

**Beyond this Night:
A poem from the last class before student teaching**

Vicki Sherbert

How do I encourage you
for what lies
beyond this moment,
beyond this class,
beyond this night?

I hope all you have learned
this semester
has flicked a spark at the
loosely gathered kindling
of all you've considered about
literacy and
learning and
learners.
You have questions that need to
simmer,
to soak,
to be mulled over.
You seek
the inspiration
to motivate and
the voice to advocate –
for your learners,
for literacy,
for yourselves.

As I read with you
and wrote with you and
modeled what I hoped would
become engaging practice in
your own literacy classrooms,
I wanted you to accept that
learning may be messy and
teaching may be hard, yet
every class, every day, is a
fresh start.

But now, it has come.
My last night to
write with you.
You are committed, compassionate educators.
Perhaps still pre-service,
but educators the same.

One of you spoke about “enough.”
I say to you:
Yes. You are enough. You are
more than enough!
You will continue
to *learn*,
to *grow*,
to *change*,
to *become*
in your calling
to teach.

When all is said and
begun – never done –
as educators you
embrace opportunity.
Opportunity
to learn,
to grow,
to change,
to become
whatever your future students and
you, yourselves, are called to be.

So tonight, I write
with you
one last time.
But forever
I will write
for you
and occasionally
to you.
Beyond this moment,
beyond this class,
beyond this night,
together and apart,
we write
the stories,
the poems,
the songs of our teaching lives.

Blessings to each of us
as we journey forth
beyond this night.

Author Biography

Vicki Sherbert, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor at Kansas State University. She works with secondary and middle school pre-service teachers in English, Journalism, and Speech/Theatre Education during their methods course and student teaching internship. She wrote this poem during the last night of the semester with her students. Prior to working in higher education, she taught for 28 years in public schools and has worked with elementary, middle school, and high school students. Her research interests include teacher education in language arts, place-based literacy experiences for rural learners, adolescent literacy, family literacy, and literacy experiences in military families. She can be reached at sherbev@ksu.edu.