把蚂蚁请进课堂

我把蚂蚁请进教室那天，先跟科学老师要了一只玻璃缸。缸里铺湿土，插一根吸管，撒几粒面包屑，盖子用蓝布松松地蒙着，放在教室窗台上。我对孩子们说，今天班里来了二十位客人，它们怕震动，所以不能拍桌子，也不能摇缸。蓝布掀开的一角，全班屏住呼吸，连最调皮的那个男孩都把声音压得很低，问蚂蚁会不会咬人。

分组观察安排在第二天。每组发一个放大镜、一本记录本、一支铅笔，规则只有一条：不许碰，只许看，只许画，只许记时间。分组的时候我特意把爱说话的和安静的混在一起，把调皮的和细心的编成一组。四十分钟里，教室里只有铅笔沙沙的声音。第三组最先发现蚂蚁绕过面包屑，直奔一粒白糖。两只蚂蚁碰了碰触角，转身往回走。有个孩子仰起脸问我：它们是不是在说话？我没直接答，只让他把刚才看到的画下来。他咬着铅笔画了两根弯弯的线，旁边写：碰了一下，往左走。

观察日记是从第三天开始的。我原本担心孩子们写不长，一人一句凑满一行就算交差。结果小航在日记里写：那只蚂蚁昨天走的是直线，今天绕开了我的橡皮，它是不是认识路？我不确定，但这个问题值得再看三天。我把这句话抄在黑板上，全班安静了一会儿，像都在想自己的答案。日记交上来我每晚翻一遍，看到蚂蚁排着队搬走一条青虫，看到触角碰头的次数一天比一天多，还看到有孩子写：它们好像偏爱甜的，米饭粒放两天没人理，瓜子壳当晚就搬空了。我把这句也抄上墙，后面跟着一行小字：谁再发现新的，写名字贴上去。那面墙后来贴了十几条，没有一条重样。

期末收上来的作文里，十七篇写蚂蚁，没有一篇以今天天气晴朗开头。我备课时常常想起那只绕开橡皮的小蚂蚁，也想起小航的问题。有些东西不在课本里，在窗台的玻璃缸里，在孩子弯下去的腰里。我要做的是把它们请进来，再退后一步，让他们自己看见。

Inviting Ants into the Classroom

The day I invited ants into the classroom, I first borrowed a glass jar from the science teacher. We spread wet soil inside, stuck in a straw, scattered a few crumbs, and covered the lid loosely with blue cloth on the windowsill. I told the children that twenty guests had come to our class, that they feared vibration, so nobody should slap the desk or shake the jar. When the cloth was lifted at one corner, the whole class held its breath, and even the most mischievous boy asked in a whisper whether ants bite.

Group observation began the next day. Each group got a magnifying glass, a notebook and a pencil, with one rule: no touching, only looking, drawing, and writing down the time. I deliberately mixed talkative children with quiet ones, and put restless ones together with careful ones. For forty minutes the only sound in the room was pencils scratching. Group Three noticed first that the ants went around the crumbs and headed straight for a grain of sugar. Two ants touched antennae, then turned back. One child looked up and asked me whether they were talking. Instead of

answering, I asked him to draw what he had just seen. He bit his pencil, drew two curved lines, and wrote beside them: touched once, then went left.

Observation diaries started on the third day. I had worried the children would write too little, one line each and call it done. But Xiaohang wrote: that ant walked in a straight line yesterday, and today it went around my eraser. Does it know the way? I was not sure either, but the question was worth three more days of watching. I copied his sentence onto the blackboard, and the class stayed quiet for a while, as if everyone were thinking out their own answer.

In the final essays, seventeen were about ants, and not one began with the weather was fine. While preparing lessons I often think of that little ant going around the eraser, and of the question from Xiaohang. Some things are not in the textbook. They are in the glass jar on the windowsill, in the way children bend down to look. My job is to invite them in, then step back and let the children see for themselves.