

At Band Practice

Routinely exiled
from our 7th grade classmates
Perry, Leon, and myself
get comfy in a cell sized room
with porous wall paneling
to absorb our practicing sounds.

*Trick is
we don't practice.*

Two black guys and a white guy
trade stories about girls
who don't talk to us,
bitch about
barely cooked school lunch,
mock our band teacher Mr. Gail;
our brass trumpets stay
polished clean,
spit guards empty,
sheet music tucked into folders.

*We don't do homework
neither.*

Perry swears I'm his cousin
and through his small eyes
spies me, smiles, high fives me;
Leon adjusts his glasses
picks through his hair
and nods in agreement.

Mr. Gail enters:
*Boys,
it's time for you to play.*

Brought before our 7th grade classmates
Perry, Leon, and I
wedge together in the second row
woodwinds and brass and percussion
circle noise around us;
Perry puffs his cheeks
presses fingers against valves
and doesn't blow;
Leon points at the sheet music

runs his finger along the staff,
finds a note, calls out

B-Flat!

And we all play
in different keys
that become
one nasty note.