

PENCIL FOUNDATION

CATERPILLAR STUDENT WRITERS SHOWCASE

2006-2007 WINNING ENTRIES

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CHILDREN'S STORIES

BARNEY SMITHSONIAN

First time I saw him, I had suspected him. If only I had known all the trouble he would cause...

It had been a regular evening like any other. My wife, who was as big and fat as a twin sized bed, was cooking a delicious and wonderful smelling meal of raccoon stomach swimmin' in gopher gravy! My 12 kids, January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, and December, were all busy playing with their pet lion, Rory. I was practicing a newly-found skill of being able to hold my breath for 15 minutes straight! Soon, my wife, whose name was Betticolius Vanessa Rumpelstiltskin (Betty, is what most folks call her), hobbled over and called us for supper. That was Rory's cue to find some helpless animal for *his* supper. Anyway, that was when I first met him. Rory, who also made a *great* "watch lion", let out a series of snarls and growls that let me know that someone or *something* had come a 'callin'. "Betty!" I called. "There's somethin' 'bout! Rory's all a growlin'!

So off I went. When I *finally* came out, Rory was so relieved at the concept of my bein' there, he ran his fastest! In fact, he ran so fast, sparks kicked out from under his feet! Woulda sent the farm all a burnin' if m' two youngins, July and January, hadn't spotted them first. You see, those two were mighty sneaky. They had been spyin'! They had 'em sparks put out in record time! "Fire's all out pa!" July said proudly. He was so proud his chest puffed up. Like a balloon, that boy's chest got bigger and bigger until, alas, it popped! If we hadn't had an air pump and some strong tape, who knows what he'd look like today! I know one things though, sure taught him a lesson! Never gets too prideful these days.

Well, in all the excitement, I'd failed to notice the tall, sinister figure in the shadows. That is, until I could smell the foul odor of onions on his breath and see his small, beady eyes.

"Howdy stranger!" I said. A bit too jolly for his cloudy mood I s'pose. Man didn't even bother to say hello as his tall figure hovered above me.

Perhaps, it is time for me to tell you a little about myself. My given name is Rogerillo Smith – as you might have already guessed, most folks call me Roger. I am an average sized person with a first grade education. I'm 800 years old and the smartest man you'll ever meet! My family and I live in a good-sized cottage. We have a good three acres of land behind it, and beyond *that* there's a bunch of shady apple trees – perfect for getting fresh, juicy apples – and a great place to sleep. We're havin' a pretty good crop this year but that's off the subject for now. Now, back to the mysterious stranger.

I wasn't about to let him ruin my good mood! I invited him in for supper and I coulda sworn, he almost smiled! But when I told him what it was, I saw him gag! I was so upset by his rudeness, I decided he needed to be taught a lesson he would never forget! That's when it

happened! I closed my eyes, raised my leg to kick him in the fanny, and before I knew what was happening, I was in the pond beside our cottage with a trout flip-flopping on top of my head! I gasped in sheer amazement and surprise! My children, however, were too busy *laughing* to notice that my face was as red as a cherry and *steam* was coming out of my ears and nose! As far as I was concerned, that stranger could leave *and* take his bad attitude with him! And, would you believe it, that's exactly what he did, and it was *fine* with me! Well, I reckon its about time for me to tell you about the next day when I went into town.

It started off pretty normal until I went to the grocery and saw the "evil" stranger. He was purchasing the weirdest things: frog eyes, toads legs, sheep's stomach, and something else I can't mention without throwing up. As he spun around and saw me, he did something I would never have believed lest I'd seen it. He looked at me, gave a smile, *pretended* to accidentally brush against me, *stole my wallet*, and stalked out of the store! As I made my way home, red as a tomato, you could have knocked me over with a feather!

As if that wasn't enough, I git back to the farm and there, in the middle of our flourishing crop stood "The Stranger", chuckling to himself, *burning* the tops of *each and every one* of our wheat stalks! Who wuz this man and what did he have 'ginst us? Sitting around the general store one day, I found out that he had a grudge towards me and my family 'cause we had purchased the exact piece of land he had wanted years earlier. But right now, all I knew was that I was FURIOUS!

I stalked over there, and as I did, I stumbled. I looked to see at what I had tripped over and saw a bunch of pure white stones! I knew at once that they must be magic, 'cause they were so white and glistening. I had a plan! That night, I waited for his next visit. I figured if he had been there once, he would prob'bly come back. Just as I suspected, down the road he came, lookin' ready for his next "evil" act. I grasped a stone, made a wish, and soon he was nuthin' but a piece of black stubble! That was the end of that stranger or as I was finally told, Barney Smithsonian. I wish we could have met under better circumstances – his memory still haunts me. I try my best to forget, but sometimes my grandchildren see the stubble and ask me about it. Then it all comes back to me... *First time I saw him, I suspected him...*

Adriana Johnson
Thomas A. Edison Elementary School
Fourth Grade

A HERON FOR AN EMPEROR?

The battle was intense. The Emperor was high on the throne, the Huns were after him. The Hun leader raised his sword his black hair glowing, and a mad, power hungry fire bringing his eyes. He threw the sword. Everybody stood, stunned, as the sword rapidly twirled threw the air. The sword seemed to find its way straight into the Emperor's chest.

The Emperor bowed to a heron resting in a nearby field, and fell over asleep forever. Out of their anger, the people slayed all the Huns, and wept over their dead Emperor.

The Emperor's manservant, Quan, looked in the book of Chinese Law, to see whom the new Emperor would be. It seemed as though Quan turned pages forever, but at last he found it. There in black and white it read: whom ever the last Emperor bowed to before his death is immediately the new Emperor.

The people of the kingdom pondered over whether the Emperor had really bowed to the heron or not.

Finally, they came to the decision that they would give the heron a trial week in which it was to complete at least three tasks to see if he would be a good Emperor or not.

The heron was bathed with the town's finest oils, and brushed with the finest combs. The Bird was set on the throne and had to immediately start solving problems.

The first task was what to do with the dead Huns. The heron gathered up its family (of herons) and they carried the bodies to the land of tigers. The herons launched the bodies at the tigers and ran for their live.

The Heron had completed one task two more to go and he would be emperor!

The people of China were getting excited one of them said "is it possible to have a heron for an emperor?"

The second task of the week came, and it was to dig a well for the general.

The heron traveled to the chosen spot for the well, and stuck its beak into the soft earth further and further. Until at last its head popped up and the tip of its beak dripping wet. The heron had struck water! The generals' servants gathered around with shovels to widen the small yet deep hole. By the end of the day the general had a new well.

The bird's next task was to recite a traditional Chinese poem to the public. But, when the heron recited the poem in perfect Chinese it was evident this was no ordinary bird. That night Quan went into the heron's room to help him prepare for tomorrow when it was to be crowned emperor, but he walked in as the 'so called heron was bathing. Quan saw it all, in the washtub sat Kimocko the old beggar, and next to him laid a heron costume!

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The next morning at the heron's coronation, Quan revealed who the "heron" really was. Everyone was shocked, but in a way relieved after all it would be strange to have a heron for an emperor.

There was a two or three hour meeting held among the town's folk about what to do. Finally, they came to the decision that Kimocko could be emperor if he wore the Heron costume for the rest of his life, and explained why he was wearing it in the first place. Kimocko gladly agreed with this, and began his story. He said "I was writing a book about the day and life of a heron, so I made a costume and kind of became one. I didn't expect to be chosen as emperor, but I thought I'd go along with it. And the other herons you saw were my family."

Kimocko was happy to be a Heron Emperor, and lived happily as a Emperor Heron.

*Madalyn McCauley
John T. Moore Middle School
Fifth Grade*

LEO THE POLAR BEAR

Once upon a time, not so long ago in a land we have come to know as Canada, a young polar bear named Leo was born in Manitoba. He grew up in an igloo that his father, Jacco built. As he got older, he loved to explore the Arctic tundra. He was a very energetic and curious little bear. If he could play every day, you can bet he would. Time passed and now Leo was six years old. One day two of his best friends Andy and Michelle, came over and asked if he wanted to come outside and play tag. So Leo went and asked his mother, Tula, if it would be okay for him to go out and play with his friends. She told him he could as long as he was back before dark. He replied to her, "Yes, ma'am."

Leo ran off quickly to go play tag on the sheets of ice. They played tag for hours and were having a lot of fun. Leo noticed it was getting dark and he knew it was time to go home. Suddenly, a sheet of ice split completely; Leo could not jump because by now he had drifted too far from the mainland. Michelle ran back as fast as she could to tell Tula what had happened. Tula ran to get Jacco to help rescue Leo, but by now all the ice had broken and the only thing they could do was call the Polar Bear Police. The PBP said they would search all the borders of waters and land and that they were sure they could find him.

Night fell, and then came morning; it was the next day. Now on the other side of the land, Leo was getting very hungry. He had not eaten since he had breakfast the morning before. He decided to get as many fish as he could and stock up as many as he could for his trip home. He caught twenty fish and ate five of them. Then he was ready to start his journey home. The weather was getting colder but Leo loved it. He ran into some penguins that were walking in the same direction that he was. Leo asked if they would help him find his way home because he had never been this far and was not sure which direction it was. The penguins all answered, "Sure, no problem."

The penguins asked him where exactly he was headed. Leo told them it was all the way on the other side of the land near Snow Cap Peak. So they headed off. His mother and father had never given up hope. They knew he was a bright little bear and either would find his way home or the Polar Bear Police would find him. Leo was quick to make friends on his adventure with the penguins. His new friend's name was Kara. Kara was also six years old. Leo decided that he would eat three more fish for dinner; he offered to share, but no one was hungry. The penguin leader told everyone that it was time to rest for the night. Meanwhile, back at the igloo, Tula and Jacco were starting to get a little worried; they wanted their son home and wanted him home now!

Morning came and soon Leo was on the move once again. He knew that today he would get home. But as the day went on, the darkness drew close. He was starting to worry that the penguins did not know where Snow Cap Peak was. Once again the lead penguin told them it was time to rest. He apologized to Leo, but assured him they were headed in the right direction, and he would soon be home. It was a long, long night. Leo could not sleep very much because he kept wondering if he'd ever make it home. As his eyes got heavy, he thought of his mom, dad and friends. Morning came and Leo woke up with a

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great feeling, he knew today was the day he's see his mom and dad again. After walking twenty-two miles the first day, twenty-one miles the next day and today eleven miles, he finally saw his town. A rush of excitement came over him! It wasn't long and he saw his mom and dad running towards him with tears of joy in their eyes. He rushed over and gave them big hugs, bear hugs of course! The Leo and his family walked back and thanked the penguins for all their help. Leo said goodbye to Kara and told her that sometime she should come back, and they could play tag. Kara said she was happy to have met such a wonderful friend, and she would love to play tag, just not on sheets of ice. The penguins stayed for lunch with Leo and his family, and then it was time to head off on their vacation once again. Leo spent the evening sharing his big adventure with his mom and dad.

*Calli M. Pugh
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Eighth Grade*

CRITICAL REVIEWS

REVIEW OF SADAKO ANN THE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES

“This is our cry, this is our prayer; peace in the world.” Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes is a powerful novel sure to grab your attention. Get ready, readers. You are going to experience a variety of emotions – excitement, happiness, sorrow, admiration, and anger. If you are like me, your opinions about the ways of the world will change after reading this book.

This is a true story which tells of a cheerful young girl who lives in Hiroshima, Japan during the 1940's. Beautiful, free spirited Sadako Chan loves two things: her family and running. She has dreams of becoming a great runner. “She danced around the room gaily swinging her school bag. Just think. If we win, I'll be sure to get on the team in junior high school next year!” That was what Sadako wanted more than anything else. Unfortunately, one day everything changes.

Just like a pure bred race horse, with its eyes fixed on the finish line, Sadako ran freely across the school yard. Suddenly, everything around her starts to spin. What is wrong? Why am I so dizzy? Little did she know what sadness lay before her.

The chapter, “A Secret No Longer,” prepares the reader for the dramatic news. Sadako learns she has leukemia, the atom bomb disease! As she heard the murmurs of her family's voices outside her hospital room, she felt as if her world could come to an end. How could this be? She was only a baby when the great lightening bolt destroyed Hiroshima.

The remainder of the novel deals with Sadako's struggles with leukemia, her friendship with a young boy who also suffers from the same disease, and the thoughts of death. A special friend, Chizuko, tries to help Sadako by giving her a paper crane. She shares with Sadako the heartwarming tale of the crane which legends says will give a person who is ill, good health if 1000 cranes are folded. This gives her new hope, and the reader is drawn into the story as Sadako carefully folds crane after crane. Sadly, she never reached her goal of 1000 cranes. Sadako dies peacefully with her family around her and 644 cranes.

The author, Eleanor Coerr, is an excellent writer. She used a prologue to prepare the reader for the story. This was very helpful to me. Also, Ms. Coerr included an epilogue which explained what happened after Sadako's death. It was interesting to learn of the Hiroshima Peace Park which was built in Sadako's honor.

When my class began studying this novel, my teacher told us that it was a bittersweet story. After reading it, I believe it is more bitter than sweet because in the end so many sad events happen. First, her family is filled with worry. Next, Sadako is never able to run again. Also, she suffers from terrible pain, and at the conclusion of the story, Sadako dies. What an unfortunate life for such a young girl!

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Additionally, this novel made me question the definition of war. Did the United States really need to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima? Yes, Pearl Harbor was a painful event for our country, but was it necessary to kill thousands of innocent people? How about today's situation in Iraq. Should we be involved in that war?

In conclusion, I highly recommend this book. Sadako was such an inspiration to me because even when times were bad, she was always thinking of others. She never gave up hope. Also, I learned that we should always strive to achieve our dreams because if we do not, what is the point of dreaming? Enjoy this book; it is a winner!

*Adrienne May
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Fourth Grade*

CRITICAL REVIEW OF “MAN IN BLACK” BY JOHNNY CASH

Black, what is black? What does it stand for? What is it symbolic of? On the logical side of the equation, there is the fact that black is not a color, but the absence of color. From Johnny Cash’s point of view, black is the lack of hope, happiness and freedom. This is never more apparent than in his trademark song, “Man in Black”.

The puzzling part of this song is that the music and beat are so simple, yet it sounds like it has the grandest tune ever heard. This effect is created by the twang in Johnny’s voice. It is a wonderful bellow that sounds like he has been deep down in the darkness. He has seen the dark side of it all. He has seen men in prison, pleading for their wife and children. He was not just singing because he liked the song, nor was he just reading the words on the paper, he was living the words. He sings about the cold, and he sounds cold as ice. When he sings about the poor and hungry, his voice sounds starved and downtrodden.

“Man in Black” is such a great song because it represents everything Johnny Cash was. He was nothing more than a human being, who had come from humble beginnings to become one of the world’s greatest singer songwriters. His humble beginnings are what made him so successful. When you have seen these things you put the pain and agony, into the lyrics creating a sensation that a ragged angel is speaking to you, telling you that all is not well.

The song itself talks about the darker things that happen in this crazy world. Johnny seems to be the sanest person in the world when he speaks of the poor, sick, imprisoned, lonely and downtrodden. The somber simplicity is bone chilling. His voice is so stone cold and unforgiving, much like the life he sings of.

The whole reason this song has a bitter cold feeling is strictly because Johnny was the man in black. He was calling America to do something about it. He thought if they did do something to help it would be life altering to someone who was in trouble.

Johnny is telling a true story, and it makes my heart heavy thinking of people starving, cold and ragged, in the very cities and towns we live in. This song gave Johnny a place in the heart of music, as he would be forever known as “The Man in Black”.

*McKay Proctor
Meigs Middle Magnet School
Sixth Grade*

REVIEW OF “THE NEGRO SPEAKS OF RIVERS”

Langston Hughes has long been known as one of the most influential poets of American History. His first famous poem was “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” which appeared in W.E.B. Dubois’s *Crisis* magazine in 1921. Legend has it that Hughes wrote the poem on the back of an envelope as he crossed the Mississippi River on a train. Hughes was to become one of the most influential figures of the Harlem Renaissance and the African-American community. His work has been associated with many genres, especially civil rights. The mighty pens of Hughes and Dubois laid the foundation for the non-violent Civil Rights struggles that followed several decades later. Many consider his first important poem as his masterpiece.

The poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” is uniquely a Langston Hughes poem. One could describe it as a category that was commonly associated with the strong expressions of Pre-Civil Rights Activists that drew attention to the grotesque inequalities of American society. The poem itself addresses the roots of the African people throughout history, using the metaphor of rivers as a way of expressing this. In general, the poem attempts to prove that Africans, specifically African-Americans, deserve equal standing in modern society because of their deep roots and role in history, and the fact that they have crossed many continents to reach here.

The first line of the poem introduces the topic and the metaphor that is used throughout the poem, the rivers. The next line elaborates on the first line, using the comparison of rivers to human blood. This comment shows that the author is trying to establish a link between the rivers and the person (“The Negro”), and that both of them are from the same dear Earth. To cap off the first part of the poem, is the line, “My soul has grown deep like the rivers.” Using the metaphor of rivers once again, Hughes refers to the fact that the Negro’s soul has become as tough as the rivers, and that he cannot be broken.

The next four lines are all about the different rivers that the Negro has seen. First, he says he has bathed in the Euphrates, a river where civilization first dawned. The next line is about how the Negro built his hut near the Congo, an important river in Africa. In a way, this also symbolizes the man’s hard work and individual spirit. In the next line, Hughes says that the Negro once looked upon the Nile and raised the Pyramids of Egypt, alluding to how his people have been trailblazers in world history. And finally, he mentions the Mississippi River as Abe Lincoln goes to New Orleans in the events preceding the Civil War. This signifies how America is the next stop for the Negro; after all he has already seen the other rivers. But nowhere has he encountered the brutal inequalities of life as in America.

The last two stanzas conclude the poem. The Negro says that he has known “ancient dusky rivers,” but none as dusky as in America. And, finally, the concluding line is a repeat of the third line, ending the poem with a summarizing sentence. By doing this, Hughes

reinforces the point that the Negro is a man of deep past and with deep roots.

There are many ways to analyze and understand this poem. The most underlying message is that the narrator of the poem has deep origins that run like rivers, and he recollects his history and impact on society. Another idea in the poem is how the African people are of the Earth and of the same roots as all men. The poem also tries to prove that the African people have had a great impact on mankind. All three of these lead to the same message of equality in the end. Hughes was known for writing about civil rights in poetic ways, and this is a good example. It shows how the African man is a man as much worthy as any other man, and has a deep past that needs to be respected. The river analogy works in many ways. Not only is the river of the Earth and part of the Earth, but it unites all of the places of the African man's journey throughout history in the poem. Despite having many different interpretations, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" has an underlying theme of equality.

"The Negro Speaks of Rivers" is a great poem written by poet Langston Hughes in 1921. It was the first major poem of his career, and it is said that he wrote it in just a few minutes. Hughes would have great success in his career, but this is considered one of his best works. The poem has many major ideas in it. One is that all Africans are of the same Earth as everyone else. Another is that Africans have deep roots to be respected that run like rivers. It also has the idea that Africans have had a major impact on man. All of these ideas boil down to one theme: Africans are as much deserving as any other group of people to have equal rights. I believe that this poem is a very good example of a poetic way that Langston Hughes expressed his feeling on equality.

*Varthik Sastry
Bellevue Middle School
Seventh Grade*

**RAY BRADBURY'S MESSAGE BURNS BRIGHT IN FAHRENHEIT
451**

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury is a science-fiction novella written in the hypothetical future. This futuristic world is a dysfunctional place in which war is looming, and where the citizens are kept uninformed by the government. The government suppresses free thought and maintains control by, among other things, making the reading of books illegal. "Firemen" enforce the ban on reading. These firemen, though, do not put out fires, they start them. If citizens are caught possessing books, it is the firemen's job to set their house ablaze. All of the offender's belongings, most importantly the books, are incinerated. The protagonist, Guy Montag, is a fireman in this society, and the reader follows him as he begins his journey of discovery. Bradbury was influenced to write *Fahrenheit 451* by many occurrences in his childhood and many worldwide events. He created an intriguing situation and plot for this novella. However, sometimes the descriptions of what takes place are unclear because the novella is written from Montag's view of the world.

