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# THE IN-BETWEEN

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**Abstract**

The author reflects on her experience as a teacher intern during the last year of a Secondary English Education degree at Wichita State University, using a creative writing piece to discuss one particular class.

**Keywords:** teacher intern, student teaching, creative writing, reflection piece

You all walk in the door as the last-minute warning song plays over the intercom.

One of you on the far-left row throws a pencil at the other, and the one acting as target suddenly turns attacker, swiftly catching the pencil and launching back to smack the original person's face before they can block the projectile. Somehow, in a way I can never hope to understand, this is funny to you, because you both giggle about it as you settle into your seats. It's not even 10 a.m.

Another one of you walks up to your desk and casually sits in the front. It's at your normal seat, but it takes me aback for a moment because you're almost never here, and it's been a week since I last saw you. Still, you are here, today. You smile and joke with the girl at your side like you haven't missed a beat, then she laughs and jokes back, and it feels like we're all right where we belong.

Two of you rush to ask me if you can go to the coffee shop, already displaying an energy that absolutely does not need the added fuel of caffeine and sugar. But your eyes are bright and wide, only exaggerated by the glare of overhead LEDs on your glasses, and the room feels just a few degrees off-balanced without your reactions to the class story, so, reluctantly or not, neither I nor you two can tell, I say yes. You both are gone and back in a flash.

One more of you brings in your guitar case, slung over your back and cradled with gangly limbs. You're quiet, as always, but there's an extra gleam in your eyes at the knowledge that maybe, just maybe, if the class wraps up early, you'll be able to sneak the guitar out and pluck a few quiet but confident chords before lunch. I'll never tell you, but the gleam in my eye is hoping for the same thing.

A new one of you slips into the room silently, which I cannot comprehend, because as soon as you catch my eye, you shout my name, drag me over, and begin to tell me all the drama of your latest forensics meet. I see where the success in theater comes from. You can hardly get the words out of your mouth around a smile or a grimace, depending on the wild emotions from one second to the next. Hopefully you can keep up that same energy for the next 75 minutes.

All the rest of you chatter, giggle, rustle paper and drop water bottles and zip zippers like it's your goal to create a chorus of noise with as many harmonies as possible. It is, as always, slightly overwhelming. It does, as always, make me smile on my way back to the front of the room.

The warning music finishes, and you've all made it (mostly) into your seats. You are all smiling, in your own ways—some louder than others, some subtler than the rest. The room speaks your comfort for you.

You are all here. Nineteen of you. The nineteen I started August together with, the nineteen who will help me close out May.

It isn't the start or end of the day, and it isn't the start or end of the year, or even the start or end of this path we're all walking through this building. It is, though, important. It's bright, and it's fun, and it's a spark that proves why I'm here. Why you're here. Why we all have been and all will be here.

Why all of this matters.

Why I can't wait to see you all next year.

### **Author Biography**

Alice Huelskamp is a 2026 graduate of the secondary English education program at Wichita State University (WSU). In August, she will begin her teaching career at Kingman Middle-High School in Kingman, KS, while pursuing a master's degree in English at WSU. She looks forward to teaching the strengths and diversity of literature to middle and high school students in rural Kansas, and she is extremely excited to build the biggest classroom library she possibly can. Alice can be contacted at [aphuelskamp@gmail.com](mailto:aphuelskamp@gmail.com).

