黑板上贴着七张照片：记一次秋收班会

星期三下午最后一节课，铃声响过，班主任王老师没有翻课本，抱着一摞照片走进了教室。黑板上早写好了六个大字：走进秋收，主题班会。我们还没反应过来，班长已经举着一沓卡片站在讲台边，说第一关是秋收知识问答。

第一张卡片就难住了半个班：稻谷是从什么时候开始黄的？小军抢答六月，王老师摇头。后排的田小禾慢慢举手，说她奶奶讲过，处暑之后稻子才低头，早的八月底，晚的要到十月。她奶奶在村里种了四十年田，她每年秋天都去田里捡稻穗。教室里安静了一会儿，然后掌声响起来。第二题问玉米收回家为什么要挂在屋檐下，第三题问一亩水稻大约能打多少斤谷，答对的人越来越多，答错的人也没人笑，因为大家都真的在学。

第二关是看照片。王老师把照片一张一张贴在黑板上：金色的稻浪、堆成小山的玉米、割稻的人弯着的背、晒谷场上爬着太阳的谷子。有一张照片上，一个老奶奶蹲在田埂上，手里捧着一把稻穗。王老师说这是她暑假回乡下拍的。照片贴到第七张，我们班的李多多忽然小声说，这个晒场跟我外婆家一模一样。全班都笑起来，可王老师没让笑停，她说：对，秋收就在我们每个人的外婆家。

最后一关，王老师没出题，只端来一个盘子，盘子里是一层撒在桌上的米粒。她让我们看三十秒。三十秒里没人说话。然后她说，这就是昨天中午教室里扫出来的，还没踩脏，已经扫出来了。她讲了我们班午餐倒掉的半桶饭，讲了一粒米从秧苗到饭碗要过的十八道工序，讲完只说一句：这节班会课，就记住一件事——碗里的饭，配得上被吃完。

下课铃响的时候，黑板上七张照片还贴着。放学路过教室，我看见值日生把最后一张桌子擦得特别干净，桌上那几粒米，不见了。

Seven Photographs on the Blackboard

On Wednesday afternoon, in the last class, the bell rang and our homeroom teacher Miss Wang walked in with a stack of photographs instead of opening the textbook. Six big characters were already written on the blackboard: Walking into Harvest, a themed class meeting. Before we understood anything, the class monitor was standing by the platform with a pile of cards, announcing that the first round was a quiz on harvest knowledge.

The first card stumped half the class: when does the rice begin to turn yellow? Xiao Jun blurted out June, and Miss Wang shook her head. Tian Xiaohe from the back row raised her hand slowly and said her grandmother had told her that the rice bows its head only after the End of Heat, the early fields by the end of August and the late ones not until October. Her grandmother has farmed in the village for forty years, and she picks up fallen rice ears in the field every autumn. The room was

quiet for a moment, and then applause broke out. The second card asked why corn is hung under the eaves after being brought home, and the third asked how many jin of grain one mu of rice can give. More and more hands were right, and nobody laughed at the wrong answers, because everyone was truly learning.

The second round was looking at photographs. Miss Wang pasted them on the blackboard one by one: golden waves of rice, corn piled into little hills, the bent backs of the people cutting rice, and grain crawling with sunlight on the drying ground. In one photo an old woman squatted on the ridge of the field holding a handful of rice ears in her palms. Miss Wang said she took it when she visited the countryside that summer. When the seventh photo went up, Li Duoduo of our class whispered that the drying ground looked exactly like the one at the home of her grandmother. The whole class laughed, but Miss Wang did not let the laughter end. She said: yes, the harvest lives in the home of every one of our grandmothers.

In the last round Miss Wang set no question. She only brought a plate with a layer of rice grains scattered on it. She asked us to look for thirty seconds. Nobody spoke during those thirty seconds. Then she said this was swept up from the classroom floor at noon yesterday, not yet stepped on and dirty, already swept up. She told us about the half bucket of rice thrown away at lunch, about the eighteen steps a grain of rice passes from seedling to rice bowl, and ended with one sentence: in this class meeting, remember one thing. The rice in your bowl deserves to be eaten up.

When the school bell rang, the seven photographs were still on the blackboard. Leaving school past the classroom, I saw the student on duty wiping the last desk very clean. The few rice grains on that desk were gone.