During the course of this novella, Guy Montag develops from an unquestioning servant of the state to a revolutionary. In the beginning, Montag is as submissive and uninformed as the rest of the population. However, he has many hidden doubts and questions that set him apart from the other firemen. These doubts cause Montag to instinctively save a few books from each burning and stash them in his ventilation system. It takes the inquisitive mind of Clarisse McClellan to bring forth these thoughts from his subconscious. She is a teenage girl whose independent outlook and questioning of authority begin to help Montag realize he is unhappy with his life. Later, after burning an old woman and her books, he discovers that he no longer wants to be a fireman. Montag's journey to enlightenment is constantly hindered by the fire captain, Beatty. Beatty feeds Montag propaganda in an effort to detour him from the truth concerning the injustices of the government. Even with Beatty's diversions and the fear instilled by a menacing mechanical hound, Montag still proceeds on his path to discovery. Montag begins by just seeking self-enlightenment but ultimately aims to destroy the corrupt government and inform all of society. Ray Bradbury infuses numerous plot twists into *Fahrenheit 451* that result in a highly suspenseful novella.

Bradbury was inspired to write *Fahrenheit 451* by many events in his own life as well as many injustices taking place throughout the world. In the foreword of his book, he states, "What caused my inspiration?...There was Hitler torching books in Germany in 1834; rumors of Stalin and his match people and tinderboxes...But most of it was my romantic background in Roman, Greek and Egyptian mythology, starting at the age of three." (16) Because of his background in mythology, Bradbury was deeply distressed by the triple burnings of the Alexandrian library. In the novella's preface Bradbury states that he called on his childhood memory when writing *Fahrenheit 451*. Bradbury also took some of the unjust things that happened to him and used them in the novella. For example, while walking in Los Angeles, Bradbury was interrogated without cause by a police officer. Upset

about this injustice, he wrote a book called *The Pedestrian*. Bradbury also includes this scenario in *Fahrenheit 451* when Clarisse McClellan tells Montag about the time her uncle was sent to jail for being a pedestrian. Bradbury infuses his personal experiences into his stories giving them a passionate message. This enthusiasm is contagious, and will have the reader feeling emotionally involved in the book. The strong feelings and personal connections created by Ray Bradbury's ardent message are positive aspects of the novella.

The intriguing new future society is one of the positive things about this story. Just the notion that the future world could be so dysfunctional and corrupt is thought provoking. Also, Ray Bradbury's message is that too much censorship can create a dystopia where free thought is suppressed; this message makes the reader wonder if the current government is withholding and censoring information at the expense of the people. For example, in *Fahrenheit 451* the citizens are kept uninformed and therefore unconcerned about the war. This withholding of information causes the citizens to be killed when they are not even aware of the danger. Another constructive aspect of the book is that it requires the reader to think critically. If readers do not pay close attention, they will miss subtle details of the book that will later cause confusion. However, this critical thinking will help readers absorb more of the information and assist them in forming opinions of the novels they read. Nonetheless, even when read closely, *Fahrenheit 451* can sometimes be confusing.

A negative aspect of *Fahrenheit 451* is that the details and descriptions of subtle events can be extremely unclear. This confusion occurs because the novel is written from Montag's limited perspective, rather than from that of an omniscient narrator. The reader discovers things just as Montag does; however, with the odd point of view and the confusing metaphors, the actual events taking place in the novel can be baffling even after reading the situation a few times. For example, the following excerpt from *Fahrenheit 451* describes a situation involving Montag discovering Mildred after she has overdosed on sleeping pills, "Two moonstones looked up at him in the light of his small hand-held fire; two pale moonstones buried in a creek of clear water over which the life of the world ran, not touching them." (43) Although these words are beautiful, it is hard to understand what they mean and how they relate to Mildred's suicide attempt. Despite its complexity, the unique point of view helps build suspense, because the reader discovers things just as Montag does.

Fahrenheit 451 is a captivating novella with an ardent message about how excessively government censorship can suppress free thought and unique ideas. In *Fahrenheit 451* Bradbury also encourages the public to question the authority so that they can form their own unique ideas and not settle for the ideas implemented by the government. The thought-provoking society presented in *Fahrenheit 451* is one of the reasons why it is worthwhile to read. However, a negative aspect of this novella is that the use of figurative language can make it difficult to read. This book's metaphorical language and uncommon view point might demand a higher level of reading and analytical skills than younger children possess. However, *Fahrenheit 451* would be a stimulating and valuable read for people fourteen years and older.

Claire Rose
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A CRITICAL REVIEW: THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS

Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize-winning only novel *The God of Small Things* uses unique language and style. The book is jam-packed with metaphor, conceit, imagery, symbolism, anaphora, and personification; but perhaps what makes it stand out most is the general structure and writing style. Much of the story focuses on Estha and Rahel, the twins, and as children they often see and understand things differently from the adults. From one-word-sentences and one-word-paragraphs to Unconventional Capitalization to combined and misunderstood words, the reader sees the events of the story through the eyes and minds of the children.

Myriad words and phrases that do not even exist in English appear throughout the novel because the twins imagine them. They like to read things backward: STOP becomes "POTS" (57), Politeness becomes "ssenitiloP" (297), and TO STOP TRAIN PULL CHAIN becomes "OT POTS NIART LLUP NIAHC" (207). Since the twins have been reading for a relatively short time, it probably makes just as much sense for them to read letters from right to left as from left to right. When they learn that Ammu has no claim to the property as a daughter, they interpret *locus standi* ("place of standing") as Locusts Stand I" – a reasonable mistake for young children who aren't familiar with such Latin phrases. Rahel also has no Plans, "no Locusts Stand I" (179, 220). During the Communist march at the railroad crossing, Rahel observes that a dead toad on the road looks more like a frog-shaped stain on the road" than a frog (78). This reminds her of what Vellya Paapen said: there are no black cats, only "black cat-shaped holes in the Universe." This phrase makes several other appearances – as a "Joe-shaped Hole in the Universe" (112), "looming, gabled House-shaped Hole in the Universe" (179), and "History-shaped Hole in the Universe" (left by the boat, 291). At the airport, Ammu gets frustrated with the twins' immaturity (139) but agrees to contain her wrath until *later* – a "horrible, menacing, goose-bumping word" to the twins, who hear it as a slow and ominous "Lay. Ter." "Lay. Ter" comes back to haunt the story as a foreshadowing (215, 216). Other recurring phrases are "Prer NUN sea ayshun" from a twin-nagging Baby Kochamma (36) and from the twins perfect pronunciation later in the story (147), the comparison of the lovely word *boot* and the terrible word *sturdy* as Rahel hears them (45, 146), and "A Wake, A Live, A Lert" describing Sophie Mol's sleep as abruptly and "summarily dismissed" (226, 252). Several words appear that are compounds of smaller words because the twins hear them as single entities" "Whatisit," "Whathappened," "Furrywhirring," "Sariflapping," "dullthudding," "trainrumble," "longago," "Shutup," "Getout," "Thiswayandthat," "lemontolemon," "ofcourseofcourse," "Lemonorange," "Orangelemon," and "Stoppit." Other words and phrases appear because of the twins' misunderstanding of English: "Stoppited," "Never The Less," "Ei Der Downds," "Infinnate Joy," "Thang God," and "Bar Nowl." Arundhati Roy gives the reader an idea of the twins' fascination with English through words like "cuff-links" (cuff + link = cuff-link), "Humbling" (a nice word to Rahel, although she thought of it as a verb: "Humbling along without a care in the world"), "Old" (to Rahel, a funny word on its own),

and “Never” (“Not Ever” minus the O and T). Roy also shows how the twins pronounce English words: “Dus to dus to dus to dus to dus” (Rahel thinking about Sophie Mol, 9), “But moonin’ an’ a groonin’ gonna satisfy mah soul, less have a pardy...” (Estha singing Elvis, 37), and “lef, lef, lefrightlef” (Rahel swinging her hand like a soldier, 135). The exaggerated repetition of these and other words and phrases creates an interesting perspective, helping the reader to see the world through the twins’ eyes.

In German, old English, and other languages, many nouns are capitalized. Similarly, Roy’s language has many capitalized words that emphasize what’s most important to the twins and other characters. At Sophie Mol’s funeral, Sophie Mol shows Rahel “Two Things” – the ceiling and a baby bat (7). Besides the use of “shows” to convey that Rahel still thinks Sophie Mol is alive, the capitalization of “Two Things” emphasizes that she notes them as though on an orderly list. When Estha is in the pickle factory, he has “Two Thoughts,” also clearly defined and actually on a list in this case: “(a) *Anything can happen to Anyone*. And (b) *It’s best to be prepared.*” This format recurs when the twins witness Velutha’s slaughter by the police and learn two new lessons (293). “Lesson Number One: *Blood barely shows on a Black Man*. (Dum Dum). And Lesson Number Two: *It smells though, Sicksweet. Like old roses on a breeze* (Dum Dum).” Because Baby Kochamma told them they were “Ambassadors of India” (133), the twins think of themselves as “Two-egg Twin Ambassadors. Their Excellencies Ambassador E(lvis). Pelvis, and Ambassador S(tick). Insect.” This phrase sadly recurs in the History House (293) as “Twin Ambassadors of God-knows-what.” Countless other capitals occur, including Rahel’s “battle against Real Life” (7), Rahel opening the window “For a Breath of Fresh Air” (29), Ammu’s mysterious “Unsafe Edge” and everybody’s consent to “Let Her Be” (44), Chacko’s “Reading Aloud voice” and “Oxford Moods” (53), Miss Mitten being a “Little Disappointed” in the twins for reading backwards (58), Ammu telling Estha to “Shut UP!!” and Estha shutting “UP” at the play (96), Estha’s sticky “Other Hand” from the incident at the play (100), Ammu’s use of “Jolly Well” when she was really angry (141), and the “Time” that “Had Come” for the twins to run away since “Ammu didn’t want them anymore” (250). The extreme capitalization of many nouns besides proper nouns catches the reader’s attention and brings emphasis to the important words in the story and in the twins’ mind.

As if capitals and nonexistent words aren’t enough, Roy throws in several sentence fragments and sentence fragment paragraphs, giving a structure that is choppy but flows with respect to the observant mind, especially of the twins. While in HERS (female restroom) at the play (91), Ammu tells Rahel that “Public Pots were Dirty. Like Money was. You never knew who’d touched it. Lepers. Butchers. Car Mechanics. (Pus, Blood, Grease.)” This excerpt lists the potential previous Public Pot users as they might come to mind, and the parentheses show the associations made with each. When the world floods into Estha’s quiet head from Rahel (16), “Estha couldn’t hear himself for the noise. Trains. Traffic. Music. The stock market.” The short sentences and words bombard the page, just as those noises bombard Estha’s mind, and he registers one after another. Other instances include “Feathers. Mangoes. Spit.” From the road at the railroad crossing (79), Rahel following “Estha to his room. Ammu’s room. Once.” (87), the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man moving Estha’s hand up and down, “First slowly. Then fastly.” (99), Ammu scolding the twins at the airport with “Is. That. Clear?” (142), and Rahel’s fear immediately following

Sophie Mol's disappearance: Pappachi's "moth snapped open its somber wings. Out. In. And lifted its legs. Up. Down." (277) There is also a run-on sentence: outside by the boat, "Rahel's fingers were Yellow Green Blue Red Yellow." (189) Some of the short sentences and paragraphs also have anaphora. Under the boat: "White termites on their way to work. White ladybirds on their way home. White beetles burrowing away from the light" (193, 317). The short sentences reflect the stream of consciousness of the twins.

Most people can relate to the twins' misconceptions. We often perceive certain words and sounds we don't know as our own fabrications, especially as children. I remember learning the sound of the lyrics to many songs when I was little but not understanding all of them (and therefore not always pronouncing them exactly right) for years. Not only this, but we can also remember how strange and mysterious everything in the world was when we were children – we saw a completely different world. It's easy to forget about this as adults, however, but Arundhati Roy has done a good job of reminding us and, in a way, transporting us back in time as we view the story of *The God of Small Things* from the perspective of the two-egg twins. Her language style (sentence structure, Unusual punctuation and Capitalization, and fabricated words) tells the story through the eyes, ears and thoughts of the twins.

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EXPOSITORY ESSAY

MY FAVORITE GAME - CHESS

Chess – the King of the games. It is one of the world’s most popular board games. Every country plays it and has outstanding players.

People do not know how chess started, but they think it happened when the King of India asked his servant to create a game to keep him entertained. This happened about 1500 years ago. How has chess survived? This is because chess has a very good quality: you need to use your brain. Chess’ FIDE organization (which is the international organization for chess) is the 3rd largest sporting body in the world.

To play chess you need an 8x8 board and 32 pieces, 16 white and 16 black. The pieces are the king, queen, knight, bishop, rook, and pawn. There are 2 rooks, 2 knights, and 2 bishops. There is also 1 king, 1 queen and 8 pawns. The king is the most important, because without the king, you’ve lost.

My favorite pieces are the rooks. There are 2 rook starting and they can be a great team.

The main reason I like chess is because chess is good for life. First it teaches us FORESIGHT. When you play chess, you need to think about not just one move ahead, but sometimes 5-7 moves ahead. In life, if you have this habit, it will benefit you. For example, Milton S. Hershey tried to make a company and failed on his first few tries. But later, he thought ahead and figured out how to make a chocolate company. Now, it is one of the most successful chocolate companies in USA. Next it teaches us CIRCUMSPECTION. This means teaching us not to just survey one part of the board (your own pieces), but all of it. You need to figure out the possible moves your opponent may do. In life, if you’re packing lunch for a picnic, you might only think of the peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and forget the drinks. When you get to the park, you’ll get thirsty, and too bad you’ve forgotten the drinks. After that, one of the most important things you can learn is CAUTION. Although you have your own plans to attack, but when he moves, you should think about what he can do. When playing chess, you can move your knight to attack his queen, but this move allows your opponent to checkmate (win)! In life, you could forget to lock the door and while you’re away someone could go inside and steal your stuff. Last, it teaches us PERSEVERANCE. When you are losing in chess you should still play to the end because you still have chances to win. One in the girls championship for Russia, 2 girls were play each other. Black was winning and thinking about getting the girls champion title. However, she made a major mistake and her opponent won. Moral: Even if you’re losing, you still have the opportunity to win. For example, once I was losing by a lot to my dad, and in the end it was a draw (tie game). I drew because I tried my best and even if I didn’t win, I didn’t lose. Chess players never resign before he is down, like a rook, a knight, and both of his bishops. In games, people don’t draw early. They often play to the end. But sometimes people want to draw with you, and you don’t accept it because they think they’re losing. Although I am not sure I will win, I play to the end of the game.

CATERPILLAR FINANCIAL SERVICES STUDENT WRITERS SHOWCASE

You can learn to accept a loss in chess. No matter how well you play, there is someone better than you. No matter how bad you play, there is someone worse.

One of the reasons I like chess is that you can play in tournaments. In tournaments, you can get money and titles such as Nashville City Champion. You can also make friends. Another thing I like about tournament is when you win someone better than you, your rating can get higher. A rating is a number that tells you how good you are. The better you play, the higher your rating gets. A beginner's rating is 700, an intermediate 1400, and advanced 1900, and really good players (masters) 2400.

I like chess because it is fun, but it's also good for life.

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SAVE OUR HOME - EARTH

There is a place with majestic mountains, swift rivers, and vast plains. There is a place with luxuriant forests, fascinating animals, and beautiful plants. Earth is this place, our beautiful home. It is truly an amazing dot in the universe. However, with its growing populations, needing ever greater industry which demands more and more of the natural resources, our home, Earth, is getting polluted.

One of the major pollutions is water pollution. Water is the foundation of life. Our planet is also a “water planet”, but only 1% of the water in the entire world is drinkable. So why are we polluting the water? Now, water pollution is both very common and serious. Many lakes, rivers, and even underground water sources are all victims of water pollution. Water pollution is mainly caused by factories dumping unpurified waste into lakes and rivers. Water pollution is also dangerous to our health, and people who drink polluted water will get really sick and/or die. Water pollution also threatens fisheries and farms. Treating water pollution is now a matter between life and death.

Another major pollution is air pollution. We all know that we need fresh air to be healthy, and if we want to have fresh air, we must fight air pollution. Currently, the main causes for air pollution are the smoke from the factories and the exhaust fumes from the cars. Also, too much exhaust in the air will increase the “greenhouse” effects, which in turn will cause global warming. About 40% of the global warming is caused by one “greenhouse” gas – carbon dioxide. The “greenhouse” gases are made up of certain gases in the atmosphere. The heat of the sun can penetrate these gases, but its escape is slowed down. Without these gases, the Earth would be too cold for life, but with too much of these gases, the Earth would be too hot. In some places, if the Earth’s temperature keeps on rising, there will be droughts in that area. And if the droughts last long enough, those places will become deserts. In contrast, other places will have more rain; coastal areas will have more frequent floods, and some places will have more storms. Warmer weather is good for mosquitoes and viruses, too, so people will have more diseases. Air pollution is also very deadly. In 1952, London was covered with heavy smog, but even then, factories were still expelling large amounts of smoke into the air. Within a few days, thousands of people died due to the inhalation of the poisonous air. Even worse, air pollution may cause acid rain. The main cause for acid rain is methane, another “greenhouse” gas that the scientists are concerned about. Acid rain can be either a type of rain that has been polluted or a type of dry invisible dust that is just as bad for the environment. It can kill large patches of forests, crops, dissolve and/or deteriorate buildings and statues, and it can even make soil lose its nutrients. Acid rain can also kill fishes and underwater life forms if it lands in lakes. Air pollution must be stopped before it’s too late.

Air pollution also causes the destruction of the ozone layer which is about 10-13 miles above the surface of the Earth. The ozone layer acts like a huge shield, protecting us by blocking out 99% of the sun’s UV rays. But now, scientists discovered that the ozone layer above North America, Europe, and parts of Oceania are beginning to thin, and there’s already a hole in the ozone layer above Antarctica. The reason why we should preserve the

ozone layer is because every time the concentration of the ozone layer goes down by 1%, the amount of the UV rays that hit the Earth is increased by 2%, and the chance of getting skin cancer is increased by 7%. The damage to the ozone layer is caused by a group of chemicals that are known as CFCs. These chemicals are mainly used in aerosols and coolants. One CFC called Freon is particularly damaging the ozone layer. It is used as the coolant in refrigerators. When the cooling unit is opened, the Freon is released into the atmosphere.

Why should we save our Earth? Because we only have one Earth, we must protect it, and then, our amazing planet can take care of us. Once Earth is damaged, it might take centuries for it to recover. We have to stop the overuse of natural resources, such as fossil fuels because they are not renewable. We also have to protect all of the organisms on the planet. Some animals may soon become extinct if we don't protect them. How can we save our Earth? First, we have to reduce air pollution. We can ride bikes or walk more and drive less, install catalytic converters into cars, stop cutting down trees and plant more because trees take in carbon dioxide from the air, and thus reduce the "greenhouse effect", or we can convert our cars to run on unleaded gasoline. Second, we have to prevent water pollution. Factories can purify their waste water before dumping it into lakes and rivers. We can also try to save water by doing things such as taking shorter showers. Third, we have to protect the ozone layer of the Earth. We can try to find substitutes for CFCs, but if that is not possible, we must try to use things containing these chemicals as little as possible. And fourth, we must recycle all that can be recycled, such as paper, plastic accessories, and cans. We need to save our Earth for future generations.

