

PENCIL FOUNDATION

STUDENT WRITERS  
SHOWCASE

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2010-2011 WINNING ENTRIES

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# CHILDREN'S STORIES

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## LUCY'S BIG ADVENTURE

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One day Lucy Labradoodle was going on a plane. She had been in Paris for the dog show and now she was headed home to California. She had been in Paris for weeks and was longing to go home. She missed her big villa in California, and so did her owner, Clarice.

Clarice and Lucy got to the airport and checked in. The woman at the check-in said, "Oh, excuse me, all dogs must go with the luggage."

Clarice got so mad she yelled, "Do you know who she is! She just won the dog show in Paris! You shouldn't let such a high class dog go with all those mutts!" The lady told Clarice the rules again and took Lucy away.

Lucy was then put in the bottom of the plane. She was so mad and felt sick at the same time. She never had to go with the luggage before. Lucy laid down in her cage and hoped she would be home soon.

A short time later, it seemed like it had been hours since the plane was in the air and Lucy couldn't help thinking how much fun all her friends were having while she was stuck in a plane.

Then she started feeling sick again. It was the smell of ocean water that made her sick. She thought, "Oh we must be over the ocean," then she saw that the cargo door of the plane was open. She started panicking as she and all the other luggage started sliding out of the plane. She was so scared as she was falling towards water. Then, SPLASH!, she landed in the water along with all the passengers' luggage.

She started sinking to the bottom with all the luggage. The water was too much for her and she passed out. Soon, she woke with a shock, looked out, and then realized she wasn't in her cage anymore.

She looked around again and saw all the fish surrounding her. She then asked, "Where am I?"

"Well you're in Atlantis, the underwater city!" a wonderful rainbow fish answered.

"What?" Atlantis! I need to be in California, at home with my owner!" Lucy cried.

“Oh, it’s alright, we will help you get home, but for now we will give you one of our greatest suites at the hotel. Come with me,” the fish said, dragging Lucy with her.

She brought her to the hotel and gave her the nicest, most expensive suite ever. “Oh thank you so much for the room! What should I call you?” Lucy asked.

“I am Hailey, and you are?” Hailey asked.

“I am Lucy!” Lucy answered. Then Hailey left and Lucy was so tired that she went fast to sleep.

Lucy woke up early, thinking everything was a dream. Then she realized it wasn’t and that she was in the ocean. Lucy couldn’t believe that it was real! She was so upset, and she just wanted to go home. She then went downstairs to see what she could eat.

“Good morning!” Hailey greeted.

“Hi Hailey, what can I eat?”

“Well you could have some seaweed or any small fish,” she said.

“No thank you, I think I will go find Clarice’s luggage, she has food in there,” Lucy said. She found her owner’s luggage and a bunch of tasty dog food. She took it all up to her room and ate.

Then she went downstairs to see what to do. She found a mall in Atlantis and shopped with Hailey all day. After that they went to the hotel and ate. Then they heard something outside. All the fish were having some kind of parade. They went out and joined in.

“Hey! I see you’re having a good time,” Hailey said.

“Yes I am!” Lucy said. “Good! I want you to meet somebody, come with me,” and Hailey went off. She took her over to the hotel and introduced her to Jonah, another rainbow fish. “This is my brother, Jonah. He thinks he has a plan to how to get you home,” she said.

“Hi Jonah, nice to meet you!” Lucy said.

“Nice to meet you too,” Jonah said, “I heard from other fish that there was a dog in town and she was trying to get to California.”

“Yes! I am, I really want to get home,” Lucy said.

“Well you could be home tomorrow morning with my plan. I heard from other fish that there was a search party looking for you and a bunch of divers will be here soon. If you just go outside and stay in your cage tonight, you will wake up and be home!” Jonah told Lucy with a smile.

“Yay! I can’t wait to get home. I guess I will go pack and get in my cage,” Lucy said looking sad.

“Why do you look sad?” Hailey asked.

“Well, because I will miss you, all the fish, and my suite. I also would like to get to know Jonah better,” Lucy answered.

“Well, you were only here for a few days, but I will miss you too,” Hailey said. Then Lucy left and started packing.

In the middle of packing she started to cry. “Oh, I don’t want to leave, I will miss my friend. I barely got to spend time with her. But on the other paw, I really do miss Clarice and want to go home,” she said to herself.

She went outside to her cage, crawled in and fell into a deep sleep. She woke up and looked around. She couldn’t believe her eyes! She was home and she was very happy! Then she thought about her fish friend and how much fun she had and knew she would miss her a lot. As Lucy went downstairs to find Clarice, she thought about how she wished that she would get to see Hailey again. Maybe, she would. There was another dog show in Australia next month!

*Sienna Magellan  
sixth grade  
Meigs Magnet Middle*

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## THE PENCIL AND THE ERASER

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We all know about the world's most common-yet wonderful- writing tool, the pencil. We also know about a wonderful disappearing tool that the world uses, too. No, not the magic wand – the eraser. Both work together to make a powerful, multitasking invention. However, did you know that this was not always true?

Once upon a time, the pencil and the eraser didn't get along, which means that when books were written, they had scratches and mistakes in them. Schoolwork looked like a scribbly mess. Too many writings got erased, as well, and couldn't be replaced.

Here is how the pencil and eraser united, changing the writing world forever.

One day the pencil was walking along with pen on his unfinished pathway, while drawing a little here and there, trying to get the path just right. The pen was adding a bit of colored ink on the finished path. When the pencil was just about to finish adding a golden gate and sliver bridge, the eraser jumped from one of the finished bushes, erasing both gate and bridge before the pen could put ink on them.

Pencil tried not to lose his temper. He redrew the gate and bridge. But Eraser erased the picture again! Pencil redrew the path three more times, until finally giving up and yelling at the eraser, "Stop it! You can never be better than me!"

"Oh, yeah?" said Eraser.

"Yeah!" retorted Pencil.

"Oh, yeah!?" said Eraser.

"Yeah!" said Pencil. "You can't beat me!"

This argument kept going on and on, until they decided to battle it out.

"Meet me tonight at the Drawing Board at 6:00!" challenged Pencil.

"I'll be there!" yelled Eraser.

Some of the tools of the town heard about this and told others: *Pencil vs. Eraser*. The news spread all over. Pens, pencils, brushes, oil pastels, and everyone else wanted to see this big fight.

When 6:00 came, the battle was on! The Drawing Board room looked as full as a chilib bowl. When Round One started, the two tools fought like they were already at the bitter end. It was amusing, too- just imagine seeing a pencil and eraser going around in circles, trying to outdo each other. Eventually the entire Drawing Board fell apart.

