

## **On Flunking a Nice Boy Out of School**

I wish I could teach you how ugly  
decency and humility can be when they are not  
the election of a contained mind but only  
the defenses of an incompetent. Were you taught  
meekness as a weapon? Or did you discover,  
by chance maybe, that it worked on mother  
and was a good thing—at least when all else failed—to get you over the worst of what  
was coming.  
Is that why you bring these sheepfaces to Tuesday?

They won't do.  
It's three months work I want, and I'd sooner have it  
from the brassiest lumpkin in pimpledom, but have it,  
than all these martyred repentances from you.

*—John Ciardi, 1916-1986*