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FORMAL ESSAYS

THIMEROSAL AND THE DEBATE OVER ITS ALLEGED CONNECTION TO AUTISM

From 1987 to 2003, rates for children diagnosed with autism have increased more than sixty-fold, from one in 10,000 in 1987 (Schulman, par. 5) to one in every 2,500 in 1991 to one in every 166 in 2003 (Kennedy, par. 2). Many attribute this precipitous climb to thimerosal, a bacteriostatic agent most often used as a vaccine preservative, when in vaccines given to infants and pregnant women. However, many others oppose this view, citing various points and studies on the issue. Due to the emotional background for both sides, this debate has gradually become more intense, and hardly any book or study on the issue that claims to be objective actually is. Resolutions to this problem might include urging vaccine manufacturers to research preservatives other than thimerosal or urging them simply to phase out thimerosal from vaccines despite the costs, exempting immunizations for influenza in case of an epidemic.

This much debated vaccine preservative, thimerosal, is 49.6% mercury by weight, has the chemical formula $C_9H_9HgNaO_2S$, and is also known as thiomersal (“Thiomersal,” par. 1). It contains ethylmercury ($C_2H_5Hg^+$) (“Ethylmercury,” par. 1), a neurotoxin, sparking an intense debate over its safety and potential health risks. However, guidelines for mercury exposure are based instead on methylmercury (CH_3Hg^+) (“Methylmercury,” par. 1), a compound proven to be quite detrimental to the health of living organisms. These compounds are slightly different, but there has still been much controversy about thimerosal’s use in vaccines.

As noted in the article “Mercury in Vaccines” by the National Network for Immunization Information (NNii), the principal use for thimerosal is as an added preservative to prevent contamination of vaccines in multi-dose vials. These require protection because, as the name implies, they are used more than once. If the needle becomes contaminated after an injection, any bacteria that happened to travel back into the vial would be killed by the thimerosal in it. The amount of thimerosal in the final vaccine is determined chiefly by its use as a preservative, so that is the main concern (par. 2-8). The counterparts of multi-dose vials, single-dose vials, need no preservative because even if after the first injection they were contaminated they would not be used again. However, the cumulative expense of single-dose vials for a certain amount of vaccine greatly exceeds that of multi-dose vials. Because of this, vaccine manufacturers prefer only to package vaccines in multi-dose vials, taking the less expensive route and thus gleaning the larger profit.

Some people claim that the government, because of some tie to the vaccine-producing industry, is unjustly protecting vaccine manufacturers by urging government-affiliated researchers to “prove” that the thimerosal has no causal connection to autism. Several

transcripts of internal government meetings seem to support their case; the so-called Simpsonwood transcripts are a prime example.

In June 2000, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) held a meeting closed to the general public in Norcross, Georgia, at the Simpsonwood Convention Center, one of their purposes being to discuss findings on thimerosal. During the event, Thomas Verstraeten presented results, current at that point, of an analysis of the Vaccine Safety Datalink (VSD), a database containing more than seven million Americans' medical histories. His findings suggested, according to Verstraeten himself, "statistically significant relationships between exposures and outcomes" (Schulman, par. 6). Even so, this meeting was embargoed and is only available due to a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit initiated by SafeMinds, an activist group advocating the removal of thimerosal from vaccines (Schulman, par. 7).

Later, when the same study supervised by Verstraeten was published, it seemed instead to debunk any connection between thimerosal and autism. CDC researchers explained this by claiming that the earlier version had not made provisions for various factors such as low birth weight, which might increase a child's susceptibility to autism. Some thimerosal activists such as Jeanne Brohart, however, claim this was a "whitewashing" of the study to eliminate various at-risk groups that might have contributed to the conclusion that thimerosal, in fact, did cause autism (par. 1).

This study was one of the principal five taken seriously and cited in the report on thimerosal from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in 2004, which concluded that there was no reputable evidence supporting a connection and suggested that research projects on the topic be stopped and turned into other, more fruitful channels of study. A Danish study, also one of these, showed an increase in autism in Denmark even after thimerosal had been removed in 1992 from its single thimerosal-carrying vaccine (Harris and O'Connor, par. 51). However, as David Kirby notes in *Evidence of Harm*, the authors tallied inpatient cases before 1994 and outpatient after, possibly explaining the apparent increase in autism cases (Schulman, par. 10). Also, since European children received much less thimerosal in their vaccines than did American children (Kennedy, par. 32), the results of this study and the other three, which were also based in Europe, are unreliable.

One of thimerosal activists' more convincing points, in my opinion, is the history of autism and how closely it correlates to the history of thimerosal in vaccines. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., states in his article "Deadly Immunity" that autism was first identified and diagnosed in 1943 "among eleven children born in the months after thimerosal was first added to baby vaccines in 1931" (par. 12). In the same article, he notes that in 1991 "the CDC and FDA recommended that three additional vaccines laced with the preservative be given to extremely young infants," correlating closely with the autism spike from 1991 to 2003. Both of these facts show the close ties between the histories of autism and of thimerosal, perhaps too close to be a coincidence.

In my view, however, the greatest problem is not thimerosal but the large amount of bias in this debate. The present lack of objectivity compounds any potential problem with thimerosal and muddles the scientific process so that any clear, objective conclusion cannot truly be reached by the scientific community; it could possibly even cause studies' conclusions to be incorrect, leading to bad decisions and, subsequently, to negative impacts on children's health. Thus, bias in supposedly scientific studies could affect the scientific concerns about thimerosal.

One possible solution would be for vaccine manufactures to research and implement alternate, non-toxic preservatives. This would eliminate the necessity for thimerosal as well as settling the debate and subsequently eliminating any bias. From the scientific point of view, however, it is rather weak. Other preservatives have already been researched and discarded; in addition, any preservative meant to kill or inhibit bacteria or the growth thereof must be toxic on some level. If it were even possible to create a non-toxic, functional vaccine preserve, discovering it and the process of making it might take years, even decades, while in the meantime nothing would have been done.

Another solution, one I believe to be more effective, is to incite vaccine manufactures to phase out thimerosal from vaccines (with an exception for flu immunizations because of the high likelihood of an outbreak), either by law or by working with them. This solution has many advantages, not the least of which is that it would satisfy believers in the connection between thimerosal and autism, eliminating the necessity for any debate. In addition, with the exception for flu vaccines, it would allow multi-dose vials to be used in the case of a flu epidemic for optimum speed in distribution and subsequent vaccination. This solution essentially serves as a safety measure to prevent the possibility of children becoming autistic from routine thimerosal-laced vaccines.

However, this solution does have weaknesses. In a letter to congress from numerous different national organizations opposing this type of legislation, several problems are noted. One of these is the increased costs of vaccine production for manufacture and this for patients who must purchase vaccines ("opposition," par. 5). This could increase the number of patients who need a vaccine but are unable to afford it.

Another potential problem arising from this plan of action is that the legislation might "perpetuate false and misleading information that vaccines are not safe" ("Opposition," par. 2). In other words, the legislation might cause distrust in vaccine manufacturers and the system in general. This is certainly true up to a point, though I would argue that there already is enough publicity about thimerosal that the system's trust has already been undermined, that the damage has been done. Even despite these weaknesses, I maintain my assertion that this is the better solution of the two, as it successfully addresses more parts of the problem.

The debate over thimerosal is exceedingly complex, with many subtopics and complicated issues, and bias in even supposedly scientific discussions and works is very prevalent. This may be resolved, at least in part, in a number of ways, including researching and implementing alternative vaccine preservatives besides thimerosal, eliminating the need for a debate and thus the accompanying bias, and requiring vaccine manufacturers to

package vaccines (except those for influenza in case of an epidemic) only in single-dose vials, despite the expense, this eliminating the need for thimerosal and, perhaps, any potential harm it would inflict on children. Any of these solutions would solve some part of the issue, though they all have their faults. In essence, however, any smart, well thought-out action would be better than allowing the situation to stagnate, with activist groups becoming more excited by the moment and thimerosal doing even more damage, perhaps, to those who receive vaccines containing it. The incidence of autism has grown rapidly in the past few years; thimerosal may or may not have had any affect on this, but the public and the government should attempt to reconcile this debate and work with the vaccine manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies to remove it from most childhood vaccinations as a precaution. Then, this issue will finally be settled.

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EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH

There is a huge debate in America regarding government funding of embryonic stem cell research. While most scientists support funding, many conservatives oppose this one ethical principle. They suggest that scientists leave embryonic stem cells alone and try to find different stem cells to work with. Recently, this issue was debated on NPR, both sides getting good representation. From this debate, it is easy to conclude that government funding of embryonic stem cell research has the potential to help many suffering people, which is the ethical thing to do.

Embryonic stem cells have vast potential in curing diseases. This is because stem cells are able to transform into any type of cell given the right signal. Thereby, stem cells have the potential to be used to repair heart muscle, reverse paralysis, and cure some brain diseases, such as Parkinson's. (Perry) There are many types of stem cells, but to do these and other things, embryonic stem cells show the greatest promise. (Lemischka) This makes sense, as embryonic stem cells must transform into an entire fetus before childbirth. However, right-wing, right-to-lifers want to prohibit government funding of embryonic stem cell research, saying that it would kill babies, and the adult body cells work just as well.

Testing embryonic stem cells for cures of diseases is NOT killing human beings; rather, it is a way to possibly **save** lives. One opponent of embryonic stem cell research, Douglas Johnson, says "Human beings should not be ...biological raw material." However, the embryos to be used would come from fertility clinics where they would be discarded anyway if not used to advance science. (Prentice) In response to this, Michelle Matthews-Roth, an associate professor of medical science at Harvard University, says, "We should offer these extra embryos to infertile couples to implant and allow them to be born, and not kill them either by experimentation or by disposal." However, this possibility has been open, and one must conclude that these infertile couples have not taken all of these cells, hence the excess of embryonic stem cells.

The other argument given by opponents of stem cell research is that adult stem cells can be used in place of embryonic ones. (Prentice) This does not make common sense, for embryonic stem cells have to change into a more diverse range of other cells than adult ones. Also, if adult stem cells can truly substitute for embryonic ones, no conclusion can be made until the two types are compared. (Lemischka) This point is demonstrated by Ihor Lemischka, an associate professor in the Department of Molecular Biology at Princeton University, who says, "we simply do not know the relative clinical usefulness of embryonic and adult stem cell populations. A prohibition of further research on one or the other source of stem cells will perpetuate our lack of knowledge."

In conclusion, the possible treatments embryonic stem cells could provide far outweigh the issues in testing them. In fact, the real ethical issue is the blocking of this research by the

religious right. If these preposterous blockades are not removed, many people, as well as the whole field of science, will be harmed. Let's not pass up another opportunity to save disabled people like Ronald Regan and Michael J. Fox.

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*Gainer Phay
Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet
Tenth Grade*

MORALITY IN SOCIETY

Mark Twain originally planned for *The Adventures in Huckleberry Finn* to be merely an adventure story, but after observing his homeland in the years following the Civil War, he decided to instill the novel with greater purpose. It evolved into a satire of the “moonlight and magnolia” fantasy which masked the deep roots of racism in the South. The main character of the novel, Huckleberry Finn, is a boy with good intentions whose conscience has already been tainted by the racism present in the role models in his life. When Huck escapes from his drunken father, he finds himself on the run with the first black man he has ever really gotten to know. His perspective is so altered by the experiences he has with this new father figure in his life that his decision to save either his own soul or Jim is no longer clear-cut, as it would have been before his journey. By forcing Huck to choose between listening to his own heart and following the example set for him by a racist society, Mark Twain illustrates the importance of never letting public opinion take precedence over personal morality.

Writing the book from Huck’s point of view enabled Mark Twain to clearly show the influence of society on the conscious of an impressionable young person. The novel, which is set in the antebellum South, vividly depicts the rampant racism of the times. When Huck is describing a steamboat accident to Aunt Sally, he tells her that although nobody was hurt, it “Killed a nigger.” The death of a black person seems entirely inconsequential to Aunt Sally, who replies, “Well, it’s lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt,” (234). Because Huck has grown up observing racism in people who are otherwise decent and principled, he too has begun to treat black people condescendingly, without recognizing that this is cruel. He has a sound heart, but his deformed conscience makes him feel remorse for doing things which are actually good. When Huck is debating over whether or not to turn Jim in, he feels guilty because, as he says to himself, “What had poor Miss Watson done to you, that you could treat her so mean?” (100) It never even occurs to Huck that it was not right for Miss Watson to keep Jim as a slave. Huck’s view of right and wrong in the world has been skewed by the racism society has embedded in his conscience.

Huck’s relationship with Jim forces him to reexamine these racist beliefs that he has accepted from society without question. Before he gets to know Jim, he thinks of him as only a black person. He speaks condescendingly to and about Jim, even though he is his elder. When Huck can’t think of a response in an argument with Jim, he simply gives up, saying, “you can’t learn a nigger to argue,” (92) When Huck and Tom hang Jim’s hat on a branch while he’s asleep, Jim thinks witches moved it – a reaction characteristic of Huck’s notion that all black people are superstitious. Later, when Jim realizes that Huck tricked him into believing that he dreamed that he and Huck got separated, Jim’s emotional reaction moved Huck to “humble [him]self to a nigger” (98). Huck adds, “I weren’t never sorry for it afterwards, neither. I didn’t do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn’t done that one if I’d a knowed it would make him feel that way.” (98) Jim becomes like a father to Huck,

stubbornly refusing to fit into any of Huck's stereotypes of black people. Huck begins to think of Jim as he would a white person, but he never seems to extend this concept of equality to all black people.

Huck eventually grows to admit that he loves Jim. And will help him, even though his deformed conscience tells him this is wrong and that he will go to Hell for it. When Huck chooses to rescue Jim from Silas Phelps, he does so after remembering all the good things Jim did for him. He decides to save Jim for specific reasons – not because slavery in general is immoral: “And I see Jim before me...But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind” (228). Huck never renounces racism; in fact, when he begins to feel bad about helping Jim (someone else's property), he reverts to labeling him “that nigger” (227). Huck's conscience continues to make him believe that slavery is morally acceptable, although Huck clearly feels that someone he loves being enslaved is a bad thing. Huck has a strong sense of what is right and what is wrong, but he fears that people will think less of him because he has helped Jim: “It would get all around, that Huck Finn helped a nigger to get his freedom; and if I was ever to see anybody from that town again, I'd be ready to get down and kick his boots for shame” (226). This fear of rejection from society holds Huck back from ever being able to abolish the racism in his mind.

Huck, as a young boy, is still trying to figure out what he believes about the world. His conscience is especially vulnerable to being swayed by pressures of society, and has already been taught that racism is not only acceptable, but necessary in order to maintain civilization. When Huck and Jim escape this civilized life on shore to discover the freedoms of the river, Huck also finds a stark contrast between the black person he has always imagined and the black man who becomes a friend and father to him. To Huck's surprise, his most admirable decisions are made when he lets his feelings guide him, rather than society's idea of morality.

*Eleanor Elbert
Hume - Fogg High Academic Magnet School
Eleventh Grade*

PERSONAL NARRATIVE

MY TRIP TO NEW JERSEY

I was going to New Jersey with my dad. While he was singing his song, I would be signing his song in sign language. I was really nervous. This was a big deal for me. That day I was going to be picked up early from school to go to the airport. When my dad picked me up, I had completely forgotten that we were going. It had totally left my mind.

When I got home, my mom said, "Get your teeth brushed. Brush your hair. Pack any other stuff you want for New Jersey."

I was munching on an apple and my next door neighbor came through the door. Of course she knew I was going. I don't know why I didn't!

Then I said, "Are you sure I am going today?"

Everybody started laughing, especially Olivia. She is still doing imitations of me asking that question. When I realized that I was going that day, my belly flipped over. I was going to sign in front of millions of people.

I said good bye to everyone. My mom took us to the airport and I said good bye to her again. We walked into the huge airport.

I asked my dad, "Where are we going to stay?"

"Two places," he answered, "but mostly at Avis and Stan's house. We're also going to be at Uncle Shark's house."

It took a while for our first plane to come. So, we went to a little place to eat. After we went back to our seats and waited for a while, we decided that it wouldn't hurt to kill a little more time. So, we went to a little shop right behind us to get some m&m's. Then, my dad spotted a Sport's Illustrated. He grabbed that too. When we had eaten a lot of m&m's, our plane finally got there. We walked into that little tunnel that leads to the plane. It took a while for everyone to get on the plane. We finished our m&m's without even knowing it. Then the plane was going really fast and the next thing I know, we're in the air. My stomach flipped over. We were going straight up. Finally, when the plane got high enough, the plane just went forward and my stomach settled down. Then my ears started popping. I had to move my jaw up and down until my dad gave me some gum to chew on. It took a long time for my ears to stop popping.

I had the window seat. I love the window seat. I like looking down on the land. I also like it when we're inside a cloud and it's all fluffy, puffy and white. That's so pretty. Then I

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thought to myself, “Wait a minute. Where is my mind going? I need to be thinking about my signing. Focus, S., focus.”

When we got kind of close to New Jersey, the sky was turning to sunset. When we landed and I got off the plane, I felt a little woozy. Then we had to wait for our second plane and the whole thing started all over again. This plane was crowded, but I still got the window seat. It was sunset and the sky was gorgeous! Pink, orange and red. After that, we still had one more plane to get on. When we landed we still weren't in New Jersey, but Avis was there to pick up us. When we reached her place we went right to bed.

The next morning, we went shopping to buy clothes for the big performance. Then, Avis took me shopping to get a present. I still have that present. Then, we went to the beach. It was warm and wonderful. That night we went out to eat. We had so much fun, but I was still feeling nervous.

Finally, the day came for the performance. I was SO scared! There was a huge crowd at the church. When we walked up onto the stage, all eyes were staring at us. My dad was right next to me about to play his piano and sing. Lights were lighting up the stage and the rest of the church was dark. My dad's voice came through the mic.

“Wait!” I thought to myself. “My dad's voice!”

I started to sign kind of slowly. Then I started catching on. I signed the words perfectly! When it was over, I felt relieved because that was a big moment for me and I had mastered it. I felt proud and grateful. After that, there was a finale and a big party.

A couple of days later, we went to Uncle Shark's place. The next morning we were ready to go home. We had a quick dip in his pool, ate some ice cream and were on our way!

I will never forget that trip and the great moment when I accomplished something very important.

*Sadie Petraitis
Percy Priest Elementary
Third Grade*

HANDS OF POVERTY REACHING FOR TREASURE: MY JOURNEY THROUGH THE EVERGLADES

When Mom told me we were going to the Florida Everglades over spring break, I figured it would be just like the other parts of Florida I had seen – miles of houses, chemically treated lawns, orange groves, and traffic-packed interstates – but soon I would discover that I was very, very wrong.

As our plane descended towards Miami, I looked down onto the flat landscape below us. “Aren’t there any mountains?” I asked Dad.

“Not really,” he replied. “Most city buildings are taller than the highest hills.

I couldn’t wait to explore this strange new landscape.

As we settled in for the long drive from Miami to the Everglades, I looked out the window. The city was so big that I didn’t think we would ever get to any wildlife.

Eventually, however, the land became rural and we drove past orange groves and produce farms. We stopped at a small general store with “Robert is Here” painted in huge white letters on its tin roof. From the outside, it looked like an ordinary little fruit stand, but inside it was packed with jars of local honey, nuts, spices, drinks, treats, chocolates, fruit, meat, and dairy products. My brother and I both tried a sugar cane shake from the dairy bar and I bought some alligator jerky (40% real alligator meat!).

Soon, I could see a line of trees off in the distance. Farms were pressing right up against it. Mom told me that these farms are threatening the Everglades. The pesticides and fertilizers that farmers use to treat their crops are seeping into the ground and being carried into the Everglades, where they are killing off plants and animals.

As soon as we left behind the green farmland and entered the Park, I could tell it was dry season. Dried-up saw grass fields stretched for miles and miles along the single road that goes through the Park.

“Where are all the animals?” my little brother asked.

“This is dry season,” replied Mom. “The animals are all gathered in the few remaining wet areas.”

“Where is that?”

“Usually in low swamps and canals.”

After a while we stopped at the visitor center. In front of the center was a small stream with a bridge over it. Under that bridge I saw my first wild alligator! Although it was a small one, it was so amazing to see an alligator in the wild after only seeing them in zoos.

