

PENCIL FOUNDATION

STUDENT WRITERS
SHOWCASE

2009-2010 WINNING ENTRIES

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CHILDREN'S STORIES

DAISY DOG AND TAYLOR TICK'S ADVENTURE

Daisy Dog was visiting the dog park and was running on a summer day. It was hot and she was tired so she laid down by a fence to rest. She was panting heavily and was putting out carbon dioxide as she was breathing.

Taylor Tick was sitting on the fence, as many ticks do, waiting for her next dinner host to come by. She was enjoying the sun and fresh air when she noticed Daisy Dog. Taylor tick was attracted to her carbon dioxide.

Daisy and Taylor started talking to each other and became friends. Daisy found out that Taylor had no family and was sad for her. Daisy thought that everyone she met could be her friend. She believed all living things were good. She did not realize that Taylor Tick could hurt her.

Soon Daisy and Taylor were playing as if they had been friends for years. Taylor said she was tired and Daisy said, "You can ride on my back!" Daisy soon invited Taylor to live on her back where she would be warm and could hide under her collar.

Daisy did not know that ticks carry diseases which can hurt or harm dogs. Taylor, being a tick and doing what ticks do, soon bit Daisy. Daisy could not feel it. Daisy just knew that she was making Taylor happy. Soon the site where Taylor had bitten was infected.

Unfortunately, Daisy was a black Labrador puppy and Taylor was disguised perfectly for many days. Taylor then began to swell as she took in Daisy's blood. The swelling grew so much that Daisy's owner finally saw the tick. She pulled it off with tweezers and flushed Taylor Tick down the toilet. Next, the owner cleaned the infection and left the room.

Daisy was back at the dog park the next week warning all her fellow dog friends. She said, "That parasite, I thought she was my friend, instead she just used me!" Daisy and her dog friends soon heard more about parasitism and symbiotic relationship. They knew that they would have to take precautions against ticks and other parasites and bathe regularly, wear tick collars, and to take medicines to make them less attractive to ticks.

*Lauren Jolly
J.T. Moore Middle
Fifth Grade*

THE LEGENDARY TALE OF ELLIOT E. HENRY

Elliot E. Henry was a simple barnyard mouse. His dream had been to become a Patriot, ever since the British had closed Boston Harbor and cut off all colonial mice from imported French cheese.

As Elliott was doing his daily chores one day, he overheard some men having a secret conversation in the barn's main room. Elliott hid under some hay and had a listen. The men were speaking of setting up an alarm system to deal with the British. They said they would hang lanterns from a church tower if the British chose to attack.

"This could be the start of an enormous battle," Elliott said to himself. He knew that he needed a way to let other colonial mice know of the attack if there would be one. Just then Elliott heard the men say that they could ride out on horseback to alert the colonists.

"That's just what I can do!" Elliott said aloud, almost breaking his cover. He knew he needed to let the other mice know of the battle ahead, and he knew these men would ride out on their mission.

There was only one thing for him to do. Elliott skittered back into the barnroom where he lived, packed up his belongings, and set off outside to find one of the men's horses. He climbed into the saddlebag of the best-looking horse.

The saddlebag he had climbed into belonged to Paul Revere.

Later than night, Elliott awoke from a nap when Paul Revere climbed up into the saddle. Elliott looked up through the openings in the leather bag in search of a church tower. As he moved his eyes fiercely about, his gaze caught a tower with two lanterns hanging from the window. Elliott didn't know exactly what the lanterns meant, but what he DID know was that an attack from the British must be coming---which meant war.

The moment Elliott laid eyes on the two lanterns, the horse took off. He tumbled around in the saddlebag until he found a place to sit.

He heard Revere's voice begin to shout, "The British are coming! The British are coming!"

Elliott had never felt more heroic than when he repeated those words. Each time he shouted them, he felt a greater thrill of heroism. All the mice that heard his message scattered back to the villages where they lived, each one echoing Elliott's warning to his family and friends.

On that long, fateful night, thanks to Elliott E. Henry, colonial mice found out what was happening. And Elliott never forgot his heroic ride across the countryside, in the saddlebag of Paul Revere!

*Jonah Aberle
Rose Park Middle
8th Grade*

EXPOSITORY ESSAYS

BOOK VS. COMPUTER: WHICH IS BETTER

In this modern world, books and computers are the main and powerful source of knowledge and information. Both are popular and entertaining. It's true that computers are quicker to supply and easy to access. That's what we really need in our busy lifestyle. But, still, book reading is a cultural habit of mankind. Whereas net surfing is, to some extent, imposed on our society. So, in the field of knowledge in our civilized world, there is a serious competition between books and computers. Actually, we can't compare the role of books and computers apparently. Because, they are totally and absolutely different in form and nature. Book's effect and approach is very humanitarian to us. But, computer's reaction and attitude is mechanical. So, 'book or computer: who is better as the main source of education' is an issue of controversial debate for a long time to all the intellectuals and the thinkers.

Heart and Brain

Books are emotionally closer to us than computers. A computer is an operative machine; its screen only waits for the click of the mouse, as a dumb follower to the command of the operator. But books are a lively friend. Its pages and words will talk with you, and you can get a lovely smell of the book. When you're in front of a computer, your brain will be too active and tensed, as you read and operate at the same time. There will also be no heart. Computers cater 'dry' information in rigid language. But when you open a book, your brain and heart will be active at the same time. A good combination of lucid language and well-flavored literature will lead you to imagination. Computers are an online system, but books are a creation.