Battered and tuckered out, Pencil and Eraser glared at each other.

“Just look at what you’ve don!” said Pencil accusingly.

“What I’VE done?!?” exclaimed Eraser. “Look at what YOU’VE done!”

Pencil though for a moment. “Eraser, it’s time that we work together.”

The first thing that came out of Eraser’s mouth was, “You’re just trying to make me feel guilty.”

“No, I am not,” said Pencil. “Will you just listen to me? You could help me when I make a mistake, and I could help you when YOU make on.”

“You’re right!” said Eraser. “The writing world would be a much better place!”

Ever since that night, books and drawing have had the ability to come to life. Charts and posters can be easily understood. School children can do their work legibly. So the next time you pick up a pencil, remember to say thanks. Without the pencil and eraser uniting, the writing world would never have been happy.

*Brandon Mimms  
Seventh Grade  
Rose Park Magnet*

# EXPOSITORY ESSAYS

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## HEAVY METAL

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Heavy metal is a popular genre of music. A sub-genre of rock and roll, heavy metal is generally associated with distorted guitars, loud instruments, and high pitched, screaming vocals. In the fifties and early sixties, music like this would've been unthinkable, but is now enjoyed by many people around the world. There is much debate on where this genre of music comes from, but there are a few bands that are generally associated with furthering metal. There are four periods where heavy metal made very significant strides: the early sixties, the late sixties, the seventies, and the early to mid eighties.

It could be argued that heavy metal all started with two men: Ray Davies and his younger brother Dave. Founding members of the legendary rock band The Kinks, Ray wrote one of the most famous rock and roll riffs of all time, the opening hook to "You Really Got Me" (released in 1964). A song so raw, so distorted, and so dumb, it is said to be one of the greatest rock and roll songs of all time. This heavy and distorted sound was achieved when Dave Davies slashed the speaker of a cheap guitar amplifier, which he affectionately called "Little Green", then connected it to his main amplifier, a Vox AC30. The song was an instant hit, and most critics agree that it provided the template for hard rock and heavy metal. Around the same time "You Really Got Me" was released, the pop/rock band The Beatles released the song "Ticket to Ride", which appeared on their album "Help!". Twenty years after its release, John Lennon claimed "ticket to Ride" was the first heavy metal song due to its loaded guitar lines, droning bass line, and repeated drumming. Most critics agree, however, that while it was a milestone in the Beatles' career, it is not a heavy metal song.

The early sixties came and went, giving way to the late sixties. In the year 1967, a self-taught guitarist named James Hendrix, who had been playing with R&B and blues musicians, moved to London to have more success with his own career. After recruiting Mitch Mitchell to play the drums, and Noel Redding to play the bass, he changed his name to "Jimi" and

formed the Jimi Hendrix Experience. The first guitarist to ever take full advantage of distortion, feedback (placing the electric guitar's pickups in front of the amplifier) and effects such as echo, Jimi Hendrix wrote many rock and roll favorites, such as "Purple Haze" and "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)". His life was cut short at age 27, having only released three albums, two with the Jimi Hendrix Experience, and one with his other group, The Band of Gypsies. Despite only releasing a limited number of albums, Hendrix remains a rock and roll legend. Most critics generally agree that Jimi Hendrix was the greatest guitarist there ever was. The sixties brought about another famous group, Cream, cited as the first ever "super group". With Ginger Baker on drums, Jack Bruce on the bass, and Eric Clapton on guitar, they released blues-rock hits like "Sunshine of Your Love" and "Crossroads". Though not quite heavy metal, the blues-rock trio hinted at heavier things to come. It is interesting to note that Eric Clapton had a successful solo career as well and is generally cited by critics as the second greatest guitarist ever, behind Jimi Hendrix.

Rock music changed when Led Zeppelin was formed. The lineup consisted of Robert Plant, wailing out his vocals, Jimmy Page, shredding his electric guitar, John Paul Jones, rocking the bass, and John Bonham, pounding holes into his drums. They released hard rock favorites such as "Heartbreaker", "Whole Lotta Love" and "Immigrant Song". They also wrote folk rock anthems such as "Battle of Evermore", as well as combining the two genres into the epic masterpiece "Stairway to Heaven", which is considered one of the finest pieces of guitar songwriting ever released. While Led Zeppelin experimented with sounds from hard rock to folk reggae, Tony Iommi and Ozzy Osbourne joined together to create the band Black Sabbath. Tony and Ozzy were a perfect combination, with Ozzy setting the standard for rock and roll singers, and Tony playing in "overdrive" with solid power chords and lightning fast solos. They released heavy metal anthems "Paranoid" and "War Pigs", and the FM radio favorite "Iron Man", still popular today. Black Sabbath is generally agreed on as the band that brought heavy metal to fruition, and their heavy guitar style was probably invented by accident, when Tony had to attach thimbles to his middle and ring finger so they were regular length when they were cut off in an industrial accident. The deal was sealed when Deep Purple released the song "Smoke on the Water", a song easily

recognizable by its classic riff. Guitarist Ritchie Blackmore's song was an instant hit, and by the end of the seventies, hard rock was an established, recognized genre all over the world.

Heavy metal lost steam in the late seventies as the disco trend caught on. It regained strength in the eighties though, beginning with the album "Back IN Black", released by AC/DC in 1980. It was an instant hit, and still stands as the second highest selling album of all time, only behind Michael Jackson's "Thriller." Another Heavy Metal band, Judas Priest, released a hit album in 1980. The album, entitled "British Steel" was their first real big break. The track "Metal Gods" earned them their nickname, and Judas Priest brought heavy metal to a whole new fan-base. The other big metal band of the 80's was Van Halen. Consisting of Eddie Van Halen on guitar, younger brother Alex on drums, Michael Anthony on Bass, and David Lee Roth on lead vocals, Van Halen originally started out opening for Black Sabbath, and quickly became more popular. Their hit song "Eruption" was a two minute long, lightening fast, unaccompanied guitar solo, followed on their first album by a cover of "You Really Got Me." The world was surprised by Eddie Van Halen's raw dexterity and improvisational skills, and Van Halen quickly rose to stardom. Other metal bands such as Metallica and Guns and Roses got their start in the 80's but rose to stardom in the 90's.

In music, as in other creative fields, artists build on and learn from each other, expanding the horizons of their craft. The same is true for heavy metal. Jazz was solely an American innovation, but both America and Britain developed heavy metal together, extrapolating and learning from each other's mistakes. The early nineties saw the end of Heavy Metal's innovation, and has remained relatively the same since then. It is generally agreed on by most critics, as well as my own judgment, that though Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin brought the genre to full capacity, heavy metal, and music as a whole, would not be the same without the Kinks.

