What is a 3rd grader, anyway?

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November 2020

Look at you – a marvelous, wonderful, human learning!

You worked through crawling, walking,

running, climbing,

jumping, leaping,

flying? Still working on that?

You learned sucking and swallowing

eating and chewing,

mixing and matching

Now, on to cooking and baking!

Remember oohing and cooing?

babbling and singing?

hearing sounds and seeing new words

worlds of words

words sounded

words printed

stories and tales from far away

brought to life in your imagination.

Words in translation

versions of the same.

This sequence, these steps are

real, important, necessary

Most people can’t ride a bike

until they’ve mastered

the balance needed

to walk a balance beam.

Most people practice sums

long before they attempt

multiplication.

Many people learn to read

before they write –

though others use scribbles

and letter-like forms

to construct a written expression

before they learn to read.

All this, and more

Some of these, and others untold

you’ve grasped, learnt, acquired

without a teacher

or maybe with.

Teachers do help

They equip, prepare, present

They help us to practice,

to know, to find out

all we didn’t know

and how to look it up.

Teachers care

Sometimes they catch us as we

fail and fall.

others cajole and coax

prodding us along

to try and try again.

good ones cackle with glee

at every attempt

we make to attain a new skill

try another way, or take a first step

in a new direction.

All this teaching and learning

is quite different from

schools and rules.

schools love order

and procedures.

“Do this! Stop that!”

“First you know your ABCs

Then I will test your colors

And numbers.”

“All this wonder

all this “Watch me!”

now must wait,

while I deliver my lesson

on how to count peas.”

“And to make it easy on me

I’m going to slice you all

Into Grades,

based on age,

and only tell you what

I think you need

to know now.

whether you’ve finished yesterday’s

lesson or not

whether you want to prepare for

the tomorrow of my design, or another.”

“So grades go

First and then Second

Fifth after Fourth.

Siblings and co-learners out,

just all the same in

this class

a group of same-aged subjects

subjected to my schedule,

my time,

my lessons – “

Remember when you used

to learn without being taught?

Find those who champion

the learner you are.

Challenge those who

tell you to do it this way

because I said so.

Ask me someday about that time

I stood up to them,

and another time when I didn’t.

Look at you – a marvelous, wonderful, human learning!