

What Can't be Said Must be Written

By: Kaitlynn Bayne

I look around the room and I see fifteen other students. We are all the same age, we are all in the same class, yet we are all so different. I hold in my hand a book, the corners of the pages are bent, and the cover is all black with white lettering across the top. Every student in the class has the same book, another small thing we had in common. For now, we all wait while the professor expresses his interpretation of the book. We sit and listen like the good students we are. "But what do you think?" he asks. The dreaded words begin to ring in my ears. What do I think? Actually, I think a lot. Thoughts pour into my head like a waterfall. As I ponder the question and try to gather my thoughts, others start to speak up and voice their opinions. What a difference between me and my peers. It takes me a while to gather my thoughts, and even then I can rarely articulate them. The silent room soon is filled with voices bouncing back and forth—shouting ideas, arguing claims. As the chaos fills the room around me, I stay silent.

It is not that I don't want to participate, but there is a force that won't let me speak. I open my mouth, but stare blankly into the middle of the room. I can't imagine what I look like right now. Probably like a deer in the headlights or the Lion's wide receiver when he realizes the ball is headed his way. My head feels like a jail cell, my thoughts constrained, hitting up against a wall, hoping to break through. As voice by voice barges in to the conversation, each overpowering the next, I sink deeper and deeper into my chair. My heart beat is racing, my hands are shaking—I am stunned by the speed of the conversation around me. I know I need to participate to get credit for the class so I try to come up with something to contribute to the

Comment [BK1]: I wanted to point out similarities between me and the other students first, then compare a difference later. This is why I mentioned this, but I feel like it is kind of awkward. How can I change this to make it seem like it fits more?

Comment [BK2]: I wanted to make it clear that the issue is not that I don't have an opinion. I thought a nice short answer to the question would be good for the flow of the paper, but once again I think it is out of place or just worded oddly. Should I keep it or just ditch it?

Comment [BK3]: This was what I wanted to use as the basis for the answer to why I write. I write to articulate my thoughts in a way I can't do by just speaking. Is this sentence worth keeping, or does the rest cover it?

Comment [BK4]: I wanted to add humor here. To be absolutely honest, I don't even know if this makes sense. I am trying to come up with another analogy, but for now this is all I can come up with.

Comment [BK5]: I just realized a lot of my sentences are like this. I am trying to be descriptive, so I end up using a lot of commas. How else can I re-structure some of these sentences?

Comment [BK6]: I'm not sure if this is worded correctly. I wanted to describe it as if everybody was talking over one another.

Comment [BK7]: Is this the correct use of the dash? I wanted to break up the sentence without using more commas.

conversation. I jumble together some of the ideas that have been clogging my head, but, as I begin to speak, I freeze. I can't move and only manage to come up with the words, "I agree." Realizing I said nothing of importance, I struggle to come up with more to say. By the time I think it through, the conversation has already moved on, escalated, and **grown** without me. I'm back to watching the other students' voices fly across the room. **There is a certain rhythm to the conversation, like that of a jump rope on the playground. Everyone else seems to have jumped in, but I just stand to the side, too afraid to try. Even though I catch on to the direction of the conversation, I sit in my seat. Paralyzed.**

Comment [BK8]: I think I should come up with a different word here. I just wanted a third word to describe the situation.

Finally, I snap back to reality and try to come up with a solution to my fear of talking to these people. To escape the mess around me, I reach into my backpack for my notebook and pen. I open to a crisp, white piece of lined paper, hoping to articulate my thoughts. My trembling hands write "What **I** think" on the top of the paper. My heartbeat slows back to its normal rhythmic pace and a feeling of absolute Zen overcomes my body. Words begin to pour onto the paper: arguments, answers, and questions, all relevant to the conversation. As I write down each word, a weight feels like it is being lifted off of my shoulders. I look down at my paper, covered in chicken scratch. There were my thoughts. There was what I wanted to say.

Comment [BK9]: I thought this was a cool analogy, but I don't know if it is working here. I would love to keep the basis of the analogy, but I'm thinking it needs to be re-worded.

The chatter in the room begin to die down. The deep voice of the teacher rumbles, "Any other opinions?" I turn my head and look at those fifteen other students again. Some have beat-red faces from the breath-taking conversation they just endured. Others roll their eyes, annoyed by the opinions of their peers. I just sit there with a slight smile on my face. "Any other opinions?" repeats the professor. Still silent. "Okay, that's it for today. I'll see you next week."

Comment [BK10]: I wanted to emphasize that it was what *I* thought. Is bolding this necessary or should I just leave it to normal text?

The students begin to gather their things and form a mass exodus for the hallway. I sit in my seat for a minute, looking at my lined piece of paper. "What I think." I love the sound of

that. I finish up the last of my thoughts, rip out the page, and closed my notebook. I am happy. I leave the piece of paper with my professor. As I walk toward the now empty doorway, I look back at him. He reads my notes and smiles. He nods at me and says, “See you next week.” Satisfied, I put down my backpack and put my notebook away so it will be there for me next time, too.

Comment [BK11]: I wasn't sure how to end this. I wanted it to be clear that I am fine with the professor reading my writing (it's the talking to other students I am fearful of). But, I feel like this might just be a BS ending. I couldn't think of another way to wrap it up.

Comment [BK12]: Again, just wanted a way to articulate that writing is always there for me and that writing is how I communicate.