

Abby Erdelatz  
6/11/12  
Year in a Poem  
Honors 10 A2  
Mr. Coia  
96 lines

## Memoirs of a Supposed Teacher's Pet

I walked into room 603 with high expectations  
Eighth grade had taught me to write  
And I hoped I hadn't lost all knowledge of the skill  
Mr. Coia's extravagant hand gestures  
Greeted me like old friends

His wooden stick  
Proclaimed its authority with a loud crack on a nearby desk  
Almost reminiscent of Prospero's staff  
With its magical powers to silence the classroom  
We stumbled through *Shakespeare* with eyes rolled

But the warm feeling from a comment left on my first essay of the year:  
*"I missed your writing"*  
Lasted me through the drudgery of our first book.

We chuckled at Mr. Hogen's initial intense lectures  
Mostly to keep ourselves from feeling apprehensive  
At his icy, yet comical stares

We scoffed through the audio version of *Tartuffe*  
And could hardly contain ourselves  
As Mr. Coia placed a dictionary on Allison's knee  
For Tristan to awkwardly touch

The inappropriate bits scattered through *Candide*  
That we all thought we'd be the first to find  
Yet little did we know the true meanings of those cryptic phrases

Thank goodness our winter break homework  
Was merely to watch a movie  
I got lucky with *Shadowlands*  
Looking back, I hope I did C.S. Lewis justice

Then the unit we'd all love to hate  
We all tried to out-groan each other at the dreaded *Dickens*  
But secretly, we all had pity on Sidney Carton  
Sorrowfully professing his love

My father and I listened to the audiobook in the car

And mimicked the British accents

Lugging the huge textbook around  
Seemed hardly worth the few pages that contained *A Doll's House*  
And though Bailey was open about her loathing of Dora's feminism  
I, as usual, wanted everyone to be right

By now, I was fearless enough of Hogen to film a couple of his rants  
Those videos still make me laugh

I wish I could say I had command of a German accent  
But my attempts at mimicking Paul Baummer and Katscinsky  
Were less than extraordinary  
I might have teared up at the end of *All Quiet*  
Had the ending not been ruined  
By a person who shall not be named

For Things Fall Apart, it was back to Africa  
The obscure continent  
That is still *macaroni-and-cheese yellow* in my mind  
And will always be

Kareem was so inspired that our review team in Hogen's  
Was dubbed the name "Okonkwo's Tree"  
Which turned out to be slightly prophetic

Then came the small, penultimate book of *Night*  
I shivered at the images Elie described  
And realized with sadness that the end was near  
Never will I forget these class discussions  
(See what I did there.)

And finally came the novel  
That I'd decided in September  
Would be my favorite  
Mostly because of its intriguing cover

In fact, *Pi* lived up to my expectations  
With his tiger domestication and three religions

But I closed the book with sadness  
Because I knew it was the final chapter  
Of my time here

And for all the late nights of reading  
And *essays done the night before*  
And witty, joking insults directed at me  
And almost-A-pluses

Nothing can equal the quotes that line the walls  
Or the cheesy Seinfeld poster

Or the horrible whiteboard illustrations  
That paint my memory of this room

I'll miss Mr. Coia's habitual pacing as he teaches  
And the way essays came out of nowhere onto my computer screen  
Until I ended up with 100 words too many  
The hope that I'd get good peer graders  
And the realization  
That Mr. Coia had been right about this book after all  
Or not

And so I won't stop writing  
No matter how annoying my next teacher is  
Wherever I go next  
I promise to see [The Great Gatsby](#) in December  
And argue worldviews with those who think differently

This is my last piece of writing for you, Mr. Coia  
And as usual, I've made it entirely too long  
Sorry about that  
I truly wish I could make up for it next year  
However, I can't

But you taught me to write  
And I will always be grateful for it.

*Thank you.*

Aleesa Chavez  
June 11, 2012  
IH Period A2 Year in a Poem  
Mr. Coia  
323 Words

## Tick Tock Ten (Unfathomable corniness in ten stanzas)

Wake up in the morning feeling like a dolly  
Grab my macaroons I'm out the door, I'm 'bout to leave this city  
Before I leave, shut the door, with my purse full of mac's  
'Cause when I leave for the Night I'm not coming back

I'm talking smoke filling up my nose  
Germans telling us to take off our clothes  
Dentists extracting teeth with rusty spoons  
Keep-marching so the Nazi's won't shoot me  
227 days and hopefully I'll be free  
Careful cause your life boat might get a bit tipsy

Please stop, my raft might pop, Richard Parker's 'bout to hop  
On the "cook" and they'll fight, then make zebra delight  
**Tick tock, on the clock "where's my best of all possible worlds" now**

**Not a care in the world, 'cause I'm naïve like Candide  
Just stashed some dirt inside my pocket 'cause I'm a bit full of greed  
Now I find this hard to tell you but may say it quite smugly,  
But he no longer loves you just because you're Cunegonde-ugly**

