

Ask any teacher if students have magical powers to cause a slow bubbling of the blood by merely asking a question. You'll most likely hear some of the following examples:

"Can we have a fun class?"

"Oh, was I supposed to write that down?"

"Can I go to my locker? I forgot to bring a pen, paper or... yeah, pretty much anything school-related..."

In this week's poem, Tom Wayman offers a range of hypothetical responses when a student returns to class after an absence and asks, *"Did I miss anything?"*

Did I Miss Anything?

Nothing. When we realized you weren't here
we sat with our hands folded on our desks
in silence, for the full two hours

Everything. I gave an exam worth
40 percent of the grade for this term
and assigned some reading due today
on which I'm about to hand out a quiz
worth 50 percent

Nothing. None of the content of this course
has value or meaning
Take as many days off as you like:
any activities we undertake as a class
I assure you will not matter either to you or me
and are without purpose

Everything. A few minutes after we began last time
a shaft of light suddenly descended and an angel
or other heavenly being appeared
and revealed to us what each woman or man must do
to attain divine wisdom in this life and
the hereafter
This is the last time the class will meet
before we disperse to bring the good news to all people on earth.

Nothing. When you are not present
how could something significant occur?

Everything. Contained in this classroom
is a microcosm of human experience
assembled for you to query and examine and ponder
This is not the only place such an opportunity has been gathered

but it was one place

And you weren't here.

Tom Wayman