



9-1989

Impromptu Essays (Poem)

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Recommended Citation

Carpenter, Carol (1989) "Impromptu Essays (Poem)," *Teaching and Learning: The Journal of Natural Inquiry & Reflective Practice*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 6.

Available at: <https://commons.und.edu/tl-nirp-journal/vol4/iss1/6>

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Impromptu Essays

You write to me on desktops.

Jagged passions etched in wood

with steel paper clips and dry pens:

Lopsided hearts pierced with arrows.

Mary & John in '79 and class of . . .

Advice to one before

from one who sits now,

knees gum-glued to metal,

his motionless daydreams

(heavy against black oak)

explode in magic marker

expletives,

the permanent kind

as I pass out the mimeo sheets —

no peanut butter smudges

or erasures —

to cover the splintered hardness

of your fears.

The assignment

created in four nights

in my draped den

calls to your mushroomed souls

to write their spongy truths

in measured lines. How

can I tell you

my red pen's out of ink,

my text is coffee-soaked,

the grammar rules lost

in red maple roots?

You sweat spring rain,

build wadded paper glaciers

between us,

write pencil essays

in dictionary words.

Hand them in.

*Now, carve your woodcuts
until bells ring
and I'll read
your impromptu essays
after class
when I sit where you sat
and touch
your word slivers.*

—Carol Carpenter