So, a good reader will be more involved in a book than in a computer. Intelligent and talented people believe that studying of a book is more powerful than net-surfing. When you are going to surf any webpage on the computer, you have to keep in mind that computer is only a medium of knowledge. Computers are only carrying a book. On the other hand, books are the mother of knowledge. So, a sincere learner, for any kind of research, always chooses and trusts books, not computers.

Born and Brought Up

Books are much older than computers. The concept of writing a book started at the time of the Stone Age. The primitive people scraped rocks against rocks for writing.

After that, books were written on palm tree leaves with a bamboo pen. In 100 A.D., when paper was made out of the leaves of the papyrus tree, the age of modern books started. Compared to that, computers are still a milk-feeding baby. After World War II, the idea of the modern computer started. Only from then, computers became a source of knowledge. So, books are definitely more experienced than computers.

Considering the motive, books are greater and more advanced than computers. Why did the primitive man first think about writing what they learned down? They not only wanted to keep the knowledge that they earned, but also to share it with the future generation. The older civilization wanted to make books to express and carry out their feelings, sentiments, and dreams. On the other hand, at the beginning, computers were just a calculator. American scientists used computers just for the human census, for easy, quick, and convenient counting. After that, for a long time, the device was only used in the corporate world. The businessmen used the machine for computing money. The Internet was invented for military purposes, for gathering information and for making the battle strategy during the war. Books brought us from the Ancient Age to modern civilization. Computers didn't do that. Computers just made us more scientific and machine-friendly. So, books are superior to computers.

Man and Machine

Books are a 'first hand' store of knowledge. This is a direct communication between the writer and the reader. Computers are not like that. Actually, computers are only a mechanical medium to reach information. We know the success of a machine depends on the 'man behind the machine'. Computers are as good as the ability of the person behind it. Computers give us so much information, which we get from a site by searching. So, somebody has to put the information. And, he or she got the information from a book! The man has to be technically and academically sound about computer operation. How? From a book! Computers are actually a 'second hand' store of knowledge. So, you have to decide which kind of knowledge suits you, first hand or second hand? We always have to keep in mind that books are lives, not robotic teachers. But until and unless a man inputs information, computers will be a useless piece of junk! I think all readers should like a full of life teacher, not a robotic machine. As a human being, we can make books a paper-filled friend, philosopher and guide. We can't get that sympathetic shelter from 'chip-eating' computers.

Mind and Body

According to physicians and scientists, bookworms are healthier than surfing machines, both physically and mentally. The social behavior specialist's opinion is, while reading books, nobody loses their human entity. But while surfing on computers, a person turns to a mechanical existence. The sociologists suggest that, books are more energetic and stimulant devices, than computers, for learners. The educationalists also advise that,

in case of perception of knowledge, books are more active than computers, to create attentiveness in the mind of the information surfers.

We know that cyber addiction is now one of the most dangerous hazards of mental health in our society. Of course, people sometimes get addicted to books, too. But psychologists and psychiatrists agree that book-addiction is a form of normal social and behavioral habits. But cyber addition is an unsocial craziness. If some form of entertainment is set in front of you, you probably can close the book. But there is no such therapy to help you get out of computer craze. Sometimes, computers become an entertaining machine, crossing its academic nature. Not only that, computer craze is an initial door to different kinds of cyber crimes. Compared to that, books are really holy and clean. Moreover, computer surfing is always more tiring, both physically and mentally, than book reading. But, books are always comfortable.

Also, in perspective of physical health, books are better than computers. After reading a book for a long time, you only face an optical illusion, nothing more than that. But, according to the clinical doctors, the radiation from the computer screen may cause several kinds of optical problems. Due to excessive surfing, somebody can suffer from some acute and even chronic osteological and neurological diseases. In this respect, books are a safer helper than computers for a knowledge hunter. So, books provide more perfect, pure, and accurate quality time than computers for learners, in every sense

Quick and Convenient

No doubt, computers are the most trusted and learned tool and technology. Firstly, to keep a lot of books, you need a big space. Secondly, to maintain books you need to work hard. On the other hand, computers are a huge source of knowledge in a small box, and the mechanical maintenance won't bother you much. Another point is that you can get access of any information very quick with computers. Books are not so convenient in that sense that it's also time taking. But, quickness and convenience don't matter in the path of earning knowledge. You have to invest your mind and labor to be rich in knowledge. So, in this matter, we can't put computers ahead of books. Books can make a better environment than computers, for learners. Just go to the library. Have a walk through the bookshelves. You must feel freshness, what you can't get in a computer desk. While sitting in a reading room, you must feel a peace of mind. In a computer room, you may feel uneasiness or irritation.

Tie-Up at the End

What is the motive of our life? Is it to make a better world with science and technology? In that case, computers are the most important gadgets to carry us to the world of information. So, we have to read more books as we can make computers more informative. We need books first, then computers, but both, of course. In the world of knowledge, books should be the first layer of soil, and computers should be the second layer of lifeline. If we want to be educated, first we go to books. Then, if necessary, we

go to the computer. If we tie up books and computers in such balance manner, only then we can be a perfect and sensitive reader.

*Lagnajita Mukhopadhyay
Head Middle Magnet
Fifth Grade*

MORDECAI ANIELEWICZ

Research into the life of Mordecai Anielewicz tells the story of a brave young man who was quick to take action when the war arose. Anielewicz fought for Jewish freedom far and wide, sacrificing much for others. The hard work that he gave led him to become a large leader in the Warsaw Ghetto. This paper will reveal the effort Anielewicz gave to have an impact on the war by saving the lives of many Jews and how his efforts turned into great achievements.

