

TEST TAKING

from SEE ME AFTER CLASS: ADVICE FOR TEACHERS BY TEACHERS

This is going to take
A miracle
And miracles are there...
But miracles are rare.

Right now
Prayer can barely
Prepare me
To tear myself from Sunday night
Throw myself into each Monday's light
As I wait insanely for one kid to do alright
On these practice tests
When these
Assessments suggest
Nothing
But heads on desks
Eyes closed
Twenty-nine young minds at rest...

These constant panic attacks
Frantic packing
Of standardized practice facts
Keep teachers fighting
Biting each other in the backs
Like rats
Packed into the back of a classroom
And trapped...
Grinding TV-primed young minds
Into lunchtime and bathroom lines
Path to success
Assessed
In less than one quick click of a scantron form...

A storm is forming
With each teacher cheating the next
Sweat dripping
From eye sockets and necks...

No time to rest
All we hear about IS this test.

Honors teachers are blessed.
The rest of us just go home depressed

Under stress...
With my desk a mess...
I begin to doubt...

Forget doing my best –
I become impressed
Every time I open my mouth
And a mean scream
Does not stream screaming out.

My life is now about this need
To seem like these kids can succeed
By following my lead
Circling keywords
'Til their little fingers bleed
Trying to guess right
When they can't write or read.

All this testing
Is testing
Me.

Because if they fail again, then I fail again
And they do fail again so I do fail again
And they fail again and I fail again and...

No doubt
I'm about to get crossed out
With my own red pen.