



Crescent Valley High School

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May 8, 2003

Dear Ivan:

My seniors and I are still reveling in the extraordinary session we were privileged to have with you on April 16. I know that you had reservations about meeting with high schoolers, but I am hoping that the enclosed comments will put to rest any apprehension you might have about their ability to appreciate your amazing writing and to gain valuable insights into the craft of writing. Their comments speak to how successfully you addressed their questions and inspired some of them to follow the sage advice you offered. I would add that I have included all of the comments that students submitted, warts and all! I am also enclosing some photographs of the art display as well as one of all of us together. My apologies for their poor quality.

On a more personal note, I deeply appreciated the opportunity to meet both you and Carol. Having been an admirer of your writing for over twenty years, I was thrilled at the chance to have a few moments to talk with each of you individually. As a teacher, I was mesmerized on Tuesday evening by your careful analysis of the paragraph on the opening page of *This House of Sky*, and will draw on it in my own lessons on good writing in the future. Watching my students listen raptly to you the following day and discussing the session with them in the classroom afterwards, I was delighted that they gained so much from their meeting with you.

Your entire two-day visit to Corvallis was a resounding success. Those of us who worked on the One County One Book committee were immensely pleased that we had made a wise decision in selecting *This House of Sky* for the project, realizing only in hindsight that we were fortunate not only in having picked a fine piece of literature but also in happening upon a renowned author who is approachable, engaging, diligent, and witty. We couldn't have asked for more.

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in our project and for your willingness to meet with high school students. Your impact on all of us was profound.

My best to both you and Carol,

Penny Fulton

14 May 2003

Dear Penny--

Many thanks for the packet of pictures, the quite lovely "place" volumes, and your seniors' encouraging comments. It all came at a good time, as I've just agreed to talk to a high school teachers' institute in Missoula next month, and the feedback from your students is a terrific help in shaping what I'll do there. Evidently the points about trying to catch the language around them--the slang of right now--and the habit of writing on some kind of regular basis resonated with your charming bunch, and I'll pass that along to the Montanans, you can bet.

And I'm glad to hear my self-analysis of the wordcraft in the opening of *This House of Sky* was useful to you. If they're any help, those pages of my speech are enclosed. I'm also passing along an interview I did--the morning after our Corvallis session, in fact--that represents my most recent thinking-out-loud about what I think I'm trying to do. Incidentally, my trip to Boulder, Colorado, that next week for a similar "community read" event was quite wan compared to the Corvallis version. They didn't manage to get me together with students, despite oft-proclaimed intentions to do so, and the whole thing lacked the verve and imagination that was so buoying in Corvallis. So, double congratulations for your part in it all, and combined appreciation from Carol and me.

Best wishes,

High Schoolers' Comments on their Visit with Ivan Doig

Ivan Doig was a great influence on my reading of his book. He breathed pure life into the passages he read. It affected me deeply to be in the presence of such passion, and having that kind of interest in and excitement about what you are doing is exactly the enthusiasm I need to have in my career, whatever it ends up being.

~Joe

I found Ivan Doig's talk to be very interesting in more than one way. First of all, I enjoyed hearing him talk because it made the book feel much more firm and real because I could put a voice and face along with the experiences he wrote about. Secondly, it made the world of being a writer seem much more accessible. His descriptions of how much revising he does made producing good writing seem possible for me. Before I'd dismissed any thoughts of actually being a writer because I felt I was lacking in the natural ability to put words down that sound perfect together from the beginning, but he made me realize he even has to really work to get the well crafted sentences in *This House of Sky*. Lastly, I though he told very interesting stories and talked in a relaxed way that made him easy to listen to.

~Myrica

I liked that Ivan actually talked to us and answered questions instead of just reading from his books. I also really appreciated that he talked to us like adults. I found it useful that Ivan brought other sources to share with us that he uses to inspire his own writing.

~Brittany

I went to the lecture on Tuesday night and was very impressed with how he talked. The vocabulary he used and how much thought he put in writing was astonishing. One of the things that I remember distinctly is thinking how every English teacher I've ever met would smile when they heard that he warms up to write by reading 10 or so pages from a dictionary. The other thing I was talking with my parents about afterwards was the list of books on western literature he gave. My father wrote down a list and is planning on some good summer reading sessions. We all felt that he wrote just like the talks, and that it all very impressive to see him talk. We also agree with you, Ms. Fulton, that he was spectacular at public speaking.

~Katie

Very interactive, fun, exciting. I enjoyed listening to him.

~Carl

He was very personal and accepting of questions. He sounded like he wanted to be there and wanted to answer questions. He was great!