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We continued on to our hotel, the Flamingo Lodge, a set of low concrete buildings looking out on Florida Bay. After we unpacked, my brother and I ran through swarms of mosquitoes and went down to the beach to collect shells among the mangroves at the water's edge. The mangroves roots curling down into the water looked to me like hands of poverty reaching into a pot of liquid treasure. Here and there we saw trash that had washed up against the mangrove roots. We searched among the trees for horseshoe crab shells until dad called us to dinner.

That night, I saw a 14-foot alligator swimming along the canal at the lodge marina. The dock master told me this alligator has to be removed from the Park because he is big enough to threaten the tourists. I hoped they would be taking it into good hands.

There was lots of wildlife down on the docks. I saw a nest with baby ospreys watching their mother and father hunting for fish in the nearby canal. I saw little green herons and a great blue heron with a long, snaky neck and sleep blue feathers that shown like the light reflecting off the evening ocean. The skinny necks of the herons looked just the perfect size for getting caught on a plastic six-pack ring. Later that night, as I lay in bed thinking about the animals I had seen, I listened to the nighttime sounds of bugs and frogs and other creatures whose humming rhythm was as soothing as a mother lulling her baby to sleep.

The next morning, we woke up early to go hiking on Flamingo Trail, hoping to see actual flamingoes. No luck, but on the way back we heard a rustling in the bushes, and there we discovered a mother raccoon and her four babies. She was teaching them to hunt. One of the babies scampered up a log and caught a lizard while the others rummaged on the ground. I was stunned; it was like I had stepped inside a nature video. As I watched the raccoons, I felt a rush of compassion for them, and I felt bad that these wonderful animals might die if the Everglades disappeared.

Later in the week, we hiked the Anhinga Trail, a long loop through an extremely wet portion of the saw grass prairie. On this trail, long wooden bridges stretch across borrow pits, which are the holes left after workers dredged soil to create the elevated roadway through the Park. These holes fill with water and attract lots of animals during dry season. I was surprised how tame the animals seemed around humans. I got so close to one of the anhingas – a large oily looking black bird – that I could almost touch it.

As I walked along the trail, I noticed a group of tourists talking with a ranger, and I slowed down to listen. The ranger was talking about the natural habitat of the Everglades when one of the tourists said, “What about that dead bird in the water?”

Sure enough, floating over in the water was a dead anhinga. The bird showed no signs of attack by an alligator, and so I wondered if it died from a human cause.

The ranger looked at the dead bird for a while, then she turned to us and said, “Protecting the environment of the Everglades is a difficult but important job and will

require sacrifices. The Everglades is a test, and if we fail this test, then the Earth fails.”

This was one of the most inspiring things that I had ever heard. I took a moment to soak in the ranger’s words. As I looked around, a deep compassion for the Everglades and all its beautiful creatures and nature began to burn stronger and stronger inside me.

On our way out of the Park at the end of our trip we stopped at the visitor center again. We had only a few minutes to spare, but I wanted to take a look around. I came upon three large posters: one of a ranger, one of a tourist and one of an orange farmer. The sign next to these posters said, “Different perspectives of the Everglades”. I pushed the button beside the poster of the tourist and the voice on the speaker told me how the Everglades is a great vacation spot and should be protected so people can come visit and enjoy the beautiful animals and plants. Then, I pushed the button besides the poster of the orange farmer. The orange farmer told me how he cared about the Everglades, but people need jobs and food and need to farm this land. Finally, I pushed the button bedside the poster of the park ranger. The ranger told me how the Everglades is an environmental wonder of the world, and it is our job to protect all the living creatures of the Earth and this is one of the best places to do it. Destroying the Everglades would have a terrible effect on the world’s ecosystem.

If you have ever been in the Everglades, or anywhere in south Florida, you have seen how the roots of the mangrove tree stretch out from above and curl down into the water. If a mangrove doesn’t stretch its roots, or the water is polluted or toxic, the mangrove will die. The roots of a mangrove are the hands of poverty reaching for the precious treasure of clean water. This phrase also applies to the rest of the Everglades. Because of the demands of local farms, suburbs, and other human development, the waters of the Everglades are slowly being poisoned and drained away. In the 1700’s, a few decades before the Revolutionary War, the Everglades was a river of grass that stretched all the way up to the Florida panhandle. Now its boundaries have been pushed down to Florida’s southern tip. Any more damage at this point could destroy the Everglades permanently. I am sad to say that the Everglades is badly damaged. Many species, like the American crocodile, the roseate spoonbill, and many varieties of fish, could at this rate go extinct in the next fifty years. We must protect the Everglades to protect and conserve all of nature. On my trip to the Everglades, I went in as a tourist, but I left there inspired to be a conservationist.

*Joshua Wagner
John T. Moore Middle School
Sixth Grade*

WHERE'S THE FIRE?

It was about 10AM in the small, but cozy, sixth grade classroom. I thought to myself, "I have just one more hour until lunch; then I can talk to my friends and get a break from this like never ending work."

"Alea," Mrs. McMurry called, "look up front and pay attention. You don't want to miss what I'm writing on the board about mummification. This information will help you on the test I am about to hand out."

I quickly directed my focus from the plain looking clock on the wall to the very sloppy looking drawing of a mummy on the white board and some writing Mrs. McMurry was scribbling about it. We had been learning about Egypt for the almost a month, and we were all expected to do well on the test. After Mrs. McMurry finished explaining her drawing she asked my friend Colby to distribute a packet of colored papers.

"After you put your name on the test, you may begin," Mrs. McMurry said taking a long sip of her cinnamon flavored coffee.

I was handed a test paper. I quickly put my name on it and skimmed through all of the problems. It was a twenty question test and the first nineteen were fairly easy. Then I came to the last problem. It read, "What were bodies dipped in to preserve them for mummification?" I tried to remember what had been written on the board about mummies, but my mind was stuck on the following: I was having pasta for lunch and I was going to tell my friends, "Hey everybody, look sat this fun drawing I did of a fairy." Well, one thing I knew for sure, mummies weren't dipped in pasta to preserve their bodies. I soon got lost in a world of thought that was filled with Italian entrees, fairies, and lots of things had absolutely nothing to do with the problem on mummies. In fact, I was so deep in my thoughts about lunch that I missed the following announcement: "Attention students, we will be testing the fire alarm. This is just a test, so don't be alarmed if you hear it go off. Thank you. That will be all."

A loud piercing sound interrupted the still silence, and I a tore away from my thoughts and back into consciousness. It took me a few moments to figure out it was the fire alarm and with a sudden jolt I realized the building could be on fire. Still in shock from the loud noise, I jumped from my chair and it crashed to the floor below me, creating a loud thundering noise which echoed through the classroom.

"Oh my Gosh!" I screamed. "It's the fire alarm!" I ran quickly to the closed classroom door, not even bothering to pick up my fallen chair. I stood at the door for a moment wondering why no one was lining up behind me to escape. "Come on, guys, let's go! We need to get out of here. There could be a fire!" I shouted. I looked around and all I saw were twenty-seven amused faces staring at me. I didn't understand why no one was coming,

I knew for a fact that the whole class didn't want to burn to death, so for a minute I just stood at the door looking confused.

Laughter erupted and I saw that everyone, including the teacher, was laughing at me. "What did I do?" I asked myself. Suddenly the alarm stopped and Mrs. McMurry said, "Alea, relax and take your seat. It was just a test. Didn't you hear the announcement?" I felt my face get warm when the laughing didn't stop. On my way back to my seat everyone was still staring at me. When I took my seat, my friend Raphael, who was sitting next to me, said, "I can't believe you just did that! That was hilarious!"

"Thanks," I muttered sarcastically. Finally, to my great relief, Mrs. McMurry told us to continue working on our tests because we didn't have much time left. I turned my focus back to the question about mummies, deciding I had done enough stalling for one test, when an announcement came on: "Attention, students and teachers, thank you for your cooperation during the fire drill *test*."

"Now he tells me," I muttered quietly under my breath.

Then suddenly, out of nowhere the answer hit me, harder than the ball that smacked me in gym the day before. The answer was, "a salty oil mixture." That was what the Egyptians used to preserve dead bodies for the wrapping process. I quickly scribbled down my answer and turned my paper into Mrs. McMurry. She gave me a quick smile and turned away.

The next day in Social Studies I was still the talk of the class, but it was easier to laugh at myself because I didn't feel as awkward as I had the day before. When class had begun, Mrs. McMurry said she was going to pass back our test papers. As mine was handed to me I saw a brightly colored sticker with the words "well done" on it in big numbers "98%." I smiled to myself, and while everybody else was comparing grades, I had a revelation: "Sometimes it takes extreme embarrassment to get an A in Social Studies."

*Alea Tveit
Meigs Middle Magnet School
Seventh grade*

MAE'S DELIGHT

Babysitters never seem to know what's going on. At least the ones I've experienced. Mine didn't know anything about life, the world around them, or how to make oatmeal. Even though Mae, our babysitter, was bright in other departments, breakfast food was not her specialty. In fact, all of Mae's dishes turned out the same color, despite what it was. Tossed salad was brown, lasagna was brown, even the plain strawberry ice cream turned out brown. The one exception to this stunning achievement was her oatmeal, which my brother and I had every day for breakfast while she was staying with us. "Here ya go, kiddo! Nice and hot!" she sang out in her light Tennessee accent to my brother Gregory and me while setting down two white ceramic bowls, filled to the brim with what resembled smooth, mustard-colored mud. This was what she called "Mae's Delight". Why it had this name was beyond me, for it was anything but a delight to all five senses.

"What are bugs doing in my breakfast?" inquired my brother, six at the time. "Those aren't bugs, hon. They're raisins! They're good for your muscles!" When Mae said this I immediately decided never to put another raisin within a ten-inch radius of my mouth. The metaphor made me queasy, along with the horrible stench wafting out of the bowl in front of me. Not wanting to be a rude eight-year-old, all I could say in response was, "I'm not hungry. Can I go play now?"

My parents were in New York with my grandmother, helping her find a rest home. She had been throwing lavish parties in her Park Avenue apartment with her retirement money, so they had to help her get back on track. My mom went because it was her mother, my father because he wanted a break from the office. They didn't take us along because they didn't want their kids to be traumatized by a crazy dramatic old woman they knew as Grandma. It only took a day or two to find the right one for her and help her move in, so they got to stay in New York for one whole wonderful summer week. And for one week, Greg and I got Mae. Obviously they didn't consult us in their decision.

Mae was a dark-haired twenty-something who had never moved away from home, let alone been to college. She liked to gab about herself and her so-called "adventures" to the grocery store and other places around town, subjects that could last for hours. Having never traveled farther than Bowling Green, (she had gotten there by accident, "I just don't know how it happened, I looked up, and BAM!"), she wasn't as worldly as Greg and me, who knew the difference between real oatmeal and what she made. In addition to everything, Mae always figures that nothing she or anyone else made would turn out looking exactly like the picture on the box. She always added fruit punch to the mix; I'll be darned if it actually said to add the sugar-rich drink ("My mother always did it like this, and look at me now!"). Another one of Mae's talents was making the oatmeal yellow when the mix was light brown, and the fruit juice red. My brother and I never asked how or why this occurred.

Needless to say, we got tired of the disgusting meal after four days. Her other concoctions we had, but “Mae’s Delight” took the cake. When we were all outside on one of these summer days, I hatched a plan with Greg to make our own breakfast that next morning. He agreed and we worked out the details while Mae was lounging on the back porch reading her Soap Digest. Our favorite smell in the morning was that of the scrambled eggs that Mom made. That was going to be our breakfast tomorrow, the smell we smelled instead of the week-old fruit punch mixed with oat glop. Little did we know that we would not smell the familiar scent of eggs, but one quite different the next morning.

When I woke up, I bounced out of bed and ran over to Greg’s room to shake him awake. He always slept like a rock, but this was a special morning. I only had to shake him once, and he was ready to go with his lucky cowboy hat and western pajamas. We were spies sneaking downstairs, using an immense amount of caution on a mission to save our stomachs. I poked my head around the kitchen door, and motioned to Greg that the coast was clear. Almost silently, we gathered all the materials needed to make our scrumptious breakfast: three white eggs, butter (for the pan), and the same cast iron skillet that had been in our family since anyone could remember. The skillet was a deep ebony piano-key color, and cooked everything in our house from pancakes to stir-fried rice. It was so heavy, it took all Greg’s might to hoist the solid iron onto the foreboding stovetop. This was the pan that dropped with a huge clang as he lost his grip, resonating like a church bell’s chime when you’re standing next to the bell. We set up all the ingredients, but forgot what we had to set the griddle at. “It should be on high”, I said. “That way, it’ll cook faster.” My brother gave me a disapproving look. “Mom *always* puts it on mid-heat.” I was hungry and wanted my eggs now. “Well, I’m doing it the right way. I’m older, so there.”

There is wisdom in small children. Often times, they noticed things that others don’t because their brains don’t overanalyze information. They can focus on the outcome, and not how to get there, and can see a situation for what it is, not all the different angles. When making eggs, for instance, they know the distinct way that the eggs are cracked, how loud the butter should sizzle, and just how hot the stove should be. Maybe he’s on to something, I thought as I tuned the heat in full blast. The flames shot up light rockets from the depths below, and started licking the rim of the black iron as if to say, I dare you. Make your own breakfast. All I could do was scream. Greg screamed when I did, and then another sound came over both of our small-child panic attacks: a shushing sound. Carbon dioxide gas swept around the orange-yellow ball of terror on our stove, and quickly extinguished the flame. To an experienced adult, the flame was just an overexcited stove, but to a six- and eight-year old, it was the towering inferno. Instantly, it was gone, and we turned our heads to see Mae, holding the fire extinguisher and a hero’s smile on her face. We sprinted to her and hugged her legs tightly, as if we could never have hugged again. She bent down and softly cooed in our ears that everything would be all right and not to worry. The last seven seconds of my life had been ones of life and death, or so it felt.

Greg and I learned a couple of things from that fateful morning the kitchen almost burned down. One, babysitters might not always know what is going on in life, but in tight situations, they know what to do. Two, using the stove when you can’t lift the skillet probably isn’t the best idea. I had to keep reminding myself of how grateful I should be to

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Mae as I forced myself to hold down the off-yellow liquid with extra bugs, otherwise known as oatmeal. She smiled at me and said what she always said, "You just can't stop smiling when you're eating Mae's Delight, because it's a delight for everyone!" To this day, I never touch the stuff.

Zoë Engel
Hume - Fogg High Academic Magnet School
Ninth
Tenth Grade

UNTITLED

Tongtong Zhu. That is second tone on the first name. And Zhu, pronounced *Joo*. “Is that really your name?” Countless times I have been asked this question after the teacher has called the class role, where the *real* name is written. The following and inevitable comment usually was something like, “how did you get Anna out of that?” Truth is, I picked it. Out of convenience and, I suppose an unconscious desire back in the fifth grade to fit in. After all, how many people do you see have such a typical Chinese name? *Ching chang chong*. It almost drives the stereotype. And so in the years of adjustment to America, my common response to the question about my name was usually a terse “it’s just a name,” followed by a quick shrug and turn of the subject. What I truly avoided, now that I look back, was a confrontation with my differences. I didn’t know how to eat cheeseburgers and shredded dry pork at the same time.

However, sometime in the past few years, I have changed. I found a fascinating flavor of the orient that was in the shredded dry pork. There was something different in the people and the culture perhaps only comprehensible to me. I realized all this only this past summer when I traveled back to China. I went back to my childhood, to my grandmother’s village, to Shanghai, and the feeling of familiarity and homeliness came back. The honking in the streets, the aroma of chicken on the stick sold by vendors on the sidewalk, the old but brisk ladies with heavy groceries, and people conversing loudly so they are audible above all the street traffic. That was the city life I was used to, how it used to feel. Then I was back at my grandmother’s village. I saw my grandmother for the first time in eight years. So did Mother. It was emotional, since my grandfather passed away during our fifth year in America. The first thing we did was visit his grave house, where we kowtowed with our lighted incense upon his final resting place, all while Mother spoke to Grandfather through sobs I have never heard before. The next couple of days my relatives showed me the village, and I got around using the now upgraded way of traveling: motorbikes. However, I was immediately recognized everywhere I went as the visitor from America. It was a small town, and everyone knew everyone else. It didn’t undergo the same transformation as Shanghai did. The rice fields were still as I had left them, and the mountains just as grand. Each night we would eat and toast with Chinese wine, all the while joking and chatting. My uncles never ceased to fascinate me with stories about legendary war heroes and emperors from our ancient history. Often they recited grand and majestic lines written by famous poets of the past and discussed Chinese literature with each other. Their pride in the longevity of the Chinese culture was infectious, and I found myself yearning to know what they know, to speak with lines of Li Bai rolling off my tongue. I am a descendent from a long line of people and thousands of years of human wisdom. *Ching chang chong*. What do they know?

“What does your name mean?”

CATERPILLAR FINANCIAL SERVICES STUDENT WRITERS SHOWCASE

“Well, see, I was born at sunrise, the first sunrise of the week because it had been raining the whole time. That morning the sky was drenched with colors of the sun, vibrant, alive, and to my parents I have captured that image. Tongtong: color of dawn. But I can never fully translate the language and fully preserve its original flavor.

“Oh. Well, it’s a good name.”

*Tong Tong Zhu
Martin Luther King Magnet School
Twelfth Grade*

PERSUASIVE ESSAY

LITTER NO MORE

When the earth was created, I can only imagine how beautiful it must have been. Throughout years littering has been the result of people being lazy, lacking in education, seeing others actions, or not knowing the law.

Sometimes when I walk outside my house I have noticed people that have driven past my house have thrown paper or cans in my yard. When I have attended a sports event or visited a park, I have seen people throwing trash in the grass or walkways. People even throw their cigarette butts on the ground. Has anyone ever thought that animals can get trapped or poisoned with litter in their habitats? I remember hearing a story on the news about a bird getting caught in a plastic ring from cans that were tied together. If someone hadn't found the bird it would have died.

Litter can also be found in rivers or lakes, polluting our water supply. We need to put a stop to littering. This is pollution! The land we live on is dirty. The water is dirty. If everyone would stop littering we would all live in a clean environment.

One way my family helps keep our environment clean is to recycle. We recycle cans, plastic bottles, glass, and even papers. At my house we have containers used for recycling. One container is used for plastic items, another for cans, and another for papers. When the container gets full we take them to the local school so they can be recycled.

Another way to stop littering is to have a litterbag in your car for trash. Then maybe one wouldn't be tempted to litter.

Laws have been put into action to stop littering in every state. Some states have fines up to \$1,000.00 if a person is caught littering.

People need to take action because we all want a clean place to live.

*Hunter Long
Crieve Hall Elementary
Third Grade*

ROOSEVELT TO THE RESCUE

The Great Depression, which started in 1929, left people homeless, penniless, unemployed, and with no food. People slept on the streets, in shelters, or in shacks made of paper or wood. They bathed using a bucket of water. Many suffered and had no hope of ever changing how life was. They just wanted to give up. There was one man who changed their future. His name is Franklin D. Roosevelt. I would like to prove his leadership was one of the biggest reasons that the Great Depression ended. As thirty-second president of the United States, his changes made the government a larger bureaucracy, which created more jobs and economic programs. More importantly, Roosevelt helped to end the Depression because he was such a positive man, which gave many people hope.

Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal gave the government a lot of power. They took advantage of that power by making the government increase in size. This extra size added to the bureaucracy of the government, but greatly helped unemployed Americans by giving them jobs. A bureaucracy is the workers or groups that are needed to run government programs.

The Great Depression made a lot of people poor. Roosevelt offered a job to anyone who needed it. He didn't care about what they looked like or how they talked or dressed. If someone needed a job, then Roosevelt was the first one to be asked. He set up different programs to help people earn money. He started a program called "Roosevelt's Alphabet Soup". Roosevelt's Alphabet Soup was actually a number of programs that gave people jobs and included the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The CCC hired young people to plant trees and take care of the national parks. The TVA workers built dams and locks on the Tennessee River. The programs weren't just good for the people, but they were good for the environment and the economy. Parks and other places were made more beautiful. The Works Progress Association (WPA) hired workers to build roads, airports, schools, libraries, and post offices.

