Chapter 13: Lost Of Innocence “More Reflections on the Middle Schools and High Schools

Middle Schools vs. Junior High Schools!

**Evaluation Question:** On pg. 177, 178, Kozol talks about aesthetics, and the fact that he “believes aesthetics count a great deal in the education of our children”. Do you agree with this or not, and why or why not? Aesthetics means, a pleasing appearance or effect, beauty, according to the definition in the Merriam Webster online dictionary. [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/aesthetics](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/aesthetics)

**Answer:** I do agree because a brighter, more cheery classroom environment will help students to learn better, feel safer and thrive. If they are in a classroom with no windows, and it is very closed in the students will be distracted, and unfocused. If students are in a school situation such as an inner city school, it is more difficult to create this beautiful classroom environment for them. When students are in elementary school, they stay in one room, but that isn’t the case when they go to high school, so it is more difficult for teachers to make their classrooms aesthetic.

**Application Question:** On pg. 178, 179 Kozol talks about overcrowding in schools. He refers to some of the classrooms as portables, bungalows or trailers. Do you think there is a problem with overcrowding of classrooms? What do you think can be done about this problem?

**Answer:** Kozol suggests mini schools or smaller schools within the school.

Pg. 171 Chapter begins by saying “innocent little girls seem to lose that innocence with a heart-breaking frequency once they leave their elementary schools. Little boys whose whimsical behavior or defiant postures – even if they drive us crazy every other day still seem adorable to us when they are six or eight years old, do not always seem so lovable to teachers in a middle school who have to cope with them when they’re twelve or thirteen”.

**Comprehension Question:** Do you really believe that once children leave elementary school, and enter middle or junior high school that their innocence will be lost? If so, how and why do you think this happens?

**Answer:** This does happen because students are around much older students. Students are changing classes when they enter middle, junior and high schools. Students have more responsibility and more homework. Jonathan Kozol said that “keeping students with us in the grade schools for one extra year, especially the female students, helped us protect them from the multiple enticements that are present in school where some of the boys, if they’ve repeated grades, may be 15 already.” pg. 172.

**Comprehension Question:** What do you believe the benefits would be of disposing of middle and junior high schools, and just having a school that goes from K through 8th? This is something that Jonathan Kozol was proposing on Pg. 172 “I’d suggest we do away with middle schools entirely. Instead, I’d argue for incorporating all three years of middle school into an upper level of the elementary school, so that we’d be able to exploit the attachments
we have formed with children since they were in kindergarten or in first or second grade as barriers against that early loss of innocence.”

**Answer:** Benefit would be that some of the older students could mentor and help the younger students. This way the student is not only helping others, but they are also helping themselves. This will reinforce the information that they learned. The students will also learn how to be responsible, gentle and caring. These are all great characteristics.

**Application Question:** Talk to your partner, and demonstrate how you would react if you were a teacher or a lunch monitor in a school where the students were getting violent or jumping in line in front of others to get their food. How would you handle this situation? Would you yell, curse?

“It isn’t just the kids, however, who become degraded under these conditions. Teachers and lunch monitors who are perfectly good-natured people in most other situations cease to be their normal selves when they are put into these settings, shouting orders at the students, uttering harsh imprecations, forfeiting their customary dignity in their frenzied efforts to control the chaos in which they become engulfed and which they often worsen by their own behavior” pg. 175. According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, imprecations is a curse, mutter an imprecation under your breath was the example used [http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imprecation](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imprecation).

**Answer:** Everyone has a breaking point, and it is unfortunately that teachers and lunch monitors are pushed to this breaking point due to the difficult circumstances they have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. I am sure these teachers, and lunch monitors are frustrated and don’t know how to bring a sense of calmness or control to the chaotic conditions they have to put up with so they begin adding to the already crazy situation by shouting at the students and by cursing under their breath. It doesn’t help matters at all I am sure, but it the only way they feel they can show their authority. I am a very calm and quiet person most of the time, but I also have a point where I will not tolerate violence or disrespectful behavior so I will also vocalize my disgust. Luckily this doesn’t happen often, but I do believe, as a teacher or authority figure, that we need to remain calm and composed and try to bring the situation under control with other methods besides shouting or cursing.