an island in the South Pacific, sprawls limp and relaxed in his desk.

The melody floats around and through us in the room, broken here and there, fragmented, re-started. It feels Mideastern, but it could be jazz, or the blues--it could be anything from anywhere. I sit down on my desk to wait, and it hits me from nowhere--a sudden, sweet, almost painful love for my students.

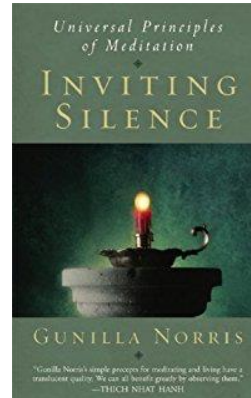
"Nevermind," I want to cry out. "It doesn't matter about fragments. Finding them or not. Everything's a fragment and everything's not a fragment. Listen to the music, how fragmented, how whole, how we can't separate the music from the sun falling on its knees on all the greenness, from this moment, how this moment contains all the fragments of yesterday and everything we'll ever know of tomorrow!"

Instead, I keep a coward's silence. The music stops abruptly; they finish their work, and we go through the right answers, which is to say we separate the fragments from the whole.

Fire

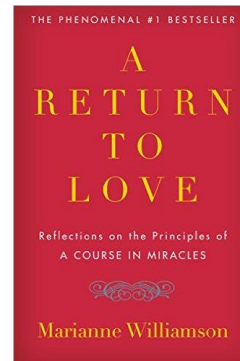
What makes a fire burn
is space between the logs,
a breathing space.
Too much of a good thing,
too many logs packed in too
tight
can douse the flames
almost as surely
as a pail of water would.
So building fires
requires attention
to the spaces in between,
as much as to the wood.
When we are able to build
open spaces
in the same way
we have learned
to pile on the logs,
then we can come to see how
it is fuel, and absence of the
fuel
together, that make fire
possible.
We only need to lay a log
lightly from time to time.
A fire
grows
simply because the space is
there,
with openings
in which the flame
that knows just how it wants to
burn
can find its way.

Paradox of Noise



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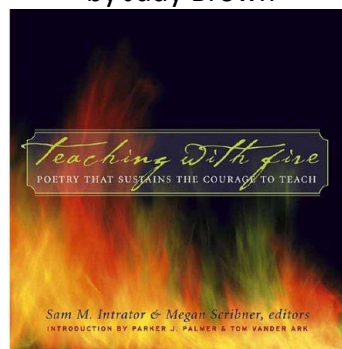
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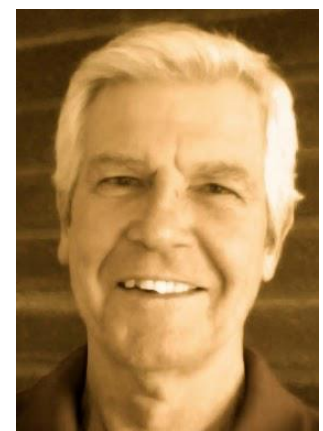
Fire

by Judy Brown



in Intrator, S. M., & Scribner, M.(2003). *Teaching with fire: Poetry that sustains the courage to teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Love in the Classroom



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