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## Writing Process

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## Writing Process

I had wanted to lead them to water,  
to the wide expanse of window where the air  
was opaque with rain,

but by the time we get there,  
to the end of corridor that ends in view  
of the world beyond high school,

the sky has emptied, and the ground draws our attention  
down, to where it displays new lakes  
the ducks have claimed,

waterfowl accepting changes in the landscape  
as easily as other wonders – flying, floating,  
webbed feet – unlike us,

without need to contemplate the weather -- not  
the way we are, looking like museum visitors  
before some great work,

like the poet when he stood before that river view  
and compared life to a balanced egg. I have, I know,  
talked too much

about autumnal equinox, Days of Awe and  
casting sins in moving water, have alerted them to signs  
of another hurricane coming

late September. Despite my efforts to help them  
learn poetry, this is always the awkward part –  
the getting-going –

teaching about holding experience and meaning  
in open, equal palms. I'm half expecting disaster.  
But they are surprisingly

obedient, and scratch words on paper, their heads  
rising and falling to the page, attentive to all they see  
beyond the glass:

to birds, trees and sky, writing without speaking. I  
watch them closely, knowing we will know each other well  
though we're strangers now,

even starting to love them, the mother in me. (I  
could never say it now, not yet, when they still find me  
so strange.) Then I lead them

back down the hall, to the classroom, they following like the line  
of ducklings that make their vernal trek to the brook  
beside the school, a few stumbling

before steadying themselves. Seated, some would like simple  
directions or even answers, but all I have are questions --  
about metaphor and memory --

and when I challenge them to see again what they've seen,  
they look at me blankly, incredulous, calculating.  
I mirror this confusion

in a silent assessments of their faces. And then they write  
just the same, minutes of furious writing in the lull  
between lunchtime bells,

writing about everything but a rain-drenched field, words  
pouring onto the page. Today, what we find is actually  
what we all were looking for.

- Dana Holley Maloney

**Dana Holley Maloney** teaches English at Tenafly High School. In 2012 she was awarded the Princeton University Secondary Teaching Award and the NCTE James Moffett Award. She has taught high school English since 1988.