Poetry

Wings of Literacy
Cynthia Hutchinson
Reading Recovery Teacher
Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Cynthia writes: “My teacher leader has often compared the progress of a Reading Recovery student to a sleepy butterfly awakening and emerging from its chrysalis shell. With that image in mind, I considered how the process might feel to my students…”

When you look at me,
Do you know you see
A butterfly
   On wings of literacy?
It may be hard to tell,
But once a chrysalis shell
   Held my reading wings
   Tucked inside.
Then one day I emerged,
   Slowly, word by word,
   With damp and crumpled
      Reading, writing wings.
But soon I became strong.
(It didn’t take too long.)
   My wings expanded.
   Literacy took flight.
And now just look at me!
   I write and I can read!
   I soar
   On wings of literacy.

Keep On
Fraida Zusman
Reading Recovery Teacher
Springfield, Virginia

Fraida writes: “My gratifying experiences as a Reading Recovery teacher and as a student in continuing contact sessions continue to inspire my poetry.”

The words don’t come easily,
Might as well be chicken scratch on the page.
One-word pages are the repertoire,
Ending as soon as they begin.
The bs and the ds, the ps and the qs
Might as well as be the front door
   and the back door
Painted the same color,
   Same panels and panes, locks and curtains.

Crushing the Emptiness
Glenn C. Coats
Reading Recovery Teacher
Riegelsville, Pennsylvania

I do not care to know your father’s dreams
or why he lost his job.

Do not tell me when his temper flies down
   the staircase
like an angry dog
   or chases you to hide
under the bed.
It is not my business
to know how lovely your mother is
   (how dark the eyes)
or why your father closes
   the door against her
as if shutting out
   a winter storm.
I will teach you to read
   that is all,
so that you may read
words out loud
   until they fill
the bare rooms you find
   at home,
crushing the emptiness
to pieces.

Some letters remain silent,
Sight and sound not yet merged.
They dance without holding hands,
Going their separate ways.
The hand is unsure.
The marker wants to travel across
   the page.
But words that should be old friends
   Are still strangers.
The mind is in labor.
It fights to give birth to a simple story.
Ideas are trapped
   Within the womb of the mind.
A teacher stays patient,
   Welcoming, open, calm.
Time will pass and it will happen,
   She is sure.
Pushing and prodding,
Prompting and practicing her craft,
   She will keep on.

Soon words come quickly.
Books have pages to turn.
Letters are all different,
Even the ones that want to confuse.
Letters find their voice,
   Sight and sound waltz to a
      beautiful tune.
Stories flow and there is so
   much to say!

Slow down and take a breath!
Catch up with the marker
   racing ahead!

Suddenly it is sunrise.
The dawn is bright,
   Covering the world
In a stunning brilliance.
Smiles sparkle, eyes twinkle.
Two hearts are full with joy.
A life is changed forever.
What would we do without keeping on?