

## ***Autobiography of a Face* by Lucy Grealy (1994)**

Read *Autobiography of a Face* by Lucy Grealy (1994).

In the memoir, Grealy is diagnosed with bone cancer in her jaw. The cancer and chemotherapy eat away at her jawbone, collapsing her face. She's in great pain, her face is deformed, and now she has to start junior high school.

What will be the hardest place for her to be?

*Having seen plenty of teen movies with their promise of intrigue and drama, I had been looking forward to going to the lunchroom. As it happened, I sat down next to a table full of boys.*

*They pointed openly and laughed, calling out loudly enough for me to hear, "What on earth is that?" "That is the ugliest girl I have ever seen." I knew in my heart that their comments had nothing to do with me, that this was all about them appearing tough and cool to their friends. But these boys were older than the ones in grade school, and for the very first time I realized they were passing judgment on my suitability or lack of it, as a girlfriend... The same group took to seeking me out and purposely sitting near me day after day, even when I tried to camouflage myself by sitting in the middle of a group. They grew bolder and I could hear them plotting to send someone to sit across from me. I'd look up from my food and there would be a boy slouching awkwardly in a red plastic chair, innocently asking me my name. Then he'd ask me how I got to be so ugly. At this the group would burst into laughter, and my listener would saunter back, victorious. (pp. 124-25)*

What words or phrases stick with you?

Why do you think the "red chair" stuck with Anna?

Why do you think people make fun of each other?

How do you think it affects others?

Write *Bullying* at the top of your Writer's Playground page 8. Skip a line and write about something you've done, experienced, or have seen happen. Start

with idea of bullying and go where the writing takes you. Write for ten minutes.

### **Freewriting Rules!**

1. Write. Just write. Keep your hand moving. (The only way to do freewriting wrong is to not write or to quit early.)
2. Experiment with spelling, punctuation, and grammar (This is opposed to "don't worry about spelling, punctuation, or grammar." Though we shouldn't worry about it, we should attempt to do the best we can.)
3. Go wherever your writing (thinking on the page) takes you. (If another story comes to mind, maybe that's what you should be writing about. Go for it.)
4. Be specific. (As you write, think about strategies like naming concrete nouns and using strong verbs.)
5. As Natalie Goldberg says, "You are free to write the worst junk in America" (1990, p. 4). (We all need to know that everyone has doubts about their writing. Allowing some writing to be garbage [Elbow 1998] allows our writing to flow and good things to emerge.)