Mordecai Anielewicz was born in the year 1921, in the small town of Wyszkow near Warsaw. Anielewicz was born into a very poor family, but that did not hold him back. He completed his high school studies not long before the war broke out. When Mordecai learned about the war, he joined and became a leader of Hashomer Hatzair, a Zionist-socialist youth movement. Mordecai was the leader of Hashomer Hatzair's Warsaw branch.

Anielewicz proved to be a good leader, one that would not give up or be put down easily. When the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939, Anielewicz and his members escaped to the eastern parts of Poland, hoping that the Polish Army would slow German advance. However, the Soviets then took control of eastern Poland. The Soviet occupation made Anielewicz come up with a new plan to cross from Poland into Romania to open a route for young Jews to escape into Romania and then over to an even farther location. However, he was caught, and then placed in a Soviet jail. When released, Anielewicz made his way to Vilna, Lithuania, where many refugees, youth movement's members and political groups that came from the west resided. Anielewicz demanded his colleagues to send members in the movement to the occupied territories of Poland to continue educational and political activities underground. Anielewicz and his girlfriend, Mira Fuchrer, were among the first volunteers who went to Warsaw.

Anielewicz was once again quick to become the leader of his movement in Warsaw. He dedicated some of his time to his own studies in Hebrew, history, sociology, and economics. Although he took time for himself, Mordecai's top priorities were protecting and training others. However, all of this time came to be used for training when he learned about the large deportations of Jews to concentration camps. Anielewicz began organizing self-defense groups inside the Warsaw ghetto. Anielewicz became a commander of the Jewish Combat Organization, or ZOB (Żydowski Organizacja Bojowa). When Anielewicz learned of a second large deportation to extermination camps, the resistance decided to react and was successful in repelling the deportation. For the next three months, under Anielewicz's command, the organization prepared for an uprising when the Germans would attempt to perform the last deportation and destroy the ghetto. The battle began on April 19, 1942, and at first the resistance had superiority,

making the Nazis suffer many losses. However, because the Nazis greatly outnumbered the resistance members and had better weapons, the resistance did not stand a chance in the end. On May 8, Anielewicz was killed in the headquarters bunker with some other colleagues. The fighting ended not long after on May 16th and the ghetto had been destroyed.

From the beginning of the war, Mordecai Anielewicz was a figure who could not and would not be held down or discouraged. Anielewicz was very passionate about fighting to protect the lives of all the Jews of Europe. He proved himself as an able leader, making wise decisions when the need came forth. At times, Anielewicz was definitely a special man who succeeded in leaving a lasting impact.

*Forrest Richardson
J.T. Moore Middle
Eighth Grade*

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY

I didn't want to move to England because I didn't want to leave all my friends and family in America, especially my cousin Bitsy. We were practically joined at the hips when I was three and she was two and a half. We saw each other nearly every day back then; we knew each other so well we could finish each other's sentences. So, naturally, when my parents told me we were moving, my first question was not "Where are we going," nor "When are we leaving?" but "Is Bitsy coming?" The answer to that was no, and I declared stubbornly that I would *not go*. Eventually, my parents were able to persuade me to leave when Bitsy's mom promised me that Bitsy would write me lots of letters.

Our new house in England was small, but I loved it nonetheless. The tiny front yard wasn't thirty square feet, and the back yard was only a little bigger than that. The little house was two stories, and my room was upstairs. It could barely be called a bedroom; the title of "closet" would have done it more justice. Of course, at only three years of age, I was just glad that I finally had my own room, however small. I like the cute little house, and I like the neighborhood it was in, but I still missed Bitsy a lot.

I woke up one cold winter morning, about six months into our stay in England, and sniffed the air. I smelled warm, just baked croissants with chocolate spread, my favorite breakfast. I stumbled out of bed and down the stairs in my warm red footie pajamas and found my place at the breakfast table filled with presents!

"Happy birthday, sweet!" my mom said, grinning at me. "You're four years old today!"

I ate my warm, soft croissants in a hurry and then reached for the first present, tearing the paper off excitedly.

"A scottie!" I exclaimed, jumping up and down. "I wanna ride it now!" "But you have more presents to open," my dad, who was holding a video camera, pointed out. At the reminder, I plunged back into my pile of presents. There were Barbie dolls, pink dresses, a new pink coat, and craft sets. When all the presents were opened, I looked around for a moment, and then shouted happily.

"Thank you, Mommy and Daddy!" I sang, clapping my hands. "Hey, wait, there's one more present!" my mom laughed. "Open up the curtain and look out the window, honey!" A little confused, I did as she said, and I couldn't believe what I saw! Fluffy white snow covered the whole back yard like a blanket.

I had never seen real snow in my life, or if I had, I was too young to remember. My mom handed me one last present. I opened it to find a brand-new pair of furry pink snow boots! My mom helped me pull them on over my pajama feet. Then she helped me into my new coat and led me outside. We played out there in the snow for hours. Later, at about noon, my dad came out with a package addressed to me that had come in the mail. It was from Bitsy! I opened it up curiously, and inside was one piece of paper with writing on it, and another with a painting of the two of us on the swings at the playground. I looked at the painting while my mom read me the letter. Bitsy said she missed me and told me about the princess dress she had gotten for Christmas. When my mom was finished reading, I decided to write Bitsy a letter and paint her a picture. My mom helped me get out my new crayons and some paper. Then she wrote while I dictated. The picture I drew was of the whole family playing in the snow in my old back yard.

That birthday was the best birthday of my entire life. About two weeks later, my new school started. At first I was scared, but soon I made many friends. I told them about America and Bitsy, and one girl had a similar story. She'd had to leave her friends and family in Wales when she moved to England. We became best friends, and when I left England and moved back to America, I was sad to leave her. I told Bitsy about her, because it seemed like they would be friends if they knew each other. I will never forget all my friends, my school, or that birthday when I got the letter from Bitsy showing that she really cared.

