

花田里的那节语文课

那天第二节课，语文老师没拿课本，夹着一摞小本子站在讲台上：走，去花田。队伍拉出校门，沿着河堤走了十分钟，油菜花田就在堤下铺开，黄得没有边。老师把本子一人一个发下来，说：今天不上课，你们蹲下去看，看到什么记什么，颜色、形状、声音、气味，都行。

我蹲在田埂边，一开始不知道记什么。花就是黄的，茎就是绿的，这有什么好记的。可蹲久了，眼睛就细了。我发现油菜花不是一律的黄：朝阳的那片黄得发白，背阴那片黄里带绿，谢了的花瓣搁在叶子上，变成一种旧旧的土黄。我发现一朵花有四个花瓣，十字形排开，花心里有细小的粉，蜜蜂一脚踩进去，粉就沾在它的腿上。我还发现风过的时候，花浪是从远处先动的，一层一层推过来，到跟前才觉得脸上痒。

我那个本子记了满满三页，中间画了个歪歪扭扭的十字花瓣，旁边标着四瓣、六毫米。回学校的路上，谁都不说话了，都在低头看自己的本子，好像怕把刚才看见的东西弄丢。

第二天的作文题是自己定。我写那三页记录，写十字形的花瓣，写蜜蜂腿上的粉，写花浪怎么从远处推过来。写的时候奇怪极了，以前憋半天的开头，那天落笔就有：我是在田埂上蹲着的时候，才发现油菜花不是一种黄的。交上去第三天，老师把我的本子在全班念了，念完说了一句：这才叫看见。

后来我常想起那个蹲在花田边的上午。以前我总以为，好词好句在书里，得去背。那天才知道，它们先在花里长着，在风里走着，在蜜蜂腿上沾着，人蹲下去，它们才跟着进本子，进作文。花田是一间没有墙的教室，谁蹲得下来，谁就上了那节课。

The Chinese Lesson in the Flower Field

During the second period that day, the Chinese teacher walked in without a textbook, holding a stack of small notebooks: Come, let us go to the flower field. The line of students left the school gate and walked ten minutes along the river embankment, where the rapeseed field spread out below, yellow without edges. The teacher handed out a notebook to each of us and said: no lesson today. Crouch down and look. Write down whatever you see: colors, shapes, sounds, smells, anything.

I crouched at the edge of the field ridge, not knowing what to record at first. Flowers are yellow, stems are green, what is there to note? But crouching long enough, the eyes grow fine-grained. I found that rapeseed yellow is not one yellow: the sunlit patch is yellow almost to whiteness, the shaded patch yellow tinged with green, and spent petals lying on leaves have turned a worn, earthy yellow. I found that one flower has four petals arranged in a cross, with fine powder in its heart; when a bee steps in, the powder sticks to its legs. I also found that when wind passes, the waves of flowers move far away first, pushing layer upon layer toward

you, and only when they arrive do you feel your face tickle.

My notebook filled three full pages. In the middle I drew a crooked cross-shaped petal, marked beside it: four petals, six millimeters. On the walk back to school nobody talked; everyone kept their head down over their own notebook, as if afraid of losing what they had just seen.

The next day's composition topic was self-chosen. I wrote from those three pages of notes: the cross-shaped petals, the powder on the bee's legs, how the waves of flowers push in from far away. Writing was strange. The opening that used to take half a day of straining came out under my pen that day: it was while crouching on the field ridge that I discovered rapeseed is not one kind of yellow. Three days after handing it in, the teacher read my notebook aloud to the whole class, then said one line: now that is seeing.

I often think of that morning crouching at the edge of the flower field. I used to think good words and sentences lived in books and had to be memorized. That day I learned they grow first in the flowers, walk first in the wind, stick first to the bee's legs; only when a person crouches down do they follow into the notebook, and into the composition. A flower field is a classroom without walls; whoever can crouch down has taken that lesson.

