作文课上的蚂蚁，帮了我大忙

我以前最怕写作文。老师说要写真实的事，我坐在桌前想啊想，想出来的事都像别人家的：扶老奶奶过马路，下雨送同学回家。我妈说，你院子里的事就不少，你看见过吗？我答不上来。

暑假里，我在院子墙根发现一个蚁洞。那天我在门口吃西瓜，一粒西瓜籽掉在蚁洞边上。一只蚂蚁跑过来，搬不动，就跑了。我以为它不要了，结果它领了六只蚂蚁来，每只都先用触角碰一碰那颗籽。八只蚂蚁一起使劲，西瓜籽晃晃悠悠地移动了。我看得连西瓜都忘了吃。

从那天起，我有个小习惯：兜里揣个巴掌大的本子，蹲在墙根记。我记了八天。籽是怎么被搬走的，蚂蚁碰头是怎么停下的，下雨前它们怎么往台阶上走，全在里头。本子第一页我还写了一行字：别写编的，写看见的。

开学第一堂作文课，题目是《一件有趣的事》。我写我们家的蚂蚁，写西瓜籽，写八只蚂蚁一起使劲时那颗籽晃晃悠悠的样子。我写得很慢，因为每句话我都要回想一下本子上记的，怕写错。

第二天，老师把我的作文当堂朗读。读到西瓜籽移动那一段，全班笑了，笑得很响。老师问我：这个细节是真的吗？我说是，我记了八天。老师说：这就是作文的样子。

我的作文本上第一次得了三个星。我妈拿去看，看了半天说：原来你天天蹲墙根，是在攒作文。我觉得她说得不太对，又不全错。我不是为了作文才看蚂蚁的，我看蚂蚁的时候只想看。可是看进去的东西，写作文的时候自己会排队出来。

现在我再也不怕写作文了。我的兜里还是揣着那个本子。蚂蚁教会我：真实的东西不在脑子里编，在眼睛外面等着，你去看，它就跟你走。

The Ants in My Composition Saved Me

I used to dread writing compositions. The teacher said to write true events, and I sat at my desk trying to think of something, but everything I thought of sounded like events from the lives of other people: helping an old lady cross the road, walking a classmate home in the rain. My mother said, plenty happens in your own yard, have you ever seen any of it? I could not answer.

During the summer vacation, I found an ant hole at the base of our yard wall. That day I was eating watermelon at the gate, and a watermelon seed dropped beside the hole. An ant ran over, could not lift it, and ran off. I thought it had given up, but it returned with six ants, and each one first tapped the seed with its feelers. Eight ants pushed together, and the seed wobbled along the ground. I was so absorbed that I forgot to eat my watermelon.

From that day I kept a small habit: a palm-sized notebook in my pocket, and I

crouched by the wall to take notes. I wrote for eight days. How the seed was carried off, how two ants stopped when they bumped heads, how the line climbed the steps before the rain, all of it was in there.

In the first composition class of the new term, the topic was an interesting event. I wrote about the ants in our house, about the watermelon seed, about the way the seed wobbled as eight ants pushed together. I wrote slowly, because for every sentence I checked my memory against the notebook, afraid of getting it wrong.

The next day, my teacher read my composition aloud to the class. When she reached the part where the seed moved, the whole class laughed out loud. She asked me: is this detail real? I said yes, I watched for eight days. She said: this is what a composition should look like.

For the first time my composition book got three stars. My mother read it slowly and said: so every day you crouched by the wall, you were saving up material. I think she is not quite right, but not wholly wrong either. I did not watch the ants for the sake of compositions. When I watched them, I only wanted to watch. But what truly goes into the eyes lines up by itself and walks out when it is time to write.

I am not afraid of compositions anymore. The little notebook is still in my pocket. The ants taught me this: real things are not invented in the head. They wait outside your eyes. Go and look, and they will follow you home.

