

**SPEAK
GOOD
ENGLISH
MOVEMENT**

get it right

Refrain of the English Teachers

Can you tell your 'which' from your 'that',
your 'in' from your 'at',
your 'who' and your 'whose' and your 'whom'?
Can you discern 'children' from 'chil-ren',
'government' from 'gah-men',
'tree' from 'three', 'expose' from 'exposé',
or know that 'façade' is not 'fa-ka-day'?

Excuse our pedantry: wouldn't you too cringe
if your mind was shrapnelled daily
by careless errors, or if your eyes were blurred by
decades of scruffy work and page after ink-smudged page,
or if after upbraiding the culprits,
you're answered by their smirks,
wouldn't you struggle to hem in your rage?

Not to mention all the setting and the marking
of the scripts for the scoring, and the papers to return,
and the grades to be confirmed.
For when every child is ranked,
and there's data to be banked,
there's no room for hesitation:
classroom time is sacrosanct.

So pardon our zealotry: we old-timers are hard-pressed
to seal the covenant we made all those years ago—
to care for our students and bring out their very best.
But we'll bury our gripes, prod on with little rest,
just to see their dreams come true,
so that our sacrifice is justified, our doubts subdued,
our strength replenished, our passions renewed.