Everybody began to have a lot more hope about ending the Great Depression because of Franklin Roosevelt's positive attitude. He turned despair into hope. The people thought that since they had jobs, they would have money, and with more money they would be able to get the stock market back up again. Roosevelt said, "I pledge to you and I pledge to myself." He followed through on his pledge. People were ecstatic to hear these words. He also said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." That meant that everyone needed to stop worrying. He knew there was a way to end the Great Depression, which made people believe it was possible too.

Franklin D. Roosevelt ended the Great Depression for the U.S. Without him we may not have been out of the Great Depression as quickly as we were able to. He led the government to become a larger bureaucracy. He created "Roosevelt's Alphabet Soup,"

which included many programs such as the CCC, WPA, and TVA. He was positive and gave a lot of hope to citizens, something they hadn't had in a long time. He knew there was a way to end the mess that had gone on for years. Something he did that surely will make you believe what I believe is that he offered a job to anybody who needed it. I hope you agree with me now that you know what he did.

*Sarah Ray
Meigs Middle Magnet School
Fifth Grade*

DOES GENETIC TESTING LEAD TO DISCRIMINATION?

“Approximately one in every thirty-five babies is born with a genetic disorder or birth defect” (Allen, par. 1) Genetic technology has been growing rapidly over the recent years to accommodate this percentage. Genetic testing is a major advancement and development in this new technology. Because of this, one must take heed to the warning that genetic testing is not perfect. Its rapid progression has left many issues in the dust unnoticed. It is true that detecting disorders or diseases in a person’s DNA helps save the lives of many people. Knowing possible genetic defects helps couples review the options for having a healthy family. On the other hand, genetic testing opens a door to discrimination, a very large issue pushed into the background. For example, insurance companies can deny coverage to people with genetic abnormalities. Nothing in life is clearly right or wrong, and genetic testing falls perfectly in to this dilemma. Genetic testing is used to save lives and prevent diseases but not without fault. This advancement has caused issues in discrimination against ill patients. Janice Wood-Harper speaks about these issues: “These advances are expected to bring important benefits to society, by reducing or relieving the burden of genetic disease. It is, however, widely feared that gene technology might be used unethically, threatening individual rights and freedoms, unless it is stringently regulated” (par. 2). Issues in insurance and ethics also arise and surround the task of saving lives. Solutions to these problems are cloudy, but if genetic testing is used only for medical diagnostics and partial insurance coverage will help pave a way for testing to continue to save lives.

Discrimination comes into its highest form, death. Through genetic testing, parents can test embryos for hereditary DNA diseases. Parents can also terminate the pregnancy if the embryo is proven to be abnormal. Many people fight for the embryo’s rights. This discrimination against dependent beings is very controversial. Janice Wood-Harper explains some justifications of termination: “Deciding factors might include the severity of the disease, degrees of pain or suffering, time of onset of symptoms, availability of effective treatments or cures, life expectancy, and impairment to quality of life” (par. 10). Even with these considerations, discrimination of dependant beings is an issue that needs to be addressed. The public is not content with simple justification. Nonetheless, parents trying to have healthy children are indeed discriminating against embryos that might not turn out perfectly. Therefore, they are discriminating against the choice of having or not having a healthy child. This issue is occurring currently and demands attention. Genetic testing of embryos was designed to promote healthy families. Now its repercussion is affecting more than just the family.

Wherever there is an issue, money isn’t far behind. When people are aware of a genetic disease or disorder, decent insurance coverage is hard to come by. Insurance companies could use the genetic information to deny coverage because of medical costs. This worries patients trying to save their lives. If there genetic information is public, insurance coverage could be denied. As the American Council of Life Insurance and Health Insurance

Association of America states, “A concern widely expressed is that genetic testing will create a ‘genetic underclass’...some of the strongest concerns have focused on whether genetic testing will foreclose large numbers of people from health insurance market” (241). This means insurance companies could deny coverage to individuals due to lack of funding. This issue is great because people with genetic abnormalities need the most financial help. Wood-Harper sums up the issue by saying, “This could lead to genetic diseases becoming increasingly restricted to people who are poorer and less-educated and who are usually disadvantaged when it comes to caring for seriously ill or disabled children” (par. 12). This could create a “genetic underclass” (ACLI and HIAA 241) much like the one of people labeled with “bad genes”. The greatest question still lies ahead, is genetic testing hurting more than helping?

Genetic testing is a very useful tool for saving lives. For instance, genetic testing is used to detect abnormalities in a person’s DNA. Detecting diseases or disorders early gives a precious gift of time. Through genetic testing, families have time to prepare financially and emotionally. Families can also choose whether or not they want to pursue having a child with a disability. For example, Huntington’s disease has affected Tracy Bumpus’ family. Her father died and her brother and aunt are battling the tragic disease. Bumpus fears that Huntington’s disease will hurt her thirteen-year-old son, Ross, and herself. She rests a little easier knowing that preimplantation genetic testing will help save future generations from Huntington’s disease. (Pinto). On the other hand, genetic testing has many knots in its string. A huge tangle comes when dealing with the possibility of discrimination based upon genetics. Genetic testing can continue to save the lives of people and promote healthy families if everyone considered basic solutions to problems against discrimination. If limits are put on the practice of eugenics; testing is used specifically for diagnosing disease or disorders; and funding is provided to those who need it, genetic testing can proceed to help families medically.

A solution to the discrimination tied to genetic testing lies in the testing itself. Genetic testing could be specifically used to only identify disorder or disease in an embryo or person. This way, people can still access the needed information for family decisions. Parents could know of they disease their child may already have. Genetic testing helped to bless Chad and Colby Kingsbury with a healthy girl free of the risk of developing colon cancer. Colon cancer devastated the Kingsbury family taking the lives of many family members. Chad and Colby wanted to insure the health of their new child so no one would have to deal with yet another loss. Chad and Colby sought the help of genetic testing to give them a healthy baby (Harmon). Although this solution does not solve the embryo right s problem, I believe that the decision to terminate or not to terminate should be made by the parents. The decision affects their own family thusly they should make the choice. This solution does give the parents the necessary information to make such a decision. Weaknesses in this solution are evident. Medical cures or help has not been developed for the majority of genetic diseases that are detectable through testing. On a positive side, many controversies and discriminations would be reduced if testing were used solely for medical purposes.

By far, I believe that proper funding for genetic testing could bridge the gap of discrimination. Plainly, if insurance companies offered equal coverage to genetically

abnormal people, there would be no dividing line. This means the poor and disadvantaged people will not be the only group with genetically defective children (Wood-Harper, par. 12). Genetic classes, such as wealthy enough for testing and treatment rather than not wealthy enough for testing and treatment, would not be made; therefore, people would not be divided and put into such social classes. No one would have to deal with a genetic disease without help, reducing financial discrimination. There is an unmistakable problem with this solution: Where would the money come from? An unpopular solution would be to raise taxes for funding. Private insurance companies could also take on the burden of providing coverage from the patients that need it. The government could even pitch in if discrimination grew to be extremely problematic. This issue of financial discrimination is a substantial problem that deserves responses.

Technology will never stop growing. This is a trait that we can all depend on to hold true. Technology can either be helpful or hurtful. Once we can get genetic testing under control, everyone can gain from its benefits. Until that time comes, people will need to problem solve so that testing can do what it was designed to do, help save lives. Genetic testing faces problems in embryo rights and funding. With creative thinking and superb execution of problem solving tactics, genetic testing will be able to do so. Simple restrictions and insurance coverage is the first step to find the solution to possible discrimination. An intelligent president once said, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself" (F.D. Roosevelt). This holds true for genetic testing and engineering. The fear of discrimination should not condemn genetic testing to a sentence of not helping deserving people with disease or disabilities. With a few considerations, genetic testing and the advancements that follow it will continue to save lives.

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Eighth Grade*

THE CHALLENGE OF OUR GENERATION

A high school student sits at his desk in his Government Introduction class, thinking of course, about a million and one better things he could be doing with his time at this very moment. What is going through this young man's head right now? Maybe he is thinking about the game his team won the night before. Perhaps his mind is in a far off place as he watches the girl in front of him. Or maybe he just doesn't care. He would give anything to be anywhere but here. Regardless of this child's mind, it has become apparent that he is not the only one of this generation with similar feelings, and this general attitude couldn't have come at a worse time for our nation or the world abroad. There are many global issues that the current leaders of our country have failed to take decisive action on, but it will not be those individuals who pay the price. It will be our generation, the youth, who will have to grapple with the mistakes of our current leaders. However, it would appear that this generation is asleep at the wheel it will soon be first to take. The longer we wait, the problems only get more complex and insurmountable. It is time for the youth of this nation to stand up and begin to deal with the challenges our parents' generation has left for us to conquer.

Perhaps the greatest and most apparent threat to our world today is global climate change. It is a known fact that our planet is warming at an alarming rate, largely due to greenhouse gas emissions by humans. One would think that the nation that uses the most natural resources would be at the forefront in combating such a potentially devastating problem, but instead the greedy special interests that poison our political system have created a false debate about whether or not this issue actually exists. Even in science classrooms, teachers are still marching to the beat of "there is still a real debate about the nature and cause of climate change." Our nation's youth cannot even begin to think about making informed solutions, if our education system is filled with misinformation. The youth has to begin asking questions and finding answers on their own, as the system they rely on can no longer accurately educate them on real problems they are going to face.

While climate change may be the most alarming problem of our future, other areas will need attention as well. Our nation's foreign policy has completely altered since the attacks of September 11th, and the implementation of that policy has opened our nation up to new fronts of potential conflict worldwide. Our stance in once great alliances with the European powers has been greatly jeopardized due to a few men's greedy and imperialistic vision of how the world should be. Man's downfall is the failure to learn history and apply it to present situations. The current struggle in Iraq and elsewhere is no different. The administration failed to realize the depth and history behind the internal conflicts in the region and see that taking out stable governments only magnifies this internal unrest into civil war. Unfortunately, our youth is traveling down the same path. Based on personal experiences, the subject that students fail to connect to the most, if not utterly despise, is World History. This is a sad fact, as history is a crucial problem-solving tool, and our youth

would be well advised to wake up and use it. Our educators should strive to teach students that while the American way is great, it is not the only way a society can operate. If this goal is achieved, it could save our generation from making the same arrogant mistakes westerners have been making since the dawn of imperialism.

There will also be several issues at home that will need to be dealt with as well. Our nation's economic situation has hit a near crisis, with the stability of our economy relying on loans from hardly friendly countries, such as China. Trillions of dollars of debt have been accumulated in a short amount of time due to endless spending and huge tax breaks for those who need them least. Our generation must learn fiscal responsibility, and realize that it is the duty of citizens to pay their fair share. If we do not, the country will slip farther into never-ending debt, and split into two opposite economic groups: the ultra rich and the poor. The middle class is in peril, as it gets harder to make ends meet every day for the average American.

We live in an ever-changing world, with incompetent leaders creating new problems left and right. It is fine for them, of course. They will soon die without a care for what they have left behind. What they leave is what we will be forced to deal with for the rest of our lives. The time to act is not when we are in power. The time is now. The future of our nation's place in this world is at stake. A child's message has little effect when screamed at a wall of unhearing adults. But when an entire crowd of children screams the same message in unison, the wall falters. Our generation has the tools to make a difference today by asking questions, looking into the past, and learning to exercise economic responsibility when the time comes. It is our duty as Americans and human beings to take the initiative, and not only be the leading problem solvers of tomorrow, but the leaders of today.

*Eric Austin
Hume - Fogg High Academic Magnet School
Tenth Grade*

IMMIGRATION

The problem of illegal immigration is a large one in the United States. There are illegal immigrants sneaking into the U.S. everyday. The problem with illegal immigrants, in an economic sense, is that, since they are paid under the table, they are not necessarily paid minimum wages. Employers are taking advantage of this, and so they do not hire American citizens. Another problem within the illegal immigrants is that they are lowering the standard of living in the United States. The U.S. has a very high standard of living, but it will not stay so if the problem of illegal immigrants continues.

There are three ways we can fix the problem: 1. Build a sort of “fortress America” or become essentially an isolated country and build walls along our borders in order to forcefully keep immigrants out; 2. Naturalize all current illegal immigrants; 3. Invest in the countries from which the illegal immigrants are coming from.

The first option is not a true option. It’s actually probably the most ignorant idea ever proposed for the fixing of the immigration problems. This idea was bred with racist ideas in mind and a cold, xenophobic heart. This plan would never work. Immigrants who really want to escape their countries would find a way in, and therefore, the wall would simply be a waste of money. This wall would only prove to the world that the US is not willing to accept others and would create anti-American sentiments throughout the world. This wall could even potentially cause many South American countries to sever ties with the United States.

The second option is not bad, but it would not solve the problem. Immigrants would continue to stream into the U.S. This could potentially fix the problem of illegal work and could bring in a lot of money to the US government. Companies would have to pay the immigrants correct wages and, in turn, the workers would have to pay taxes on these wages. However, if people are fleeing their country, it is more than likely for socio-economic reasons. They cannot find work, can’t afford life, and therefore are desperate. They need jobs. The reason there aren’t any jobs in a lot of countries is because the economies are so frail.

The third, and strongest, solution would be to invest in the countries that are supplying the most immigrants. These are some of the poorest countries in the world, mainly El Salvador and Mexico, both with incredible amounts of debt. Most people want to stay in their home countries, so if the US were to help these countries with their debt, improve the standard of living, and create jobs, the immigrants would more than likely pour back into their home countries. This is the real solution to the immigration issue. You may ask, will this work? Before Spain and Portugal were allowed to join the EU, they had to conform to the European Union’s standards of living, and the economic standards. The EU helped them achieve these goals and successfully become part of the EU. Since this point, many native Spaniards have gone back to Spain and Spain, ironically, now has an immigration

problem of its own now.

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*Yannick Dawant
Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet
Twelfth Grade*

POETRY

MY OCEAN OF SORROW

Lost in a sea of raging storms,
Watching you cry, mom, makes me mourn.
For when you die, I'll cry an ocean of tears.
Then I'll have to face my fears.
When I am grown
And you're out of my sight,
I'll wish you were back
To tell me what Heaven is like.
Through the years as I grow old
I will remember you and the stories you told.
Even though I'll miss you so
I'll cherish your memory
And continue to grow.

*Sarah Tew
Hickman Elementary
Fourth Grade*

LIVING IN UNITY

Why can't we all get along?
Why do we fight?
It's not right!
Isn't this world where we all belong?

We should all have relationships like brother and sister.
We shouldn't judge by race.
It's the facts we must face.
The words of equality we must minister.

There's enough room in this world for all of us.
So we shouldn't argue who's right.
Or it'll all end up in one big fight.
If we keep it up our peace will fall.

Each of us is not that different.
Our actions are sometimes a disgrace.
When it comes to people of a different race,
Why are some people so indecent?

So listen to my words of poetry
Get along with people of different races.
Just don't get in each others' faces.
And live together in unity.

*Kierra Johnson
Antioch Middle School
Sixth Grade*

GRANDPA'S SONG HORSES

I remember those days so dear
when I would sit on his lap and giggle
while he sang about those galloping horses
and bounced me on his knee
that wonderful smell of cotton and smoke
I still smell in his shirts when my dad wears them
those old plaid shirts
no one ever talks about him now without the utmost respect
they say that when they were a kid
he would always look them with a twinkle in his eye
and open arms
like you were the most important person in the world

I remember that moment so well
We drove up to see him
My parents told me he was leaving
He was lying in that ugly room
The room with white walls white floor white bed
that was like a cold dreary winter
dull and colorless
He had his suitcases packed beside him
Nana said her last goodbyes
It was my turn
I stood over him
not knowing what to say
He tried to tell me something
But all that came out was coughs
So I simply said in a timid voice,
"I love you Grandpa"
And with that he picked up his bags and left

I remember my sorrow there after
anger rose from my tears
my mom picked me up and brought me outside the hospital
and there they were

CATERPILLAR FINANCIAL SERVICES STUDENT WRITERS SHOWCASE

Grandpa's song horses
whinnying and putting their muzzles against my hand
through a chain link fence
as I stroked their soft fur
my pain melted away
like an icicle
frozen in misery
until the gentle light came
tearing away at the pain
until it was again the peaceful water it once was

I remember that dream so vividly
I had years later
about the purple horses
painted on a lampshade by my mom
that sat by my bed for ages
in my dream they were galloping and prancing
and moving to the beat of a song
and he sang about those horses
while I giggled and sat on his knee

*Maeve Bell-Thornton
Meigs Middle Magnet School
Eighth Grade*

A POEM BY MICHAEL EADY

Poetry is my hole and key connecting me to those who speak
Eat, breathe, and sleep every word that stirs in me
Its uncanny and kinda scary how situations may vary
But every word in every line says everything that's necessary
To make you calm down and think rationally
Bout shootin up school and making news nationally
And I passively let the majesty of rhapsody
Invade my mind like a masterpiece
Or at least a sonnet piece, virtually I leave my feet
And fly high up in the sky where once only the birds could see
Is there a seat in history for me?
Well let me see
My country tis of thee, but all I see is misery

*Michael Eady
Hillsboro Comp High School
Tenth Grade*

TODDLER OF FOUR

Toddler of four
Under the bed
Quietly crying,
And covering his head.

Mom's boyfriend's drunk again
Screaming really loud
Way too many beers,
He's looking for me now.

Bottles clanging
Stumbling feet
Doors are slamming –
“Where are you Timmy?”

Open the window
I'll run away!
He's getting closer
Dear Lord I pray.

“Help me lift this window
And finally escape,
Run as fast as I can
And find Mommy on the way.”

The doorknob turns –
The window flies up.
Here I go, freedom
But I'm not quick enough!

He pulls me back
And raises his fist –
A blow to the head

“I’m so tired of this.”

I scream, I cry
I beg him to stop!
I feel my eyes swell,
Now all hope is lost.

A really loud boom
Makes my ears ring.
Warm liquid on my skin –
The boyfriend is bleeding.

He falls to the ground
I cover my eyes
I open them again
To the greatest surprise.

There stands my mom
In her scrubs of light blue
She runs to me crying,
“Sweetie I never knew.”

Thank you, God,
You answered my prayers
I’m glad you listened
When no one was there.

*Tina Finneyl
White’s Creek Comp High School
Twelfth Grade*

POETRY COLLECTION

DREAMTIME

WHERE DO DREAMS TAKE US?

Where do dreams take us?

Over hills and under seas

Past mills and manatees

Where do dreams take us?

Where do dreams take us?

Through the mind

On a path with a wind

Where do dreams take us?

Where do dreams take us?

Through tunnels, caves

And labyrinths too

Where do dreams take you?

CINQUAIN

Teddy

Soft, cozy, and warm

Wrapped up close and small

Covered in a sheet of darkness

My friend

CATERPILLAR FINANCIAL SERVICES STUDENT WRITERS SHOWCASE

EVENING HAIKU

Powers of sunset

Making long shadows across

In the evening light

NIGHTTIME HAIKU

Stars glow and twinkle

Connecting the big dipper

As night protects it

*Emma Kelley
Eakin Elementary
Third Grade*

UNTITLED

THE CLOCK IN THE TOWER

There once was a clock in a tower,
That told the old time by the hour.
Its bell would chime,
The hourly time,
That good 'ole clock in the tower.

THE MARSHALL

It was a cold, silent night.
The marshal slept.
Misfortune was lurking
in the shadows.
In the eerie night,
the marshal slept.
Only to be marshaed
and mistreated by his mind,
haunting his thoughts
with misery.
Madness wrenched his spirit,
and tore at his soul.
The marshal slept,
Never to awake.

CLUELESS

I'm trying to write a poem,
but I don't know what to do.
I've been sitting here for hours,
and still I have no clue.

I'm really pretty hungry,
and I want to go to bed,
'cause the words of this poem,
won't stop swirling in my head.

I'm getting very dizzy,
and my eyes are drying out,
my heart is going crazy,
and it makes me want to shout.