Prospero's tempest made the ship go kerplunk  
Trinculio and Stephano getting greedy and drunk,  
Caliban trying touch Miranda's junk

**NOW KEEP YOUR MASK ON, YOU DON'T WANT TO BREATHE THAT GAS  
AND KEEP IN THE TRENCHES, GO DOWN,  
WAIT, THERE'S A SOLDIER DOWN,  
KEMMERICH JUST WENT DOWN**

Please stop, Manette, stop, there's no more shoes for you to mop  
Tonight, to your delight, your daughter and you will unite  
Tick tock, two o'clock, time to see "Darnay's" head chopped

YOU RAISED HIM UP, TO BREAK HIM DOWN  
OKONKWO YOU'RE NOT A TRUE FATHER  
EZIMNA'S NOT MALE, AND NWOYE'S WEAK,  
WHAT MORE CAN YOU ASK FOR?

He's "of holiness an zeal" lying isn't a big deal  
Unfit that he won't quit, 'cause he is a hypocrite  
Elemire seduced, they had proof, of the bad side of Tartuffe

Tick tock, in the clock Coia's card magic tricks rock  
We write, and recite, 'til we see the sunlight  
Tick tock, on the clock, Honor's Ten is almost over

Allison Jordan  
6/11/12  
A Year in a Poem  
10IH Period A2  
Mr. Coia

### Yet Another Not-So-Creative Title

I walked in on the first day, a freshman no longer,  
Unsure of what to expect, although I had Mr. Coia 2 years back.  
I knew the difference between 8<sup>th</sup> then and now would be drastic,  
But I didn't know how.

I learned very quickly as we were assigned our first essay.  
We were to write about some sort of personal renaissance,  
And of course, we all complained.  
Was this Mr. Coia's attempt to weed out the weak ones?  
Was this some kind of conspiracy?  
I wouldn't know.

As I stared at the books at the front of the class,  
So carefully lined up in order of appearance.  
I shuddered as I laid eyes on *The Tempest* by Shakespeare.  
Much to my father's chagrin, I complained.  
Every time I expressed my hatred, my father would gasp;  
It was a reaction much like Mr. Coia would have  
If someone were to confess their dislike towards *A Tale of Two Cities*.

I almost forgot to mention *Tartuffe*, the only play we never *really* read.  
I sat in class and couldn't help but giggle  
At the accent of the actor who portrayed Tartuffe, quite the odd, creepy character.  
I'll never forget the heat on my cheeks when I sat in front of the class  
With a book for a thigh and Tristan for a Tartuffe.  
I still don't understand why I volunteered for that embarrassment.

Not soon enough did I feel *Candide*'s pages between my fingers,  
But this book did not appeal to me in the least,  
And I realized how much innocence I had lost throughout the years.  
But I must confess it took me a while to learn the true meaning of "experimental physics."

I only wish I could have felt relief when I opened *A Tale of Two Cities*,  
But the complaints I had heard from sophomores the year before  
Filled me with a biased opinion.  
Oh, how I had been led astray! I couldn't have been more satisfied  
As Sydney Carton redeemed himself and died for love.

I can't say *A Doll's House* came too soon,  
Considering the month we'd spent reading a Charles Dickens classic.  
I understood the material and impressed Mr. Coia with my input,  
But I hated the plot and couldn't stand ~~N~~ora,  
Who so ungratefully slammed the door on her family  
And left the world she knew behind.

Then came *All Quiet on the Western Front*,  
A World War II novel from, unlike most, the perspective of the Germans.  
I will never forget how important Paul's potato pancakes were,  
As he risked his life to keep them safe.  
I loved his character until the very end.

We went back a few centuries to a land of African tribes,  
Where Okonkwo instilled fear into his neighbors with his strength,  
The same strength that was taken away by a Christian takeover.  
His death still seems so sudden. That was it?

*Night*, a book about the Holocaust, thrust us back to the 20<sup>th</sup> century,  
A novel so amazingly written by Elie Wiesel, starring himself as the main character.  
It's impossible to understand how Hitler could do something so terrible,  
Stealing the Jewish people's faith and will to live.  
I still debate whether or not Elie's survival makes a happy ending.

I'm sure I wasn't the only one relieved to read our last book of the year.  
When I first saw *Life of Pi*, I thought it to be stupid.  
However, I learned how wrong I was.  
Unlike many of my classmates, I enjoyed this book,  
Even when I disagreed with Pi's religious convictions  
And couldn't bring myself to believe his survival story that involved a ferocious tiger.

Mr. Coia's selection of books was... less than perfect,  
And of course I can't say I enjoyed every single one  
Even if he wishes I could.  
But I can say that I loved each class discussion  
That made me feel intelligent and left me feeling like I learned something,  
And that at least one half of Honors 10 was worth it.