那句批语，是蚂蚁替我请来的

我有一个好词好句本，抄了大半本。什么太阳升起啦，什么花儿点头啦，抄的时候觉得个个漂亮，写作文的时候一个也用不上。老师在我上一篇作文里批了四个字：太空，添肉。

我不太明白肉在哪儿。十月的一个下午，我在老槐树底下看见一群蚂蚁抬一只死蚂蚱。蚂蚱比它们大太多，它们抬不起来，就把它拆开。一只蚂蚁咬住一条腿，往后坐，腿动了；三只蚂蚁挤在一块儿抬肚子，抬得歪歪扭扭。还有一只特别急，在队伍边上跑来跑去，谁也不理它。我蹲到腿麻才回屋。

我找了张作业纸反面记下来：几点几分，几只大蚂蚁，腿是怎么动的，那只急蚂蚁跑了几趟。记完我把它压在文具盒底下。

周记布置的题目是《劳动》。我本来想写扫地，想起文具盒底下那张纸，就写蚂蚁。我写它们抬不动就拆，写一只蚂蚁坐着往后拽，写那只急蚂蚁谁也不理。写完我有点心虚，觉得蚂蚁不算劳动。

周记发下来，老师在我那篇下面批：这才是看见过的劳动。后面还加了一句：继续看，继续

写。那天我把这句话读了三遍。

后来我才知道差别在哪儿。好词好句本里的句子是别人看见过的，作业纸上的句子是我自己看见过的。别人看见的东西，借来用总差一口气；自己看见的东西，写出来它自己会动。

现在我的好词好句本还在，不过我在它后面夹了一沓作业纸反面，全是蚂蚁。那只急蚂蚁我到现在也没弄明白它在干什么，我在周记结尾写：它可能是工头。老师批：有可能。这两个字让我高兴了一星期。

蚂蚁不会讲话，可是它们教会我写作文。它们让我明白，肉不在好词好句里，肉在腿麻的那二十分钟里。

The Ants Helped Me Earn That Comment

I have a notebook of good words and sentences, more than half filled. Sunrise this, flowers nodding that. Every sentence looked beautiful when I copied it, and not one of them was useful when I wrote. My teacher wrote four characters on my last composition: too empty, add some meat.

I did not know where the meat was. One afternoon in October, I watched a group of ants carrying a dead grasshopper under the old locust tree. The grasshopper was far bigger than them, so when they could not lift it, they took it apart. One ant bit onto a leg and sat backward, and the leg moved. Three ants squeezed together to lift the belly, walking crooked and crooked. One more ant ran back and forth along the edge of the line, and nobody paid attention to it. I stayed crouched until my legs went numb before going inside.

I took the back of a worksheet and wrote it down: what time, how many big ants, how the leg moved, how many trips the anxious ant ran. Then I tucked the paper under the lid of my pencil case.

My weekly journal assignment was titled labor. I had planned to write about sweeping the floor, but I remembered the paper under the pencil case and wrote about the ants instead. I wrote that they took the prey apart when they could not carry it, that one ant sat and pulled a leg backward, that the anxious ant was ignored by everyone. When I finished I felt a little unsure, because ants hardly count as labor.

When the journals came back, my teacher had written under mine: now this is labor you actually saw. She added one more line: keep watching, keep writing. I read that sentence three times that day.

Later I understood the difference. The sentences in my good-phrases notebook were seen by other people; the sentences on my worksheet were seen by me. Borrowed things

always fall a breath short of alive. What your own eyes have caught moves by itself on paper.

My notebook of good phrases is still around, but now I keep a stack of worksheet backs behind it, all about ants. I still do not know what that anxious ant was doing. I wrote at the end of my journal: maybe it was the foreman. The teacher commented: quite possibly. Those two words made me happy for a whole week.

The ants cannot talk, yet they taught me to write. They showed me that the meat is not inside fine phrases. The meat is inside those twenty minutes when your legs go numb.

