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The Adolescent Poetic Experience as Supported by a Teacher/Poet's Heartfelt Empathy

JOSEPH S. PIZZO

New Jersey Council of Teachers of English

Joined in a mission to create original poetry—
mature vision blended with youthful angst,
we negotiate a path

Of discoveries and disappointments, desires
and distinctions. Explosions of energy and excitement
buoyed by support and safety—

consideration and consternation replaced by
observations and opinions—encouragement
dampening criticism

Ideas generated with playfulness and perception:
Peaches blossoming into golden orbs bursting with nectar
Clouds transformed into floating mountains of lighthearted ballerinas

Simple smiles healing troubled hearts,
soothing comfort through the beat of reassuring
rhythms, metaphors, and personification.

Delicate fingers crafting selections—
keyboards invite mélanges of explorations—
wafting breezes accenting fields of dahlias,

eyes discovering serene hues and melodies,
familiar friends offering havens during emotional storms
of lost friendships and compromised promises.

Safety secured and risk insulated,
poetic patterns providing precise escape
through mysterious haze:

language challenging meaning,
specificity and sincerity.
Encouragement through perseverance,

discouragement of distress,
youth engulfed in emerging emotions, descriptions
desiring clarity, sound pursuing sense,

unbridled energy countered by academic control,
intention pursuing meaning, instinct pursuing vision—
words waiting to be spoken, words

needing to be spoken, words requiring
voice, honesty, integrity, personality, individual
Intention. Sincerity with extended hands,

smiles of support, permission to seek adventure
and discover. Experienced expectations
thwarting dissonance, challenges replaced

by support through sincerity
In this instruction defined
by partnership and production

JOSEPH S. PIZZO is a 7th-grade integrated language arts teacher at the Black River Middle School in Chester and an adjunct professor of writing at Centenary University in Hackettstown. In his 51st year of teaching middle school and 32nd year at the university level, Joe constantly reinvents his best practices to stay current in his field while being a writer who teaches writing, a PD workshop provider, and a podcaster who features authors, middle level books, and issues (<https://www.youtube.com/@josephpizzo2357>). He can be reached at joseph.pizzo@chester-nj.org.