*Peter Taylor  
Sixth Grade  
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## REVOLUTIONS IN THE ARAB WORLD

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Arab countries in Middle East and North Africa have been ruled by dictators for a long time. There could be two reasons behind this trend: history and oil. Middle East and North Africa were part of the Ottoman Empire which lasted from the 13<sup>th</sup> century until 1922. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Britain, France, and Italy occupied most of the region and divided it to countries among themselves. At that time, oil was discovered and became the most important asset to run the economy and the military machine of the new empire, the British Empire and the other European powers. When the European occupiers divided the countries of the region, they had in mind the goal of keeping control and influence long after leaving in order to keep the oil flowing at a cheap price. The new powers could not keep control of the populations of the region by force because the people were uprising against them all the time. In order to placate the restless populations, the new powers established kingdoms in the countries they occupied. They installed puppet kings in those countries and kept manipulating them behind the scene. The power in those kingdoms continued in one family, so when the king died, the son became a king. Some of these kingdoms continued to this day, like in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco. In other cases the king was overthrown by a military officer and became a military dictatorship like in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Egypt.

People have been suffering under these rulers for a long time. People suffered from rampant corruption, nepotism, lack of jobs, poverty, bad and unaffordable healthcare, poor education and lack of services. People resisted and sometimes revolted, but those uprisings were crushed brutally. People lost hope of change but suddenly all that changed in 2011. With the mounting of suffering and resentment, millions of disaffected youth and the spread of new media like internet, social networking sites and satellite channels, uprisings are sweeping Middle East and North Africa. Dictators were toppled in Egypt and Tunisia. Uprising is continuing in Libya, and demonstrations are continuing in Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, and Iran. It is possible for people to change their destiny and life but there is always

a price to pay. Two of the famous uprisings are in Egypt and Libya where people paid a heavy price.

In terms of population, Egypt is the largest Arab country. It is located in North Africa on the Mediterranean. Egypt is around 390,000 square miles in area and 79 million in population. The strategic importance of Egypt is that it is the home of Suez Canal which links the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. Suez Canal is very important because it is a shorter route to transport oil from the oil producing countries like Saudi Arabia to Europe and North America. Suez Canal is also important for the movement of U.S. military ships to the Persian Gulf. During the last century of the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the British rule, Egypt was ruled by Mohammad Ali dynasty between 1805 and 1952. The corrupt rule of those kings led to the overthrow of the king by a group of military officers led by Jamal Nasser. Nasser died and was succeeded by Anwar Sadat in 1970. Anwar Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979 and was assassinated in 1981 and was succeeded by Hosni Mubarak. Hosni Mubarak ruled for 32 years. During Hosni Mubarak's rule the government tried to control the society and curtail the opposition by applying the Emergency Law which reduced severely the freedom of the people. Hosni Mubarak was able to control the elections by changing the constitution so no one could challenge him in elections. Economic policies were bad. Businessmen with connections to the president and his son were in charge of the economy with only the goal of enriching themselves. All this led to great resentment among the young educated people of Egypt. With the spread of internet and social media, the inevitable explosion happened on January 25, 2011 when large numbers of people demonstrated on the streets of Cairo. Thousands of mostly young people camped in Tahrir Square in central Cairo for days and nights demanding that Hosni Mubarak and his government leave. The demonstrators were mostly peaceful and did not use violence. Hosni Mubarak tried to use his loyalist to finish the uprising with violence, but he failed. Under the pressure of the uprising in Egypt on February 11, 2011, Hosni Mubarek resigned as the president of Egypt.

Libya is a large country in terms of area but does not have a large population. Libya is around 679,000 square miles in area and 6 million in population. Libya was colonized by

Italy from 1911 to 1951. Libya became independent and established the Kingdom of Libya between 1951 until 1969. In 1969, Colonel Gaddafi overthrew the king and ruled Libya until today. The Libyan society is tribal in nature and political parties are banned under the rule of Gaddafi, so there is not a significant opposition to his rule. The people of Benghazi, the second largest city in Libya, revolted and took control of the city on February 20, 2011. The uprising spread to other cities and moved closer to the capitol, Tripoli. Many cities are under the control of the people but unlike the uprising in Egypt, the Libyan uprising was bloody. Gaddafi loyalists responded with force and fired on the protesters by using African mercenaries with live ammunition. Hundreds of people are dead and fighting is raging in towns close to the capitol Tripoli. People are starting to organize and established an interim government. The international community put sanctions on Gaddafi and froze his assets. President Obama and other leaders are asking Gaddafi to leave.

Change is coming to the Arab world. The long awaited democracy and freedom seem to be close. People no longer are intimidated and afraid. Important countries like Egypt and Libya will be free. Any political change in Middle East and North Africa will affect the entire region and the world. Corrupt dictators have ruled Middle East and North Africa for a long time and denied their people the freedom we enjoy here in the United States. The people of Middle East and North Africa have spoken and want change now. When there is justice, there is peace. Peace and justice have a price and the people in the Arab world are ready to pay it. History and the rise in the price of oil are not on the side of the people of the Arab world and their aspirations of democracy. The dangerous combination of oil and history has always led to dictatorships in the region. We hope this time is different because the people are more aware of their rights and united to defend them.

References: For writing this essay, I benefited from the facts published in this website:

1. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

*Saya Khoshnaw  
Oliver Middle  
Eighth Grade*

# PERSONAL NARRATIVES

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## MY SISTERS, THE BUTTERFLIES

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I am eleven years old, and I have two sisters. Mia was born a year before me, in 1998; Maura was born ten years after me, in 2010. All three of us were born with dark brown hair and my mo's dimple in our chins.

I am known as the girl who loves bugs. Since I was 6, I have spent a week at Belmont University's *Beetles, Bugs and Butterflies* Camp every summer. My experiences at bug camp have been very exhilarating, though not for the weak-hearted. During my second year at camp, Dr. Murphree added a giant millipede, about eight inches long, to the many collections of bugs he makes available for us to handle in his lab. The millipede is dark brown, with little black legs. Her name is Susie, and she is my favorite part of bug camp. I love the feeling of her thousands of legs inching up my arm. She scares everyone else, including my mom. The hissing cockroaches are also fun. I love placing all of them on my arms. When you lightly touch their heads, they respond with a hiss. I can fit as many as 27 on my arm at a time.

I never got to see my sister, Mia. She was born still at the end of my mom's pregnancy. The doctors told her there was no known reason for why Mia was stillborn, and a year later my mom had a normal pregnancy and birth, and I was born. I've grown up knowing about Mia and visiting her at Calvary Cemetery, where she is buried. My mom tells me that when I was three, I would walk past her picture on my parent's nightstand, pat it and say, "Baby Ow." My parents also told me that at her funeral in July, 1998, a group of monarch butterflies flew around and danced near the dirt where they had just buried her.

