***Revolution for the Tested***

by Kate Messner (Copyright 2010)

Write.

But don’t write what they tell you to.

Don’t write formulaic paragraphs

Counting sentences as you go

Three-four-five-Done.

Put your pencil down.

Don’t write to fill in lines.

For a weary scorer earning minimum wage

Handing out points for main ideas

Supported by examples

From the carefully selected text.

Write for yourself.

Write because until you do,

You will never understand

What it is you mean to say

Or who you want to be.

Write because it makes you whole.

And write for the world.

Because your voice is important.

Write because people are hurting

Because animals are dying

Because there is injustice

That will never change if you don’t.

Write because it matters.

And know this.

They’ll tell you it won’t make a difference,

Not to trouble over grownup things,

Just fill in the lines

And leave it at that.

Tell them you know the truth.

That writing is powerful.

Just one voice on the page

Speaks loudly.

And not only can a chorus of those united change the world.

It is the only thing that ever has.

Read.

But don’t read what they tell you to.

Don’t read excerpts, half-poems,

Carefully selected for lexile content,

Or articles written for the sole purpose

Of testing your comprehension.

Don’t read for trinkets,

For pencils or fast food coupons.

Don’t even read for M&M’s.

And don’t read for points.

Read for yourself.

Read because it will show you who you are,

Who you want to be some day,

And who you need to understand.

Read because it will open doors

To college and opportunity, yes,

And better places still…

Doors to barns where pigs and spiders speak,

To lands where anything is possible.

To Hogwarts and Teribithia,

To Narnia and to Hope.

Read for the world.

Read to solve its problems.

Read to separate reality from ranting,

Possibility from false promise.

And leaders from snake oil peddlers.

Read so you can tell the difference.

Because an educated person is so much harder

To enslave.

And know this.

They’ll say they want what’s best for you,

That data doesn’t lie.

Tell them you know the truth.

Ideas can’t be trapped in tiny bubbles.

It’s not about points

On a chart or a test or points anywhere.

And it never will be.