

Zimmer in grade school



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the poem, “ Zimmer in Grade School”, by Paul Zimmer, the speaker talks about the unhappy memories of his childhood. He even wondered why he was born, he feared God, school, and his school mates. The speaker states, “ My parents wrung their loving hands. / My guardian angel wept constantly. ” (11). He never seem to get things right even as an adult. In grade school, I never got things right the first time either. There was always a language barrier because English was not my first language. I remember having those unpleasant experiences and fears just like the speaker had had in grade school.

One can even argue that the fears and lack of English helped shape me into the kind of person that you see today. The only good thing tat I was good at in grade school was trying to pretend that I knew everything already when really I did not know that much and understood very little. The speaker quote, “ My worst mistakes were at/ The blackboard for Jesus and all/ The saints to see. ” (12). My teachers would ask me, “ ok Seng, do you understand how to do the math problems now? ”, and I would nod but the truth was that I did not know.

I realized that they, my teachers, would leave me alone if they thought that I knew what I was doing, hence that would draw the attention away from me. It was always the confrontation at the blackboard that would always gave me away to my teachers that obviously I lied. I did not feared God because I knew he would understand why I did what I did and forgave me for lying, but I felt as if the rest of the world was looking down at me. My classmates, my teachers, and my friends can now see how much of a failure I was as I try to keep calm and divert from their stares.

The embarrassing proof of failure did not just end at the black board because at the end of each semester, report cards were handed out to every student. My parents always compared my C's and B's to my sister's straight A's. My sister, Ma, is two years younger than me but she was smarter and more likable than me. The speaker quote, " My report card proclaimed/ These scarlet failures. " (11). Just like the speaker, my scarlet failures seem to carry on with me till this very day. As an adult, I try not to be that little girl who thinks that she knew everything.

In fact I became less shy and more out spoken, I ask questions that I do not know the answer to, and I share what I do know. As a child, the speaker was more of a trouble maker; he quotes " My parents wrung their loving hands. / My guardian angel wept constantly. " (11). I, too, went through the same experience with my parents. My parents wrung their loving hands when I got suspended for throwing a snowball at someone's face, and when I got detention three days in a row for not turning in homework, and when I got caught throwing food during lunch.

These acts were all innocent, I promise, but the punishment was always a lot more severe. As an adult I notice that I have similar but very different quality than I did in grade school. For one, I nod still and pretend that I know what people are saying to me but not when it comes to school work. Unlike the speaker in the poem, I use the unhappy memories of grade school to connect with students of my own since I work for the Boys and Girls Clubs and Greater Milwaukee.

In fact, many people should try to use their knowledge of fears and personal failures to try to help others that are going through the same situation. I know that it works for a fact because I do it everyday. As an after school teacher, I can spot and work with the individual that does not know what he/she is doing, but pretends to understand because I have been through it before. If only the speaker embraced his grade school memories instead of thinking of them as unwanted or undesirable, he too can be a better person because I know I have.