

Connecticut Student Writers

A Dream Come True...



Hannah McNabney, Grade 3, Gallup Hill School, Ledyard

Volume XV May 2003

Connecticut Student Writers

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FOREWORD

This year, the Connecticut Writing Project received over 2,000 submissions from student writers across the state. Those of us who volunteer to read these poems, essays, stories, and plays, do so out of devotion to students, to *Connecticut Student Writers Magazine*, and to good writing. Within each piece, we also find ourselves reflected in the many pieces about love and loss, overcoming adversity, and finding joy in simple things. In a way, reading these submissions provides an opportunity for us to return to our own youth.

It is in that spirit that we invite you to read every poem and story, each essay and play in this volume. In it, you will rediscover the simple pleasures of childhood, the love of country, and even the alienation of adolescence. Certainly, you will find inspiration.

Then, read them again.

Editors

Evangeline Abbott

Steve Albrecht

Pamela Baril

Cathy Holdridge

Anne Marie Mancini

Kathy Uschmann

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Food

I like fish, extra crispy
And chicken, extra crispy, too.
The foods I like to chew
Hamburgers with extra pickles and lettuce
Pancakes with lots and lots of syrup
I like those, too.
Sandwiches, pizza, and sweet apples
Pickles, pears, and peaches
I like bacon and breakfast food
If I don't eat, I'm in a bad mood!



Dogs

My dog loves to play.
He runs all day.
He eats bones
And jumps on stones.
He shares my home
But not my ice cream cone.



Soccer

I kick the ball
And on the ground I fall
The ball in the goal
And I hit the pole
Dad says, "You won!"
I say, "Soccer is fun!"



**Tyree
Harris**
Kindergarten
South Street
School
Danbury

**Akhil
Chedalavada**
Kindergarten
South Street
School
Danbury

**Kevin
Cambisaca**
Kindergarten
South Street
School
Danbury

**Robert
Mitchell**
Grade 1
Daisy
Ingraham
School
Westbrook

**Lauren
Onofrio**
Grade 1
Osborn Hill
School
Fairfield

**McKenna
Atkinson**
Grade 1
Daisy
Ingraham
School
Westbrook

Tissue

Tissues in
their box
They're white and
soft
Tissues just
sitting still
Never move a budge
Like they're sleeping
One on top
of the other.



The Night Sky

The dark night Sky
is dancing
slowly
with the
Moon.



The Little Seed

I am one sunflower seed. There are other seeds too. The wind started to blow the seeds up, up and up and up, until we almost got up into the sky. We sailed along the mountains. One seed floated down to the mountain and it could not grow. All the others kept floating. Then one of the other seeds fell into a volcano and it was too hot to grow. The other seed fell into the sea and there was too much water, so the little seed could not grow. After the seed fell, the wind stopped. I was the only seed left. I landed and started to grow. I kept growing and growing until I was a sun flower taller than a tree and all the people could not believe their eyes.

My Family Are Good People

I love my family because they are nice to
me. I have five people in my family and
they are all good. I love my family because...
When I am scared, my brother makes me feel better.
When I play on the monkey bars, my sister
catches me when I fall down.
When I hurt myself, my daddy gives me a band-aid.
When I miss my daddy, my mommy lets me call him.
My mommy teaches me how to sew and
tells me to keep trying.
My family are good people to me, and they
all love me, and I love them.



Penguins

Penguins, penguins
They're as cute as can be.
They like to swim in the ice cold sea.
In their own language,
They chatter and chatter
And it seems as though
They get fatter and fatter.
It's hard to believe, but they are a bird
And they do the silliest things
you have ever heard.
Penguins really like
To slide on the ice.
You may not like squid,
But they think it's nice.
I like penguins,
I really do.
I like penguins,
How about you?

Samantha
Brace
Grade 1
The
International
School at
Rogers
Magnet
Stamford

Rebecca
Baierwick
Grade 2
Tariffville
School
Tariffville

Heath
Hartley
Grade 2
Daisy
Ingraham
School
Westbrook

TUCKER!!!

Tucker is a pest
That is up all night
in my room saying,

he's scared
and
in
the
morning,

he
climbs

on

my bed
and he jumps on me 'til I wake up!

When I get out of school

and I watch T.V.
he knocks me over
and puts on "Thomas the Train"!

He screams
like

100

giant trombones
in an orchestra. Sometimes...

he's nice and

is
not a pest...

