# 铁钉生锈的八天，和我的四百字

老师表扬我那篇作文的时候，说的是同一句话：这是你自己观察的吧。其实不是我观察得好，是我记的时间长。那篇作文写的是铁钉生锈，前后八天，每天一小段，连起来就成了文章。

实验很简单。三个玻璃瓶，第一只放一根干铁钉，盖紧盖子；第二只放半瓶水，铁钉泡一半在水里；第三只装满煮沸放凉的水，再滴一层油盖住水面。科学老师说，猜猜八天后哪根先锈。我猜不出来，就想自己看。

第一天，三根钉子都亮闪闪的，我在本子上写：没有变化。第二天还是没有变化。第三天，第二只瓶里水面那一圈出现了很淡的褐色，像铅笔灰落在瓶壁上。我把它描下来，标上日期。第四天，褐色变深了，水有点发浑。第五天，钉头开始翘起细小的锈皮，一碰就掉渣。第六天、第七天，锈往下爬，水变成茶色。第八天，第一只瓶里的干钉子还是亮的，第三只瓶里的钉子也几乎没变，只有泡在水里的第二根，锈得像放了一年的旧钥匙。

八天里我每天只写两三行，有时一行。写的全是看到的：褐色像铅笔灰，锈皮一碰就掉渣，水变成茶色。我没写一句我觉得科学真神奇，因为那八天里我大部分时候觉得它慢死了，天天看一点变化都没有。

作文课写观察作文，我把八天的记录抄下来，按日期排好，开头加了一句我猜不出来就想自己看，结尾加了一句只有泡在水里的第二根锈成了旧钥匙。四百多字，比平时写得快，因为一句都不用编。

老师念完作文，问我是怎么写出这些细节的。我说：每天记一行，记了八天。同学笑，老师没笑。她说：一行一行记，比坐在桌前想半天都管用。

这件事给我的心得很实在：有的作文不是写出来的，是攒出来的。一天一行不多，八天就是一篇。做实验是这样，写东西也是这样，先让日子把材料攒够，笔只要负责把它们连起来。

# Eight Rusty Nails and My Four Hundred Words

When the teacher praised my essay, she said the same thing every time: you observed this yourself, didn't you. Really, it is not that I observed well; it is that I kept recording for a long time. That essay was about rusting nails, eight days in all, a few lines a day, strung together into one piece.

The experiment was simple. Three glass jars: the first held a dry nail with the lid sealed tight; the second held half a jar of water with the nail half submerged; the third was filled with boiled water that had cooled, covered with a layer of oil on top. Our science teacher asked us to guess which nail would rust first after eight days. I could not guess, so I decided to watch for myself.

Day one, all three nails still gleamed, and I wrote: no change. Day two, still no change. On day three, a very faint brown ring appeared at the water line in the

second jar, like pencil dust settled on the glass. I traced it and dated it. Day four, the brown deepened and the water turned cloudy. Day five, the nail head began to lift tiny flakes of rust that crumbled at a touch. Days six and seven, the rust crept downward and the water turned the color of tea. On day eight, the dry nail in the first jar was still bright, the nail in the third jar had barely changed, and only the second nail, the one soaked in water, looked as rusty as an old key left out for a year.

Over eight days I wrote only two or three lines a day, sometimes one. Everything I wrote was what I saw: the brown like pencil dust, rust flakes crumbling at a touch, water turning the color of tea. I did not write a single line about how amazing science is, because during those eight days I mostly thought it was painfully slow, with no change day after day.

In writing class, for the observation essay, I copied down the eight days of notes, arranged them by date, added one line at the start - I could not guess, so I decided to watch for myself - and one at the end: only the second nail, the one in water, rusted into an old key. A little over four hundred words, written faster than usual, because not one sentence had to be invented.

After reading the essay, the teacher asked how I got such details. I said: one line a day, for eight days. The classmates laughed; the teacher did not. She said: one line a day works better than sitting at a desk thinking for half an hour.

My lesson from this is plain: some essays are not written, they are saved up. One line a day is nothing; eight days make an essay. Experiments work this way, and so does writing - let the days gather the material first, and the pen only has to string it together.