走近十步

先交代一句大实话：以前我最怕的就是作文。老师出题「我的春天」，别人哗哗地写，我咬着笔头半个钟头，本子上只有两行：春天来了，花开了，草绿了，我很高兴。每次作文本发下来，那个「阅」字后面跟的分数，我都不敢看。

教我写作文的不是老师，是同桌何小满。她的作文回回被贴在教室后墙上给全班读。我去问她秘诀，她想了想，说：你不是不会写，你是没去看。

我不服：我天天看，怎么没看？她拉着我走到走廊，指着楼下的玉兰树说：你现在告诉我，那棵树上有几种颜色。我眯着眼看了半天，说：白的。她说：你再走近十步看。我走下去数了，树皮是灰的，花苞外面裹着一层褐色的绒毛，开着的白花背面透着一点粉，地上掉的花瓣边上已经发黄。她拍拍我：你看，你刚才不是没看，你是站在三楼看，站太远。

这就是她教我的第一个方法：走近十步。她还给了我一个「五感单」，写任何作文前先填五行：眼睛看到的、耳朵听到的、鼻子闻到的、手摸到的、舌头尝到的。填不满五行，不许动笔。

第一次用五感单写的是春雨。我填：雨打在铁皮棚上像炒豆子，空气里有土腥味，雨点落在手背上凉凉的、有点疼。交上去，作文本发下来那天，「阅」后面是个八十五，旁边还有一行红字：观察细致。我盯着那四个字看了好久。

进步是一步一步的。第二个月我的作文第一次进了班级朗读名单；期末，我的作文被贴上了后墙，跟何小满的并排。我妈看见照片，问我是不是换了个班。

现在写作文我不再咬笔头了。我兜里随身揣着那张五感单，皱得不成样子。何小满跟我说：好作文不是写出来的，是先看见、再写出来的。我把这句话抄在了积累本第一页。

这个学期我最大的心得就是：谢谢你，何小满。你让我知道，写作文的头一步不在笔上，在眼睛上。走近十步，世界就够写了。

Ten Steps Closer

Let me start with an honest confession: I used to fear composition most of all. When the teacher set the topic "My Spring," others poured out words while I bit my pencil for half an hour and had only two lines in my notebook: spring came, flowers bloomed, grass turned green, I was very happy. Every time my composition book came back, I did not dare look at the score following the character for "read."

The one who taught me composition was not the teacher but my deskmate He Xiaoman. Her compositions were posted on the back wall of our classroom as models every time. I went to ask her secret. She thought for a moment and said: it is not that you cannot write—it is that you have not looked.

I was not convinced: I look every day, how have I not looked? She pulled me to the corridor, pointed at the magnolia tree below and said: tell me now how many colors are on that tree. I squinted for a long while and said: white. She said: walk ten steps closer and look again. I went downstairs and counted: the bark is gray, the flower buds are wrapped in a layer of brown fuzz, the open white flowers show a hint of pink on their backs, and the fallen petals on the ground have already yellowed at the edges. She patted me: you see, you did not fail to look just now—you were looking from the third floor, standing too far away.

That was the first method she taught me: walk ten steps closer. She also gave me a "five-senses sheet": before writing any composition, fill five lines—what the eyes see, what the ears hear, what the nose smells, what the hand touches, what the tongue tastes. If you cannot fill five lines, you are not allowed to pick up the pen.

The first time I used the five-senses sheet was on spring rain. I filled in: rain on the tin roof sounds like frying beans, the air smells of earth, raindrops on the back of the hand feel cold and sting a little. When my composition book came back, the score after "read" was eighty-five, with a line of red beside it: careful observation. I stared at those four characters for a long time.

Progress came step by step. In the second month my composition entered the class reading list for the first time; by the final exam my composition was posted on the back wall, side by side with the one of He Xiaoman. My mother saw the photo and asked me whether I had switched classes.

Now I no longer bite my pencil over compositions. I carry that five-senses sheet in my pocket, wrinkled out of shape. He Xiaoman told me: a good composition is not written first—it is seen first, then written. I copied that sentence onto the first page of my accumulation notebook.

The biggest lesson of this term is this: thank you, He Xiaoman. You taught me that the first step of composition is not in the pen but in the eyes. Walk ten steps closer, and the world is enough to write about.