Coree Stuart  
June 11, 2012  
Year in a Poem  
10IH A1  
Mr. Coia  
889 words

### **The Greatest Magic Trick**

“Hey guys,  
Welcome to honors!  
It’s going to be really hard.  
You might fail.”  
That is how my brain summarized an entire lecture,  
About those who should drop out of Honors 10,  
And those who shouldn’t.  
Even a  
“May the odds be ever in your favor!”  
Would have been entirely more comforting.

Suddenly brows furrowed together,  
Eyes widened,  
And Mr. Coia spoke in a voice all too intense to match with his own mouth.  
Crickets.  
Crickets.  
That was a Mr. Hogen impression.  
Apparently it was supposed to be funny.  
I didn’t get it.

Day after day we shuffled into class,  
Eyes wide,  
Binders organized,  
As we learned about Ferdinand and his love, Miranda.  
As if a metaphor for the very love in the story,  
*The Tempest* was practically in a different language.  
As pages were ripped off the calendar my eyes were suddenly adjusted.  
I understood,  
Just as I will one day understand love.

“That was a joke, guys.  
You’re allowed to laugh.”

Next was *Tartuffe*.  
He was such a pig of a pious person,  
Gives the rest of them a bad name.  
It was easier to read.

I failed the quizzes all the same.  
I wish Mr. Coia was serious every time he told us we were exempt from taking them.

“You know what...  
Every time I wave my stick,  
That means you guys are *supposed* to laugh.”

Candide was sure it was the best of all possible worlds.  
As essays  
Quizzes  
And power of one  
All flooded over me until I felt I would soon drown,  
I had to disagree with him.

“Here, I’ll show you guys a magic trick.  
It’s Monday—this is sure to liven you guys up.”

We were given promises in the beginning of *A Tale of Two Cities*.  
First,  
Reading it would be like having our brains punched in the face every night.  
Second,  
If it wasn’t our favorite,  
We would look back on our experience fondly.  
Both were true.  
I couldn’t help feeling like Mr. Carton,  
Putting forth the great sacrifice of my complete and total mental energy for those weeks,  
Like he laid down his life.  
Maybe the two aren’t so comparable.

“You know what, I trust him so much I’d let him date my daughter.”  
“Mr. Coia... you don’t have a daughter.”

*A Dolls House* pitted us all against each other,  
A war over whether or not Nora was a piece of scum,  
A disgrace to the race of women.  
I personally think she set herself up for what she got.  
However,  
I understand her desire to flee from all of her problems.  
At times,  
mere mention of a new assignment made me want to stand up and dart out of the room,  
flying free as an eagle,  
away from one more reading or essay.  
I never did.  
I’m glad I stayed.

“I’m telling you guys,



giraffe meat is the best.”

Then we started *All Quiet on the Western Front*.  
Suddenly, the boys seemed to pay more attention during discussions.  
Probably only because it was a war novel.  
Paul was a noble figure,  
Even at the young age of nineteen.  
He made me realize that war is devastating,  
No matter which side you’re on.  
I still forget he was a German.

“Please Mr. Coia, show us a magic trick.  
It’s Monday and we want to be livelier.”

Again, brows furrowed together,  
Eyes widened,  
And Mr. Coia spoke in a voice all too intense to match with his own mouth.  
Laughter floods the room.  
That was a Mr. Hogen impression.  
It was really funny.  
Finally, we all get it.

In *Things Fall Apart*,  
We were all shocked by the difference in the roles of a marriage in other cultures.  
Heaven knows Okonkwo would have never gotten away with shooting his wives,  
Beating them,  
Or even ordering them around,  
If he had been born a modern-day American.  
Missionaries led a beast of a man to kill himself.  
It wasn’t the first or the last time in this class,  
The flawlessness of the Christian church was questioned.

“I can see it now...  
some day you’ll be teaching next door to me,  
and I’ll tell my students about how I taught you in Honors 10.”

I felt like I was dying right along with Elie in *Night*.  
With Power of One over,  
It felt like I shouldn’t have to go to school ever again.  
Still the work continued,  
And *Night* seemed to strengthen my faith in a God,  
Rather than destroy it,  
Like it did for Elie.

“Please don’t tell my wife.”

*Life of Pi* punched my brain in the face,  
Just like *Tale of Two Cities*,  
Only for different reasons.  
People or animals?  
I say it's just like religions for Pi...  
We don't have to believe just one.

My father sat us down for dinner as a family,  
Scrambling to start some sort of a conversation.  
"What is your favorite class you've taken in your life?"  
This question seemed like a very hard one to answer at first,  
Especially since my mother was sitting right there,  
And she's been the teacher for most of the classes in my life.  
But then the thought entered my mind,  
Slowly,  
Quietly,  
And there was a peaceful assurance of it.  
Honors 10,  
Literature,  
With Mr. Coia.

His greatest magic trick of all was,  
By far,  
Turning me from a kid to a writer.