同桌跟我一起蹲了下来

我同桌以前老笑话我。他给我起了个外号，叫蚂蚁站长，因为我一下课就往花坛边跑，蹲着看蚂蚁，兜里还掏个小本子记。他说，看这黑乎乎的东西，有啥看头。

十一月的周记课，老师念了我的《蚂蚁站长》。我写蚂蚁在冷天里搬东西慢吞吞，写它们碰触角像碰头说悄悄话，还写我蹲久了站起来，眼前发黑，差点坐到花坛沿上。念到眼前发黑，全班笑，我同桌也笑。笑完他凑过来小声问：真有这么回事？我说，本子上全记着呢。

第二天放学，他站在花坛边等我。他说他也想看看蚂蚁站长上班。我们俩一起蹲了二十分钟。他亲眼看见两只蚂蚁碰触角，看见一只大蚂蚁从一片落叶底下钻出来。他当天回家写了一篇周记，题目叫《我和蚂蚁站长一起上班》。

他的周记也被老师念了。念完老师提议，我们俩把记录合起来，出一期墙报。我们选了六天的记录，配上我画的路线图，标题就叫《花坛边的二十分钟》。墙报贴出来那天，好多人围着看，有个同学说，原来蚂蚁还站岗。

现在我们班蹲在花坛边的不止我们俩了。中队长也来了，她带了一个小组，每人一个本子。我们给小组定了两条规矩：只看不碰，看完把本子上的记录念给对方听。

我的学习心得写到这里，其实就一句话：观察这个东西，会传染。我蹲下去，同桌就蹲下去；我们俩蹲下去，半个中队都蹲下去了。以前我觉得写作文靠好词好句，现在我知道，靠的是一群人真的看见过同一件事，然后各自写各自的。

外号还是那个外号，蚂蚁站长。不过现在它不是笑话了，是我们小组的组长名号。我同桌说，等他也有小本子那天，他要记点别的东西，比如蚂蚁站长本人。

My Deskmate Crouched Down With Me

My deskmate used to tease me. He nicknamed me Stationmaster Ant, because I ran to the flower bed at every break, crouched to watch the ants, and pulled a little notebook out of my pocket to take notes. He said, what is there to see in those black specks?

In the November journal class, my teacher read my piece Stationmaster Ant. I had written how the ants moved slowly in the cold weather, how they touched feelers like two heads whispering, and how the world went dark in front of my eyes when I stood up after crouching too long, so that I nearly sat down on the edge of the flower bed. The class laughed at the part about going dark. My deskmate laughed too. Then he leaned over and whispered: did that really happen? I said it is all in my notebook.

The next day after school, he was waiting for me at the flower bed. He said he wanted to see the Stationmaster Ant going to work. We crouched together for twenty minutes. With his own eyes he saw two ants touch feelers, and saw a big ant crawl out from under a fallen leaf. That evening he wrote a journal entry titled The Stationmaster Ant and I Go to Work Together.

His entry was read aloud too. Afterwards the teacher suggested we combine our records into a class wall newspaper. We chose six days of notes, added the route map I had drawn, and titled it Twenty Minutes by the Flower Bed. On the day it went up, a crowd gathered around it, and one classmate said, so the ants stand guard as well.

Now it is not only the two of us crouching by the flower bed. The troop leader joined us with a small group, one notebook each. We set two rules for the group: only watch, never touch; and after watching, read your notes aloud to your partner.

My reflection comes down to one sentence: observation is catching. When I crouch down, my deskmate crouches down; when the two of us crouch, half the troop crouches with us. I used to think compositions were built from fine phrases. Now I know they are built when a group of people truly see the same thing, and then each writes their own.

The nickname is still Stationmaster Ant. But it is no longer a joke. It is the title of our group leader now. My deskmate says that when he gets his own notebook, he wants to record something different, for instance the Stationmaster Ant himself.