放大镜本

三年级以前，我一写记事作文就写流水账。早上起床，吃了早饭，上学，放学，回家，睡觉——一天写满三行，再加一句「今天真是快乐的一天」。好朋友赵一帆看了我的作文，笑得趴在桌上，笑完他从书包里掏出一个皱巴巴的本子，说：送你，这是我的「放大镜本」。

那个本子里夹着一张纸条，纸条上就一句话：把一分钟写成十分钟。我不懂。他给我演示。

他说：你写「妈妈叫我起床」，六个字对不对？可妈妈走进房间用了三步，第一步门轴响，第二步拖鞋声，第三步床边坐下，床陷下去一点。她先摸我额头，再说「面好了」，说完捏了捏我的被角。你看，一分钟的事，写出来是一整页。

他教我把作文里最要紧的那一分钟找出来，像用放大镜照着它。别的都可以一句带过，起床、吃饭、上学，一笔就过去；只有那一分钟，要写声音、写动作、写说的话。他说：流水账不是写得平，是放大镜没举对地方。

我第一次用放大镜写的是「爷爷修自行车」。别的全略过，只写他蹲在车边那十分钟：扳手卡住螺母，他哈一口气再拧；链条上黑油沾到指头，他在裤子上蹭，蹭完手上更黑；修好以后他站起来扶了扶腰，试骑半圈，回头喊我：来，坐后面。那篇作文得了九十一，老师在末尾写：会写细节了。

一开始我也不会举放大镜。写洗手，我把开水龙头、抹肥皂、擦干手从头到尾写了一遍。赵一帆看了说：你放大镜举错了地方。洗手最要紧的一分钟，是肥皂泡在水底下散开的那一下。我重写，只写两手掌对搓、白泡变成清水珠、水砸在池子里的声音。那篇很短，老师旁边批了两个字：干脆。

后来我的放大镜越举越准。写运动会，我只写冲线前那二十秒；写包饺子，只写捏褶子那一只手。同学都说我的作文「有画面」。期末我的作文被老师念给全班听，念完有人回头看我，我耳朵烫烫的。

赵一帆的放大镜本现在传到我手里了，我在第一页添了一行：一分钟写成十分钟，别的都放过。这个心得送给所有写流水账的同学：不是你不会写，是你的放大镜还没举起来。借我朋友的放大镜，先用着，用熟了，它就是你的。

The Magnifying-Glass Notebook

Before fourth grade, every time I wrote a narrative composition it turned into a running account: got up, had breakfast, went to school, came home from school, went to bed—three lines for a whole day, plus one sentence: what a happy day today. My good friend Zhao Yifan read my composition and laughed face-down on the desk. After laughing he pulled a crumpled notebook from his schoolbag and said: a gift for you, this is my magnifying-glass notebook.

Inside the notebook was a slip of paper with one sentence on it: write one minute as ten minutes. I did not understand. He demonstrated. He said: you write "Mother woke me up," six characters, right? But Mother took three steps into the room—step one, the door hinge creaked; step two, the slippers slapped; step three, she sat on the edge of the bed and the mattress sank a little. She first touched my forehead, then said "the noodles are ready," and after speaking she pinched the corner of my quilt. You see, one minute of events becomes a whole page when written.

He taught me to find the most important minute in a composition and shine the magnifying glass on it. Everything else can pass in one sentence—getting up, eating, going to school, one stroke and done; only that one minute gets sounds, movements, and spoken words. He said: a running account is not flat because you write badly—it is flat because the magnifying glass is pointed at the wrong place.

The first thing I magnified was "Grandfather fixes the bicycle." I skipped everything else and wrote only the ten minutes he squatted by the bike: the wrench stuck on the nut, he breathed on it and turned again; black grease from the chain got on his fingers, he wiped them on his trousers and his hands got blacker; after fixing it he stood up, rubbed his lower back, test-rode half a circle, and turned to call me: come, sit behind. That composition got ninety-one, and the teacher wrote at the end: now you can write details.

At the beginning I could not hold the glass steady either. I wrote about washing hands and described turning on the tap, rubbing in soap and drying hands from start to finish. Zhao Yifan read it and said: you are magnifying the wrong minute. The important minute of washing hands is the second the soap foam disappears under the water. I rewrote it, with only the rubbing of palms, the white foam turning into clear drops, and the sound of water on the basin. That piece was short, but the teacher wrote two words beside it: brief and clean.

Later my magnifying glass got more and more accurate. For the sports meet I wrote only the twenty seconds before the finish line; for making dumplings I wrote only the one hand pinching the folds. Classmates all say my compositions "have pictures." At the final exam the teacher read my composition to the whole class, and when she finished some turned to look at me and my ears burned.

The magnifying-glass notebook of Zhao Yifan is in my hands now, and I added one line on the first page: write one minute as ten minutes, let everything else go. This reflection goes to every classmate who writes running accounts: it is not that you cannot write—your magnifying glass has not been lifted yet. Borrow the glass of my friend and use it first; once it is worn smooth, it becomes yours.

