

Why She Writes

Imagining Sylvia Plath

In the style of "Never try to trick me with a kiss"

1946

There's nothing she can't do or think or say.
Inside a book, she captures all that's lost.
She journals so her words won't fly away.

She chases boys for nothing more than play.
She sailors them, she ties them up in knots.
There's nothing she won't do or think or say.

She's fearless like a man, she gets all A's.
She smiles like a girl. Her lips are glossed.
She journals so her mind won't fly away.

It's hard this life that holds her gifts at bay.
A good girl, she feels trapped and even crossed.
There's so much she can't do or think or say.

Her mother she vows never to betray.
She knows just what her clothes and schooling costs.
She journals so her anger floats away.

She dreams of Daddy shooing her astray.
She dances, studies, paints until exhaust.
So many things to do and think and say.
She journals so her words will fly one day.

* Sylvia's "Never Try to Trick Me with a Kiss" was published in her school literary magazine, *The Phillipian*, when she was thirteen. The poem, a rejection of the belief that love and happiness can be permanent, appears in her Pulitzer Prize-winning, *Collected Poems*.

**Plath returned to this poem's form, called a villanelle, often in her early writings, most famously in "Mad Girl's Love Song."

Stephanie Hemphill's first novel in poems, *Things Left Unsaid* was awarded the 2006 Myra Cohn Livingston Award for Excellence in Poetry. Her second novel, a verse portrait of *Sylvia Plath*, *Your Own, Sylvia* was published in 2007. A third novel in poems for teens, *Salem*, will be published in 2008. She is a former member of the Women's Poetry Project at Writers At Work.

Your Own, Sylvia tells the story of Sylvia Plath's life through a series of fictionalized poems. "Why She Writes" from *Your Own, Sylvia* by Stephanie Hemphill, copyright © 2007 by Stephanie Hemphill. Reprinted courtesy of Alfred A. Knopf, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, a division of Random House, Inc.

