

GO _____ (FILL IN THE BLANK)!

The Ecology Club has won round two. We are no longer the Tigers because the name shows "shocking disrespect" for an endangered creature.

I know I'm shocked.

Saxcasn

The Ecology Club made great posters. They laid out headlines from the sports page: TIGERS RIPPED APART! TIGERS SLAUGHTERED! TIGERS KILLED! side by side with color photos of Bengal tigers with their skins peeled off. Effective. The Ecology Club has some good PR people. (The football team would have protested, but the sad truth is that they've lost every game this season. They are happy not to be called the Tigers. Other teams called them Pussycats. Not manly.) More than half the school signed a petition and the tree huggers got letters of support from a bunch of outside groups and three Hollywood Actors.

They herd us into an assembly that is supposed to be a "democratic forum" to come up with a new school mascot. Who are we? We can't be the Buccaneers because pirates supported violence and discrimination against women. The kid who suggests the Shoemakers in honor of the old moccasin factory is laughed out of the auditorium. Warriors insults Native Americans. I think Overbearing Eurocentric Patriarchs would be perfect, but I don't suggest it.

Student Council is holding an election before Winter Break. Our choices:

- me*
- a. The Bees—useful to agriculture, painful to cross
 - b. Icebergs—in honor of our festive winter weather
 - c. Hilltoppers—guaranteed to frighten opponents
 - d. Wombats—no one knows if they're endangered

CLOSET SPACE

My parents commanded me to stay after school every day for extra help from teachers. I agreed to stay after school. I hang out in my refurbished closet. It is shaping up nicely.

The first thing to go is the mirror. It is screwed to the wall, so I cover it with a poster of Maya Angelou that the librarian gave me. She said Ms. Angelou is one of the greatest American writers. The poster was coming down because the school board banned one of her books. She must be a great writer if the school board is afraid of her. Maya Angelou's picture watches me while I sweep and mop the floor, while I scrub the shelves, while I chase spiders out of the corners. I do a little bit of work every day. It's like building a fort. I figure Maya would like it if I read in here, so I bring a few books from home. Mostly I watch the scary movies playing on the inside of my eyelids.

It is getting harder to talk. My throat is always sore, my lips raw. When I wake up in the morning, my jaws are clenched so tight I have a headache. Sometimes my mouth relaxes around Heather, if we're alone. Every time I try to talk to my parents

CLOSET

or a teacher, I sputter or freeze. What is wrong with me? It's like I have some kind of spastic laryngitis.

I know my head isn't screwed on straight. I want to leave, transfer, warp myself to another galaxy. I want to confess everything, hand over the guilt and mistake and anger to someone else. There is a beast in my gut, I can hear it scraping away at the inside of my ribs. Even if I dump the memory, it will stay with me, staining me. My closet is a good thing, a quiet place that helps me hold these thoughts inside my head where no one can hear them.

→ what?

ALL TOGETHER NOW

My Spanish teacher breaks the "no English" rule to tell us that we had better stop pretending we don't understand the homework assignments or we're all going to get detention. Then she repeats what she just said in Spanish, though it seems as if she tosses in a few extra phrases. I don't know why she hasn't figured it out yet. If she just taught us all the swear-words the first day, we would have done whatever she wanted the rest of the year.

Detention does not sound appealing. I do my homework—choose five verbs and conjugate them.

To translate: *traducir*. I traducate.

To flunk: *fracasar*. Yo am almost fracasaring.

To hide: *esconder*. To escape: *escapar*.

To forget: *olvidar*.

JOB DAY

Just in case we forget that "we are here to get a good foundation—so we can go to college live up to our potential get a good job live happily ever after and go to Disney World," we have a Job Day.

Like all things Hi!School, it starts with a test, a test of my desires and my dreams. Do I (a) prefer to spend time with a large group of people? (b) prefer to spend time with a small group of close friends? (c) prefer to spend time with family? (d) prefer to spend time alone?

Am I (a) a helper? (b) a doer? (c) a planner? (d) a dreamer?

If I were tied to railroad tracks and the 3:15 train to Rochester was ready to cut a path across my middle, would I (a) scream for help? (b) ask my little mice friends to chew through the ropes? (c) remember that my favorite jeans were in the dryer and were hopelessly wrinkled? (d) close my eyes and pretend nothing was wrong?

Two hundred questions later, I get my results. I should consider a career in (a) forestry (b) firefighting (c) communications (d) mortuary science. Heather's results are clearer. She should be a nurse. It makes her jump up and down.

Heather: "This is the best! I know exactly what I'm going to do. I'll be a candy striper at the hospital this summer. Why

~ Career Cruising