Setting: a rural, Southern town; a young man approaches an old woman, Sarah, seated on her porch; he notices a town celebration and asks the Sarah: *What’s the celebration about?* She responds, *Schoolteacher died.* He asks, *Then why are they celebrating?* And Sarah said,

She had always said, "‘Sarah, it’s a delicate thing, students passing through hands.’"
And she called us by name when she had something for us to think about. The first day, she had candles. She brought one for everyone in that class; she made us take one and hold it in front like we were praying. When it was quiet, she lit her candle, and started talking. She said, that each one of us—our minds—were candles waiting to be lit, but we wouldn’t get lit, unless we brought our candles to hers, since we were students with no matches on hand. And she said, it was a give and a take, a humbling in giving, and a humbling in taking, but once lit, we’d burn on our own. And she loved colors. You could say that’s how she saw each student. They were precious. Oh, not because she got to know their business or their private ways—but special because, if she’d been an Artist, a painter, they’d have been her paints—each one a different color, and she was just the brush.

(laugh)
When mine were in school, they said it was enough to know: 1+1 was 2.
Learning was basic reasoning and facts, facts….facts. Said it was Enough?!?
But you and I know: this life, it’s not Reasonable and that’s not enough…Not enough at all!

So in teaching facts, she MEANT to make You WONDER! Wonder about the wilderness between failure and hope. Spaces!
She taught you how to fill in the spaces. Oh, she could give plenty of facts, but she’d say, *They’re slippery things, Sarah—Too many, and the mind dries up like unused Paints…a world with no texture. Too little Fact, and we are diluted and deluded,*
*And it’s sad to see minds without a purpose—*
as if it isn’t clear already that the mind was meant to expand! We’d be strange boxes otherwise, huh Sarah?” And I’d just nod feeling she knew because she’d been wondering longer.

II

The day was hot and dry. It was noon and that sun was bright orange against cloudless blue. The night before, it rained hard, and the passing came late. Still, the service was attended by most of the community. And it was a day for children; they came dressed in different colored dresses and suits. A life come and gone. And a candle was lit and passed around for each one to light his own. And remembering the kind of life she had lived, some folks, feeling it was a sign opened their Bibles to pray. “Well Mister,

I’ve been here 43 years. Belle worked like a Master: ‘Sarah? She’d say, It’s enough to make you wonder, students passing through hands, delicate hands; it’s such a slippery slippery thing.’”