

Poems by Kate Mullikin

Box Boy

Put down that box, boy
With the shiny guns
And metallic sounds
And false glory
Stop repeating that same
Old bloody story
In different places
Though I must admit,
The graphics are quite real
And make you feel
As if you actually are there -

Yet why you want to go there
I can't understand -
You become the main character:
A hunter, a soldier, a slayer, a man -

But you're just a boy
With a box of violence for a toy

Turn off your not-so-magic lantern
And let a book turn you on instead
Read about death
Read about bloodshed
Read about revenge and regret
And all its human possibilities
Learn about others' lives and sensibilities
Anything else besides your own quest
To be the best at a game of war

Open up your brain son
Before your eyeballs bleed
Put down that box boy,
Pick up a paper book
Turn over a new leaf
AND READ.

Making Art

To make art
You must start
With the heart of a child
And then run wild
Around the possibilities
Of being completely in control
Of something that may one day
Take over your soul.

To make art you must
Practice being patient and smart
And ignore the clock
And enjoy the time
To draw a line
That makes a shape
That adds value
To your design
That takes form
In your life -
A form that you
Might like to add
Texture and color to
And hurl out into space
Declaring that you are you.

Most Satisfying

When middle school children find
The right book to hook them in,
As they read,
Their brains grow
And auras glow...

My senses spin –
I feed off their energy
From within.

There is nothing more beautiful

Than a teen-age face
In a far off place
On a sea of words...

The only sound that can be heard
In our classroom today
Is breath
And sometimes the occasional
Gasping or
Laughter burst.

The sight of a bunch of good books being devoured
By a class of mindful middle school students -

Is the most satisfying sight on earth.

Open Up

The middle school children huddle by the entrance
Looking for a door to be opened
They stand under bare trees in the cold
In the corners of the school yard
Waiting for the building to be unlocked

Some shiver and read from a paper book
Some sip from a gas station coffee cup
Looking up at the morning sky
Trying hard to catch my eye as I hurry by
And slink back in my hole

Where I am sucked in by
Computer screens, piles of papers and
Streams of e-mails with edicts pouring in –
I begin to scurry and worry about my lessons
Running up and down the stairs to and from
The copy room.

Still, outside the school children stand in wait
They watch me sneak by again
Now with piles of hand-outs

They stretch out their eager hands and cry out
“Can we help?”

Their voices soothe me.
Their faces move me to the moment.

“Please help me,” I respond happily -
And their eyes light up
And the doors are opened.

First Computerized Standardized Test

Oh brave new world
With such brave people in it -

Hammering away at the key board
Trying so hard not to be bored
Torn, worn down by society's
Grinding wheel that keeps on turning
Out new ways of performing
Printing out and showing
What it is we should be knowing
By now, and now, and how about now?
We should all know how to
Type, Skype, Facebook,
Email, Text, Tweet,
Instagram and oh yes READ
In order to succeed to sift
Through the sources to decide what is real
To surf the web, to research
Relate and prove *that we can think* Critically
And still have some strength left to feel -
Lost in this ocean of new technology
Old folks like me can be shaken
Taken back, feel forsaken
I must awaken to the fact that
My students are and will always be
More technologically savvy than me
Yet I still have so much to give
Living in this school

My second home
The kids my heartbeat - they set the tone
Of a rhythm and enthusiasm for life
Pushing the blood around my bones
And through my tired veins
I am renewed again
With the faith that they can
Conquer whatever machine
They are given to measure the
Depths of their still forming teenage brains -

Oh brave new world
With such brave people in it.