



5 Reasons Why I Hate Grades by Sarah J. Donovan

Five. Because they suck.

Four. As a kid, I never like competition, comparison as though your A identity made you more worthy of love, attention, a hug than my B identity. Sure, I skipped a few blanks, failed to match terms, only partially shaded a bubble or two, but my story was beautiful. It's not my fault creativity is only worth 10%.

Three. When it comes time to grade an essay, I read. I am transported into the heart and mind of a writer. I notice doubt in parentheticals, certainty in periods, excitement in fragments, and trust-distrust of their words in my hands. I cannot slash prepositions, scribe "awk," count typos — the being on the page defies such measurement. It feels wrong, is wrong to conflate it all to a letter, number, score.

Two. What they don't advertise in teacher job descriptions is that the reason you teach— to be the change, to make a difference — will be reduced to measuring, ranking, and sorting bodies into tracks of classes, limiting access to opportunities, beliefs of possibilities because of

one test or grade that cannot possibly define worth, should not factor into identity. So the A can do school, comply with rules, lacks wi-fi excuses, doesn't need to be after-school child care. So the C is subversive, resists meaningless homework, won't tolerate packets, doodles in the margin of the Cornell notes. So what? Who are they? What do they know? Who do they want to become? See, our students are not letters. We know that. And yet grades drive assignments, phone calls home, eligibility lists, high fives, and disappointed glares. So the next time your student asks, "Miss, what grade did I get?" Change the topic and say, "I'd rather talk about your poem."