

Miss Santerre

There was not a thing prepossessing about her appearance, but as an outstanding person and unparalleled teacher, she was head and shoulders beyond her peers. I was so well acquainted with her reputation that I was delighted when I learned that Roland, our younger son, was assigned to her homeroom class in his second year of elementary school. She immediately saw beyond the diffident, shy child, casting him in the school play as a bratty, spoiled prince whose first appearance on stage featured a tantrum. The idea of Roland on stage was startling, not to mention the shock of seeing him acting in a noisy manner before his school mates, teachers and parents. But she was right: in the persona of a brat, he was superb. Even before I made his “princely” costume, he threw himself into the part. And once we persuaded him that a prince *would* wear a velvet, fur-trimmed vest with white tights, he became that objectionable character – but only while he was on stage in costume.

Miss Santerre noticed early on that he had read all of the sports books, and nothing else, in the school library. He politely ignored her advice recommending other books. Her solution was to remove every sports book from the library, leaving him the open choice of a multitude of other books. He then discovered the heady experience of pursuits other than sports, although sports remained his preferred reading. She had uncovered the potential scholar and devoted student that has characterized Roland during the rest of his life.

I don’t know how conscious Roland is today of Miss Santerre’s influence – I intend to ask him – but I have no doubt that her effort has lived on in him in his life as a student, as well as an abiding influence on who he is today.