~Jennifer

Even though I didn't read the book I felt like all of the questions he answered related to me. I felt like he answered questions very well. I thought his ideas on observing people and things were very interesting.

~Sarah

I really enjoyed how he analyzed the beginning of his book—the kinds of verbs he used. This made his writing seem more interesting. He really put a lot of time and care into answering our questions.

~Kyung

I have never known somebody to be able to so thoroughly answer very single question without overdoing it. I truly felt that he was talking with us, he didn't seem "above" us.

~Keith

Wonderful speaker, very interesting, funny. Loved to listen to him.

~Eunice

I thought that in both presentations Ivan Doig gave that he had a tremendous command of the audience by his pleasurable attitude and enjoyable sense of humor. What I didn't expect was in the beginning/middle of his speech on Tuesday he began to analyze the beginning few paragraphs of his book *This House of Sky* and went through, word by word. He talked about every verb, noun, adjective, etc. and how he used them to convey the feeling of the land. I didn't expect him to go through his writing quite so thoroughly. To me that was extremely effective and I learned the most from it. As for Wednesday, I think once again he adapted very well to the audience and answered each question with extreme thought. I am very grateful for the opportunity I had to go and listen and learn from him.

~Laura

I felt that the appearance by Ivan Doig was both interesting and informative. It is a great experience to hear from a great writer his experiences and techniques in writing. Looking closely at how language is used around me is not something I had ever considered before now. I am please we had the experience of listening and asking questions of Ivan Doig.

~Paul

Ivan seemed to connect with the audience in a very amiable way. His personality and humor definitely added to his presentation. He made everyone feel at ease with a famous author. I found him and his presentation very interesting and thought it was a good experience.

~Danielle

I thought that the presentation was really interesting. Ivan was very personable and funny. He wasn't intimidating at all. I didn't feel like a high school student, I felt like an adult. He made me very comfortable.

~Nishi

The talk with Ivan Doig was very insightful and interesting. I was fascinated to hear about his process in writing, especially the dialogue he has gathered throughout the years. The audience participation was also great. They had great questions and Ivan gave really great responses. It was a wonderful experience meeting an author of a book I had read. Thank you, Ivan, for giving me a really great experience.

~Bekah

I thought the discussion was really interesting. I don't think I've ever seen an author before. So it was a great experience. It was also interesting to hear the author's perspective on how he wrote his books and where his inspirations came from. Overall a great experience.

~Whitney

I thought Ivan Doig's discussion with all of us was very cool. He was laid back and at ease. It was cool that he wasn't talking at us, but talking with us. I enjoyed him having students lead the discussion. He said a lot of really interesting and valuable things that I'm sure many benefited from. It was a rare and unique opportunity for all of the students. I have never met with an author of a book I have read in such an intimate environment. Thanks for the opportunity.

~Claire

I enjoyed the opportunity to hear a little bit more about Mr. Doig and his feeling on writing. The comments about how to write—like keeping a journal and putting down conversations or group slang—was extremely useful. I was very inspired to become a writer by the talk and his answers to the kids' questions. Thanks for arranging all this, Penny!

~Katie

I enjoyed listening very much. His advice to write down the language we hear around us was very inspiring. It made me think a lot about everything that was happening around me and also realize how important our language is to us. I aspire to be involved in film and I can only hope to be able to keep some of past and present language with me.

~Luke

I found the discussion with Mr. Doig to be both intellectual and accessible. He made points about writing that applied on the high school level. His openness about his work, past, and emotions was refreshing. Hearing about how his works related to others, especially from the other authors we read about this term, was nice.

~Nathan

I was pleasantly surprised at how enjoyable Ivan Doig's presentation was. He focused his speech to people interested in writing, and this helped me be interested in the details of his speech. Specifically, his advice about writing our experiences down now was relevant. He was also more humorous than I expected, making it easier for high schoolers to relate (the slang terms were especially good at breaking the age barriers). Doig did not focus too much or read from *This House of Sky*, which was very good considering how much we have already discussed and analyzed it.

~Katy

I felt that the discussion with Mr. Doig was useful. Going into the discussion I felt that we had discussed *This House of Sky* too much for me to learn anything else about it. Therefore, I appreciated that he spoke mainly about the art of writing, his style, and his life as a writer rather than about the novel or its thought process. While a brief reference to the novel was made and while most questions surrounded it, Mr. Doig was able to utilize other pieces of literature as well, some of which weren't his work. This made the discussion especially interesting for me, and made the experience much more educational and enjoyable.

