Ilana and I are currently reading the book “Old School” by Tobias Wolff, which is very good. One particular chapter reminded me of the Sherman Alexie performance we saw at Stanford the other day, and what I had expected vs. what he delivered (or "setting a high bar for a good performance" ;-)

Wolff’s (unnamed) narrator is a high school senior in a private prep school on the East Coast during the 60’s, where the big emphasis is on The Humanities/Letters. A Great Traditions of the school was to invite famous authors and poets to meet the students and read some of their work.

One of the guest speakers one year was Robert Frost, and Wolff does a fantastic job of describing his “performance” and “technique” (hence the connection to Alexie) as he was warming up and then "delivering" some of his poems in the school chapel.

I would definitely pay good money to attend Frost’s magnificent performance:

the slow ascend to the church pulpit, the shuffling of his papers and re-arrangement of his books, the engagement of particular students in the audience, the great tone inflections as he was reading from his work (Wolff’s narrator actually suspected from Frost’s eye movements from the page to the audience semi-hidden by his thick brows, that Frost was reciting not actually reading), through the pauses, and losing his place in the text, wrapping up with a “thundering and classy” response to a “sophisticated/modernistic” question from a faculty member, during the Q&A.

It must have been a great experience; something to tell your children about...