*Eloise Wood
JT Moore Middle
Sixth Grade*

DARKNESS BECOMES DAWN

The white hot tears ran freely down my face, branding a path in their way. My breathing hitched and my lungs screamed in protest. My vision blurred at the edges and blotches of black tinted here and there. I felt like I was drowning in a sea of darkness. There was nothing except me, the darkness, and the pain in my heart.

Abruptly, I wasn't alone. The empty blackness was filled with the distant calling of my name. It seemed so far away. It got closer...and closer...and closer. And then the calling was right at my ears. I yearned to go back into complete silence, there it was peaceful.

My eyes opened and I saw the frantic faces of my family. Sobs threatened to erupt from my throat. I bet them back as I saw my mother's face crumpled in agony. My mother had always been a strong woman and didn't let anyone see her cry. My frame shook and trembled. My eyes felt hot and dry, like I had no more tears to cry.

"Come on. Let's get to the hospital," my mom said. My heart ached at the reason as to why I would need to go to such a place. My eyes felt drier and itchy, and my breathing seemed to come to me in wild, devastated gasps.

"Come on, Jackie. We need to be with your father," she answered as if she could read my thoughts. That was it. Those two sentences, ten words, brought my world crashing down.

The sobs I had held down came uncontrollably now. The fierce fears fell from my dry eyes. What did I do? What had I done to deserve this rebuke?

I was roughly shoved in a car, and I dimly heard a car door being slammed. The car purred to life as it lurched forward and raced us down the road. The hospital came into view and my sobs came violently forth. I was being pulled swiftly toward the emergency room.

"No. Please don't." I moaned. I couldn't be here.

I found myself residing in the waiting room, staring at the floor. The sobs had caught in my throat after seeing the sorrow filled faces of the room's other occupants. The seconds felt like minutes; minutes felt like hours. The doctor came out and every head turned to him in perfect synchronization. He headed towards us. With every step he

took, my dread grew. Was the news good or bad? Was my father better? Or worse? Where was my father?

“He’ll be in surgery for five hours. His head wound is pretty bad. He might have some head trauma afterwards, if he makes it. The chances of that are slim to none. I’m very sorry.”

He spoke in a soft, gentle voice. He continued to talk to my mother, but I tuned him out. My body felt detached from the rest of the world. *If he makes it*, the doctor had said. *The chances are slim to none*. My father was tough. He could make it through this. He *would* make it through this. He had to.

It had been exactly one week since the horrible incident. A week, and I still hadn’t seen my father. I stayed at my aunt’s house, along with my brother, seeing as our house was empty and my mom was staying at the hospital. My poor aunt was trying to cheer me up, but her attempts failed. Nothing could cheer me up. Nothing.

My mother rarely called, and when she did she was short and kept back the details. My knowledge on my father’s well being was scarce, and I hated it. I deserved to know!

The days dragged on, until finally, I was allowed to see my father. The doctors, but I suspected my mother was mainly behind it, agreed that my father was doing remarkably well, and was not allowed to have more than one visitor, my brother and me.

The hospital corridors were deserted, with the exception of the occasional nurse. The sound of many televisions were mixed with the hum of the medical machinery. Every step I took I was closer to my father and that sent my heart into a frenzy. We came upon a wide, alabaster door. The engraved plaque next to it claimed that my father was indeed inside. My mother’s tan hand reached for the door handle and turned.

The room walls were painted a light blue. The curtains were opened wide, letting the sunshine pour in, making patterns shift into the floor. Pushed against the western wall was a bed. The floor was made of an off-white colored linoleum. I gasped. There, laying on the bed was a man. His head was wrapped in gauze, small stains of blood spotted it. His arm was hanging from a hook and sported a cast. His dark charcoal eyes followed my every move.

This man was my father.

My eyes began to water, but I gritted my teeth and held the tears back. He looked so broken! He looked like a mannequin that was torn apart and glued back together. *All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put him back together again...*

The moments passed in blurs, and then I found myself hugging my father with every ounce of strength I had. I took a step, turned and walked to the window. I could feel my mother's stare on me as I went. I measured each step carefully. It was a bright and sunny day, it was mid-August, yet all I felt was gloom. A single tear fell. It hurled toward the floor and than splat against the linoleum. As I watched the tear, realization washed over me. My father *had* made it.

*Jacqueline Herrera
Antioch Middle
Seventh Grade*

POETRY

WHO AM I?

I am here

I am there

I am everywhere

I am peace

I am violence

Can I please

Have a moment of silence

I am good

I am bad

And I love

My dear old dad

I am young

I am old

I am the child

That's been scold

I am big

I am small

I am not dumb

No, not at all
I am smart
And very keen
So please, please, please
Don't be mean
I am gentle
I am rough
And sometimes
I act like I'm tough
I am happy
I am sad
But sometimes
I get really mad
Who am I? You ask
I am every child
That you pass
Every adult
That you seek
And every person that you meet

*Kieonna Donald
Head Middle
Sixth Grade*

I LOVE YOU MORE

I remember finding out that my aunt had cancer
And praying for her every night

I remember hearing the grownups talking
Worrying about Chemo and radiation
And other things that I did not understand

I remember writing her "Get Well Soon" letters
And feelings so special when she saved all of them
Each of them placed in an old maroon drawer
Set aside just for me

I remember going over to her house to visit
And being enemies at war for hours
Seeing who would be the last to say, "I love you more."
And I remember that she always won

I remember asking why she wore wigs
And Daddy saying, "She likes to play hairdresser."
I remember that day she did not wear a wig
And her hair was too short, too thin, too white

I remember when we had a sleepover
And she woke me at promptly twelve o'clock
To have moon pies and glass-bottled coca-colas
For our midnight snack

I remember seeing her growing weaker
Trying to hide it from us, always smiling
I remember looking at a picture of her
And saying, "Look, Daddy! Her eye is squinty again"
And Daddy replying, "Don't say that Savannah.
It's not her fault."