~Greg

Through the presentation I was interested by the way Ivan used examples from not just his own but by others to illustrate his points. I was also thrilled by the fact that he did not try to sell his book but discussed it and other things about his literary works. Compared to other presentations, the time spent with Ivan allowed for a better insight into himself rather than just his books and other literary works.

~Tim

I thought the hour of time with Ivan Doig was more fun and exciting than I expected it to be. I thought it might be boring but he had a great personality. We didn't talk about *This House of Sky* a lot which I thought would have been better because some of the other things I couldn't really relate to.

~Eric

I thought Ivan Doig was much cooler than I had expected. Due to his book, I had expected him to be a sort of person that had to draw out everything. Instead I thought he was very interesting and a unique speaker.

~Michael

I was surprised at how well Ivan Doig related to kids our age considering how much he said about the generation gap. He seemed to remember what he did as a child, like he wrote in *This House of Sky*, but also how it felt to be a child. That is a quality that is hard to find in adults.

~Lisa

I was inspired with Ivan Doig's ability to entertain an audience. It was really fun to see him speak in a smaller, more personal setting. I'm glad we were able to spend the time asking questions. I think his advice to write every day was correct, although I doubt I'll ever follow it.

~Amy

I found Ivan Doig to be interesting and entertaining. I especially liked the advice on gathering the memories now. I also thought the slang from different times was neat. I appreciated that he answered my question about intended gain of the readers vs. personal gain for him. It was interesting that he didn't do it for personal satisfaction, especially since it was a memoir. Thanks for coming, Mr. Doig. Keep up the good work.

~Leanne

I thought Ivan Doig did a great job speaking. The things he had to say about writing were very interesting, and it gave me a whole new perspective on *This House of Sky*. I really liked how Mr. Doig used examples from his own work for each of the writing techniques that he talked about. I had thought that he might be a little standoffish or distant, but Mr. Doig seemed very open and related very well to us students. His answers and speech were quite relevant.

~Christina

It was interesting to hear about Doig's writing process. How he keeps notes of what other people say, and dialogue from the past (like in the Army). It makes sense that he did research, but it is amazing how accurate he can be in his stories (such as swearing in Dutch). Doig talks a lot about and reads many Western authors, but on Tuesday he mentioned Conrad. I wonder how much of his inspiration comes from non-Western authors like Shakespeare and Conrad.

~Ian

I found the Ivan Doig experience to be a very stimulating and worthwhile one. It is always great to meet someone as passionate about something as Ivan is about spoken words and language. I think the question and answer format he used was also very good. It allowed us to get the information from Doig which we desired. I have always looked up to people who are able to write books, and it was great to finally meet someone with that skill.

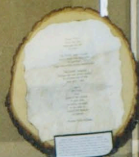
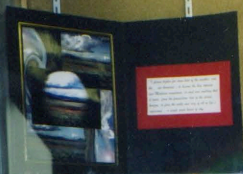
~Mackenzie

Really appreciated his insights on holding onto slang and language.

~Andrew

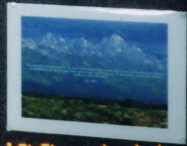
I really enjoyed the session with Ivan Doig because of the interaction he had with his audience. The question and answer time allowed the students to get questions they had answered. I think Ivan was a wonderful speaker. He delivered information in a way that connected with high school students. The main thing I learned from Doig was how important it is for a writer to keep track of their thoughts and feelings, to be used in later writing pieces. I also thought it was interesting how Doig wrote down pieces of conversation to remember the slang in dialogue used by different people.

~Jenna

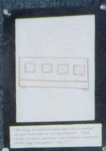




"Those two had started out
even when they put their first
footprints in the snow
on that hunting trip.
"Why Death for One,
And Not the Other?
"No Answer Comes
except that even starts don't
seem to count for much."
This "House of Sky"
by Shan Dong



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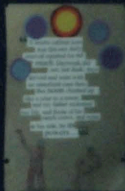
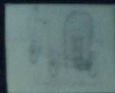


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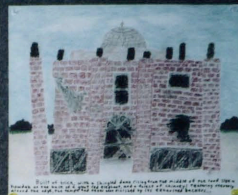
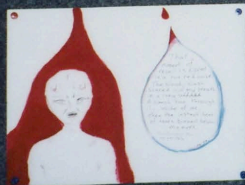
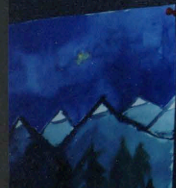
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The western region of the state is one of the most beautiful in the world. It is a region of mountains, lakes, and forests. The mountains are high and rugged, and the lakes are deep and blue. The forests are dense and green, and the air is fresh and clean. This is a region of great beauty and interest, and it is one that should be visited by all who have the opportunity.



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