

P. S. 81 The Bronx, June 1985

Naomi S.

We sat on the basement floor that afternoon
because it was cooler
than the oven
we called our classroom.

I pressed my steaming face
against the cold
ceramic tiles.

Except for the occasional
THWUMP and BANG of the boiler
and the monotonous
droning of our teacher's voice,
silence surrounded us.

Our thoughts floated away
on rivers of sweat.

The teacher drawled on,
"Repeat after me,
A noun is a person, place, or
thing..."

Trancelike we repeated,
A noun is a person, place, or
thing..."

A noun is a person, place, or
thing..."

A noun is a...a...

beach...

white glistening sand

a cool breeze

clear water licking

at my toes.

A pronoun is me...

me at the beach.

Spray mists my body.

I inhale

drifts of sticky

salt.

I lick my lips.

Sweat rolls down my face.

My face

pressed

against

cold

hard

ceramic

tiles.