

# Any Poem

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The assignment is to:

*bring a poem that you can identify with  
and are willing to read in front of your peers.*

Any poem.

This is the introduction  
to a revamped poetry unit.

The teacher has no idea what

She  
has  
just  
done.

Any poem.

He is a quiet boy  
in class.

Respectful,

sweet,

but above all,  
quiet.

He asks his teacher  
for book recommendations.  
The teacher knows she can't go wrong  
with a *Perks of Being a Wallflower*  
endorsement.

He reads it,  
pays attention,  
and chooses *that* poem...  
the one from *that* book.

Any poem.

The day of the poetry reading arrives.  
One student

after another  
take their turn at the front of the room.  
Poem in hand,  
trembling voice,  
butterflies fluttering in Hot Cheeto craving stomachs.

Snapping fingers  
                                replace  
clapping hands.

Then,  
it's *his* turn...  
with *that* poem.

Any poem.

He reads in his quiet,  
                                sincere  
  voice.

The teacher chokes back tears,  
hoping her students don't know  
she is figuring out there is more to  
his quiet  
demeanor.

The poem seems to speak the words that roar in his head.

Any poem...*that* poem.

No one breaths.  
It's too much to take in.  
It's deep.  
It's devastating.  
It's a poem.  
It's the poem he chose from the book  
she recommended.

When the kids leave,  
                        the teacher calls his mom.  
                                She worries her student may take his own life one day...  
just like the boy in the poem.

The mother and teacher talk.  
They talk again.  
Later, his mother would hug the teacher at Open House.

The teacher invests  
more time.

He starts to talk more.

She worries less.

He smiles more.

The year ends.

He will visit his teacher  
from time  
to time.

He joins a band.

He gains an unmistakable twinkle  
in his eyes.

This evening,  
he emails his teacher.  
He asks how the beginning of her year has been.  
He tells her he is having a great time  
learning new things  
in college.

She cries.

She smiles.

It could have been any poem.