我把作文课搬到了花田边

教了十几年作文，我最怕批到这样的句子：花儿绽开了笑脸，小草探出了脑袋。句子没错，可写它的人显然没见过花。他们写春天，全凭春天这个词在脑子里的样子。这个春天，我决定把他们拎出去看看。我联系了学校后河堤外那片油菜花田，跟班主任磨了两个星期，把两节连堂的作文课搬了出去。

出发前我提了一个要求：带一支笔，写你亲眼看见的东西，不许用一句背来的好词。到了田边，我把他们散开到田埂上，每人发一张硬纸当垫板。四十来个孩子蹲进春天里，教室里那种坐不住的样子全没了。有个平时最厌写的男生蹲在花跟前，鼻子几乎碰到花瓣，我远远看着，没出声。

我让他们记录：这儿的黄有几种？一朵花几片花瓣，怎么排的？叶子是什么边？风来的时候花怎么动？蜜蜂落在哪一朵上，待了几秒？孩子们趴在地上写，硬纸上沙沙一片。我巡过去，看见他们写的句子笨拙极了，也结实极了：黄分三种，亮黄、淡黄、快谢了的黄。花瓣四片，像个十字。叶子边上全是牙口。蜜蜂一头扎进去，屁股朝天，待了七八秒。

回教室写长文，四十分钟，没有一个人咬笔杆。我批那批作文，手都在抖。那个最厌写的男生写了半页蜜蜂，写蜜蜂腿上沾了粉、飞的时候后腿一蹬一蹬的，结尾一句：我以前写的蜜蜂都

是编的，这可不是。我把这句用红笔圈出来，第二天在班上念，念完跟孩子们说：这就是作文的样子。

后来常有同事问我，把课搬出去是不是作秀。我说不清。我只知道那个春天过后，班里的作文里，笑脸和脑袋少了，十字形的花瓣、带牙口的叶子多了。花还是那些花，年年开在河堤外。它们不收费，也不挑学生，只要把孩子的眼睛借出去一个上午，就还他们一整篇真的作文。

I Moved the Composition Class to the Edge of the Flower Field

I have taught composition for over a decade, and nothing frightens me in grading like these sentences: the flowers broke into smiles, the grass poked out its head. The sentences are not wrong, but whoever wrote them plainly never saw a flower. They write spring entirely from the shape the word spring has in their heads. This spring, I decided to drag them out to look. I contacted the rapeseed field beyond the river embankment behind the school, spent two weeks persuading the head teacher, and moved two consecutive composition periods out there.

Before we left I made one demand: bring a pen, write what your own eyes see, not a single memorized fine phrase. At the edge of the field I spread them along the ridge, handing each a sheet of stiff cardboard as a writing board. Some forty children crouched down into spring, and all the restlessness of the classroom was gone. The boy who hated writing most crouched so close to a flower that his nose nearly touched the petals. I watched from afar and said nothing.

I asked them to record: how many kinds of yellow are here? How many petals on one flower, and how are they arranged? What kind of edge do the leaves have? How do the flowers move when wind comes? Which blossom does the bee land on, and for how many seconds? The children wrote lying on the ground, stiff boards rustling. I walked the rows and read their sentences — clumsy, and solid: yellow comes in three kinds, bright yellow, pale yellow, and the yellow of flowers about to fade. Four petals, like a cross. The leaf edges are full of teeth. The bee dives in headfirst, bottom in the air, stays seven or eight seconds.

Back in the classroom they wrote the long piece in forty minutes, and not one person chewed a pencil. My hands shook as I graded. The boy who hated writing most filled half a page about bees: powder on the bee's legs, its hind legs kicking as it flew. His last line read: the bees I used to write were made up; this one is not. I circled that line in red and read it to the class the next day, then told them: this is what a composition looks like.

Colleagues often ask whether moving the class out was a show. I cannot say clearly. I only know that after that spring, smiles and poked-out heads grew fewer in our compositions, while cross-shaped petals and toothed leaves grew more. The flowers are still those flowers, blooming beyond the embankment every year. They charge nothing and choose no students. Lend a child's eyes for one morning, and they return a whole composition of truth.

