

THE RITE OF PASSAGE

Time is getting close.
One week before oral comps.
Time to practice for the big test.
Kris, Mary, and I cut up questions and placed them in a pot.
 Rehearse drawing questions.
 Feel the butterflies invade our bodies.
 Experience that awkwardness as we
 Trip over our words, and
 Attempt to speak intelligently on each
 Particular topic.
The morning of December 6th –
I drive to school without music.
A light drizzle falls around me.
My attention is on my body
 My chest feels heavy.
 My throat feels hot!
 I practice breathing deeply.
 R e l a x i n g
I'm ready! How could I not do well?
In just a few hours this will all be behind me.
A previously trained teacher leader sends our class warm wishes,
 And a hot tea party, New Zealand style.
 Her message to us is that this work,
 This stress –
 Leaving our families and homes,
 Is indeed worth it.
To help at-risk children experience success,
Rather than failure,
And to have the mission to bring our developing expertise back to our states
 And train other teachers to become what we value
Three months of intensive work has prepared us for this day.
 A day of initiation.
 The rite of passage.
 The hero's journey.
We join the ranks of teacher leaders in 48 states,
 Four Canadian Provinces,
 New Zealand,
 Australia,
 England,
 Germany,
 Japan.
We made it!



In this poem, Jill Speering shares her feelings on the day of her oral comprehensive exam in December 1994, at the end of her first quarter of training at The Ohio State University.

Over her 15 years as a Reading Recovery teacher leader and an additional 8 years as a Metro Nashville School Board member, Reading Recovery teacher leaders there trained over 228 teachers.

Reading Recovery's impact on Jill's life experiences is documented in her book, *Rubies in the Rubble*.

In Jill's own words: "As I was preparing to leave the board at the end of my second term, I was filled with gratitude for time to reflect. I decided to write a book about my life—how a young girl's life came full circle. One who was convinced she was stupid, became a woman who led a cause in Nashville to help students succeed in school which is the baseline for success in life. Literacy achievement builds students' confidence and self-respect. I found the rubies in the rubble of my personal and professional life."

Speering, J. (2021). *Rubies in the rubble*. Author.