

A poem about ordinary and the extraordinary mornings in homeroom,

by members of the BE Afterschool Writer's Workshop.

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We discussed how to go from the typical to the extraordinary, starting with everyday details. As a group, we described a typical homeroom period. We decided to use the second person, and reviewed different points of view. Then I typed the students' responses and we discussed parallel construction and word repetition. We also talked about how it wasn't necessary to rhyme. This part of the poem ended with: "Sometimes you just want to go to sleep."

Then I asked the students to each come up with his or her own departure from the typical. I read their work privately and used the sleeping and waking ideas to organize the material.

As I see it now, we have a poem about falling asleep in homeroom, having some wild dreams, waking up alone and lonely, and realizing it's time to get on with the day!

I think an awareness of transitions from typical to extraordinary to magical to outrageous is making the students more constructive readers of one another's work, and better able to edit their own work. They are also listening for original details and images.

-Susan Land

22 Fourth Graders

During the morning, in homeroom, everybody sits.

Some people look at their planners.

Some people read.

Some people watch BETV.

Sometimes it's too hot or cold.

Sometimes you forget to hang up your jacket.

Sometimes you sneak something out of your lunchbox.

Sometimes you leave your pajama shirt on under your regular shirt.

Sometimes you just want to go to sleep,
but the teacher says, "Time to go to reading group."

Ugh.

But one morning, everybody starts to fall asleep and the teacher doesn't even notice.

So you fall asleep and bang your head on your desk.

But wait, where is your best friend, Sally?

"Gone, moved, not coming back," says the teacher. You cry and cry until there is a river.

"Swim!" shout your classmates.

And they jump in the river

crisscross applesauce

and flow out the door.

Then in flows Sally, sitting on an invisible chair, staring at her spelling test.

And one morning your teacher wakes you up and she's eating an ice cream cone. It is all the flavors mixed together in

one big scoop.

And one morning while you are writing in your agenda in June something freaky happens. It begins to hail.

Then a storm comes and the lights go out and the computers shut down in the class for 30 minutes. Then they come back on and you discover that your teacher got shocked and got so nice that she is going to take you all out for ice cream.

One morning your teacher gives you your report card and she says,

"You've got straight As."

So you say, "Oh my gosh! Are you serious?"

This is the best thing that has ever happened to you. Your mom thinks this is a special day so you celebrate with a party and all your friends come and even your teacher comes.

But on another morning your teacher tries to write on paper with a Promethean Pen.

And then there is a substitute teacher and the kids tell her that the regular teacher dances to rap music.

And another morning, your best friend comes in with a real live scar like Harry Potter. He says that he tripped on a carpet, and fell, and his forehead pierced the corner of a brick fireplace.

During the rest of homeroom, you focus on your friend. You wonder:

Is he Harry Potter?

Then Mr. Welch comes in with Barney pajamas that read,

"I love you, you love me."

But later, during lunch, your friend tells you that she's moving.

Then your dessert falls
into the fish tank
and the eel eats it.

You get the teacher to go outside and then you lock the door and have a party and order pizza through the window and get a DJ to jump through the window and play music.

And your teacher comes back with a huge candy cake for Christmas. To celebrate, you go sledding when you get home!

One morning a little boy named Bob looks outside and sees snow
just like a white blanket across the world.

Then the phone starts to ring. The teacher picks it up and a strange expression falls across her face.

"School is over for today!" she says. "Have fun!"

Bob runs home, grabs his sled and heads for the hills.

Another morning, Julia shrieks, "Snow!" Everyone dashes to the door and bursts through.

Then David yells, "Melanie flipped over the railing!"

The teacher rushes out and jumps over the railing to save her.

When Melanie is saved, you sit down at your desks and pretend that nothing happened.

Another morning you look out the window and imagine yourself outside. You hear the birds chirping and see the fall trees that tower above you, surrounded by shining yellow flowers.

The sun rises up to its throne in the sky, as if carried by the wind.

Suddenly you snap out of it and look around.

The chairs are empty.

You hear the buzzing of the computers but

nobody is sitting in front of them.

The black board still has the homework and the lights are off.

You feel

lonely

in this dark room,

but you hear the sound of voices in the hallway.

So you run out of the room to join your class on the way to specials.