I've always wanted the closeness some sisters seem to have. When I found out in October 2009 that my mom was pregnant again with a little girl, I was a little scared at

first, but then really excited. Who wouldn't be excited if they knew they were going to have another person in the house? We picked Maura as her name, and I could hardly wait nine months for her to be born. I wanted to help her, teach her, play with her hair, hug her, and love her. I wanted to laugh with her and share secrets. My mom and I would stay up late and talk about where things were going to go and which room Maura would have. I would help my mom pick up stuff; give her a ginger ale to calm her morning sickness; make sure she took her vitamins on time; look for baby items on the internet. As my mom's belly got larger, I would talk to Maura sometimes at night. I once told her, "It's okay if you want to be a girly-girl. Mommy and I, we're not very girly-girl, but I can teach you to hunt bugs and about cool science things. Really, though, it's okay if you want to be a girly-girl."

I have raised many different kinds of insects in habitats at my house, including ants, moths, millipedes, worms, and butterflies. But my favorite of all of them was when I got my butterfly kit. There were 20 little baby caterpillars in a kit that included nectar to feed them and a container for them to grow in. I waited two weeks and the caterpillars gradually grew. When I came home from school one day, three little chrysalises were on the top of my butterfly holder. When I woke up in the morning, all of the caterpillars were in chrysalises. I was very excited for their future arrival. Two weeks later, one little orange and brown butterfly appeared. It's graceful, wet wings slowly fanned out. By the end of the day, all of them had been born.

My butterflies were Painted Ladies, and they were a dazzling amber orange and a nice earthy brown, with white splotches. I gave each one a name. A few days later, I released them at dawn. One by one, I let them go. There was one truly inspiring butterfly that was born with one normal wing and half a wing on the other side. I named him Half Wing, and once I took him out of the habitat and placed him in my hands, he fluttered his little wings and took off. The next summer, I saw tons of Painted Lady butterflies near my house!

When I found out about Maura, I was in the middle of math class. My teacher said, “Maya, you have early dismissal.” I knew something was wrong at once. Because my dad was having back pain, I thought maybe he might be hurt. My mom led me to the car, and when we got inside, she said, “Maura’s gone.” My mom knew something was wrong because she hadn’t felt Maura kicking. She had gone for an ultrasound and found out that at 23 weeks, Maura was still.

It immediately felt like my world was crashing down. I just cried and cried. I was worried about how my mom and dad felt, because this had happened again to them. I was very sad, and I just slept and slept while my mom went to the hospital and had to give birth to Maura. When I woke up, I had a lump in my throat, and I felt extremely heavy. I didn’t want to do anything. Day by day, I started feeling a little better and better. When my mom was recovering, she and I split an apple pie parfait, and I got to crawl in the hospital bed with her. “My miracle baby,” she called me.

I am an only child. But in my heart, a sister is a sister. Mia and Maura will always be my sisters, alive or dead. I like to think of them as butterflies, playing together and watching out for each other. Like Half Wing, I held them in my heart and hands and let them fly. In their own sky.

*Maya Kiev  
Bellevue Middle  
Fifth Grade*

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## MAMAW'S GIFTED HANDS

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Her hair was gray and puffy like cotton. Large glasses covered her kind eyes. She was petite and delicate; her laughter could fill a room. What I remember most, however, was her small, but gifted hands. I was fortunate to know my great-grandma, Wilma Harrell, or as I called her, Mamaw.

Mamaw used her hands to make quilts for her family. When I was a baby, she made me a beautiful crib quilt with teddy bear angels and rainbows. Then, when I was a toddler, she made me a quilt to match my new, pink teddy bear bed. On this quilt, Mamaw embroidered a brown bear riding a rocking horse. Mamaw had a tradition of making a quilt for her grandchildren when they graduated from high school. Graduations were important to Mamaw because she had to quit school in the eighth grade to go to work when her father died. She worked as a servant for a rich family and did their washing, ironing, and cleaning for ten hours a day. Mamaw knew she would not live to see me graduate from high school, so she made me a queen-sized quilt to use when I go to college. On this purple and white quilt, Mamaw embroidered southern belles carrying parasols. When I see my quilts, I remember Mamaw's tiny hands and know that her love is in every stitch. The quilts are priceless family heirlooms that I will pass on to my own children.

Mamaw used her hands to play card games with me and my twin brother. Each spring, my family would visit Mamaw and Papaw in Florida. Although my great-grandparents lived in Illinois, they spent each winter and early spring in a small, green trailer in a Florida campground. During our visits, we played games. My favorite game to play with Mamaw was Go Fish. Every time we played, my brother would cheat by peaking at other people's cards or by lying about what cards he was holding. This would make me madder than a hornet, but Mamaw would giggle like a little girl and say, "I'm enjoying this so much!"

Mamaw also used her hands to buy me thoughtful gifts. Each year for Christmas, Mamaw bought a small figurine to put in my stocking. The porcelain bisque figurines are called Growing Up Girls and depict a girl on her birthday. Mamaw was able to give me six of these dolls before she passed away. Mamaw told my mom, “after I’m gone, you need to keep buying these dolls for my great-granddaughter.” I have the figurines on a wooden shelf in my room. Although the dolls may not be valuable to others, they are priceless to me. When I see Mamaw’s gifts, I am comforted and feel like she will always be with me.

I have been told that when Mamaw was young, her hands were as strong as steel. She used her hands to work in a steaming hot factory on an assembly line, drilling screws into fuel pumps. When I knew Mamaw, her hands were weak and ached from arthritis. Her fingers were bent like broken branches. Even though her hands hurt, she still made quilts for the people she loved. Mamaw died unexpectedly in 2004 when I was six years old. The week before her death, I had visited her in Florida. We had laughed, played games, and enjoyed a special night at the Dixie Stampede. Mamaw taught me the importance of making gifts for my family. I am glad Mamaw left behind tokens of her love so I can remember her today. Her small, but gifted hands produced a legacy that will last for generations to come.

*Jessie Gholson  
Meigs Middle Magnet  
Eighth Grade*

# POETRY

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## TSUNAMI

---

The sadness shows on their faces  
as they look back at all they knew  
each person had their own sorrows  
they had each lost something  
close to their hearts  
all their belongings  
were rubble  
all their friends  
were buried  
and all their hopes  
were lost

They cried out  
but no one came  
the obvious pain was shown  
but each were tangled in their own problems  
to help others  
why would no one help ease their pain?