I remember the day that Daddy told me not to kiss her
Because that day she had a fever
That was too high
I remember seeing her pale, ill self waving goodbye to me
From the doorway of her chocolate-smelling home
And I could not resist
I sprinted to her and leaped into her arms
And I kissed her too-warm cheek
And I am so glad that I did

I remember that night with all of the family
Pacing in circles around her house, worrying

I remember her lying in her bed
And she couldn't even talk
Yes, she could hear us
She knew and comprehended what we said to her
But she could not answer
I remember being furious at my cousin
For saying Aunt Maggie scared her now
I remember saying, "You don't know that she will"
When I heard my aunts planning her funeral

I remember seeing my cousin Maxwell
Sobbing so violently that I shivered
I remember that it made me not want to see her
Because I felt obligated to be the one that did not cry
The one that stayed strong
The one that had hope

I remember my dad carrying me up to her
And when I saw her, my heart sank
All of my hopes
My optimistic dreams
Were crushed
It was over
And there was not a thing I could do about it
I remember burying my face into Daddy's shoulder
In a defeat
A pitifully vulnerable surrender
I remember looking down at her
For the very last time that night
I remember a tear on my cheek
As I quietly whispered, "Goodbye."
I remember Daddy sniffing softly
And carrying me towards the door
I remember burying my head in his shoulder
And whispering, "I love you more."

*Savannah Patton
JT Moore Middle
Eighth Grade*

SHORT STORIES

FORGOTTEN

It's the strangest thing in the world to wake up not knowing what's happening. What's going on? It's stranger still to only remember rushing in, ambushing an enemy camp, and waking up in an unfamiliar infirmary. I sat up slowly, looked around at a few others lying in beds. One was missing his left hand, another's head was bandaged tightly; one was lying very still with fluids dripping through an IV.

"Hey," a strange voice called.

I turned around to see a girl around my age. She had to be seventeen or eighteen. She was coming my way with a bandage. There was an ID tag around her neck.

"What section are you from?" I asked, referring to the sections the world had broken into after the Catastrophe of 2147, twenty years ago. Each one started with a country, then came the Section within that country...each country was fiercely pitted against each other.

"I used to be from American Kallahaun," she said, setting down the bandages. "But no, I don't belong to one."

I narrowed my eyes. "Kallahaun is very openly against the Lentrus...which is what I am."

"Yes, I know, your ID is pretty flashy about that." She gave me a grin, then sighed. "You want me to rebandage your side, or do you want to get an infection?"

I looked down confused to find my left ribcage bandage red with blood beginning to seep through. "You look more like a fighter than a healer," I said, looking at the jagged scar running from her ear to her jaw and another going from her upper temple to the bridge of her nose across her eye.

She shrugged her broad shoulders. "Not today." There was a big battle yesterday. We're doing the cleaning up."

Something sparked my brain, "Were the Lentrus invading?" she nodded slowly. "That's my section!" "Why didn't you return to me?" I attempted to jump up, but I started to fall. She caught me. "Get off of me you filthy Kallahuan," I protested.

"They left you," she said quietly, helping me back to the bed.

It felt like someone just kicked me in the stomach. "Excuse me?"

“They left you, friend. Rumors had been going around about that fight for a day or so, so we came up here for the aftermath, but we were early. We jumped in the fight but—...”

“Who were you fighting for?”

“We don’t hurt them. We wear them out. We do a lot of ducking, jumping and blocking. We wear them out until they go home. We weren’t on a side.”

“If you weren’t...”

“Would you just hush and listen?” she scolded softly, raising her eyebrows. “You were hurt, badly, along with, well...” she motioned around the room. “I was the one to help you to the sidelines, like the Fight Code states. Well, when the sides began retreating, your side was all that was left. We tried to call both sides, but your side said to leave them be. They were weak and therefore a hindrance!” She scratched her chin thoughtfully. “Your section sure does use some big fancy words.”

“Didn’t yours?”

“Both of our Sections are known for being well-educated,” My thunder was officially stolen. “Me? Weak? How dare they!” he exclaimed.

“It’s not my Section. I told you I don’t belong to one,” she said, frustrated.

“You have to belong to one to survive,” I scoffed as she changed the dressing.

“Tell that to the other 500 Forgottens.”

“I’ve never heard of them.” She answered.

“Forgotten, left behind, abandoned, pick a word. Fighters, healers, cooks, hunters, all screwed over by one Section or another. We all sorta got it together.”

“Five hundred is a punitive number,” I winced as she tugged at the gauze.

“A little one you mean?”

“Yes,” he nodded.

“Well it’s real nice of you to insult the ones that saved you. Makes us feel all warm and fuzzy inside.”

I stopped and looked at her. Her black, straight, shoulder-length hair covered the scar across her face when she was looking sideways.

“I’m sorry,” I said finally.

“Oh don’t worry, you’re one of the milder ones,” she smiled up at me and tossed the old dressing in a trash can.

“What has been the worst?” he said.