I think I'm almost finished,
and I really hope I am,
'cause after writing this poem,
I'm a very tired man.

*Hayden Palm
John T. Moore Middle School
Fifth Grade*

REFLECTIONS

THESE RESTLESS DREAMS

The lights go down
The house it sleeps
But restless dreams
are ours to keep

Held inside
by doubts and fears
Trapped looking back
on wasted years

Is it too late?
we ask ourselves
To pull dreams down
From dusty shelves

To find our crinkled wings
and try
to get off the ground
and finally fly

for these dreams
though worn and old

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deserve to see light
as we unfold

Our restless dreams,
so trapped within
to be set free and fly
once again

SWEET IGNORANCE

Wall of glass
Shatter and fall for you are all
Trapping me from
My sanctuary, my peace
My place to lie
And find dreams to keep
The dreams I never knew were there

Sweet Ignorance, where have you gone?

Wasn't this easier
When between us lay
A wall of stone

When this dead place
Was all I had
To call my own
When all I knew
Was this barren land
But now I've seen the work
of a Greater Hand

Now I know what should be mine
For it was always mine to find
Yet it was never mine to grasp
For between us lies a wall of glass

Sweet Ignorance, where have you gone?

Sweet Ignorance
that keeps me from knowing
wanting
loving
dreaming
or growing

Sweet Ignorance
That leaves me blind
Instead of shining a light

Whose source I cannot find

Sweet Ignorance, where have you gone?

SHATTERED MIRROR

This mirror you're putting

To my face

Will not last long

For mirrors will break

Will crumble away

Between your hands

And I will be

The last one to stand

And you will hide there

Lost and alone

Spirit and soul have turned

To stone

Heart and mind have turned

To glass

Just like the mirror

That has fallen at last

Reflecting back

What you have

This shattered mirror

Has an awful cost

A BUTTERFLY'S WING

A pile of treasure is spread out on the sidewalk

As the blonde head bent over

Lovingly looking at each one.

His blue eyes searching for the most beautiful.

His freckled face being tanned by the summer sun

Bottle caps, and pennies

Pebbles from the stream

His nose wrinkled tight

At the hardness of the choice

A candy wrapper, two clear marbles,

One starfish from the beach

Two dirty hands,

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Who had carefully avoided washing,
Gently touched each of his prizes

A robin's egg
And a butterfly's wing

Standing up
to reveal a freshly scraped knee
and two little bare feet,
the boy began to gather the pile
back into his old shoebox

Sniffing back a tear
For he knew what he must do

The shoe box was carried to a house next door
And dropped at the feet
Of a shy little girl
Sitting beneath a tree

Her doll was set aside
Her singing stopped

The boy staring at the girl

The girl staring at the box

The lid was lifted

She made a gasp

Staring amazed at her little gifts

For all the wealth in the world

Could not have amounted

To this much

Bottle caps and pennies, pebbles from the stream,

A candy wrapper, two clear marbles, one star fish from the beach,

A robin's egg and a butterfly's wing

The girl stood up

Clutching the box

Kissed the boy

And made him blush

She ran inside

Hid in her room

Hoping never again

To see the boy who had run back home

Wearing a smile

For the world to see,

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His precious smile
That's missing two teeth

He ran to his door
Then back to the street
To chase a butterfly
With only one wing.

AS FRIENDSHIP DAWNS

As the sun breaks through
As the moon fades away
But when night has not yet
Turned itself to day

When Time is stopped
By uncertainty
And those who were trapped
Now find themselves free

This is the hour,
The moment, the breath
When those who have nothing

Still have one thing left

Coming in slowly, and softly

With the tide

Helping you find life

In the dreams that have died

Look over the ocean

Where the sky meets the sea

Where the stars shine their last

Here I will be

Watching and waiting

For you to follow

Finding our gift to treasure

For today and tomorrow

Watching and knowing

Things are right at last

In this beautiful sunrise

On our future, present, and past

Knowing someday we'll laugh

At our worries and fears

Certain we'll remember

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Our heart sores and tears

But forever, I know

In our hearts

This sunrise will never be gone

I will cherish this moment

As Friendship Dawns

*Kira Leander
Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet
Seventh Grade*

WHO AM I? I AM WHAT I AM

REFLECTION | NOITCELFER

Look at me

What do you see?

Do you see an intimidating boy ready to snatch from your hand

Or a proud young man who's ready to stand

Stand up for his people, family, and rights

Who's stereotyped constantly because he's willing to fight

Do you see a young man who is a stalker of knowledge

Or a timid little boy who will never get into college

Do you see a bright young man whose intelligence leaves you speechless?

Or a boy you say is dumb and teachers claim is teach less

Everyone's opinion is different of me

But when I look in the mirror at my reflection I see

A great young man who has come to be

The best I can be for all to see

As I mature and grow throughout the rest of my days

I'll never give my, morals, or ways

THIS IS ME

Harry

Brave, Honest

Loving, caring, growing

Intelligent, handsome, shady, dirty

Hating, annoying controlling

Mean, ordinary

Barbarian

HATE IT OR LOVE IT, TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

Throughout my life I'm sure there are many haters to come
Who devote most of their time to make sure I'm not number one
They envy me so with hate and disgust
So I pose the question, who can you trust?
Trust to be real and take you as you are
Who don't care if you fall short and try to help you get far
My answer is that you can't, you have to take a chance
But there aren't any lifelines so now you have a real problem on your hands
I show them the real me, genuine personality and all
But those haters still are steady wishing everyday that I fall
At the end of the day if they still have something negative to say
I tell them Hate it or Love it, Take it or Leave it, and please stay out of my way

ACROSTIC OF ME

C ollective

O ptimistic

N atural

F riendly

I ntelligent

D ivine

E nlightening

N oted

C alm

E ager to learn

*Harry Short
Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet
Ninth Grade*

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

The mental duress and stress coalesce – I'm depressed.
Mediation with mandala but all synapses suppressed.
Harrison Bergeron-ic handicapped depiction
Because my imagination is stronger than stranger is fiction
Derived from the jungles, cast into the woods asunder,
Failed to brainstorm due to the lack of thunder.
Suffering from somnambulism up in the stratosphere,
Don't look down or wake up or I'll be outta here.
Mental mistakes: like paying attention for a hooker fee;
A mix between Du Bois and Malcom X drinking booker tea;
Thinking about Spring when wandering Winter hallways;
Under pressure from the Summer, wondering how much the Fall weighs,
Or how much it hurts when I finally hit the bottom;
Systematically nervous, autonomic in the Autumn;
Memories of yesterday coming at me from next week;
Thoughts pooling like bodies of water, pondering like the Chesapeake;
I'm not thinking straight, or the world's probably tilted;
Daydreaming with my head in the clouds – nightmarishly stilted.
I hear them roaring, the lions in my mental den.
A blank piece of paper? That's just lines I gotta pencil in.

Here's something for you to think abo'ut: the water in the mental sink's hot.
I'm trying to boil the whole world but only making an inkblot.
I tried using my voice, but I think not.
My mental pyramid has more knowledge than the sphinx got.
So they took off my nose, took all of my clothes,
Got me for my slingshot and broke the window on my Rolls.
Open-and-close, that's how they said the case was.
With no mouth and no nose, you'll never see the grief that my face does.
But I'll be happy to share it with you.
I'm always showing love; somebody give me a hug.
Don't five me a tug – we're not at war.
I'm hanging at the end of the rope, only because there's so much more.
How can I be full of myself if I'm not ever fed?
How can I be sure of myself when I'm not ever read?
How can I revive myself if I'm not ever dead?
I'm at war with myself; just check the knots on my head.
Not to mention I got rocks in my head.
My mind's made of gravel. On a rocky road I travel.
With the life I'm living in, hell seems like a nice dream.
Others scream for ice cream, but when I dream, I scream.
I've been ignored for too long like cereal that's sogged up.
I used to have a pipe dream, but now its all clogged up.

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I've tried hard not to face the face: I replaced its space;

Copied and paste; changed my pace.

And now I guess due to amazing grace and my distaste.

Look at myself in the mirror – yeah, face to face.

I'm tired of looking at the world; I'm about to gouge my eyes out.

Replace them with your ears – try to hear these tears.

See, this is what I fear:

With all this commotion, no one's in motion. You need to get it in gear

Like a bicycle, but its missing the kickstand

And leaning to the side. How can you ride when you're sinking in quicksand?

Yeah, so you gotta move faster,

Get your life in orbit, and make the flavor long laster.

Or get chewed up and spit out.

Make like tobacco and leave – yeah, you got to get out

Or live with'out – lobotomy on the mental.

Get your senses right, es'sence is essential.

Grab a pencil; make an outline like a stencil,

Put your thoughts on the graph – yeah, you do the math.

Make sure to keep it geometric:

Get your life in shape, and then connect it electric,
 Put in the plug, and start shockin' the socket.
 Life isn't a rerun – don't pop it and lock it,
 But pull it out and cock it, shoot it into the sky,
 Kill the rats like the pied piper, and believe you can fly.

Never free but a slave with braids; I slave for wage,
 But only get tips like what a waitress is paid.
 Underage, so I can't drink away the pain.
 To ink away the pain, I'll think to save the brain.
 Put the train away, some things can't be tracked.
 So print an ad or tract, then add subtract.
 It's a negative spin like retrograde rotation.
 Flying to get stuck in water – hydroplane probation.
 No officer to say, "Go to the office, sir."
 Took off the ice just to have something to offer her.
 So now I'm back on track, and I shouldn't get shaken.
 I'm not a hand or a drink – stirred is how I'm taken.
 Verbal guns shoot at me to put a cap on my braids.
 Shave off the fade – my words are still making waves.

I write my poems with my eyes closed; the pen knows where the line goes.
 Even with a blindfold, I'll still be able to find those

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Words that stick out, but not like a sore thumb, though.
Ones that make the pen belled like my pants ion my gumsole.
I hang around the ankles if you know what I mean.
I guess that's why I'm stepped on like the back of my jeans.
Down to my final hour, but I'm doubting time's still tickin'.
But I'm running out of minutes – I should stop counting, like a Cricket.
I go against the grain like I'm allergic to wheat.
A burden to weak, and the shackles hurting my feet.
I'm just trying to do the second letter of the alphabet.
I need to spell-check, where's the letter after alpha at?
If I can't dodge a jab, then the scar's a scab –
The punch to the chin is just a bump on the skin.
You can do nothing to me; let me explain the lesson.
My plain confession: all this pain is a blessin'.

*Frank Coates
Glenduff Comp High School
Twelfth Grade*

SHORT STORIES

POSSON THE WHALE

It was a cold arctic morning in North Pole when a killer whale was swimming with her five month old child names Posson. Posson was still a baby but, too old to drink his mother's fatty milk. He was learning how to fish and swim. He was a fast learner and soon mastered his lessons.

Not long after Posson's lessons, he became dangerously close to starving to death. It was not because Posson was a poor hunter, it was because there were no seals or Beluga whales available for hunting. So Posson's mother decided she would go hunting in more dangerous waters, leaving Posson behind, near a large ice floe. Unknown to her, she swam into the most dangerous fishing territory in the arctic sea. It was called the Nettinglands. She knew the waters were dangerous, but did not realize just how dangerous they were. These waters could kill her, but she was willing to do this for her child.

So she went deep into Nettingland. She looked around and it seemed safe enough. A few hundred yards later, she stumbled across a herd of Arctic Herring. These small, slippery, silvery fishes, are not nearly big enough to feed a full grown killer whale. But she thought seven or eight should be enough for her baby. Then, suddenly a net began to rise up from the depths of the dark sea! As it rose it trapped her bringing her higher and higher. The next thing she knew, she was in the cold arctic air, wrapped in a net that was getting tighter and tighter around her body. The last thing she felt before she died, was a sharp fin poking her in the eye.

When the fishermen noticed the large creature tangled in their nets, they cut her out of the thick net and threw her out of the old boat. She floated down to the bottom of the cold dark water. The last thing she thought about was Posson. Her body would soon rot and eaten by scavengers, Posson would never see his mother again.

Nearby, a pair of Ice fish smelled the blood and swam in the direction where Posson's mother was lying still. Meanwhile, Posson was confused. "Where is my mom?" he thought. Starving and faraway from his pod he wondered where his mom had gone. Posson was just a baby and he was scared and lonely. He stayed still in the water, fell asleep and hoped that his mother would return soon.

A half mile away, a Beluga whale named Mira, was swimming with her two children. She had a teenager named Nuklore and a three and half month baby names Hoovey.

"What's that!" she exclaimed.

"What are you looking at?" asked Nuklore. Then he realized what she was looking at. She had spied the poor whale.

“Oh no! A killer whale!” yelled Nuklore.

Mira was a kind and caring whale. She wanted to know why the baby was all alone. She decided to swim to Posson, but Nuklore stopped her. “Do you remember what happened to dad?” said Nuklore. “He was killed by a killer whale. That’s why KILLER is part of the name!”

Mira said, “But he looks sad and hungry. I think we should help him. After all, he’s just a baby. I’ll just give him some of this spiny fish.”

Nuklore did not like that idea, but he went along with his mom. So Mira swam up to Posson and offered him the fish. He was very confused. She did not look like his Mother, but she felt like mother. So Posson swallowed the spiny fish and it felt good in his empty stomach. He guessed Mira could be his mom. Mira and her two children led Posson back to their pod where she would take care of him.

However, Nuklore and Hoovey were not anxious to have Posson as part of the family. As they swam through the cold Arctic sea, Nuklore complained about his new baby brother. Hoovey cried for his mother’s milk. The cold water stung Posson’s cheeks and made tears come to his eyes. Posson would never know what happened to his mother, on that cold Arctic morning in January.

When Posson was back at the Beluga’s pod, he thought it looked nice and cozy. In one corner of the pod, there were two ancient looking whales betting over which of their tiny fishes tasted better. In another part of the pod, lots of whales were talking and others were gossiping. Posson thought this was all very exciting.

Posson’s new mom took him to Blackscar. Blackscar, the leader of the small heard, looked more like a professional wrestler than a great leader of whales. He had lots of deep scars all over his body, that even time couldn’t cover up. With half of his fins partially bitten off, he did not look like much of a whale at all. But, he was a Beluga whale and a threat to little baby killer whales!

Avnor, a not so popular whale, saw Posson in the crowd, and swam up to Mira and him. Pointing to Posson he said, “What in the deep blue sea is that?”

“It is something out of this world,” said Mumor the drama queen.

“It is a monster!” said Quop, a spoiled child.

“No, it is just Mira and a baby killer whale!” said Beroue a brainyac. “Ohhh,” said the crowd.

“It is going to eat us!” Screamed someone from the crowd.

Blackscar heard all the loud talking and yelling and went to check what the noise was about. “Quiet!” yelled Blackscar. A dramatic pause hit the crowd. “What is going on?” asked Blackscar.

A Beluga whale from the crowd said, “Mira has a baby killer whale with her!”

“What?” asked Blackscar. “Is this true Mira?”

“Yes, it is true,” said Mira in a sad voice.

“Okay then. Give me the baby,” said Blackscar.

“What are you going to do with him?” asked Mira.

“Kill him if course!” commanded Blackscar.

“No!” screamed Mira.

“Why on the deep blue sea, not?” said Blackscar.

“No, no!!” said Mira in a loud voice.

“Okay, I will let you keep your stupid whale!” said Blackscar.

Time passed and Posson became more like a Beluga whale than a Killer whale. He learned to like food that Beluga’s eat like fish, squid, octopuses and the occasional worm, which Posson did not enjoy as much as fish. But as time passed, Posson began to feel differently. He was now seven years old and nine feet long. He noticed that the fully grown, Beluga whales, were fifteen feet long, and at seven he was more than half that. Fully grown, Posson would be twenty feet long. He soon realized her was different from all of the other whales.

Many years passed and the pod of Beluga whales were going hungry. So Posson went swimming in search of food. He came to the place called the Nettinglands. He saw thousands of tuna fish swimming around, so he swam home to tell the others about what he discovered. He told about the amazing site, but no one believed him. He couldn’t tell his mom Mira, because she did many moons ago. The only one who actually trusted him was his little brother Hoovey.

He swam to Hoovey and told him about the amazing discovery. Hoovey of course, believed him. The brothers swam to the site where the tuna were. Hoovey was so excited about finding food, that he rushed home forgetting about the dangers of this place. Posson saw Hoovey rush back to the pod and realized he had to stop them from coming to the Nettinglands. He had to save the Beluga pod from being sealed in tuna cans.

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Posson made a plan, and was ready to stop the pod before they could get caught in the nets. However, not all of the whales escaped the nets. Nuklore got caught with some others. Posson watched Nuklore bite the net as hard as he could, but he could not get free. Then Posson thought that maybe he could bite through the net. As a killer whale he had powerful jaws. So he dove at the net and ripped it open with tremendous force. All different kinds of fishes, whales, and other sea creatures poured out of the nets. But there was something left in the net. Posson saw it was Nuklore. Nuklore was too weak to move. Posson swam to help him, but it was no use.

“I was wrong about you,” said Nuklore. “You are a good friend.” With that, Nuklore slowly died.

Saddened by Nuklore’s death, Posson returned to the pod. He was named the new leader of the pod, but Posson had something else he had to do. He had to search for his real family of whales. He told the pod of Beluga’s that he would have to leave but, his adopted brother Hoovey would make a fine leader. After many long good-byes, Posson swam away from one pod in search of another. Perhaps he would have a future filled with happily ever after life, with his own kind.

*Tyler Reed
Thomas Edison Elementary School
Fourth Grade*

ALMOST TO FREEDOM

“Take them to the path, honey,” Momma managed to croak. She sighed and held my hand.

“I will Momma, I promise I will,” I said and held her hand tighter.

She smiled at me. Her worn features looked tired and weak. I bit my cracked lips and held her hand, squeezing the energy out. Several seconds of silence passed. I felt her hand become lifeless and cold. With that, I promised in my mind to take everyone to freedom, just as Momma had tried to.

That had been nine years ago. I still remember every single detail of that painful moment. “Bree Scott!” Master Smith boomed from a narrow hallway.

I stood up straight and replied, “Yes Master?”

“Start working in the fields,” he grunted and placed a straw hat on his head.

“Yes master,” I quickly hurried away to change clothes.

“Where you headin’ to?”

I turned around and smiled at Pa. He looked old and tired, his skin dry and cracked. His eyes danced and smiled at me.

I rushed to explain about working in the fields.

“Okay, you make sure to find the path, ‘kay Bree?” Startled, I asked nervously, “Path?”

“Yes.”

“What path?”

“Freedom Path!” Pa boomed and clasped his hands together smiling.

Everything hit me then, and I shuffled off to change into my field clothes.

The sun glared at my back. I winced and glanced in every direction. Slaves plucked, plowed, watered, and sang. I wiped beads of sweat off of my forehead. Making sure that no one was looking in my direction. I crouched down, crawling underneath corn stalks. This was very risky, I knew. If Master discovered my absence, the consequences would lead to a beating.

After an hour or so, I came to a path where corn stalks seemed to tower over. Trees and bushes hid the path from view. I grinned and began to crawl. *Free us, Lord* scrawled into the

dirt ground. The pain of working in the fields was hard, but the pain of my death would be harder to escape.

Two weeks passed slower than the year the jubilee sounded. I feared this moment, yet I longed for this moment.

“This is mighty brave of you, Bree,” Pa whispered, looking eagerly abroad the corn stalks. I squinted my eyes into the night, trying to see his face. “Your Momma would be proud of you,” Pa mumbled. He smiled as a large crowd of black, rich color flowed into the dark. My plan was working well so far. The fear was replaced by pure excitement.

“Can I please have your attention?” I whispered as loud as possible. People silenced to a chatter, then a hush, then a mute. Satisfied, I led everyone to the path. We walked for about a mile in silence, being cautious. A shiver ran up my spine as we stepped onto the path. My feet tingled as the soft mud squished between my toes. I suddenly remembered Momma’s words, her weary face in view, “Go past the trees until you find a river. Cross over the stones to get to the other side. Now, a farm with one light on will be your overnight stay. If Master catches up to you, run. The sun should be rising in the east. Follow the sun until you find a field of fruit and corn. You will be hidden from view. However, if you make it to the farm house, wake up before the sun has completely risen. Keep your people safe, never leave them alone.”