班会之前：一个城里老师的秋收备课

班会前一个礼拜，我都在准备那节「走进秋收」。说真的，我在城里长大，自己就没进过几回田，要带四十二个孩子认识秋收，我得先把自己教一遍。

我先去请教学校门口修车铺的老周。他从前在乡下种过十几年水稻，我蹲在他摊子边问了半个钟头：稻子什么时候黄，谷子晒几天才装袋，玉米为什么不许堆着不晾。他一样一样讲，还扯着我讲处暑、白露、寒露，说节气就是庄稼的日历。我拿手机备忘录记，他笑我：老师还做笔记。我说，我要讲错了，四十二个学生就错四十二回。

照片是我暑假在乡下表哥家拍的。表哥种了三十亩田，我跟着他下过两回田。挑照片那晚，我在手机里翻到一张表哥蹲在收割机边上吃盒饭的，饭盒搁在稻茬上，他吃得很快，眼睛还看着田。我把这张也打印了出来。还有表哥家的小女儿，才六岁，蹲在晒谷场边上用玩具小铲子铲谷，铲得比大人还认真。这张孩子们肯定喜欢。

问答卡片我做了三十张，最难的一张我留了答案没写：一穗稻子上大约有多少粒谷。我自己不知道，打算到时候让田小禾说她奶奶怎么数的。田小禾是我班上的孩子，她奶奶种了四十年田，她自己也捡了六年稻穗。班里就她最懂田，这节班会，她其实是我的半个老师。

爱粮那一环我原本想讲大道理，讲一半自己先脸红——昨天办公室倒的半桶剩饭还是我倒的。所以我改了主意，端一盘扫出来的米粒进教室，什么都不讲，先让他们看三十秒。有些道理，讲一百遍不如摆出来一遍。

班会那天很成功，黑板上的照片贴到放学都没人揭。我抱着一摞卡片回办公室，路上想：这节班会，先受教育的其实是我。明年秋天，我真打算带他们去表哥的田里站一站，让秋收从照片里走出来，走到他们脚边。

Before the Class Meeting: Lesson Preparation of a City Teacher

For a week before the class meeting, I was getting that lesson called Walking into Harvest ready. To be honest, I grew up in the city and have been into only a few fields in my life. To lead forty-two children to know the harvest, I had to teach myself first.

I began by visiting Old Zhou, who repairs bicycles at the school gate. He once farmed rice in the countryside for more than ten years. I squatted by his stand for half an hour and asked: when does the rice turn yellow, how many days must grain be dried before bagging, why may corn not be left heaped without airing. He answered one by one, and even pulled me into talking about the solar terms, saying the terms are the calendar of the crops. I recorded it in my phone, and he laughed: the teacher takes notes too. I said, if I teach it wrong, forty-two students will be wrong forty-two times.

The photographs were the ones I took at the home of my cousin in the countryside during the summer vacation. My cousin farms thirty mu. I followed him into the field twice. That night while choosing photos, I found one of him squatting beside the harvester eating a boxed lunch, the box resting on rice stubble, eating fast with his eyes still on the field. I printed that one too. There was also his little daughter, only six, squatting at the edge of the drying ground and shoveling grain with a toy shovel, more seriously than the grown-ups. The children would surely love this one.

I made thirty quiz cards. The hardest card I left without an answer written: about how many grains on one ear of rice. I did not know it myself, and I planned to let Tian Xiaohe tell us how her grandmother counts. Tian Xiaohe is one of my pupils; her grandmother has farmed for forty years, and she herself has picked up fallen rice

ears for six years. In our class she understands the field best. For this class meeting she is really half my teacher.

For the grain-saving part I first meant to preach big principles, and stopped halfway with a blushing face. The half bucket of leftover rice thrown away in the office yesterday was thrown away by me. So I changed my plan: carry a plate of rice grains swept from the floor into the classroom, say nothing, and let them look for thirty seconds first. Some truths, spoken a hundred times, are worth less than placed before the eyes once.

The meeting went well, and the photographs stayed on the blackboard until school ended. Carrying a stack of cards back to the office, I thought on the way: the one truly educated by this meeting was me first. Next autumn I really plan to take them to stand in the field of my cousin, and let the harvest step out of the photographs and come to their feet.