“Well, one guy from Canada Valen jumped up and started swinging with his IV thingy,” she pointed at the metal pole holding an IV bottle. “He got me pretty good.” She lifted her shirt a little to show a straight, wide scar about six inches along her side.

“Where are we?”

“Well, this used to be a mall in Indianapolis, but we figured it worked fine for what we needed this week.” She helped me out of bed, and took me out of what used to be a Hollister store. There was camp set up around the food court; on the other end of the mall, beds made out of tables, chairs, blankets, pillows, odds and ends found in the abandoned mall. I looked up through the sky –light to find a dark, cloudy sky.

A man came sprinting to the food court from the other end of the mall. “Someone’s coming,” he shouted, almost tripping over his own feet. “Kelly, we’re gonna need you.”

The girl helped me back into the store and into my bed. “I bet it’s my Section, he said, “coming to get me back.” She nodded and grabbed at armor sitting by the door.

“Of course it is. You keep telling yourself that.” She responded.

At that moment, I knew we were doomed.

*Braxton Smith
JT Moore Middle
Sixth Grade*

THE KINGDOM OF CARDS

In the kingdom of cards, everybody had a social status and everyone knew their place. The kings of the cards were the rulers of the land, followed by the beautiful queens, and their dashing boys named Jack. They owned the entire kingdom, and if you weren't one of them, they would refuse to talk to you. They held parties and seemed to have the grandest of times, but no one truly knew for themselves because they were the only ones invited to such occasions.

The tens came after them in social ranking, followed by the nines then eights and so. The Twos were at the very bottom of the line. They were the lowest of the low. No one ever dared to even talk to them.

As you can imagine, this lifestyle was very hard on the Twos. Most of them had grown accustomed to it and were fine with just having three close friends. However, the Two of Hearts hated being at the bottom. He loathed that everyone else thought they were better than him, and he'd always dreamed of becoming a king. He never thought this could actually become reality, until one special day when his life changed forever.

On a fine morning, Two of Spades came up to him laughing hysterically about something that she overheard. She said, "Hey! Guess what! Five of Diamonds just told the sevens that there's some guy in our kingdom that is a magician and he will grant your heart's biggest desire! Like this guy would actually come to *our* kingdom? He said that his name is Joker or something. The sevens were buying it, but I just think Five of Diamonds was showing off!"

Two of Hearts couldn't believe his ears! He had to find this guy named Joker so he could change his life. He was figuring out a plan in his head to find him, when Two of Spades said something that caught his attention, "Five of Diamonds said you can't go find him. He has to come to *you*..." That was when he knew all of his hopes of becoming a king were over. Of course Joker would pick on one of the kings to get the wish. He would never choose someone like him. He quietly thanked the Two of Spades and headed on a walk into the forest, feelings discouraged.

He briefly considered running away and never coming back to the village when he suddenly saw purple smoke up ahead. There was just a small amount, but as he approached it, he realized there was a ton of it, and it was coming at him. He quickly turned on his heels and started running back to his village, but when he turned around, the purple smoke surrounded him. There was nowhere to go.

"Boom!" All of a sudden, the smoke disappeared and the most peculiar card appeared in front of him. There was a man on the card in a yellow suit and a tall red hat with a bright smile. Immediately, Two of Hearts knew this was Joker.

“Why hello there!” Joker said in a deep voice, “I am Joker and I am here to grant your heart’s biggest desire. I don’t have much time, so will you please tell me what you would like me to do for you today.”

Two of Hearts could barely speak, but he somehow whispered, “Yes, I would like you to make me a king.”

Joker smiled and said, “Well that’s easy enough, batta bing batta boom, you’re a king.” Instantly, the Two became a king. He couldn’t believe it. He just got everything he’d ever hoped for. He couldn’t wait to go into town and show off who he was now!

He started to head home when Joker called after him. “Wait here little fellow. There’s one more thing you should know. My magic only lasts till midnight. So, spend this day well, because at 12:00, you will turn back into a Two.”

At first Two of Hearts was discouraged he couldn’t be a king forever, but he knew that right now he needed to just enjoy every second of being a king. So, he raced into town and as he walked down the streets he felt unbelievable. He smiled with his chin up and chest held high.

He ended up dining at the finest place in town for dinner, and even got two queens to sit by him. One of them even invited him to a party at her place that night.

And just like that, he was invited to one of the parties that was a mystery to everyone. It started at 9:00 and it was already 8:15 so he needed to head back to his house and get ready.

When he arrived at the Two’s cabin, he walked in without knocking, forgetting that he looked like a king instead of the Two of Hearts. All the twos gasped and flew to the ground instantly.

Two of Hearts was confused until he remembered what he looked like. He quickly shouted “Guys, calm down. It’s just me. You know, two of hearts?”

The twos barely raised their eyes but managed to say, “Hearts, is that really you?”

Hearts said, “It sure is! And guess what? I got invited to a king’s party tonight! It starts in ten minutes so I have to get ready, but I’ll see you guys later and tell you what happened.” He rushed into his room, ironed himself so he was perfectly straight, and proceeded to rush out of the door.

Two of Diamonds stopped him and said, “Wait, you’re actually invited to one of those parties? Can you take us? Please! This could be a chance for the twos to finally become something.”

Two of Hearts debated this. He said, “Listen, I’d love for you to come, but I can’t risk this one night going badly for me. I’m going to this party alone tonight.” And with that, he started running to the party. He felt bad about what he said to his friends, but he knew that they would forgive him tomorrow.

He arrived at the party just in time, and was amazed at what he saw. There were decorations all over the house and everyone was dancing and talking. He headed down the hallway and spotted the queen who invited him. She was talking with a friend so he decided to go up to them, and bring them punch.