I blinked back to reality and walked ahead, filled with awe.

Hours passed before we finally found the river. We all felt as if we were close to freedom, although this wasn’t even near the beginning.

We began to see a farm house in view, and that was exactly when we heard what we all dreaded most. Faint voices and dog barks filled the humid air. I suddenly could hear my heart pounding, begging to escape from my rib cage.

Gasps came from the sea of people. I came back to my senses and frantically rushed everyone past the farm house.

“Bree!” a voice whisper-shouted. I sighed as I saw Adrien, my younger brother approach me. “They’re close!” Adrien blurted out. My blood froze and all working systems in my body came to a stop. I sprang into action and stormed past trees, land, animals, and finally came to an empty dirt path.

An hour passed since we heard the voices and barking. My nerves tingled when I heard them once again. This time, about 20 to 25 yards away. All of the slaves panicked and ran towards the rising sun. Time was gaining on us. I felt like a mouse, clenching onto his cheese as a cat batted at him. Only I was clenching onto freedom, with a sea of mice

scurrying to a hole in a wall.

“I won’t let you down Momma,” With new energy I came to the head of the crowd and led everyone, *my people* to a stream.

“Jump!” I exclaimed and rushed across the stream.

“I think they went that way!” a turbulent voice cried. It only gave me more confidence in leading everyone to freedom.

Finally, I leaped over the stream towards the final path, the path north. I turned around to see people disappearing, one by one.

“Bree, BREE!” Adrien pulled me into a deep ditch, hidden by a wrath of thorns and bushes. I glanced in every direction to see the large mass of people smiling and heavily breathing.

“Men! They’re here! C’mon!” I felt Adrien clutch my hand tightly. Momma’s tired face came into view. Worn shoes and dog paws hitting the grainy dirt sounded like echoing booms.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, thud, thud. I heard the panting of a dog as it stood near the thorns, completely blocking the ditch.

I have failed Momma, I’m sorry, I thought and closed my eyes, preparing for my painful fate.

“Nah Thomas. They ain’t here, they musta’ gone thatta way!” Another voice yelled, and the thudding of the footsteps slowly faded.

Not a single noise filled the air. I stood up cautiously, motioning everyone to do the same.

“You did well, Bree,” Pa said and beamed.

“What? What does that smile mean?” I asked narrowing my eyebrows.

“Honey, you know how those dogs were a couple a feet away from finding us?”

I nodded slowly, not quite sure where he was going.

“Well they couldn’t smell of course!” he grinned, beads of blood dripping down his lips.

“W-what? How could t-that be? I stuttered, feeling shocked.

Pa laughed heartily and began, “That’s Adrien’s and my secret to know.” Pa began to walk away as I stood staring at him in disbelief.

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“Well now, aren’t you going to lead us to freedom?” Pa asked, a smile playing on his lips. I chuckled and ran ahead of the pack.

“We’re free Momma. Your dream has come true, your people are free now, rest in peace,” I murmured to myself.

As we walked along the dirt path, I looked up to see a risen sun. Not the same glaring sun, but a new sun that meant a new start. We were on our way to freedom, and no one was going to stop us.

*Susan Moon
Meigs Middle Magnet School
Sixth Grade*

THAT'S LIFE

My foot tapped vigorously, thankful for the carpeting of the floor, because then no one could my anxiety. I squirmed in my church pew. I didn't want to be here. I'd rather be atop an active volcano than be here. But I had to come; I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I hadn't.

I watched as my friend, Sierra, dragged herself down the aisle. She was bawling her eyes out, and screaming her sorrows to the heavens. I looked away. I couldn't stand to see her like this, especially when I was trying so hard to keep a stronghold over my emotions. I refused to cry...even if this was my sister's funeral.

My sister and I were everything to each other. We had to be, because we were all we had. Our father abandoned us, and Mother went after him. We had no family, only each other. I thought we would never make it on our own, but Ericka got us through. She always did manage to get us out of any crisis we faced, and Lord knows we encountered a lot. But now, I'm alone, and I have to fight my battles all on my own. But I don't think I am going to see them through.

Sierra had made her way to the altar. She was speaking about Ericka now. Sierra spoke of how Ericka was strong, a little over-protective, but loving, and incredibly hardheaded. I allowed myself a small chuckle at the last comment. Ericka had been extremely stubborn; sometimes it would be to the point of her being childish. "Really, Ericka, you should've listened to Sierra and left that girl alone. She had to be at least ten times bigger than you!" I complained to my sister.

"Trisha, one, when have I ever listened to Sierra, and two, so what if she was bigger than me! I only got a bruise; on the other hand, she got bruises, along with cuts scars, etcetera etcetera,"

I rolled my eyes. "I find it amazing at how incredibly stubborn you can be,"

"I'm not stubborn; I'm just highly determined!" she defended.

I giggled, "I know Ricky, I know,"

My heart ached at the memory. Tears brimmed my eyes, but I wouldn't let them fall. Ericka taught me that crying was a sign of weakness. Plus, I have no more tears *to* cry. I poured my heart out at the hospital when the doctors told me, "She didn't make it."

I had been hysterical then. Everything had become a blur, and my head had been spinning a thousand miles per hour. Those words kept running through my head. I had not wanted to believe them; I *couldn't*. Ericka had come through high waters in her life, and I would not accept her death. It really should've been me lying in that coffin, will a bullet pierced through my heart, but as strong as she was, I doubt Ericka could handle that any better.

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Sierra was finished speaking, and it was my turn now. I rose steadily from my seat. As I walked slowly towards the altar, I counted every step, each one leading me closer towards the casket. I didn't even so much as glance at it. I didn't need to see my sister's dead body; I had already seen it. I had already seen her color-drained face and cold, limp body. I surely didn't need a reminder that image would forever be sketched into my mind.

"My big sister wad everything to me, and believe me, I mean absolutely everything. She was my mother, father, teacher, best friend, and sister. She was my mother because she raised me into a woman, although she was still growing, herself. She was my father because she protected me with strong arms." My voice cracked, but I kept going, "She was my teacher because she taught me about life; its ups, downs, and its in betweens. She was my best friend. We laughed together, shared secrets, and she provided me with a shoulder to cry on because she wouldn't shed a tear. But most of all, Ericka was my sister. Not only by blood, but we were connected through our souls,"

My eyes were watering again, but this time I let them fall. I could never really obey Ericka's law of weakness. The tears streamed down my face uncontrollably. I had exhaled slowly, calming myself. Sierra came up to me, hugged me and asked if I was all right. I gave a weak nod, assuring her I was fine.

"I want to ask God why he would take her away form me. But I don't because her words ring through my head, "Don't question life, because it is just that, life. And only the power of God can stop it from being life" So, today I say good-bye to Ms. Ericka Tomas, my everything.

The audience applauded as I stepped down from the podium. I didn't walk back to my seat; I continued until I was on the church's front entrance way. I sat on the step, buried my head into my arms, and cried, this time silently. A while passed before I whipped the tears away. I sighed heavily. I was going to face the fierce world alone now, but I had to fight whatever came my way, just like Ericka would want me to. And hey, maybe I will make it through on my own. If I don't, what am I gong to do? That's life.

*Raya Marsh
Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet
Eighth Grade*

THE DETERMINED

He really needed the sea foam green shirt; he knew the navy blue would not do. This was an important day in his life: his Determination. Today society would determine his plans for the future.

“Come on, Harrison!” his plump, boisterous mother called up the stairs, “It’s already two-thirty and the appointment is for three.”

“One second! I’m trying to get dressed,” the small, young-looking boy yelled back in an exasperated tone that only annoyed his mother further.

He ran down the stairs while he hurriedly pulled a sweater vest over his head, only making his already messy hair more untidy. He slammed the front door behind him, ran across the perfect lawn, and hopped into the black SUV his mother was waiting in.

As they drove to the Office of Determination, Harrison wondered what his future occupation would be. He hoped to get something prestigious so as to impress his parents and friends, but in secret he wished to be an artist. Painting was his desire. This was a menial job usually done by people with mental disabilities. In his heart he knew he would not get to follow his dream, but he could not fully come to terms with that until it happened.

They arrived at a large stone building, somewhat resembling the Mi=Monticello. The large wooden doors were opened by a guard in a mint-colored uniform, mint was the state color. He led them down a sterile white corridor. Harrison’s steps echoed on the clean tile. They finally came to a room that looked more like a boardroom than a room for a coming-of-age ceremony. Another government worker came in and with no words, hooked Harrison to a complicated contraption reminiscent of an EKG machine. It measured the frequency of his brain waves to choose his future. He sat patiently got he three hours of testing as his mother sat in the corner and nibbled various foods like a mouse with the munchies. When this time had elapsed he was led to a larger room the size fo a gymnasium full of other adolescents and their parents awaiting Determination. A large judge-like man stood in the front of the room announcing results. Harrison’s hands shook visibly.

“Jennifer Gaines,” the announcer called out, “Janitor. No education beyond the eighth grade.”

A mousy girl began to cry and her mother pushed her forward to the main to retrieve her legal papers.

“Blane Gerst. High school football coach. University of Savage Entertainment.”

The stocky tow-headed boy did a dance of triumph and high-fived his father.

“Harrison Greene. Corrective brain surgeon. Columbia University.”

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Harrison pushed through the crowd to get his papers unsure if he was capable of such a prominent education and career. He retrieved them and handed them to his mother.

“You did so much better than your father or I! Aren’t you proud?” she said, not really listening, but only beaming at the unnoticing crowd.

“I guess. I am not sure it fits me,” he replied as they headed out.

“Of course it does. Don’t question the unchangeable.” She stated defiantly. That was something she had heard on television, no doubt.

He resigned and sat in silent submission until they got home. Then he fell onto his warm, down bed and drifted off into a dreamless sleep.

He awoke as his father, who looked a bit like Clark Kent, shook him hastily and said, “Wake up. Determination School today, remember?”

He remembered the events of the previous day now, and he realized he was to go to his new school. He quickly dressed and rode quietly to school. It was geared towards preparation for one’s elected career. Nothing unrelated to this was taught. Individual interests had been eliminated. His first period class was easy to find, and he was soon there. It was Citizenship H.D. (Highly Determined, for the more high status students). When he opened the door he saw the room empty except for a gawky looking older man wearing a stocking cap with several pom poms on the top and a three-piece suit. Harrison checked his watch and found that he was an hour early. He forgot to fall back for daylight savings.

“Hullo!” the man said, you must be the newbie, I’m Mr. Goldberg, the teacher. I heard of your results – quite impressive. What do you think?

Harrison hesitated, wondering if he should be truthful. What the heck, he thought, the man seemed nice. He told him his situation and the man excitedly said, “I once was in the same predicament. I longed to be a poet, but I submitted to The Man. Let me help you. We may be able to request an exception in which you choose your own future.”

Harrison did not understand why this strange man was proposing such preposterous ideas when they barely knew each other, but he was in authority. Society could not punish him for going along with authority, could they? He faltered but then firmly said, “Alright, I’ll do it.”

They ran down the quiet, early-morning streets to the Office of the Mistakes. All government buildings were within a one-mile radius. This building was a typical towering skyscraper. They went through the revolving door and explained their problem to secretary after secretary until they were led to a room in which one thin, bespectacled man sat.

“Mr. Greene, I am the administrator, and I have heard of your predicament. We will resolve it today. Your teacher is free to go back to his classroom. You will join him there later in the day.”

Harrison watched as his teacher left with a grin of accomplishment on his long, thin face. Harrison, however, did not like this administrator. He was sure something was amiss.

“Follow me, son,” the administrator said as he opened a door on the wall behind his desk. The door led to a murky stairway lit by ornate metal torches on the wall. Harrison was frightened; it seemed as though the décor was for that very purpose. They then arrived in a large, cold room where a tall, attractive man in scrubs stood by a shining metal table with lights illuminating it from above.

“This is Dr. Evans; he will be performing a corrective brain surgery on you so that you may be more satisfied with society. As you can guess, it is easier to change an individual than it is to change society, so you must be the change we want to see in this world,” the administrator said, reciting a nonsensical maxim embedded in his mind by repetition.

The doctor waved and said cheerfully, “Hi! The procedure is virtually painless and according to Law 397 you have no choice as to if it is performed, so do not bother fighting. We have sedatives!”

Harrison felt his heart sink. He had been abandoned in this cold, dank room; no one could save him.

“Maybe,” he thought, “I was always alone. I am one man against eight billion. How can I win? He climbed onto the table and closed his eyes blocking the tears that begged for release. The doctor placed a mask over his nose and mouth. Harrison could not help but think, as he drifted off, that someday he would be that doctor.

*Sarah Kainth
Hume - Fogg High Academic Magnet School
Tenth Grade*

HIDING IN MY MIND

The fluorescent lights buzzed incessantly as the woman finished filling out the last of the forms given to her by the guy in the lab coat. I stared at the floor picking out patterns and details and arranging them into shapes and objects. The carpet wasn't as short as some of the other prisons I'd been to and I began shifting it around with my toes, swirling the little hairs around and up until I'd drawn a landscape into the canvas. I slid out of my chair onto the creation and began using my fingers to finish the job and add yet more detail to the piece. It was turning out beautifully when I heard a murmur in the background. I ignored it and continue to work on what could be my next masterpiece.

"Carmen? Carmen, dear can you hear me?"

I flattened some of the hairs that were sticking up and attempted to put a road going down the middle of the countryside I had created out of the shag.

"Carmen, I know you can hear me."

I reached for the box of Kleenex and began ripping up sheets of white to create clouds for my sky.

"Carmen, I want you to clean this mess up right now and look at me."

The woman called my art a mess! How dare she, I stared at her angrily and willed her hear to explode. She pulled at my wrist and though I tried to fight back, she had the guy in the lab coat helping her and together they dragged me into the torture chamber. They led me down a hall of hideous whites all horribly exaggerated by the light behind them. I turned myself into rock, killing my body and forcing all of my weight on the floor.

"This is ridiculous, stop acting like such a child!"

I slid on my back down the hall as they dragged me by my arms toward my doom. What a shame, the floor was tile so they had little trouble getting me where they wanted me to go. They pulled me into a room and forced me onto some sort of stretched out couch. Then the woman left with the lab-coat man and in walked a lady in a suit. I knew her kind. She came with the intention of getting in my head and stealing my secrets, but I wasn't giving up so easily.

"Carmen, my name is Dr. Wisdom and I am here to help you."

I stated into the cushion of the seat and waited for her to continue.

"I've had a chance to view your records and I have to say I'm impressed. Your IQ is of

genius level and your art proves that you have great mind, so tell me why do you act the way you do? We have yet to get back your Rorschach results, but I feel it's safe to assume that you aren't mentally challenged in any way.

The short artificial hairs of the cushion prickled into my face and neck as I closed my ears to what she was saying and became still.

"Carmen, can you look at me?"

I turned my head and my body went rigid as I opened my eyes and made myself like a living doll. I stared at the wall just behind her head and refused to move. The walls were green, I knew that tactic too. The green was supposed to be calming and make me feel like opening up to this strange woman. Their Jedi mind tricks could not work on my however, and I continued to stare unblinkingly at this lady's ugly green wall.

"As I am sure you've realized by now, I am a counselor and I'm going to meet with you for an hour three times a week. We're going to work on why you insist on being antisocial."

The room was very tiny. If I were claustrophobic, I'd be screaming right now. But I'm not, I'm a silent, motionless doll made of rock who refuses to crack. But what if they cracked, what if they all cracked? Or exploded, what if all of their heads exploded? I cracked. I let out a laugh from deep within my chest that seemed to startle the lady. Good, she needed to be afraid of me.

"What may I ask were you just laughing at?"

I continued to giggle and glared at her. Maybe if I scared her enough times, her head really would explode.

"Carmen, what are you thinking about?"

I stopped giggling and became solid again. She sighed and reached into her desk, pulling out a beat up black leather binder that had the hairs on the back of my neck standing on end. Waived it in the air for me to see exactly what it is.

"I didn't want to have to do this, but you really aren't giving me a choice. Cooperate with me or I'll go through this binder and give your parents another reason to worry."

I became a tiger and jumped at the offending collection of cardboard and paper only to have it snatched out of my reach. She put it back in her desk and smirked at me as I found myself wanting to attack this evil, vile woman who has shown me her horns and pitchfork and wants me to suffer just like the rest of them.

"Now dear, I'm here for you. I'm here to prove that you are indeed of sound mind so as to keep you out of the psych ward and off the thorzene drip. Do you understand? Now tell me how you feel about me having attained your binder without your permission."

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My nostrils flared as I struggled to string together words that would explain exactly what I wanted to do to this satanic woman who has me lock in this interrogation room before she takes me to the torture chamber to hang me upside down by my toes.

“I...I want to ...shave off your left eyebrow!”

She smiled in victory as she began taking notes on her stupid sheets of dead and recycled tree.

“Now that I have you talking, can you tell me why you act the way you do?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

Because I’m not acting. I really do want to shave off your eyebrow.”

“Why?”

“Because it would make you abnormal.”

I slapped my hands over my mouth before I’d even thought to do so. Still, the damage was done and it appeared as though a realization had dawned over the woman.

“I see. Why would you want o be abnormal?”

She leaned forward on her desk waiting for my reply. I tried to clam up and become a rock again, but I had too much I wanted to tell her, too much I wanted to get across, to scream in her face and force her to understand.

“Because...that would make me one step closer to my goal.”

She raised her eyebrows at me, “Would that goal happen to be world domination?”

“No, equalization.”

She sat back and began taking more notes, writing quickly and glancing at me all the while. I stared at the floor and began tapping on the hardwood with my feet.

“So if you think that if everyone were abnormal, everything would be better?”

“No, it would just be a little more fair.”

A little buzzer on the corner of her desk signaled an hour had passed. The woman put

down her clipboard and rose from her desk.

“I think that’s enough for today. If you could come back on Wednesday and finish telling me about this equality you seek I’d love to hear it and get your thoughts on some other subjects.”

“I don’t think you really care about what I think, you just want to get in my head like everyone else who thinks I’m crazy.

“I don’t think you’re crazy, I think you are intuitive and I’d like you to be more vocal about it.”

She opened the door to her office and led me down the hall and into the waiting room where my mother was waiting with the man in the lab coat. I didn’t speak to either of them as I left the hospital and ventured out into the real world.

Tekisha Bailey
Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet
Eleventh Grade

SNAPSHOT WRITING

A WINTER WONDERLAND – THE COLORADO ROCKIES

Skidding and soaring down the slopes – what a marvelous feeling! Free falling in mid-air and colliding with the white powdery snow, the other skiers zoom by me. Soaring like a rocket into space, my world becomes a blur. The whirling wind stings my ears and makes my hands freeze into icicles.

Time for hot cocoa! The mossy timber of the lodge dangles freely above the door. As I enter, a variety of scrumptious scents fill my nose with delight. Cinnamon, nutmeg, coffee, and of course, the wonderful smell of chocolate, makes my mouth water. The warmth of the cocoa slithers down my throat making me feel cozy.

As I venture into the frosty wilderness, I see chunks of snow which look much like sugar cubes that fall to the ground making a booming sound. The branches of the jagged evergreen trees seem to tower over me. Their symmetrical shapes create a horizon of beauty.

As the sun begins to set, I know that my journey must quickly continue. Strapping my feet onto my frigid snowboard, I push forward and the acceleration increases. After descending rapidly down the mountain, crowd of happy people appear. What an incredible feeling to see the familiar face of my father! Congratulating me on my outstanding run, he pats my back gently. As we walk away, I pause to take one last look. Etched in my mind will always be the memory of this special day – a winter wonderland nestled high in the mountains!