百宝箱

四年级上学期，我的作文分数总在及格线上下晃。不是写不完，是写出来干巴巴，老师批语回回是「内容空洞」。好朋友孙小禾有个宝贝本子，牛皮纸包着皮，她叫它「百宝箱」，里面全是她抄的好词好句。她跟我说：她教我的是怎么用百宝箱，不是叫我去抄百宝箱。

她先让我准备一个本子，也抄好词好句。我抄得飞快，一个星期抄满两页，得意地给她看。她翻了一遍，指着其中一句「太阳像大火球」说：这句你抄了，可你用过吗？我摇头。她说：抄一百句不用，不如用熟一句。从那天起她的规矩是：每周只抄五句，但每句必须当天造一个句子，造的句子必须是我们班真发生过的事。

这就是她分享的方法：少抄，多用。我抄过一句「心里像揣了只兔子」，当天就写进日记：数学课发卷子，老师念到我的名字，我心里像揣了只兔子，跳得耳朵嗡嗡响。第二天日记本发下来，老师在那句下面画了波浪线。我头一回发现，好句子不是抄来好看，是用出来才好看。

造句比抄还难。第一周我只造出两句，孙小禾让我重造，说那不是班里真发生的事，是我编的。我想了想，班里真发生的是王浩把水桶碰倒，水在地上淌了一大片。我写水淌了一大片那句，她说这就对了。从那以后我上课专门留意班里的事，造的句子越来越长。

进步是攒出来的。一个月后，我的作文里开始出现自己的句子，不是抄的，是仿着抄来的句子长出来的。两个月后，我的作文第一次上了九十分。期末写「我的好朋友」，我写孙小禾翻本子时「眉头一皱一皱的，像在数页码」，老师批了四个字：活灵活现。

孙小禾看了我的百宝箱，说她的百宝箱可以退休了。我不肯，两个本子摞在一起，用一根皮筋捆着。她说：捆着就捆着，反正以后是你的。

这个心得我想告诉同学：朋友教我的不是好词好句，是个笨办法——少抄多用，抄一句用一句。抄是往兜里装种子，用才是往地里种。兜里装满不种，一季也打不出粮食。我现在兜里有种子，地里也有苗了。

The Treasure Box Notebook

In the first term of fourth grade my composition scores always wobbled around the passing line. It was not that I could not finish writing; what came out was dry and bare, and the comment of the teacher read empty content every time. My good friend Sun Xiaohe had a treasure of a notebook, its cover wrapped in kraft paper, and she called it her treasure box, because inside it were all the good words and sentences she had copied out. She told me: what she would teach me was how to use the treasure box, not how to copy from it.

She first asked me to prepare a notebook and copy good words and sentences too. I copied at a great speed, filled two pages in one week, and showed it to her proudly. She leafed through it, pointed at one sentence, the sun is like a big fireball, and asked: you copied this one, but have you ever used it? I shook my head. She said: copying a hundred sentences without using them is worth less than knowing one sentence well. From that day on her rule was this: copy only five sentences a week, but each sentence must be turned into my own sentence that very day, and the sentence I made must be about something that really happened in our class.

That was the method she shared: copy less, use more. I once copied the sentence my heart felt like a rabbit tucked inside it, and that very day I wrote it into my diary: in math class the papers were handed out, the teacher read my name, and my heart felt like a rabbit tucked inside it, beating so hard that my ears buzzed. The next day the diary books came back, and the teacher had drawn a wavy line under that sentence. For the first time I understood that a good sentence is not beautiful because it is copied; it becomes beautiful only when it is used.

Making my own sentences was harder than copying. In the first week I managed only two, and Sun Xiaohe made me redo them, saying: that one did not really happen in our class, you dreamed it up. I thought it over, and what really happened was that Wang Hao knocked the water bucket over in the classroom and the water ran across the floor in one wide sheet. I wrote the sentence about the running water, and she said: now that is real. After that I began to watch what happened inside the classroom, and the sentences I made grew longer and longer.

The progress was saved up bit by bit. A month later my compositions began to carry sentences of my own, not copied ones but sentences that grew by imitating the copied ones. Two months later one of my compositions scored above ninety for the first time. In the final exam the topic was my good friend, and I wrote about how Sun Xiaohe leafed through her notebook with her brow knitting up again and again, as if she were counting the pages, and the comment of the teacher was four characters: vivid and alive.

Sun Xiaohe looked through my treasure box and said hers could retire now. I refused, and stacked the two notebooks together, bound with a single rubber band. She said: bind them if you want, for anyway from now on that box is yours.

This is the lesson I want to pass to my classmates: what my friend taught me was not good words and sentences but a clumsy way, copy little and use much, copy one sentence and use one sentence. Copying is putting seeds into the pocket, using is planting them in the field. A pocket full of unplanted seeds yields no grain in a whole season. Now I have seeds in my pocket and seedlings in the field.