“Hey! I hope I’m not interrupting anything too important, but I just thought you two might need something to drink,” he said.

“Thank you so much! Oh don’t worry about it. I was just talking to my friend about those twos. Isn’t it ridiculous that they are even allowed to live in this kingdom? Just the thought of them walking down the same streets *I* walk disgusts me.”

Two of Hearts could barely believe his ears. He was mad, but he knew he had to keep his cool. So he said, “You know they really might not be that bad once you get to know them.”

The queen started laughing hysterically. “Ha! Yeah, right.”

Now, Two of Hearts was really mad, but he still didn’t have the guts to say anything. So instead, he walked away and stepped outside to cool off. He felt terrible that he had ditched his friends to go to this stupid party. He wished he could make everything better again.

Then suddenly, an idea donned on him. He called the twos and told them to come to the party immediately. They were all shocked when he said this, but they trusted their friend so they sprinted to the party and got there as fast as they could.

When they arrived, they all asked “Hearts, what’s going on?”

He said, “Look guys, I’m sorry I was a jerk to you and I should have taken you to the party when you first asked me. I feel awful and I hope you guys will forgive me.”

Two of Diamonds said “Of course we forgive you.”

Hearts said, “Thanks guys. I really appreciate it, but there’s still one thing I have to fix.” And with that, he grabbed his friend’s hands and walked inside the party. As soon as everyone saw him, mouths dropped and silence filled the house.

All at once, everyone started saying something. “Why are there twos here? Get them out! Who does the king think he is?!”

But Two of Hearts suddenly shouted, “SILENCE,” and everyone became quite. “Listen up everyone. I have made friends with the twos recently and I’m glad I have. Now I know they aren’t the most popular card, but if you would just get to know them, you’ll realize how awesome they are. I’m proud to call them my friends and you all should be too.”

Everyone couldn't believe their ears, but suddenly a king stepped up and said, "You know what, you're right. I'm sick of having the same types of friends. We should all try to befriend the twos and all the other cards in our kingdom."

Everyone started mumbling amongst themselves saying, "Yeah, me too!" and "It's about time someone thought of this!"

And with that, all the kings, queens, and jacks started approaching the twos and inviting them to dance and be a part of the party. They had the best time together and became good friends. And when midnight approached, Two of Hearts changed back into his normal body, but no one even noticed.

The party was the best one the kings had ever had, and from then on whenever a party was thrown, everyone in the kingdom was invited. After that night, everyone realized that you should judge a person by their insides rather than their outsides, and because of this, the kingdom of cards was changed forever.

*Kelly Severino
JT Moore Middle
Seventh Grade*

SONG LYRICS

I GOT THEM OLD TOO MANY KITTY CAT BLUES

Verse 1:

I woke up this mornin'

Three cats in my bed

Two on my feet

One on my head

Chorus:

I got them old too many kitty cat blues

I got them old too many kitty cat blues

Verse 2:

You might be wondering

How I got all these cats

I'll tell the story

Just stay where you're at

Repeat chorus

Verse 3:

My first cat found me

On my way to school

I give her some tuna

Boy, was I a fool

Chorus

Verse 4:

My second cat got found

While I was watchin' the Sounds

Now he's real big

Must be twenty pounds

Chorus

Verse 5:

I bet you can't guess
Where my third cat came from

But cat 1 and cat 2
Are now Dad and Mom

Chorus

Verse 6:

So now here I lie
Cats all over me
I love these cats
And they all love me

Chorus

*Jonathon Smith
Meigs Middle Magnet
Sixth Grade*

YOU'RE MY HOMIE

Verse 1

You're my real home; my best friend
No matter what happens, I'll be there 'till the end
And even when the end comes rounding near
Don't worry homie girl 'cause I'll be right here

If anything happens, just give me a ring
'Cause I'll be there to help you with anything
If you're ever in trouble, I'll be there
'Cause girl you know that I, I really care

Because
Real homies
Fight for you
Die for you
Live and breathe and cry for you
There's just one thing you need to do
Just look them in the eye and say "I love you"

When you die then Imma die too
No matter what happens, I'll be there with you
I was there when you thought that you found your first love
And I was there as you cried when you had to break up
Never been through anything without you
Now I know that our friendship is true

Because

Real homies
Fight for you
Die for you
Live and breathe and cry for you
There's just one thing you need to do
Just look them in the eye and say "I love you"

And they are willing to
Fight with you
And die with you
And live and breathe and cry with you
So there's just one thing they need to tell you
THEY love you
So when you need a homie, I'll be there
'Cause you must know that I love you

*Darion Poston
McMurray Middle
Seventh Grade*

SNAPSHOT WRITING

SNOW

Oh, how beautiful is falling snow, as white as angel's wings. I looked out my oversized window on a calm, serene winter evening. I saw my footprints from my black oversized boots perfectly imprinted into the gentle powder flakes covering the grass, threatened to be covered by the pure white frozen tears of the sky. I looked up and saw the full moon shining timidly behind large clouds of gray, filled to the top with precipitation. As I stared at this beautiful scene, the tears of the sky continued to fall ever so silently as the day closed to an end. The birds stopped singing their angelic melody as they closed their eyes in their nests; waiting for sleep to take them, while the squirrels brought their food that was scavenged that day home to their families. The white crystals in the sky filled their footprints, restoring the never-ending ocean ripples of snow on the ground. My warm breath fogged the cold window as I pressed my face closer to get a better look, my nose chilled as it touched, my hand laid gently as my fingers itched as to drag the peaceful scenery in my room. The sky seemed very upset as its tears sped up, covering most of my footprints. I could see a ghost-like outline of myself, leaving those footprints. I felt an immediate wanting, a needing, to be part of that beautiful, peaceful winter scene.