The death toll was climbing  
all friends, family, and neighbors  
were gone  
the indescribable amounts of litter  
filled what was once a city  
all caused by the disaster  
that affected thousands

All thoughts were the same  
were people thinking about them?  
did anyone care about their loss?  
could they not see that they were in need of help?  
we had tried our best  
but not all problems could be fixed

The agony stays with them  
never will they again have all that they lost

people try to comfort  
but they will never know their true pain  
each wondering why this catastrophe had happened  
to them

The news comes quick  
showing on every television and computer  
the whole world knows  
of the suffering  
the pain  
the loss  
their suffering  
their pain  
their loss  
our tsunami

*Safa Figal  
Meigs Middle Magnet  
Sixth Grade*

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## MAJESTIC

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There was a young boy who lived high upon  
A beautiful tree that viewed sunrise at dawn  
“I see my life perfect,” he said, his brow creased,  
“But something is missing. Perhaps a great feast!”

So he found a big table that once favored poor,  
And filled it with meats, fruits, and veggies galore  
He took a good look at his cakes and nice dishes  
And thought to himself he’d fulfilled all his wishes

He sat at his table, just watching the sun,  
Then thought, I am young! Life’s just begun!  
“What am I missing?” The boy scratched his head.  
“Perhaps some nice clothes!” he excitedly said.

So he called up a seamstress, and asked, “If you’d please,  
When I bend my legs my pants rip at the knees!  
The style of my clothes presents no way to dress.  
Make me some clothes that are sure to impress!

When she had finished, they looked as he’d guessed  
“Why these fit so nicely, they’ll *all* be impressed!”  
But who? He thought now, his head in a swirl,  
“Perhaps what I’m in need of now is a girl!”

A journey he went on to find a fair maiden,  
Upon her broad shoulders her golden hair laden,  
He then took her back to his old, giant tree,  
And spit, “Here’s no place for a lady to be!”

So he built her and him a large, beautiful palace  
The work left his hands bruised, bloody, and calloused  
The woman was happy, but oh, where was he?  
He was not as happy as he thought he’d be

He realized with grief that they never had love  
She’d beauty of angels, and grace of a dove  
They soon grew apart and went their separate ways  
And that young boy soon started counting his days!

He had his great table returned to the poor,  
And saw that their meals had been served on the floor  
He saw that he grew from his thread's close-knit ties,  
And saw that the seamstress was low on supplies

“Now I can see, for back then I was blind!  
I treated them badly and left them behind!  
Those of less fortune, the seamstress, the girl,  
Now I must go clean my mess in the world!”

He soon traveled back to where he was before  
The roots still implanted, green leaves still his floor  
“Oh my majestic, beautiful tree!  
How could you still be here waiting for me?”

“I'll find love one day, but it should not be forced,  
From now on I'll let my life move as God coursed,  
I'm grateful for what I have here and today,  
And excited to see what tomorrow will lay!”

That young boy grew up in his tree and found love  
And lived nicely together as God planned above  
Over the years, he had seen a lot, yet,  
That boy, now a man, loved sunrise and sunset.

He still loved to watch the sunrise and sunset.

*Rebecca Lynn West  
Meigs Middle Magnet  
Sixth Grade*

# SHORT STORIES

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## THE LAST LEAF TO LEAVE

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Have you ever looked out at a tree with a single leaf hanging from it, and wondered why that leaf was chosen to be the last? Well, I am that leaf. I watch as my friends fall, and sometimes I wish that I would fall too, but I know that I shouldn't wish for that. When I fall, my life as a leaf is over. This is the story of my struggle to become the last leaf standing.

My story starts on the day that I first grew. I sprouted in a nice spot, right over the backyard. It was spring, so I had little to worry about. The weather was fair and sunny, the flowers chatted as the birds tweeted about the latest gossip. No one had fallen yet, and everyone was happy.

Then one day, my first obstacle arrived in the form of a plump caterpillar. I knew by looking at her that she was hungry, and conveniently for her, I was only a few inches away. She crawled closer and closer, and I knew this was to be my first challenge as a young leaf. She placed a few of her chubby legs on my stem and began to nibble on my fingers. I knew that if the caterpillar continued to eat me, I would have little left, and it would be hard to continue holding on to my branch.

I tried to throw her off and succeeded on my second attempt. She fell to the ground and rolled onto her pudgy belly. Apparently, these things happened to caterpillars a lot, because she merely shot me a dirty look and began to chat amiably with a piece of onion grass. Once again, everything was fine.

Summer came suddenly, and everyone became lazy, tired, and irritable. The grass baked until it was brittle from the unforgiving summer sun. Leaves like me became parched, and so hot that we thought our stems would crack. Everyone was so miserable, that some actually started to will themselves to fall off of the tree. This was very strange,

and it scared me. As much as this bothered me, I couldn't really do anything about it. So I was content just to watch the human children in their backyard, enjoying their sprinklers and water hoses.

Then, on one of the hottest days so far, my friend Lila got so hot that her stem cracked. She hung there with just strands of stem holding her on to the home branch. She shook in the summer breeze, and everyone knew that this was going to be the first casualty of the season. We watched, horror struck, as Lila's stem broke, and she twirled gracefully to the ground. Although we were all forlorn about Lila's parting, leaves falling aren't like humans dying. The leaves that fall decompose in the ground, and help nurture the tree. So, in a way, all of the leaves that fall become a part of the tree once again. Despite the fact that fall was coming, everyone was glad to finally be rid of summer.

As the weather grew cooler, everyone started getting tense. It was late summer, almost fall, and that meant soon there would be changing, falling, and dying. Before the changes started happening, however, the first thunderstorm of the season came. Everyone could feel it in the air, and everybody started to get ready, for they could feel that this storm was going to be a big one. As the clouds rolled in, I watched with apprehension. Unlike others, we leaves had nowhere to go in order to protect ourselves. We just had to grasp our branches a little bit tighter and brace ourselves for a fight.

The first raindrop fell, and many more followed. The cold water was like knives cutting into my skin. The wind howled, and I twisted about, hanging on for my life. I felt my other friends shaking the tree from a combination of wind and terror. The clouds didn't look like they were going to let up any time soon, so I hung onto my branch, my stem aching with exhaustion from grasping my home so tightly. As I shook in the terrible wind, I fell into an uneasy sleep.

The next morning I awoke like it was any other day, momentarily forgetting what had happened the night before. As the details of the previous night caught up to me, I looked around to see if any of my friends had been hurt, or had already fallen to the

ground. No one had fallen, and a few were hurt. Even though we were heartened by our slim escape from the storm, nothing could make us forget that fall was still on its way.

