

# A feather on the clyde

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A deer wanders through a meadow, stopping to take a drink. The trees sway in the wind, and all manner of creatures are seen dashing in and out of the shelter of their low- hanging branches.

Despite the wide open scene depicted in this mural, the wall it is painted on closes in faster and faster. There is no more room for us to move, no room to breathe. We are taught, we are told, and we are instructed. Facts are pouring out of our ears, our brains too full of similes, metaphors, definitions, synonyms, and antonyms. It is all pounded into our brains every day and every night.

We live and breathe information. Because with all that space being taken up by hypotheses and diagrams, there is no room for an opinion. Because opinions are dangerous. No one is excused from this insanity. No one is safe from the scrutiny.

Everyone is part of this madhouse. It is the culture that we live in today, and the society of students. Teenagers are all about exclusion. They need to block other people out to make themselves feel worthwhile. To avoid being clocked out, individualism is dropped at the door. If you want to join the club, you have to become the club.

There is no way that any unique person could survive in the world of high school, simply because the other students would not like it. The only thing teenagers care more about than excluding others is avoiding that same exclusion. It is a fight not to be left out; a battle not to be left behind, no matter what some administrative policy might try to say. In our school, the teachers and the administration shun us if we have any contradicting ideas

that are not part of the approved dialogue. If we try to be any kind of unique individual, we are shut down instantly and told, “ That is not how we do things around here.

” We are brainwashed to believe all of the facts that are thrown at us day in and day out. There are moments that I can never forget, moments of simply saying a few short words to a teacher, or in a couple of cases, and administrator. I was not intending to be rude and I certainly did not say anything that could be considered vulgar or offensive. And yet, when I opened my mouth and the words came out, their eyes widened in shock, and something that looked a little bit like fear. It was my opinion that scared them. It was my knowledge of the world outside these walls.

IT terrified them to know that I might have concerns besides what x might equal. It made them shudder to think that I might know something.

Knowledge is power, and power is the last arrow they want in our quiver.

One individual is nothing. One individual can be squashed under the great, stomping foot of institution.

One feather may not look like anything, being borne down the third largest river in Scotland, but the picture would still be different without that feather. Whether it means to or not, that feather can change someone’s perspective of the entire river. We are told not to be that feather. We are told not to be different. Yet we do just that. We defy the establishment’s determination to keep down the opinions.

Opinions are dangerous. So am I.