

Why Grammar Counts!

3rd quarter of 5th grade,
a pleasant sunny day,
delightful in its beauty
but not its metamorphosis,
transforming into a cold front
a short while after class began.

Elementary school was
the incredibly simple life;
no stress, mess, or
complicated tests.

This sunny morning seemed
to be a casual morning
to procrastinate in my 5th grade class,
except with one slight difference.

Our beloved teacher, Mrs. Sehner
was abducted by the evil minions
of Mrs. Smart Ass, the substitute,

friendly at first
with her jolly elf grin,
writing her full name
straight and neat without mistakes,

no doubt, a perfectionist,
on the chalk-covered
blackboard.

9:35 a.m.,
I politely asked,
“Can I please go to the bathroom?”

I was hoping like any
innocent child a simple response
of “Yes, you may,”

but my morning was stained
with her oh-so-clever answer.

“I don’t know, *can* you?”

Her thunderous, vain voice
wouldn’t stop
reverberating in my head.

I stood there shocked
and blushed an invisible red,
fully embarrassed
hearing the snickers around me.

The color drained from my face,
unable to be noticed
through my brown skin.

I couldn't get past
this critical comment.

Why would a teacher
intentionally harass a student
like that for a silly little
grammar mistake,
making her stay standing up
in front of a class of
twenty seven students,
shivering with angry thoughts
and violent possibilities?

At the same time, however,
I felt like bursting into tears.

There's a difference between
being teased by another student
and being humiliated by a teacher.

Teachers have that stubborn, lemur stare
that can make students feel worthless.

I wondered, "How could a
teacher deface a student like that?"

No, scratch that.

My exact thoughts were

“How dare she?!”

And to make matters worse,
when I regained sense and
went back to sit down in my seat,
she tortured me by criticizing
my improper use of grammar,
all for a “can” instead of a “may”
with a cocky, whiny attitude:
”If you really have to go, then go”
and when I argued back,
she wrote me up.

That life lesson
full of hate and agony
shoved my cheerful morning
into dreary nighttime darkness.