The first day of autumn arrived like a crisp slap in the face. The air was invigorating, and even though fall was the most challenging season for leaves, I already loved it. That feeling didn't last long, however, because soon, I started to change. The sensation was quite peculiar; I felt a slight tingling at the corners of my body. Then, I had the feeling that my whole self was drying out, until, 'SNAP'! I was a bright shade of orange. I didn't know what to think about my new color. It was certainly different than I was used to, and I guessed I would just have to get used to it. I didn't see what all the fuss was about this particular season, until one day about halfway through autumn.

The morning dawned bright and early, and as I awoke, I felt the familiar feeling of the brisk, cool air caressing my face. There was nothing out of the ordinary until I looked down at the ground. There, laying on the soil of the backyard was a blanket of colorful leaves. Leaves from my tree! Many of the leaves had fallen over only one night, and if one night could do that much damage, I wondered forebodingly what the rest of fall could do to us.

As the temperature continued to drop, the number of leaves that my tree lost increased. I would wake to find that twenty or thirty new leaves had fallen each morning. Yet, somehow I managed to escape 'the fall' each time. Whether it was the canopy of leaves above protecting me from the wind, or sheer luck, I didn't know. The downfall of leaves continued through the season until there were only about thirty-five leaves left on the entire tree. Even though I had not yet fallen, I knew that the worst was yet to come.

Winter came, and brought with it freezing winds that bit at my face and stem, bitterly cold rain and snow that pummeled me with the force of a bullet, and the death of even more leaves. Winter was even worse than summer, and leaves like me just had to stand tall and accept it, for we had no way to protect ourselves.

Then about a quarter through the winter, when there were only ten of us left, the first snowstorm arrived. The winds reached up to sixty miles an hour. The hail and snow hit me with what felt like the force of an oncoming car. The wind shrieked and roared as I ripped about in the gale. There was no way that I could sleep in the middle of a humongous storm, so I hung there, limp, literally ‘shaking like a leaf’, until morning arrived.

The morning air was just as sharp as the night’s. However, the snow had let up, and it was falling beautifully towards the ground. As I looked around, I realized with a shock that I was the only leaf that remained on the whole tree. It would have been peaceful if my stem had not been splintering with strain. Suddenly I realized that I had made it to the end, and that I had done what I had meant to do.

As my stem tore from the tree, I realized that nothing is forever. You can try to make it that way, but it will never last. As I pirouetted to the ground I knew that I would always be a part of my tree. I could leave my branch forever, but it would never leave me.

*Vivian Herzog  
JT Moore Middle  
Sixth Grade*

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## DISFUNCTIONAL CONCLUSION

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I'm finally going to do it! I, Darren Luis, will ask the girl of my dreams, Penelope Faharn, to go out with me. At least that's what I told myself trying to work up the nerve in the middle of cooking class. It wasn't very convincing when you're wearing an apron though. During the interval between switching classes, I watched Penelope exchange books at her locker which was only across the hall from me. I watched as her dark bluish black hair slip over her shoulder as she knelt down to retrieve a pencil that she'd dropped.

"Dude, are you even listening to me?"

Judas Laderman, my best friend, broke me from my trance. Some people were against Jude and I being friends because he was "cooler" than me. I'm seventeen and less than six feet tall. While Jude towered over me, being six foot two. His luscious, black hair made my hair look like a welcome mat. I've been his one and only friend since kindergarten. I've also been his one and only best friend since forever. He started getting all emo on me in third grade. Girls even liked him back then.

"So anyway, you still need help with math and cooking?" Jude asked. Did I mention my grades aren't the best?

"Did you see the mess I made in there?" I lamented.

"What was that anyway, chicken?" He guessed.

"No, cookies," I sulked.

"Not good..."

I turned as Penelope left her locker to go to class. I staggered for my books and rushed after her. Jude followed. We all had last period together: except Jude, who was in all my classes. Last period was what all teens feared: science. The teacher, Jess or Jesse, was a bit of a nut case. He would make robotic dogs from tin foil and broken toy car parts. Before I could walk through the doorway, Jude jerked me backward nearly knocking me down. I

turned to ask why and he pointed at a glob of unknown substance on the floor. It probably fell from the ceiling. It most likely would have hit me if Jude hadn't saved me. AS you first walk into the class, you wanted to immediately walk back out. Around the room you could find frogs and many indescribable subjects in the room. Some that weren't even in the science books themselves.

I sat at the second table in the first row next to the window. Just in case I needed a quick escape route. Jude was my lab partner of course so he sat next to me. In the back corner of the class sat Penelope. Sometimes I would feel her stare at the back of my neck. Jude says I even sweat. The teacher walked in with a chocolate bar; his occasional snack.

"Today, class, we shall be making.... ROCK CANDY!" Jesse exclaimed excitedly. The class all sighed in unison. At least today he wasn't expressing any of his demented thoughts like marshmallows growing out of your ears. For some reason, Jude really liked this class.

"First, I need a volunteer," Jesse gestured to random people in the class. "How about you, Darren?"

I reluctantly rose from my chair and walked to the front of the class. I felt a syrup like substance fall over my head. I was calm ... until it began to harden. My classmates, including Penelope, stared blankly at me. I scampered to a mirror in the corner of the room opposite of Penelope. My hair was entangled with chunks of blue and pink rock candy. I fainted. All I remembered was Jude smacking me around.

I woke up in the nurse's office. Jude was talking to someone next to him. I couldn't tell who it was; I was still in a daze. I jumped up feeling my head for anything else Jess might have done to me while I was out cold. I turned to Jude with a relieved face until I saw who was standing next to him.

"There's our happy trooper," Penelope said brightly.

I stared in a shocked silence. Jude was silent too, but not shocked. Jude lifted me by my left arm and drug me out the school door. Penelope followed.

“I’ll wait for you at your place,” Jude said nonchalantly.

“Wait, you’re just going to leave me?” I exclaimed after him.

“Yup,” He answered bluntly.

He left me all alone with the girl I liked. Some best friend. I turned to Penelope who was staring blankly at a red and black motorcycle across the street. It looked terribly expensive. She realized I was gawking at her and spun around quick.

“Judas said you wanted to talk to me,” she said almost as a question.

*Jude, you idiot!*

“I, uh, wanted to know if you wanted to go...out with me...”

*Smooth move, dope!* I thought to myself.

An awkward silence arose as she stared at me. I was about to turn and walk away...

“Sure, Darren. Tomorrow at five. Bring your friend if you want,” she said giving a tiny smile. She turned and ran across the street to the motorcycle. She started it and drove away before I could ask why she owned a bike. I didn’t expect such a quiet girl like her to be so daring. When I heard a loud, joy filled yell, which changed my mind forever. Penelope had done a u-turn and was now pulling a wheelie down the street. I walked home in a confused and shocked state.