田小禾带来的那把稻穗

田小禾的课桌抽屉里常年放着一小把稻穗，是去年秋天在奶奶田里捡的，穗尖扎手，她也不扔。班会课那天，她把那把稻穗带到了教室。

黑板上写着走进秋收。老师贴照片的时候，田小禾一眼认出晒谷场那张跟奶奶家门前那块水泥地像：谷子摊开，木耙推过去，边上蹲着赶麻雀的孩子。她六岁起就蹲在那块地上赶麻雀，太阳把后颈晒得发烫，麻雀不怕生，要扔土疙瘩才走。照片里没拍到她，可她觉得那张照片里有她。

问答环节，第一题稻谷什么时候开始黄，半个班答错了，田小禾没有马上举手。她听同学抢答六月、七月，听老师摇头，才慢慢把手举起来。她说奶奶讲过，处暑之后稻子才低头，早的八月底，晚的到十月。说晚的到十月时她声音大了一点，因为奶奶家那几丘冷浸田，真要到十月才割，割稻时手上全是裂口。她没讲裂口，只说十月。掌声响起来的时候，她低头看自己手心里那把稻穗。

数稻穗那一题，老师让举手的人上台数。田小禾上去，把带来的稻穗放在讲台上，一串一串掰开数。她数得慢，掰一粒放一粒。第一串，八十九粒。第二串，一百零四粒。老师说数一串就够了，她摇头，把第三串也数完，九十七粒。下台时她把数过的稻穗拢在一起，用橡皮筋扎好，留在讲台上，说留给班里没数过的同学接着数。

最后一环，老师端来一盘撒出来的米粒，让全班看三十秒。三十秒里，田小禾想起的是奶奶。奶奶扫谷的时候腰弯得很低，扫成一堆后用簸箕扬谷，风把瘪谷吹走，好谷落回簸箕。奶奶扬完一批总要直一次腰，手在后腰上捶两下。三十秒结束，老师说什么她后来记不清了，只记得自己那天中午把碗里的饭吃得干干净净，连泡饭的汤都喝了。

放学，田小禾路过班教室，看见黑板上七张照片还贴着。她在门口站了一会儿，数了数，第

七张是晒谷场。她书包里那把稻穗的橡皮筋还留在讲台上，明天会有同学接着数。

The Handful of Rice Ears Tian Xiaohe Brought

In the drawer of Tian Xiaohe desk there always sat a small handful of rice ears, picked up in her grandmother field last autumn. The tips pricked her fingers, and she never threw them away. On the day of the class meeting, she brought that handful to the classroom.

Walking into Harvest was written on the blackboard. When the teacher put up the photographs, Tian Xiaohe recognized the one of the grain-drying ground at once. It looked like the concrete yard in front of her grandmother house: grain spread open, a wooden rake pushed through it, children squatting at the edge chasing sparrows. She had squatted on that yard chasing sparrows since she was six. The sun made the back of her neck hot, the sparrows were not afraid, and you had to throw clods of dirt to move them. The photo did not show her, yet she felt she was inside that photo.

In the quiz round, half the class got the first question wrong about when the rice begins to turn yellow, and Tian Xiaohe did not raise her hand right away. She listened to classmates blurt out June, July, listened to the teacher shake her head, and only then raised her hand slowly. She said her grandmother had taught her that the rice bows its head only after the End of Heat, the early fields by the end of August, the late ones not until October. Her voice grew a little louder on the word October, because the cold-water paddies at her grandmother place really were not cut until October, and her grandmother hands were full of cracks when cutting. She did not mention the cracks. She only said October. When the applause rose, she looked down at the rice ears in her own palm.

For the counting question, the teacher asked volunteers to come up and count. Tian Xiaohe went up and placed the rice ears she had brought on the platform, breaking them open strand by strand. She counted slowly, one grain broken, one grain set aside. First strand, eighty-nine grains. Second strand, one hundred and four. The teacher said one strand was enough; she shook her head and counted a third, ninety-seven. Going back to her seat she gathered the counted ears, tied them with a rubber band, and left them on the platform, saying they were for classmates who had not yet counted.

In the last round the teacher brought a plate of spilled rice grains and let the class look for thirty seconds. During those thirty seconds, what Tian Xiaohe thought of was her grandmother. When sweeping grain her grandmother bent very low, piled it up, then winnowed it with a bamboo tray, the wind carrying off the empty grains while

the good ones fell back. After each batch she straightened up and knocked her lower back twice with her hand. When the thirty seconds ended, she later could not remember what the teacher said; she only remembered finishing every grain in her bowl at lunch that day, even drinking the rice soup.

At the end of school, Tian Xiaohe passed the classroom door and saw that the seven photographs were still on the blackboard. She stood there for a while and counted them; the seventh was the drying ground. The rubber band from the rice ears in her schoolbag was still on the platform, and tomorrow some classmate would go on counting.