

field note

SELF-DESCRIPTION

*Ann asks, "How would you describe yourself. What words would you use?"*

OLIVER, FIFTH-GRADE BOY: Hyper. Like if I eat sugar I end up practicing my football moves inside the house. I collide with the chair and the chair goes back and forth and I collide with the furniture. Sometimes kind. Because I like to do things for people. Like my sister this morning, she was trying to get the braids out of her hair—so I was helping her get her hair out for her. I'm helpful. And intelligent.

TERRENCE, SIXTH-GRADE BOY: Tall, playful, handsome, kind. My timing is impeccable. It's like this morning I have a poster of Michael Jordan that's in a glass [frame] and it started to fall but I caught it. It still broke. So that's how I got cut. [Shows me a cut on his hand.] That's why I was kinda mad 'cause I only got it last month.

DONTE, FIFTH-GRADE BOY: I'm [long hesitation, then very decisively] sensitive, 'cause I hate when people around like start annoying me. It makes me mad. Makes me want to start bumping against them and stuff.

MARTIN, SIXTH-GRADE BOY: I don't know. [Thinks. Then quietly, so quietly I have to ask him to repeat what he said,] Middle.

ANN: Tell me what that means. Sounds fascinating.

MARTIN: Like sometimes you bad. Sometimes you good. Not one thing or another.

EDDIE, SIXTH-GRADE BOY: Tall. Nice *and* mean person. I be nice when I'm playing with my friends but when somebody hit me or something, I be all angry and mean. But I like the nice part of me better.

ADAM, SIXTH-GRADE BOY: Funny, fast, smart, intelligent, that's it.

MALEK, SIXTH-GRADE BOY: Nobody really knows me. Well, probably one person or two. But nobody *knows* me. I'm the only person that knows myself. The teachers, they might think that—he's this or that. But really I just be acting so they'll think I'm like that—just acting.

HORACE, SIXTH-GRADE BOY: She [referring to teacher] thinks that I could do the work and I could do above the work, but I don't because sometimes I'm lazy. Sometimes I don't want to think.

DONEL, FIFTH-GRADE BOY: Kind of depends on what neighborhood you raise up your kid. But not all that much. Because some kids are just plain bad. Some kids are good.

MARCUS, FIFTH-GRADE BOY: Unnnhnnn. Nobody's bad! Nobody!

DONEL: I know people that won't change their ways.

MARCUS: In this world right now, the reason why people is like this is because TV is setting people a bad example for us and they want to follow them. But nobody's *bad*, though.

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