

When I came to Thetford Academy in the fall of 2011, I was utterly terrified. As far as I could tell, three hundred people on one campus was an unfathomable size for a school. All of a sudden, the world had become enormous. Of course, now I know that Thetford itself is pretty small, but as I've grown up through the grades, I've noticed that it's started to seem big again. Out of nowhere, I'm back to seventh grade--I feel like I know the names of only about a quarter of the student body. At this point, I'm mainly familiar with exactly those people I was familiar with at the start of my TA career: my own class.

Over time, we've gained and lost classmates; we have been glad to welcome new people, and sorry to say goodbye to those who leave. It's easy to say that I'm happy to have spent time with this group of people--there is exceptional intelligence, creativity, kindness, innovation, and humor present in them all. I can't say that we as a group have been entirely free of contention, but I also can't imagine what

large group of people could be. However, as far as I can tell, the major rifts have been healed over time.

I've noticed that in the intermittent years, as we've each grown to be a bit more sure of ourselves, we've settled into our own spaces in the school where we feel most comfortable. That seems to be a trend among our generation. Over and over, I hear friends and classmates discuss their ambitions for the future, and they have a similar theme: carving out a pocket of the world in which to be content.

As we graduate and begin to roam beyond this campus--some farther than others--I am already beginning to miss this peaceful pocket of the world in which we live. The idyllic summer nights and winter mornings. The not-so-idyllic slushy blizzards, and the hot, humid days without air conditioning. I've been thinking more about summer recently because we are hurtling towards it at what seems to be an unprecedented speed, and because what else do students think about?

Every night of this most recent summer, I crept down to my house's porch swing and watched the fireflies, listening to music until the sun started to peek over the mountains. This was my peaceful corner of the world, in which nothing existed but the breeze, the music, and the quiet sounds of the goats across the yard.

One of my family's favorite poets, Wallace Stevens (after whom we named a kitten), spoke of a time when:

*The house was quiet and the world was calm.*

*The reader became the book; and summer night*

*Was like the conscious being of the book.*

*The house was quiet and the world was calm.*

*The words were spoken as if there was no book,*

*Except that the reader leaned above the page,*

*Wanted to lean, wanted much most to be*

*The scholar to whom his book is true, to whom*

*The summer night is like a perfection of thought.*

*The house was quiet because it had to be.*

*The quiet was part of the meaning, part of the mind:*

*The access of perfection to the page.*

*And the world was calm. The truth in a calm world,*

*In which there is no other meaning, itself*

*Is calm, itself is summer and night, itself*

*Is the reader leaning late and reading there.*

I am devoted to that feeling of the quiet sphere of peace, in which only you and the things you love exist. I think we all are. We want to travel, to see things we have never seen, to meet people and experience the midnight streetlamp glow of a city we've never been to before. But, all the same, I believe we desire the cozy mundanity of our own

home and family, whether they are the home and family we are born to or those we choose ourselves.

I wonder often where all of us will be, many years from now. Which of us will have come back here, or never left? Will our children, or our children's children, be walking the quad we walked across just today? Will we be in different states? Countries? Continents? Leading different lives in different places, with different friends, different memories, different ideas? I know that some of us want to go to the ends of the earth and back. No matter where each of you finds yourself, I truly hope you are able to carve out that space of peace and happiness. In closing, I've one more quote to share with you.

*I like to wonder if you can see me writing these words*

*somehow*

*I like to think the worst is forgotten; nothing but kindness*

*now.*

*I'd like to know where you call home, and if I will see you there*

*Is it abundant, does it suit you, and is it free of care?*

*I can remember when we were sure we'd not do the things*

*we'd seen*

*And oh, what a strange, unusual journey it has turned out to*

*be.*

*So far again, and so long, my friend, and so I will gladly send*

*Word from the corner I recognize, until the story ends.*

I'd like to underscore what I've said by simply thanking you all for making this journey so genuinely enjoyable, and I hope that corner in which you someday find yourself makes you as content as can be.

Thank you.