那缸蚂蚁，替小宇开了口

班里最安静的孩子是被一缸蚂蚁改变的。小宇从不举手，作文永远三行，开头结尾中间各一行，像完成任务。那阵子科学课总缺器材，我就把蚂蚁请进了课堂：一只玻璃缸，湿土、吸管、几粒面包屑，蓝布蒙着，搁在窗台上。我跟孩子们说清楚，客人怕震动，别拍桌子。蓝布掀开的时候，小宇挤在最前面，鼻尖几乎贴上玻璃。

分组观察时我把安静的和话多的混编，每组一个放大镜、一本记录本。规则是不许碰，只许看、画、记时间。四十分钟里，小宇那一组最先发现蚂蚁绕过面包屑直奔白糖。有人问蚂蚁是不是在说话，小宇没开口，但他把看到的画了下来：两根弯弯的线，旁边注着碰了一下，往左走。我把那张画举起来给大家看，他的耳朵红了，手却把本子往前推了推。

观察日记从第三天开始。我担心小宇仍旧只写三行，特意在他旁边站了一会儿。他交上来那天，写满了一整页：蚂蚁昨天走直线，今天绕开橡皮，它是不是认识路，还是不喜欢橡皮的味道？最后一行是：明天我把它挪到铅笔旁边，看它绕不绕。页角还画了一张小小的路线图，铅笔的位置画了个圈，箭头从橡皮那边绕过去。第二天我在班里把那页日记读了整整三分钟，安静得能听见窗外的风。小宇的耳朵又红了，腰却挺得笔直。

期末作文，小宇交了三篇，最长的一篇九百多字，写的还是那窝蚂蚁。我常在备课间隙想起那页日记。我们总急着让孩子有东西可写，却很少给他们值得写的东西。一缸蚂蚁没讲一个修辞，却让他自己走到了纸面前。教育有时候不是我把东西塞进去，是把值得看的东西放到他眼前，然后忍住，不替他说话。

The Jar of Ants Spoke for Xiaoyu

The quietest child in my class was changed by a jar of ants. Xiaoyu never raised his hand, and his essays were always three lines, one for the opening, one for the middle, one for the end, like a task to finish. That term the science lab kept running short of equipment, so I brought ants into our classroom: a glass jar with wet soil, a straw and a few crumbs, covered with blue cloth, placed on the windowsill. I made it clear that the guests feared vibration, so no slapping the desk. When the cloth was lifted, Xiaoyu squeezed to the front, his nose almost touching the glass.

During group observation I mixed quiet children with talkative ones, one magnifying glass and one notebook per group. The rule was no touching, only looking, drawing and noting the time. In forty minutes, the group with Xiaoyu noticed first that the ants bypassed the crumbs and went straight for the sugar. Someone asked whether ants talk. Xiaoyu said nothing, but he drew what he saw: two curved lines, annotated with touched once, then went left. I held his drawing up for the class. His ears turned red, but he pushed his notebook forward.

Observation diaries began on the third day. Afraid Xiaoyu would still write only

three lines, I stood near him for a while. The day he handed his in, the page was full: the ant walked straight yesterday, today it went around the eraser. Does it know the road, or does it dislike the smell of rubber? The last line read: tomorrow I will move it next to the pencil and see if it goes around. In the corner of the page he had drawn a tiny route map, a circle marking the pencil, an arrow curving around the eraser. The next morning I read that page aloud for a full three minutes, the room quiet enough to hear the wind outside. His ears reddened again, but his back was straight.

At the end of the term Xiaoyu turned in three essays, the longest over nine hundred words, still about those ants. Between lesson preparations I often think of that page. We are always in a hurry to give children something to write, yet rarely give them things worth writing about. A jar of ants taught not a single figure of speech, but it walked him to the paper on his own. Sometimes education is not putting things into children, but placing something worth seeing before them, then holding back and not speaking for them.