女儿的花田笔记

四月第二个周六，女儿说学校布置了一篇写春天的作文，她坐在书桌前两个小时，纸上只有九个字：春天来了，花儿都开了。我看得心里发堵，又不敢催。到了周日一早，我跟她说：走，带你去看花，看完再写。

我们坐四十分钟公交去郊外，那里有一整片一整片的油菜花田。女儿起初不太情愿，到了田边才稍微来了精神。我给她一个硬皮本和一支笔，跟她说：不着急写，先蹲下去看，看到什么记什么。她将信将疑地蹲在田埂边上，我坐在旁边的草坡上假装休息，眼睛其实一直看着她。

她一开始记得很慢，半天划拉一行。可蹲到二十分钟，她忽然扭头喊我：妈你快看，这花是四个瓣的，排成十字！又过一会儿，她趴在本子上画，画一朵花，旁边标：四瓣，十字，中间有六个小柱子。再后来她开始追着一只蜜蜂看，边看边记，嘴里念念有词。那天上午她记了五页，有颜色：她说黄的深浅不一样，跟调色盘似的；有形状：十字瓣、六个柱头、叶子边上带齿；还有声音：蜜蜂翅膀嗡嗡的低，蝴蝶几乎没有声。

回程的公交上，她靠着窗写作文，写在手机备忘录里，一路删删改改。到家她念给我听，开头是：我以前不知道油菜花是十字形的，也不知道它中间有六个小柱子，更不知道蜜蜂钻进花里的时候，后腿会一蹬一蹬地沾粉。我听到沾粉两个字，鼻子有点酸。九个字憋了两小时的春天，蹲了一上午，变成了一千多字。

那篇作文后来得了个优，老师在评语里写：观察细致，有真东西。女儿把评语拿回家，宝贝似的贴在墙上。再往后，她路过小区花坛会停下来看，会问我这花几瓣、那花什么边。我意识到那个上午给她的不是作文技巧，是一双肯蹲下来的眼睛。

有家长问我周末带女儿去哪上补习班，我说去花田。他们当玩笑。只有我知道，一片不要门票的花田，一个愿意陪她蹲下来的上午，抵得上一整年坐在书桌前憋出来的春天。

My Daughter's Flower Field Notes

On the second Saturday of April, my daughter said her school had assigned a composition about spring. She sat at her desk for two hours, and the paper held only

nine words: spring is here, the flowers are all blooming. My chest tightened watching her, yet I dared not hurry her. Sunday morning I said: come on, I will take you to see flowers, and you can write afterward.

We took a bus forty minutes to the suburbs, where rapeseed fields lie field after unbroken field. She went reluctantly at first and only perked up at the edge of the field. I handed her a hardcover notebook and a pen and said: no rush to write. First crouch down and look; write down whatever you see. She crouched at the edge of the field ridge, half doubting, and I sat on the grass slope nearby pretending to rest, my eyes never really leaving her.

Her writing was slow at first, one line after a long while. But twenty minutes in, she suddenly turned and called out: Mom, look, this flower has four petals in a cross! A little later she lay over the notebook drawing a flower, marking beside it: four petals, cross shape, six little pillars in the middle. Then she began following a bee, writing as she watched, muttering to herself. She filled five pages that morning. Colors: she said the yellows differ in depth, like a painter's palette. Shapes: cross petals, six stigmas, leaves with toothed edges. Sounds: a bee's wings hum low, a butterfly is nearly silent.

On the bus home she wrote the composition leaning against the window, typing into her phone's notes app, deleting and revising the whole way. At home she read it to me. It began: I never knew rapeseed flowers are cross-shaped, never knew there are six little pillars inside, and never knew that when a bee dives into a flower, its hind legs kick powder onto themselves. When I heard the word powder, my nose stung. The spring of nine words strained out over two hours became, after one morning of crouching, over a thousand words.

That composition later earned an excellent, the teacher's comment reading: careful observation, something real inside. My daughter brought the comment home and posted it on the wall like a treasure. Afterward, passing the flower beds in our neighborhood she would stop to look, and ask me how many petals this flower has, what kind of edge that leaf has. I realized that morning had given her not composition techniques, but eyes willing to crouch down.

Parents ask where I take my daughter for weekend tutoring. I say: to the flower fields. They think I am joking. Only I know that one ticket-free field, and one morning of a parent willing to crouch beside her, outweigh a whole year of straining out a spring at a desk.