*Lindsey George
JT Moore Middle
Fifth Grade*

MAGICAL NIGHT

The wedding was over. I remember being very tired of wearing those uncomfortable glittery shoes. The reception was winding down. My sister Rachel and I decided we'd go outside into the porch light and blow bubbles.

Bubble juice dripped onto our junior bridesmaid dresses. The burgundy color of the dresses darkened where the bubble drips landed. Our hair was curled and pulled up on top of our heads, held together with rhinestone bobby pins. Sparkly silver necklaces decorated our necks.

Our eyes followed the bubbles that we blew out of our plastic wands. The night that edged the porch was pure black darkness, except for a streetlight in the distance. A soft October wind blew around us, cooling the air and raising goosebumps on our bare arms. The wind danced in the night, bringing with it a sweet scent of the reception.

*Rebecca Batchelor
Rose Park Magnet Middle
Eighth Grade*

SPORTS WRITING

CHRIS PAUL'S STORY

Chris Paul's life was changed forever, in his senior year of high school when his grandfather died. Chris's grandfather, Nathaniel Frederick Jones, 61, of Winston-Salem, North Carolina was recently murdered. Chris said, "He was my best friend." Jones owned a gas station. He told Chris that he couldn't work anywhere but at his station. Chris had a very unique relationship with his grandfather. Chris talked with his grandfather everyday. Chris said, "I didn't know anyone else who was more proud of me and my accomplishments as much as my grandfather."

When Chris's grandfather was murdered, he wanted to honor him. Chris and his aunt found a great way to do this. He knew the best way to honor him was playing on the court. On the way to the game with his aunt, he asked her, "How can I honor him on the court?" She said, "What about scoring 61 points for all the years he lived?" Chris looked at her like she was out of her mind. She was serious though.

At the game, Chris's heart was racing. Chris still had to go out and play, but before the game, his dad had told him he believes in him. Chris gained confidence. Paul was scoring up a storm. The fans had heard about him scoring 61 points and were getting excited. By the fourth quarter, every fan knew what Chris was doing. Paul had 59 points very late in the 4th quarter. Chris was driving down the court, fakes, and goes to the bucket. He shoots, and he is fouled. It went in! Hitting the ground hard, Chris was motionless. He couldn't believe. When he went to take the free throw, he threw it, ran to the side line, and fell into the arms of his dad. Crying, knowing he did it, the silent crowd was astonished. Chris Paul had truly honored his grandfather.

*Thomas Ozburn
JT Moore Middle
Fifth Grade*

THE GAME

The score was tied four to four in the bottom of the seventh inning with the bases loaded and two outs. Michael was at bat for the isotopes. He slowly stepped up to the plate. He was nervous so he took a few steps back to take a couple of practice swings. He wasn't the best player on his team and he had lots of pressure building on him as he took his stance. His batting average was so poor this year, but his coach and teammates still believed in him.

As Michael prepared for the pitch, he watched as the pitcher stared aimlessly at the catcher. Once the pitcher nodded his hand, he took a step back and sent the ball to the catcher. It must have been seventy-five miles per hour as Michael didn't get a chance to swing. Michael blinked as the umpire called, "Ball one." That was the fastest pitch Michael had seen all season, which discouraged him because he wasn't sure he could make contact with the baseball at that speed.

Michael took a deep breath and took his stance once more as the catcher motioned his call to the pitcher. The pitcher looked Michael in the eyes with an antagonistic grin, but Michael didn't blink.

The pitch came. With all his might, Michael swung the bat and TAP! He had barely tipped the ball and sent it deep into right field. "Foul ball, strike one," the umpire called. This gave Michael some confidence. If he could tip it once, then he could tip it again, but this time he would sent it past the bulls' right fielder. He knew that if he could get this shot, it would be good enough to win the game. He could and would do this for the team.

Two balls, one strike, and Michael was ready once more. Not knowing which ball would come next, he took his stance. He watched closely as the pitcher released the ball. Hush fell over the crowd as the ball approached home plate. The crowd watched as Michael forcefully swung the bat. Whoosh. All air and no ball.

Disappointed, Michael got out of the batter's box and looked at the dugout for some encouragement. His coach came over to him and gave him a pep talk. The coach's talk must have been funny because I saw Michael laugh.

If Michael could make this shot, it would boost up his self-esteem big time, but he not only needed the support of his coach and teammates, he also needed the support of himself. "Come on, you can do it," he told himself.

Once Michael was back in the batter's box, the umpire called the game to resume. Michael took his stance. There was no sound to be heard as the pitcher sent the ball soaring to home plate. It was a curve ball, and it came directly into striking zone. With all his might, Michael swung the bat. Crack! He sent the baseball deep into center field.

The left fielder quickly gathered up the ball and threw it to the second baseman, as Michael slid in. The second baseman missed the ball, so Michael bounced up and darted like an arrow. As Michael was heading towards third base, he looked back, over his shoulder, and saw that the ball was heading towards the third baseman as Michael rounded third and headed for home.

The third baseman threw the ball to the catcher. The catcher was determined to take Michael out. When Michael slid in his desperate attempt to take him out got out of control and he skidded into Michael. Once the dust settled, the umpire said, "Safe! Ball game."

The team charged the field to congratulate Michael at the plate. They jumped up and down and screamed at the top of their lungs because Michael hit the winning run. They not only were triumphant against the Bulls, but they also claimed first place in their league.

David Mikhael
Antioch Middle
Seventh Grade