*Trice McCullar
Julia Green Elementary
Fourth Grade*

PITCH BLACK DARKNESS

It was a dark, scary, freaky night. I started out walking down my long, deserted, driveway, pulling the heavy weight behind me, further and further away from my brick and wood fortress. Suddenly, I hear a wickedly evil, eerie, noise. Was someone there? Were they coming after me? I started gagging, my throat tightening. I took off running faster and faster, breathing heavy, my heart about to explode, as I got nearer to my goal. Wheels spinning wildly, almost losing control, I finally reached my destination and let go. I ran back swiftly to my safe place. Shadows chasing my, closing in, my life was still in danger. My shaky, sweaty hand reached out, desperately gripping the doorknob, hurriedly turning it. Finally inside, but out of breath, nerves jumpy, I proclaim to my Grandmother, "I hate taking out the trash!"

*Tyler Sweat
Head Middle Mathematics/Science Magnet
Sixth Grade*

MAKING A HOMERUN

Slamming the ball never sounded so sweet. With the dirt blowing across my ankles and the sweat dripping down my face. It was during a softball game, I was up to bat. There were people yelling all around. Some were in the bleachers and some were in the field, while getting ready for the ball. They were either yelling, “Go Samantha” or “Hey Batter”. All my focus was on the ball, that the pitcher had, because I was trying to pretend the ball was my brother. While I was standing there, I felt my sweat and the wind blowing against my shorts. Then I felt the dirt and my heavy helmet. My hair was blowing. I felt my hands grip my bat tighter and tighter. I smelled sweat and gum, while chewing three pieces of green apple bubble gum. Then all of a sudden I hit the ball really hard. I then heard someone behind me yell, “It’s a homerun.” I was so shocked I just stood there staring at all the people in the field run after the ball in their blue uniforms. There was a feeling I never had before. I was so happy, because everyone was so proud for me. That is the best experience I had. It was my first homerun.

*Samantha Sawyer
Dupont Hadley Middle School
Seventh Grade*

THE AUDITION

Nervously, I wait for my number to be called. I look down at my viola resting in my hands. Gripping its neck, I cast a sidelong glance at the other violists auditioning for Mid-State Orchestra. Although I try to join their conversation, I seem to choke on my every word. I stoop down to where my viola case is lying and pull out my music, looking over it frantically, fingering the notes as I go along. Chasing each other in my head are the thoughts of how much this spot means to me, my parents, and especially my teacher. Jettisoned out of this whirlwind of thought, the next number is called. Frantically, I grasp my slip of paper with my number on it and read it quickly, knowing all too well it was not my number. Still, I feel a compulsion to at least check. I let the slip of paper fall on to my viola case and stand up, trying to resume the threads of the conversation. Another number is called, and I realize it is the number before mine. With a sense of panic beginning to uncoil within me, my number is called. I wheel around discovering that the person before me did not show. I hear my number again, and miraculously it seems my voice begins to work as I notify the woman that I am here. Sweat seeps through the pores of my hands as I tightly grip my viola. This is it.

*Calvin Patimeteeporn
Martin Luther King Jr. Magnet
Tenth Grade*

TWICE OVER A BRIDGE IN WINTER

Outside, the air is cold and crisp as our car heads over the bridge, the city looming up before us, gray skyline against gray sky. Inside, though, there is warmth and a hot breeze dancing about our feet, wafting up to dance around our shoulders and make us sigh, content. Then suddenly, the buildings are on all sides of us, and steam sprays up from the streets and drifts lazily over our windshield. He turns and looks at me as the car comes to a stop, and I force a bothered glance to the chilly winds outside.

“This city’s ugly, don’t you think? All stone and grime.” I complain for a moment, hesitating with my hand on the door, until he leans in to steal a kiss, grinning beneath tousled brown hair. With a sigh, I step out onto the street, coat drawn tight as his car pulls away.

Now it is evening, and he’s riving me back over the bridge. Outside, the air is still frozen, but the warmth of the car has returned, as I lean my head on his shoulder, watching his hands on the steering wheel and eying the departing city behind us. The buildings are draped in evening black, now, heavy, clinging satin, interspersed with the jewels if glinting street lights and the fading stains of sunset. Finally, we’re out past the bridge and I lift my head and sigh contentedly.

“Don’t you just love the city?”

*Nicholas Allen
Hume - Fogg High Academic Magnet School
Eleventh Grade*

SONG LYRICS

SNOWED IN

I woke up this morning.
It was snowing hard outside.
I slipped off my nightgown
And put on all my snow clothes
I wanted to go out.
Then build a giant snowman
But I'm out of luck today,
Ya I'm out of luck today,
Because I'm,

Chorus

Snowed in, wanna' get out a' here,
Much rather go to school than get
Locked up in this big mess!
And I'm snowed in, wanna' get out a' here,
I'm hopin' the sun, hopin' the sun,
Hopin' it will clear up this mess.

Now I'm bored to death
The microwave's been dead
For six hours strait
Now I can wait

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For the next white day

Since I'm,

Sing Chorus Twice

*Kelsey Driscoll
Eakin Elementary
Fourth Grade*

AGUASTAYA

Deep down in Texas
Away from it all
There's a little ranch house
With a big dining hall
A fire pit out back
With land all around
Far, far away from any ole town

It's called Aguastaya
Oh it's so fine
I go there with granpa
All of the time

Away from my troubles
Away from my work
Ridin' in the pickup and kickin' up the dirt
A river runs through it
And so do the deer
There's swimmin' and huntin'
Year after year

It's called Aguastaya
Oh it's so fine
I go there with granpa
All of the time

Aguastaya
Out on the range
The years roll by
Without any change
The afternoon sunset
Is a beautiful sight
The stars and the moon
Are of so bright

CATERPILLAR FINANCIAL SERVICES STUDENT WRITERS SHOWCASE

It's called Aguastaya
Oh it's so fine
I go there with granpa
All of the time

Lucas Trujillo
Meigs Middle Magnet School
Sixth Grade

I DIDN'T HAVE TO WORRY

Chorus: (2x)

I didn't have to worry

'Cause Lord you did it for me

I didn't have to worry

'Cause Lord you gave it to me

I didn't have to worry

That I didn't have a family

I didn't have to worry

'Cause Lord you gave them to me

I didn't have to worry

About all the money

I didn't have to worry

'Cause you provided plenty for me

Chorus (2x)

I didn't have to worry

About not having a home

I didn't have to worry

'Cause you never left me alone

I didn't have to worry

About not giving you the praise

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I didn't have to worry
'Cause I do it every day

Chorus (2x)

I didn't have to worry
About my daddy being saved
I didn't have to worry
'Cause your life you gave
I didn't have to worry
About you loving me
'Cause you died on Calvary
Just for me

Chorus (2x)

Hallelujah (Hallelujah)
Thank you Jesus (Thank you Jesus)
I didn't have to worry (No I didn't)
'Cause you were always there for me (Yes you were)

I didn't have to worry

'Cause you were always by my side
So when the devil came
You always told him to go on by
I love you father
'Cause you're always by my side
You gave me my life that was no bother
And now I'm saying Amen until next time

*Kiri Neal
Croft Middle Design Center
Eighth Grade*

YOU AND ME

I could see Romeo chillin' at the arty
Mask on waiting for a love that will last long
Then he saw shorty
Butterflies in his stomach. So he pulled her aside.
They looked at each other. You could see it in their eyes.
What I mean by it, a feeling that you can't explain.
For that split second, you forget about all your pain.
Life moves in slow motion and your heart beats faster
You was life's slave, now you feeling like the master

Chorus

Loving you and you loving me
A feeling that I can't explain
Touching you and you touching me
Feeling crazy just to see you again
Don't be concerned about what they think
'Cuz we losing time every time we blink
So let's let it ride instead of letting it sink

When he saw her you could see everything
Waiting for love to call

Now it finally rang
Would he answer it now or the answering machine
Without no further reply from his supposed to be queen
End anger, let love in
But he questioned himself because he knew where love's been
Changed his mind despite their differences
And now they made each other equivalent

Repeat Chorus

I'm a ride and die for her love
In the sky I fly for her love
Sky can't compare to how high I am
I ain't walking I'm gliding on land
I shine You shine
We shine together
Like marriage
For worse or better
It don't matter
As long as we are together

Repeat Chorus

*David Reedy
Maplewood High School
Ninth Grade*

WASTE AWAY

A puff of life

A shot of bliss

'Wonder why

I never thought of this

Glimpse of Heaven with one week's check

Can't wait till I can see it next

Chorus

Waste your life away

(you're no better)

drink you r life away

(I'm no monster)

smoke your life away

(you're no better)

snort your life away

(I'm no monster)

Inject yourself

With your pain

Twenty minutes

And your down again

Jump to heaven and fall to hell
And you still don't wanna save yourself

Repeat Chorus

Disengage yourself from your life
Disconnect yourself from your mind
Disrespect yourself with your lie
Just inject yourself with your strife

Under your bridge
'Cause you have no home
you look around and you're not alone
It's not fair that on earth there's hell
And to see heaven's to condemn yourself

Repeat Chorus

Disengage yourself from your life
Disconnect yourself from your mind
Disrespect yourself with your lie
Just inject yourself with your strife

*Scott Benson
Hillsboro High School
Eleventh Grade*

SPORTSWRITING

THE GREAT SPORT OF TENNIS

“He shoots from the 3 point line, he scores!” “He hurls it into the end zone for a 50 yard touchdown!” “He swings the bat and off to the stands that ball flies!” You’ve heard all these calls from reporters covering all the great sports such as football, basketball, baseball, and many more. The question is, what have you ever heard about the sport of tennis?

Tennis, unlike many other sports, is rarely on television, and is misunderstood by many different sports fans. It isn’t the most common or most popular sport, but there are amazing athletes who play tennis professionally, on a tennis tour.

Tennis is an individual sport. The only person on our “team” is you, or if you are playing doubles, your partner. Tennis is about how you play and how you think. It is basically a mind game, even though you have to be incredibly skilled. The main ingredients to becoming a great player are whether your mind is positive or negative, how you respond to how you play, and how your opponent acts and plays. When you are playing, there is no one to tell you what to do or to help you. Many tennis players that are exceptionally advanced have to be prepared for different experiences while playing, and in great condition for the brutal activity on the tennis court. The better shape you are in, the better tennis player you’ll be.

Some people think tennis is for wimps, but the pros are amazingly strong and have great speed and reflexes. You will be amazed at their ability to play the game and how perfect they can be. Instead of flipping your flat screen on to a football game, a baseball game, or basketball game, try flipping on some tennis matches, and you’ll be surprised at how much you can learn to like this great sport.

Tennis is great for your body, and is very fun and recreational for people of all ages. When you want to do something active and enjoyable, get a racket and some tennis balls and play, play, play. If you put your mind to it and continue to play, you could become a pretty good tennis player.

*Andrew Graham
J. T. Moore School
Sixth Grade*

GOOD FOR SILVER, LOST THE GOLD

There is a thick line between winning a silver and losing a gold in the Olympic games or any competition. I have witnesses and example of both in February 2006 at the Winter Olympics in Turin, Italy. Although they occurred four days apart from each other, it was two Olympic moments that captured the hearts and interests of many people who felt sympathy and awe for both competitors.

On February 13, a couple from the People's Republic of China, Dan Zhang and Hao Zhang fought courageously for the gold medal in the pair figure skating competition. Russia's teams had won the pairs event for forty-two years, and Zhang and Zhang were the last pair of skaters left to compete, but more importantly, the last pair who had a chance of defeating the Russian team. Zhang and Zhang hoped to do so by attempting the rarely seen quadruple Salchow, which involved Dan Zhang turning four revolutions in the air.

"We were challenging the extreme limits of what a human being can do," Dan Zhang admitted on the news.

The Salchow sent Dan Zhang landing on the ice on her knees and then crashing into the boards on the sidelines. After struggling to get back on skates, she was supported by her partner and helped off the ice.

Pain was seething through her body as she was torn between two decisions that would've changed the final outcome. Her heart told her that she *must* continue while her head told her she had to quit.

After having the coach examine her knee, she and her teammate decided that she was going to continue. She wanted, needed to go on. To me, that was really one of the bravest decisions a figure skater could make after an incident similar to hers. The rest of the world who watched could only imagine the pain, the agony she went through as she continued her long program from where she left off, attempting more jumps.

Watching her probably made many hearts leap and skip a beat, with fear that her leg could not support her body and would injure herself further.

To all that was watching, it seemed that Chinese team had lost their chance of earning a medal, and Dan Zhang knew what was on everyone's minds. She was under less pressure now, thinking surely they couldn't have a chance of placing. She eased up and skated with her heart, her spirit and her love of competition and ice skating. With that, she made no other mistakes and continued skating with profound effort.

In the end, Zhang and Zhang dazzled the crowd by placing second and winning a silver medal. I think that was truly *winning* the silver medal. Zhang's spirit helped her skate on,

when she could've quit; most people in her disposition would have. Her spectacular comeback was unexpected by the crowd, the referees, and probably even the judges. Dan Zhang and Hao Zhang won the silver medal with pride, happiness, and no regrets.

On February 17, twenty-year old female snowboarder Lindsey Jacobellis of the United States was at the top of her game, and her terrific efforts led her to compete in the finals, which would determine the top three Olympic medallists.

She had a great start and was very soon in the lead. Shortly after the start of the race, many had gone down, but Jacobellis was still going. It seemed like nothing could stop her, and she kept her lead throughout almost the entire race. She was on fire and me, along with everyone else was watching, thought that no doubt about it, she *had* the gold medal.

Jacobellis was close to the finish line, so close. She glanced back to see nobody behind her within a long range, and I think that gave her confidence and sureness. She decided to do a backslide method grab of the snowboard at the end of the race. To me, she knew that she was going to win the race so she might as well end it with a flare. But, it did not go as Jacobellis had planned. She fell at the end of her jump, which left the audience wide-eyed and staring in disbelief. As she hastily got up to finish the race, Tanja Frieden of Sweden sped past her and reached the finish line before Jacobellis. But, it was not Frieden that Jacobellis saw go past her eyes, it was the gold medal. Jacobellis came through right after her.

Innumerable thoughts must have been streaming through her mind as Lindsey Jacobellis came through nit completely victorious. The expression on her face was not that of someone who had won a silver medal, but that of one who had lost the gold.

"She was showboating" people said, but Lindsey denied it.

"I was just having fun with the sport. I got caught up in the moment, and stopped paying attention," claimed Jacobellis to the press.

Losing the gold meant that Lindsey Jacobellis could've had a chance to be first, but one mistake made the gold go past her eyes, and it was heartbreaking for someone who was so close, so close but lost it. In fact, everyone was sure she was going to win. As she fell, I think this sudden fear hit her and her glory moment went away instantly.

Dan Zhang, Lindsey Jacobellis: Both attempted something that made their outcomes completely different, yet both left with a silver medal but two completely different impressions. One lost the gold, the other won the silver, and to me, they are completely opposite.

*Cindy Ma
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WHY IS THE WNBA IN COMPARISON WITH THE NBA?

Ever since the WNBA started it has been in comparison with the NBA. The NBA or the National Basketball Association was established in the late 1940's and the WNBA or Women's National Basketball Association was established in 1997. Most people say the WNBA or women's basketball for that matter is boring or less entertaining compared to men's basketball.

First off, the WNBA and the NBA are two very different types of leagues and it's completely inaccurate to even compare the WNBA to the NBA. The WNBA should not be expected to live up to the reputation of the NBA. There is really only one thing that the NBA and WNBA have in common, and that's basketball. The NBA plays a total of 82 games during the season whereas the WNBA only plays 32 games. The size of the ball that the WNBA uses is different from that of the NBA. The WNBA uses a 28.5 inches and an NBA ball is 29 ½ inches. The rules of playing the game are even different, the NBA has a 24 second shot clock and the WNBA has a 30 second shot clock. Another difference which most people seem to notice is the pay of an NBA player and the pay of an WNBA player. The average WNBA player makes \$89,000 per season. The average salary for an NBA player is almost \$12 million, and most financial advisors to NBA players make more than an WNBA player makes in a season. The WNBA requires that all of their players graduate from a four year college, use all of their college eligibility or be at least 22 years old, unless you're a foreign player. The NBA does not require that you complete your college years before getting drafted. One reason is because in the NBA, when you get your first paycheck you're financially set for the rest of your life. However, if you play in the WNBA then you can't just rely on your athleticism. During the off-season you have to fall back on your education to provide for yourself. Kate Starbird, The Utah Starzz, guard is also the co-founder and co-owner of 3HC, an animation studio that used 3-D graphics and motion technology to create special effects for commercials and films. She says, "The players need something to do in the off season besides working-out." In other words, pay in the WNBA is so low, players have to find other ways of making money outside of basketball. Most women basketball players have to rely on their brains instead of their basketball skills to get money. That's why the WNBA requires that you graduate from college before entering the league.

Publicity about the WNBA is so low that they have begun to attach themselves to the NBA, which really doesn't help the WNBA but hurt them more. The WNBA shouldn't attach themselves more with the NBA but stand on their own. By attaching themselves with the NBA then it gives people an even bigger motive for saying that the WNBA isn't as good as the NBA because they can't stand on their own. Another thing the WNBA should avoid is their team name similarities. Take for instance, the Phoenix Suns, well the women's coach Cheryl Miller decided to name her team the Phoenix Mercury. The WNBA should not try to copy the NBA, but form their own identity, and become more original and stop being

overshadowed by what the NBA does. The good thing about the WNBA and the NBA is their played in different seasons so I can watch both men and women play. The WNBA is played in the summer, and the NBA is played in the fall. The thing is this; the WNBA and the NBA have so many different aspects about them, which makes it very hard for them to be evenly compared. Like for instance I was reading a website, and it said that LA Clippers (NBA team) had a better attendance than the LA Sparks (WNBA team); therefore men's basketball is better than women's. I thought to myself though, the Clippers should have a better attendance than the Sparks since the Clippers play 50 more game in their regular season than the Sparks. So that's not very accurate, but most people don't think about that. I love basketball personally whether it's men or women's; in my opinion I think some women play better than a few NBA stars. However; that's beside the point, the bottom line is this, its basketball whether it's a man playing or a woman. I watch basketball not to see how many dunks a person can get but to learn new skills. You don't need skill to dunk a ball, but to break a 3-2 defense or how to penetrate and free up a teammate, now that takes skill that both men and women possess. So don't fall into the cliché of thinking that the NBA is better than the WNBA, because they're two different leagues.

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RUN FOR GLORY

We were down by three with a minute and a half left on the clock. Three of the five starters were hurt in the game. Only two starters, myself and the center remaining. Fast Break by Edward Hirsch goes pass for pass leading up to the grand finale. The shot that wins or loses the game, to cry from joy or in sorrow, to walk off the court with your head hanging or celebrating on the court.

Playing basketball back in New Orleans for our AA4 team on our way to the championship game. We were playing a team from Florida and the entire game was going downhill from the beginning. In the first half, we lost our starting point guard and power forward when they collided together. The other team seized the moment with a rookie guarding a senior scoring on him at will. At the end of the first half, we were down by eighteen points. We were ready to give up but after a server talk we were ready to play.

However, when we came out ready to play, our opposing team was just as well ready to keep on playing. We kept on back and forth scoring on each other. At the end of the third, we were down by eight, Coach James brought us all into a huddle and told us no matter what happens that we are all going out to eat no matter what. Walking out of the huddle we all said, we ain't losing this game. Scoring over and over we closed the gap to three.

We called timeout, Coach James drew up the play, and we broke out of the huddle ready to win the game. We enterbounded the ball with: 11 seconds remaining. The freshman leading the ball up the court he passed it to me. I dribbled into the corner and threw it to the point forward he passed it to the shouting guard with three seconds remaining. He shot it and was fouled. The ball hit the front of the rim, bounced and hit the backboard and gently dropped into the rim. The game was tied. He walked up to the foul line, looked at all of us, took a deep breath, dribbled twice then paused. Finally he took the shot. It seemed like an eternity waiting to see that was going to happen. Swoosh! He falls down and we dog pile him as everyone rushed to the court. We were winners in a game. We weren't supposed to win. We were champions for the night.

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