十一天的绿豆，喂出了我的作文

我的作文本第一页上，老师用红笔写过四个字：内容空洞。那篇《第一次做饭》，我写了整整一页的开心，却没写清楚油温多少、鸡蛋下锅时响了多大一声。那时我不明白，好作文里的东西到底从哪里来。后来一次养绿豆的实验，把答案递到了我手上。

科学课布置了观察绿豆发芽，要连续记录十一天。第一周我像以前写日记那样，每天一行：今天浇水了，今天发芽了。第五天老师检查记录本，翻了两页就合上，问我：豆瓣裂开是在第几天？先裂的是哪一头？芽是直的还是弯的？我一个字也答不上来。记录本上那些今天也怎样、今天也怎样，全是一句套话。

从第六天开始，我换了一种记法。每天放学先蹲到杯子前，拿一把尺子、一支笔。水位线在杯子的第几条刻度上，我写数字；豆瓣裂开时露出一点白，像抿开嘴笑，我写看到的；根须长到四厘米那天，我把鼻子凑过去闻，有一股淡淡的生豆子味，我也写下来。妈妈笑我：你这是在给豆芽做档案。我说档案才好，档案里有真东西。

记录攒到第十一天，作文课正好写《我的第一次实验》。我翻开记录本抄了一遍——不对，不是抄，是挑。我挑出第六天烂掉的两颗，挑出根须绕成圈的那颗，挑出妈妈那句档案。写完一数，六百多字，没有一句是我编的。老师这次批的是：细节扎实。

回头看，那十一天的记录本比这篇作文更值钱。它教会我一件之前怎么也想不通的事：观察日记不是作文的作业本，是作文的原料库。每天那几行数字和看到的画面，当时觉得琐碎，写的时候全用上了。以前我总对着题目想词，词想出来也是空的；现在我明白，先让手上有活儿，眼睛里有东西，笔才有东西可倒。

现在我的抽屉里还留着那个记录本，纸边起了毛。它提醒我：数字不会骗人，细节不会骗人。写之前，先亲手养出一样东西来。

Eleven Days of Bean Sprouts Fed My Essay

On the first page of my essay notebook, my teacher once wrote four words in red ink: empty content. That piece, My First Time Cooking, filled a whole page with how happy I was, yet never said how hot the oil was or how loud the egg cracked when it went in. Back then I did not understand where the real stuff in a good essay comes from. Later, one experiment with bean sprouts handed me the answer.

Our science class assigned an observation of sprouting mung beans, to be recorded for eleven days straight. In the first week I wrote the way I used to write diaries, one line a day: watered today, sprouted today. On the fifth day the teacher checked our notebooks, flipped two pages, closed mine, and asked: on which day did the seed leaves split? Which end split first? Was the sprout straight or crooked? I could not answer a single one. All those today-this, today-that lines were stock phrases.

From the sixth day I changed my method. After school I squatted by the cup first,

with a ruler and a pen. I wrote numbers for where the water line sat against the cup marks. I wrote what I saw when the seed leaves split and showed a bit of white, like a mouth just opening into a smile. On the day the root reached four centimeters, I put my nose close and smelled a faint raw-bean smell, and I wrote that down too. My mother laughed: you are making a file for the sprout. I said files are good, files hold real things.

By day eleven the notes were full, and the writing class asked for My First Experiment. I opened the notebook and copied it over - no, not copied, picked. I picked the two beans that rotted on day six, the one whose root curled into a circle, and my mother line about the file. When I finished, I counted: over six hundred words, and not one sentence was invented. This time the teacher wrote: solid details.

Looking back, those eleven days of notes were worth more than the essay itself. They taught me something I could never figure out before: an observation diary is not homework for essays, it is the warehouse of raw material for them. Those few lines of numbers and images each day felt trivial at the time, yet every one of them went into the essay. I used to stare at a title and fish for words, and the words came out hollow. Now I understand: let the hands do work first, let the eyes catch things, and the pen will have something to pour out.

The notebook still sits in my drawer, its paper edges frayed. It reminds me: numbers do not lie, details do not lie. Before writing, grow something real with your own hands.