

窗子是一本书的第一页

以前每次写作文，我都咬着笔杆数格子。三年级下学期，马老师布置了一样作业：这周下一个雨天，观察雨，写观察日记，写你看见的，不许写下雨了，真美啊。我当场就傻了，雨不就是雨吗，有什么可看的？

那个雨天我趴在窗台上，按老师说的先看雨丝。看了五分钟我才发现，雨丝不是直着掉的。风一吹，它们整片整片地斜过去，像有人拿一把特别大的扫帚从天上往地上扫。雨丝落在空调外机的铁皮上，会溅起一层小白花，一层刚碎，另一层又开起来。我拿铅笔把这些记在草稿纸上，手比脑子快，这是头一回写作文不卡壳。

再看楼下的路。我发现了三件事。第一，撑黑伞的人和撑花伞的人走路不一样，黑伞压得低，走得快；花伞举得高，伞沿上还挂着小风车，转。第二，有个叔叔没带伞，把公文包顶在头上跑，公文包是方的，他跑起来像一只会飞的箱子。第三，一个老奶奶牵着小孙子过水洼，小孙子专门挑有水的地方踩，老奶奶嘴上说他，手里却把伞往他那边低低地罩过去。我在草稿纸上写：伞会说话。写完自己愣了一下，这句话是我自己想出来的。

那个星期我写了四篇观察日记，最长了半页。周五作文课，马老师在班里念了我的日记，念到会飞的箱子，全班笑翻了。她在黑板上写了一句话：不是雨没东西写，是你没凑近看。

后来我养成了一个习惯，只要下雨，先跑向窗台，看够十分钟再干别的。我的观察日记写满了一个本子，里面全是雨：雨丝怎么斜，水洼怎么一圈一圈长大，伞面上怎么藏心事。上个学期考试作文写《一件小事》，我用了老奶奶罩伞那一幕，写完自己检查了两遍，没有一句空话。

现在我觉得，窗子是一本书的第一页，雨天是这本书里最好翻的一页。摘抄本上的好词好句是别人嚼过的，窗外看见的才是自己的。观察这件事，说穿了就一句话：别嫌眼前的东西普通，凑近三分钟，它就开始给你送素材了。

The Window Is Page One

Before, every time I had to write a composition, I gnawed my pencil and counted the grid squares. In the second term of Grade Three, Teacher Ma assigned something unusual: this week find a rainy day, observe the rain, and write an observation journal. Write what you actually see. You are not allowed to write, It rained, how beautiful. I froze on the spot. Rain is just rain, what is there to look at?

On that rainy day I leaned on the windowsill and, as the teacher said, watched the threads of rain first. After five minutes I noticed that the rain does not fall straight down. When the wind blows, whole sheets of it slant sideways, as if someone were sweeping sky to ground with an enormous broom. Where the rain strikes the tin of the air-conditioner unit, it splashes up a layer of tiny white flowers; one layer shatters and another blooms. I penciled these things onto scratch paper, my hand faster than my head, and for the first time writing a composition did not jam.

Then I watched the road downstairs and noticed three things. First, people with black umbrellas walk differently from people with flowered ones: the black umbrella sits low and moves fast; the flowered one is held high, with a little pinwheel hanging from its rim, spinning. Second, a man without an umbrella ran with his briefcase over his head; the briefcase is square, and running, he looked like a flying box. Third, a grandmother led her little grandson across the puddles, and the boy deliberately stepped where the water was. The grandmother scolded him with her mouth while her hand lowered the umbrella to shelter him from the rain. I wrote on the scratch paper: umbrellas can talk. After writing it I paused for a second. That sentence was mine.

That week I wrote four observation journal entries, the longest half a page. On Friday's composition class, Teacher Ma read my journal aloud to the class, and when she reached the flying box, the whole room roared with laughter. She wrote one line on the blackboard: it is not that rain has nothing to write about, it is that you never looked close enough.

After that I formed a habit: whenever it rains, I run to the windowsill first and watch for a full ten minutes before doing anything else. My observation journal filled a whole notebook, all of it rain: how the threads slant, how a puddle grows ring by ring, how an umbrella hides someone's thoughts. Last term, on the exam composition titled One Small Thing, I used the scene of the grandmother lowering her umbrella, and when I finished I checked it twice; not one empty sentence in it.

Now I think a window is page one of a book, and a rainy day is the best page to turn to. The good words in an excerpt notebook were chewed by someone else; what you see outside the window is yours. Observation, plainly said, is this: do not dismiss the ordinary thing in front of you. Lean in for three minutes, and it starts delivering material to you.