

About School

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He always wanted to explain things,
but no one cared.
So he drew.

Sometimes he would just draw
And it wasn't anything.
He wanted to carve it in stone
or write it in the sky.
He would lie out in the grass and look up at the sky
and it would be only the sky
and the things inside him that needed saying.

And it was after that that he drew the picture.
It was a beautiful picture.
He kept it under his pillow
and would let no one see it.
And he would look at it every night.
and think about it.
And it was all of him and he loved it.

When he started school he brought it with him.
Not to show anyone, but just to have it with him
like a friend.

It was funny about school.
He sat in a square brown desk
like all the other square brown desks
And he thought it would be red.
And his room was a square brown room
like all the other rooms.
And it was tight and close. And stiff.



He hated to hold the pencil and chalk,
with his arm stiff and his feet flat in the floor, stiff,
with the teacher watching.

The teacher came and spoke to him.
She told him to wear a tie like all the other boys.
He said he didn't like them
and she said it didn't matter.
After that he drew. And he drew all yellow
and it was the way he felt all morning.
And it was beautiful.

The teacher came and smiled at him.
"What's this?" she said.
"Why don't you draw something
like Ken's drawing?
Isn't it beautiful?"
After that his mother bought him a tie
and he always drew airplanes and rockets
like everyone else.

And he threw the old picture away.

And when he lay out alone looking at the sky,
it was big and blue, and all of everything,
but he wasn't anymore.

He was square and brown inside
and his hands were stiff.
And he was like everyone else.
All the things inside him that needed saying
didn't need anymore.

It had stopped pushing. It was crushed.
Stiff.
Like everything else.



This poem was handed to a high school English teacher
the day before the writer committed suicide.

Source: Pain & Joy in School, 1973