

What You Missed That Day You Were Absent from Fourth Grade

Mrs. Nelson explained how to stand still and listen to the wind, how to find meaning in pumping gas,

how peeling potatoes can be a form of prayer. She took questions on how not to feel lost in the dark.

After lunch she distributed worksheets that covered ways to remember your grandfather's

voice. Then the class discussed falling asleep without feeling you had forgotten to do something else—

something important—and how to believe the house you wake in is your home. This prompted

Mrs. Nelson to draw a chalkboard diagram detailing how to chant the Psalms during cigarette breaks,

and how not to squirm for sound when your own thoughts are all you hear; also, that you have enough.

The English lesson was that I am is a complete sentence.

And just before the afternoon bell, she made the math equation look easy. The one that proves that hundreds of questions,

and feeling cold, and all those nights spent looking for whatever it was you lost, and one person

add up to something.

— Brad Aaron Modlin