

“I am a camera” Writing Samples

Mentor Text

From “Goodbye to Berlin” by Christopher Isherwood

From my window the deep solemn massive street. Cellar-shops where the lamps burn all the day, under the shadow of top-heavy balconied facades, dirty plaster frontages embossed with Scroll-Work and heraldic devices. The whole district is like this: street leading into street of houses like shabby monumental safes crammed with the tarnished valuables and second-hand furniture of a bankrupt middle class.

I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Some day, all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed.

Student Sample

The hospital. The dirty carpet in the hospital elevator. The whole institution stank of soap and urine and looked overly clean and shabby at the same time, and I don't know why that little bit of mud on the orange carpet bothered me so much. But it did. Every day, every day I'd go to the fifth floor, riding with all of the happy grandmas and aunties and new daddies carrying stuffed toys and pink or blue flowers bouquets and when they would get off on the third floor maternity wing I would be left alone-alone or with one or two silent souls who were making the longer darker and ever so much heavier journey with me to the fifth floor –and every day I'd notice those same dam mud stains made by some visitors shoes long ago. I would think of the mud those shoes had walked through in some past wet season, mud that had been rain-soaked and probably cold, and I thought of how the person who wore those shoes must have greeted and hugged and encouraged the patient at the end of this elevator's ride. I thought of the mud on those shoes and the murky, brown trail left behind, and I wondered if that was all that was left, all that was left to remember of that day, of that owner of dirty shoes or his love for the one whom he had come to visit. I thought of the ashes-to-ashes, dust-to-dust of that damn dried mud stain and I wondered why no one ever cleaned out that germ-infested metal cage, that moving basket of human contagion.

I wondered about that and other things as the little cell moved up and then the doors would slice open. I'd walk off the elevator platform onto the relative terra firma of the fifth floor and then I would forget the mud and the bacteria. I would step off of the elevator and be confronted with all of the other things that I really don't want to remember, like how much longer and no extreme measures and how can I ever go on after this?