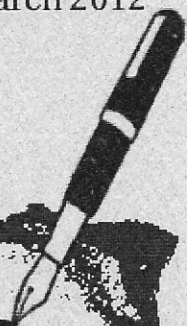


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# Ohio

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# Teachers



*You must **Write** every single day of your life... You must tuck in libraries and climb the stacks like ladders to sniff books like perfumes and wear books like hats upon your weary heads... may you be in love every day for the next 20,000 days. And out of that love, remake a world." - Ray Bradbury*

OCTELA

## Playing School by Sandy Lingo

I walked to the phonograph  
right of the radiator  
left of the craft table--  
resplendent with  
empty toilet paper rolls  
and rickrack and broken crayons--  
and lifted its arm  
and placed the needle  
ever so gently  
as Mom taught me  
on the first ring of the scratched 78  
and used *Peter and the Wolf* as my  
soundtrack while  
I played school  
in her classroom.

I handed out dittos still  
sweet with the scent  
of purple.  
I licked my thumb  
like Miss Reeder did  
and counted out papers  
at each row of  
imaginary students.  
I sat at the scarred wooden desk  
front and center  
flanked by big bellied desks with  
hinged lids  
and attached chairs.  
I admired the array  
of accouterments of the trade  
red pencils, a brown planner  
a cranky stapler that rarely worked  
a black grade book with spiral edge  
a whistle on a lanyard  
the plump silver bell  
just waiting for the teacher's  
imperious finger  
to ding the class to order.

I turned to the blackboard  
still gray with today's scrim of dust  
and wrote my name  
*Mrs. Seilkop*  
in loopy, laborious cursive  
the date  
October 5, 1962

then the agenda for the day  
*The Pledge of Allegiance*  
three reading groups  
arithmetic, history, science

I sat back down and grabbed the book  
my mother was reading to her class  
(wishing it were *Ben and Me*  
what Mrs. Harrold was reading to mine)  
and read  
with precise elocution  
holding the bookmark in my left hand  
and *Charlotte's Web* in my right.

And when I needed a break  
as even good teachers do  
I crossed the hall to the lounge  
peeked in and turned on the lights  
crept in and did inventory:  
a percolator and green melmac cups  
tin ashtrays  
filled with lipstick-stained  
butts on bulls-eyes of brown tar  
a white bakery box  
lined with crumbs and  
knuckles of doughnuts  
a pop machine!  
green-tinged bottles of  
Pepsi Cola  
a ditto machine  
with a purple-stained handle  
stacks of books  
"Look! Look! Look!"  
the fat ones with the answers  
and a bathroom  
one toilet  
a Kotex machine  
who would use that?  
surely not teachers.

I conjured the grown up me  
smoking a long Lucky Strike  
blowing out thin streams of smoke  
thrumming my nyloned legs  
with my high heels  
kicked half off  
a red pencil speared in my bun  
conferring with other  
smart teachers--  
big words flowing with ease

in this very same room--  
about important things  
life-changing things  
and  
good kids  
like me.

**Sandy Lingo** I wrote about playing school in her mother's first grade classroom. It was in her classroom that Sandy's journey as an educator began. She retired from Oak Hills Local School District in Cincinnati in May 2010. She was a language arts teacher for most of her career, but finished as a middle school librarian.