

The gym is waxy with a sheen you can smell from the cafeteria,
ready for the adolescent sound and fury.

Somewhere,
there is a mess of boxes.
A wilting trophy case.
A stink still rising from
last year's lost and found.
A tangle of pests feasting
on forgotten Easter candy.

Somewhere,
a classroom is lit by daylight only.
Maybe an ancient desktop chugs along,
resuscitated.

There, a teacher surveys industrial dust,
stares into the middle distance—
a near-empty lot,
an overgrown courtyard,
an extravagantly astro-turfed field—
considers the enormity of it all.
Sighs.
Gets back to work.

Katie Cubano is an author and educator focused on supporting teacher leadership toward curriculum and instruction that effectively and equitably meet students' needs. After teaching English for over a decade, she became an instructional coach in 2019. In 2023, her first book, *Choose Your Own Master Class: Urgent Ideas to Invigorate Your Professional Learning*, was published. Reach Katie at katecubano@gmail.com.

Truth and Love

There are a million things
I should be doing right now
That aren't writing a poem
So I will write a poem

I'm using an old note
On my phone so I promise
The title is not premeditated
It's just something

One of my students said
During the usual Wednesday
Afternoon meeting of the
Malden High School

Philosophy Club it was
The start to her rejoinder
"So back to the Truth
And Love thing" we had

Been discussing the
Question "What is love"
And we could not agree
If love was closer

To Truth or Untruth
Like when Proust's
Jealous Lover thinks
Albertine is cheating or

When one student talks
About how her sister
Says she loves her
Abusive boyfriend

Even went back to him

She said how can we
Know what it's like
From the outside

(I hear this and think
About how no one would
Understand Lol Stein
If she explained herself)

And then someone else
Says sometimes even on
The inside you don't know
Like you could think

Everything's fine but
You're really hurting
The person you love or
You're calling something love

That isn't and now
We are talking about labels
Who can call what
What and two students

Gesture at my bi pride
Flag during their stories
About how they relate
To that label, what coming

Out was like for them
The munchkins are almost
Gone and we agree
We'll continue next week

Talking about labels
We haven't gotten
To the bottom of it yet
Like the laundry pile I

Should be putting away
Instead of writing this

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After seven years as a general & special education mathematics teacher, Tom Snarsky transitioned to working at Amplify, where he currently supports the Amplify Desmos Math team as an Activity Specialist. He is the author of several collections of poetry including [Complete Sentences](#), a chapbook of teaching poems published by Broken Sleep Books. He lives in the mountains of northwestern Virginia with his wife Kristi and their cats. You can reach Tom at thomas.snarsky@knowlesteachers.org.