

The window through which to whisper

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [March 5, 2014](#) issue

Talked to six high school students this morning,  
Two young men and four young women, for 20  
Minutes each. Ostensibly the discussion was all  
About college admission essays, but one thing I  
Have learned in life is to be quiet and listen and  
Out will pour real honest naked hard holy grace,  
And there it was, child after lanky child. So very  
Many masks worn as armor. So many polite bits  
Of college admissions essays that skated over the  
Stories they were so desperate to tell they would  
Even tell *me*—given the chance, the shy window  
Through which to whisper. When we were done  
I stood up rattled and blessed. Such terrible gifts  
And such generosity in the giving. I remembered  
Confession, in the old days, when the old shutter  
Made of oak or pine would shiver open suddenly  
And a voice, often so calm and gentle, would say  
*Say what you most want to say, and have not said.*