

## greek **tragedy** /1/ mr. israel

I loved my **eighth grade English teacher**, Mr. Israel. He was **such a hard-ass** and when he spoke he **had everyone's attention**. I was a little **scared of** him, but **mostly**, I wanted to **impress** him. He wasn't one of those teachers who **let you know** they like you. **With** some teachers, **you just knew**. But he **wasn't so easy to see through**. He was one of my favorites **for this**.

In his class, I **mostly** remember **learning** grammar. He once **asked us to** write the shortest possible sentence. **After turning down** most of our suggestions, he said the answer was "I am." "No," **can't be called** a sentence, he said. A sentence, he **insisted**, needed a subject.

Then when **class was over, he'd slip out of** the room and **run** his hand **along** the walls, **as if he were** in his own world and **had** just escaped **from ours**.

Mr. Israel once told **this** class of eighth graders that **excellent performance on** SAT exams **depended on how much** time our parents **spent teaching** us when we were children. "If your parents **read aloud** to you, you'll **do better**." I think he **meant overall**, and not just **in terms of test scores**.