

English Teacher Unbound

Dickinson. Frost. Eliot.
Wonderful vetted poets--
but sameness of names
in every school.
My students are alive--
they need MEANING,
not biography-worship.

Bless Keats and
jolly Shakespeare
for all they wrote--
but now let's dare
to anonymize these
bards around whom
schools have
mummified their
curricula by means
of committee after
workgroup
kowtowing to
conformist after
department head
after principal as
the decades ditto on.

I'd rather pluck
new writings out of
most abundant
everywhere,
throw them all
nameless into
a vibrant pile,
then pull them up
one by three--
READ them--
BE them--
poems and stories
written by unknowns
who may inspire
and kindle fire.

I fully CARE,
but I'm captive
in this well-lit,
firmly-administered,
climate-controlled
classtomb.

SOULS come here,
parched souls.
We're to feed them
stacks of
cardboard facts
and poetic forms
to memorize--
vital to know,
we con, because
they'll be on
the final exam.

Teachers, let us
wake very much up!
Dare we transcend
the tried and dead?

Let's each write a sonnet
on why we don't read
sonnets--or an elegy
for the deceased
meanings of passion.

What would Shakespeare
write about our schools?
"Much Ado about Atrophy"?
And Robert Frost?
"The Railroad Not Taken"?

I am nobody
to be writing like this,
nor am I in your syllabus,
but I can still breathe.