“She has a motorcycle!” I exclaimed to Jude who was whisking eggs in my kitchen. My mom worked until eleven so Jude came over and made dinner for me sometimes. I was forbidden from using the kitchen because the last time I tried to cook, I nearly burned down half the house. While we had it rebuilt, we stayed with Jude and his parents who lived down the street.

“Why am I doing your homework assignment again?” he threw a bag of flour at me. He had been listening to me babble about Penelope for ten minutes straight. He probably didn’t want to hear anymore.

“C’mon, you said you were going to teach me,” I explained. “Besides, if you show me first, I can copy what you did.” *Then I’ll take what you made instead of mine.*

“I’m not going to let you work me over,” Jude said.

The guy can read minds, I tell ya!

He grabbed my ankle and drug me from the couch toward the kitchen. I, still holding the flour, tried as hard as I could to hold onto the couch. Our quarrel was interrupted by a blast of rock music and a car horn. I raced to the window to find Penelope in a black convertible with Alexander Uramer, one of the “cool” kids. His hair was black with eyes of autumn brown. He had two piercings in his left eyebrow and about seven in his right ear. They were multiple studs which got smaller and smaller as they went down. The only difference between him and Jude was the piercings. Plus, he’s Russian. He sometimes even spoke with an accent from what I’ve heard.

“Yo!” Jude shouted out the window.

“Wanna go for a ride?” Penelope shouted.

“What are we waitin’ for?” Jude said.

Jude jumped out the window like he always did, while I went out the regular way, locking the door on the way out.

We drove all the way to Hanger’s Cliff. Penelope hung over the edge looking at the ocean.

“Who dares me to jump?” she challenged.

“I do!” Jude and Sasha, Alexander’s nickname, shouted.

“Why don’t you jump too?” Penelope asked me.

“Go for it, man,” Sasha egged me on.

“Well...,” I hesitated while nearly choked on my nervous words.

Before I could answer, Penelope had jumped straight off the edge. I looked over in amazement. Sasha and Jude were cheering like they had just witnessed a child being saved from a burning house. I felt a sudden push. The world went spiraling under my heels. A splash was heard. Then silence. I floated to the top of the water gasping for breath. Jude was smirking in triumph that he managed to push me over. *He is so not playing my video games anymore.* On the shore I could see Penelope holding an armful of sea creatures: one being a once alive jellyfish, several clams, and a, again once alive, fish. *Am I dating a hunter girl?* In my entire life, I hadn't done as much as catch a stray dog. However, Penelope was able to catch slippery fish with her bare hands. I swam to the shore while trying to avoid jagged rocks below the salty water. While I desperately gasped for breath, I noticed Jude standing next to Penelope. Not worrying about my drenched clothing, I pounced Jude and attempted to choke him. Penelope looked over her assortment of sea animals.

“Hey,” We looked at her. “I got us dinner.”

*Shandra Holbert  
McMurray Middle  
Seventh Grade*



# SONG LYRICS

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## THE BACKSTABBER

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(Verse 1)

Your words are luring,  
Sounding sweet as can be  
But the truth is stirring,  
As you twist reality.  
Your group is so appealing,  
And words, pure deception  
But the truth is revealing,  
With a horrible misconception

(Chorus)

Once they will find,  
Of your horrible humors  
All the truth in a bind,  
Telling nothing, but plain rumors.  
Backstabbers are a pain,  
Seeking all of the fake.  
It's their loss, not a gain,  
Just a big, hug mistake.

(Verse 2)

In the end, we will all see,  
Everything false, not true  
And everything will finally  
Point right back to you.

So with a last word,  
I will say as I felt,  
Because once a little bird,  
Told me all of this himself.

(Chorus)

Once they will find,  
Of your horrible humors  
All the truth in a bind,  
Telling nothing, but plain rumors.  
Backstabbers are a pain,  
Seeking all of the fake.  
It's their loss, not a gain,  
Just a big, hug mistake.

(Bridge)

Backstabbers are no good,  
Just lying little fools  
Not doing as they should,  
Simply being cruel.

( Repeat Chorus)

*Lauren Chase  
Meigs Middle Magnet  
Sixth Grade*

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## MAGICAL

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### Verse 1

I don't know how  
But I fell in love with you  
And I didn't know  
What I was putting myself up to

I don't know why  
But you were beautiful  
And enchanting  
And you were magical

### Chorus

Love is writing your name on a foggy window  
Love is heartbreak and you don't know  
Love is insane and beautiful  
Love is everything and nothing at all  
Love is running to get next to you in the hallway  
Love is calling your name just to see your face  
Love is forgiveness, making up for my mistakes  
Love is magical, baby

### Verse 2

I don't know when  
Was the last time I felt like this  
But September was happiness  
And everything I miss

I don't know who  
Would ever stop this so soon  
And cover up the truth  
Like you do

**Chorus**

Love is writing your name on a foggy window  
Love is heartbreak and you don't know  
Love is insane and beautiful  
Love is everything and nothing at all  
Love is running to get next to you in the hallway  
Love is calling your name just to see your face  
Love is forgiveness, making up for my mistakes  
Love is magical, baby

**Bridge**

Love is crazy  
Love is amazing  
Love is kissing in the rain

But love is heartache  
Love is a mistake  
Love is a tragedy

**Repeat Chorus**

*Lagnajita Mukhopadhyay  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Magnet Middle  
Seventh Grade*

# SNAPSHOT WRITING

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## THE 50-YARD BACKSTROKE

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The whistle blows, four short blasts. My nerves start to jump. One long blast pierces the noise and splashes from the other pool. I jump in the chilly, blue water, and grab the cool silver bar.

“Take your mark!” the starter says into the microphone. I curl into a ball putting my bare feet up against the rubbery touchpad. I leave only my ankles and feet in the water, and then all too soon the start signal sounds. BEEP! I rocket off the wall, throwing myself backwards, and become submerged in the freezing water. I tighten my streamline and take four short, but fast kicks. My face breaks the surface, and I take my first stroke. My hands start to spin like a super-speed clock. I kick as hard as I can. I try to keep my head back. My legs start to ache, but I do my best to ignore it. The backstroke flags come into view, and I start to count. One, two, three, four, five, kick, turn, flip, push. Four fast dolphin kicks, and I break the surface. I speed up, my arms spinning, my legs kicking and splashing. I slam my hand into the wall and turn around. I look at the scoreboard, a best time, perfect.

