

They're suffocating you.

You sit at the bus stop, your bleached skin peers pulling at their eyes. Their elbows scrape your ribs as they poke through your windbreaker. They've got you surrounded, one on each side, blue eyes cold and blond eyebrows sharp.

They think your teeth are too crooked. They think your skin is too tan. They think your hair is too spiky.

They don't understand your accent. They are confused when you say you're not from China.

*But you're Chinese?*

Yes.

*But you're from England?*

Yes.

You fold your hands in your lap, knees pressed tight together and tongue against the roof of your mouth. It's cold in San Francisco. They see you shiver.

*How are you so skinny?*

You're not.

*Aren't all Chinese people fat?*

They're not.

*Just eat more rice.*

They round their vowels and jut out their front teeth. They shake their hands through

your hair and complain that it feels like steel wool.

You tangle your fingers together, locking your hands still. Your fingertips turn red. Maybe you'd be better off walking the ten miles to school.

You try to adjust your elbows but they laugh and force you motionless. You try to move your legs but they squeeze them closer. Your shoulders start to ache. You shut your eyes.

They're suffocating you. They're closing in on you.

You try to move your arms but they're pinned to your side. You try to speak but your teeth are too crooked and your skin is too tan and your hair is too spiky. They're closing in on you. They want you to go back to your country and you wish you could.

The yellow school bus arrives.

They jump on and your lungs expand with the air they stole from you. You hand the driver fifty cents and take the last open seat.

Close your eyes. Take a breath.

The bus lurches forward.



*image: Alberto Giacometti*

	<i>Needs further revision</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	
Essay Focus + Visual Image	Lyrical essay and/or visual image do not work together clearly/ effectively to represent identity subject. Treatment may seem surface-level. Audience is not inspired to empathize with the subject.	Lyrical essay and visual image work together clearly, but the writer could provide a deeper/more complex view of the identity subject. One or both textual elements could be reworked to evoke a more powerful empathetic audience experience.	Lyrical essay and visual image work together to challenge the reader in a compelling way, capturing the identity subject's complexity and creating a powerful empathetic audience experience.
Poetic Language	Poetic language is vague or missing. Or, metaphors or other poetic language fall into cliché territory. Or, metaphors or other poetic language are not appropriate representations of the subject matter.	Writer employs a couple of clear and effective poetic techniques, but they could be more varied. Some specific parts of the lyrical essay would benefit from more poetic language or different poetic techniques. Apt metaphors are present, but could be more specific or original.	Writer employs a variety of poetic techniques (eg. sensory imagery, description, figurative language, sound, allusion, etc.) to challenge the reader to interpret meaning and enhance sensory experience. Metaphors are fresh, original, and apt representations of the subject matter.
Narrative Elements	Narrative elements are lacking or they are disjointed in a way that obscures the reader's ability to engage in the interviewee's experiences. Narrative perspective is not yet effective.	Narrative elements are present, conveying the interviewee's experiences clearly. However, narrative elements could be further developed to enhance the reader's engagement in the interviewee's experiences. Narrative perspective sustains the reader's attention consistently.	Narrative elements (exposition, conflict, characterization, dialogue, etc.) engage the audience in interviewee's experiences. Narrative perspective is highly effective, lending cohesion to the overall piece and allowing the reader to "step into the shoes" of the interviewee(s).

Mechanics	Lyrical essay contains a many errors of spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation. Errors affect the reader's ability to understand the meaning the author is trying to convey. Significant editing will be necessary before this text is ready to be published.	Lyrical essay contains a few errors of spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation, which can easily be fixed with one final round of editing.	Lyrical essay is free from errors of spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
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Grade: A