*Grace Miller  
JT Moore Middle  
Fifth Grade*

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## DESOLATION

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Her knee-length dress shimmered as if the miniscule stitches were made of stardust. The 80's style disco ball that hung high above her reminded the girl of those nights long ago when she would sit on the sand to gaze at the glowing moon and its reflection on the lake. In the air, there was a sweet aroma of fruit punch and perfume. Sounds of voices conversing and sweeping music surrounded her. The dancers on the floor were gliding with the grace of shooting stars as they twirled round and round, like the planets spin around the sun. She leaned against the refreshment table, sipping a cup of punch and watching the events around her. The table was adorned with a royal purple tablecloth and an ornate vase with a lone iris in it. The wilted and lonely looking flower seemed deprived of love, just like the girl felt. She tucked a loose strand of hair behind her ear and thought about all the hours it took to make her hair so soft, wavy, and shiny that it could be a mirror. But now, she feels just like broken glass, her hopes shattered and swept away, though the feelings of loneliness stayed. Nobody paid attention to her when she walked in, nobody cared when she stood all alone, and nobody noticed when she slipped out the gym's double-doors and into the chilly air of the night.

*Leah Daniel  
J.T. Moore Middle  
Eighth Grade*

# SPORTS WRITING

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## CLOUD DIVING

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Score! We were moving on to the finals! My team the Flyers was playing a sport called cloud diving. The referees would place two goals inside a cloud, and the objective is to score more goals than your opponent in a given time. It is much like the land game of soccer, but the only boundary is the cloud.

As we were transported down to Earth, my team was chattering all about the game. I had made the winning goal, but our sport is a team effort. In the final, we would face a team called the Jackhawks. We had heard they were a very tough team that won almost all their games. Even though the odds were against us we would not be scared!

That night as we ate dinner everyone was thinking about what our strategy should be... My team was fast and we moved the ball well, so we decided to work with our strengths. The players on my team all went to bed at 7:30 because our coach said it was mandatory.

Finally, the big day came. We had an early morning practice five hours before the game to make sure we were awake, on our toes, and ready to face whatever the Jackhawks threw (or kicked) at us. As we took our positions on the field, the Jackhawks' starting lineup was full of girls twice the size of us. Sure they could push us over, but could they beat us in cloud diving where rough play was closely watched? One of our opponents charged, but she did not notice she was getting close to the side. BEEP, BEEP, BEEP...the buzzer went off and the Jackhawks were penalized for not watching safety precautions. That gave us the ball to start. We managed to immediately score a goal. Time ticked away and both sides scored several goals.

TWEET, the referee's whistle signaled the end of the game. The Flyers had won 11-10. We won the championship! This was the first of many tournament wins that we would earn as a result of our team efforts.

*Shannon Pickrell  
JT Moore Middle  
Fifth Grade*

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## A BASKETBALL SURPRISE

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Have you ever wished that one day while you're at basketball practice you would look up and see Kobe Bryant sitting in your gym bleachers? Really? I have too, and guess what? It really happened!

It all started when my mom got a promotion for a new job. I was very happy for her until I found out it was all the way in Los Angeles, California. I would have to leave all of my family and friends. A new school, a new city, a totally new state. Didn't seem like such a good idea. I knew my mom had to have this job so of course I couldn't say no, even though it wasn't my choice. We would be moving in a couple of weeks, so I had to inform everyone. No one took it well but we all knew it had to happen.

We finally moved to a condominium in a small suburb in Los Angeles. I would start my new school tomorrow and I wasn't ready. I went to sleep that night hoping this was all a nightmare and everything would be back to normal in the morning. Because life isn't fair, I woke up and still had to go to a new school. I got ready for the first day of school, well my first day of school.

You know that feeling everyone has when you're going somewhere new and you don't know what to expect? That's the exact feeling I had while walking into my classroom for the first time. Don't you hate when everyone starts to say, "Oh there's a new girl?" Of course when I first walked in everyone looked at me like, "Why are you here?" or, "Are you in the wrong class?" I started to walk to the teacher's desk hoping he wouldn't make me introduce myself. I didn't have to introduce myself instead he just said, "Welcome to McKinley Middle School, you may find a seat." Of course, I sat in the back. First period was so boring I didn't look forward to any other classes.

First period was over so everyone started to go to their second periods, for me it was reading, oh no. Don't get me wrong I like to read books, of my choice, but I strongly dislike the subject reading. As I started to walk out something caught my eye. It couldn't

be it. I never knew a little school in the suburbs had a basketball team. The paper read Try Outs. I had a feeling that I shouldn't try out, maybe I should wait to get to know things a little better before I start focusing in sports or any other activities. I started to think and all of a sudden I thought, "What could go wrong?" I decided to try out because if I didn't make it I wouldn't be losing anything.

Tryouts were a bit scary. All the girls were huge. If I had any chance of making the team, I'd be the shortest one. It all began with suicides, we shot lay ups. I think I did well. I only missed two lay ups even though I only shot two lay ups. After doing lay ups we shot free throws, I did okay. The last thing was defensive slides and positions. I know I did well because the coach told me I was doing a great job.

The next day on the announcements, the principal announced the basketball team. When I heard my name, I couldn't stop smiling. Coach told everyone practice would start tomorrow. Coach also told everyone that somebody important was going to be at practice so make yourself look good. Every since she said that I had a feeling I needed to work hard. For some reason I felt this moment would be important to me.

Our first day of practice was great. We did lay ups, free throws, jump shots, and ball handling. The coach wasn't screaming as much as I thought she would, maybe only because it was the first day or because we had an important visitor. I was doing great at all the drills but I didn't see the important person. I assumed the person wasn't there. I started to work on my jump shots. After all of my amazing shots, I started to mess up big time. After about six misses, I made one shot, but I didn't get too excited because I wanted to make it look like I could easily make that shot.

As we started this new drill, I took a quick glance at the bleachers and I couldn't believe my eyes. It had to be a dream. Kobe Bryant at my school, during my practice. I couldn't believe it. After seeing Kobe Bryant, Lakers Superstar, I started making every shot, I started to run faster, I started to get more steals. This felt impossible.

Practice soon ended and Coach called me and a girl named Shelby to her office. Were we in trouble, I thought? Couldn't have been me. What did I possibly do? We walked in her office together and abruptly our mouths dropped. It was Kobe Bryant. He told us to sit down and started to talk. He said that he liked our technique. He also talked about a basketball camp during the summer. It sounded pretty fun. He gave us a paper to give to our parents.

Later, when I got home, I was so exhausted I couldn't wait to go to sleep. I knew before I went to sleep I had to tell my mom everything that happened. I couldn't help but to think, what a life. Suddenly I woke up.

*Deondrea Jackson  
Oliver Middle  
Seventh Grade*