But he is mostly annoying!
"Yup," that's
TUCKER!



Shells

I love big, pink shells.
If you place shells by your ear,
you can hear the waves
Whispering to you softly.
You can hear pebbles
running.

Olivia
Langley
Grade 2
Old Greenwich
Elementary
Old Greenwich

Your Hair Looks Like a Rat's Nest

"Your hair looks like a rat's nest!" said Mom. "We're going to your grandma's today, and you know how your grandma hates when your hair is messy. Please brush your hair right now." But I refused to brush my hair.

When we got to Gramma's house she had a brush in one hand and a hair bow in the other. "Katherine, your hair looks like a rat's nest! Let me pull it back for you." I said, "No way, Gramma, let's play!" "Oh, that hair!", Gramma said, but she didn't make me brush it. We played lots of games at Gramma's house. Then it was time to go.

I did not brush my hair all week, and on Friday morning my mom said, "Brush your hair, Katherine." "But it hurts." "O.K. fine you don't have to brush your hair today. Now you hurry up. You don't want to miss the bus. Good bye, I love you!" "Good bye, Mom, I love you too." When I got to school my teacher, Mrs. Barton asked, "Do you ever brush your hair?" "No," I answered. When I came back from recess, I didn't notice that a rat had climbed into my hair. That's where it all began...

Mrs. Barton fainted when I walked up to her and she saw the rat in my hair. A couple of minutes later Mrs. Barton woke up. She did not want to alarm me so she just sent me to the bathroom to brush my hair. After I got there I was going to try to brush my hair, but all of a sudden a bluebird flew in through the window and landed right in it!

It was time to go home, so I packed up my backpack. When my mom picked me up she fainted, too! After all that fainting, we finally got home. I did all of my homework and went outside to eat my snack. I have a lot of chipmunks in my back yard. And out of a wood pile a chipmunk jumped right into my hair! I was so tired of holding my head up with all of those animals in my hair that I went straight to bed.

The next morning was Saturday. We always go to Gramma's house on Saturdays. When we walked in the door Gramma took one look at me and SHE fainted!

After Gramma woke up we went on our way to eat at Mario's restaurant. Then a policeman saw me. He almost fainted, but then he said to me, "Sorry young lady, but a girl with a rat, a bird, and a chipmunk in her hair has to go to jail!"

When I was in jail, I cried so hard that the rat, the bluebird, and the chipmunk all decided it was TOO NOISY so they jumped out and didn't come back.

When Gramma came to visit, of course she had a brush and a hair bow with her! And this time when Gramma said "Your hair looks like a rat's nest. Let me pull it back for yo," I let her!

When the policeman noticed that the rat's nest was gone, he let me go. I promised I would never let a rat's nest grow in my hair again
... until tomorrow.

Katherine
Rose
Worthen
Grade 2
Tootin' Hills
School
West Simsbury

Ryan Manion
Grade 2
Middle Gate
Elementary
School
Newtown

Playing Football with My Dog

"Bing! bing!" I woke up rubbing my eyes. There I saw my dog as black as a bear, and wagging her tail like she's as happy as God in heaven. I had to wake her up. So, I bounced on that big black back of hers. She stretched her big arms and lifted up her big straight legs. She jumped out of my bed. I brushed my teeth and ran outside to play football! I tried to tackle her, but she was too fast. So, she got a score. Then I got a touchdown. Finally time went by and all you can see is tackles and touchdowns. When it was the beginning of the second quarter, Penny got a touchdown right then and there. I gasped thinking if I should call a penalty, but she was a dog. Penny didn't know what I was saying. So, I tried to get a touchdown, but Penny tackled me just in time. It was the third quarter and the score was 18 to 17. Penny got lots of touchdowns and was always tackling me. I tried to catch up to her score, but I couldn't. Penny was whooping me badly. Finally it was the last quarter and it was almost dinner, and I was one inch from scoring a touchdown. I ran as fast as I could run. I thought I got the touchdown but I was in shock. I dropped the ball. "I have been beaten by a girl dog!" I yelled. My mom called us in for dinner. I raced Penny to the door. This game I was sure not to lose.



Fish

Ally Lennhoff
Grade 2
Osborn Hill
School
Fairfield

Sometimes when you get a fish it dies. It is very sad.

I used to have a fish but it died. It was the first pet I ever had so I was sad. He was in his bowl on the kitchen table. When he died I cried.

Mommy and daddy said it happens sometimes. We said a prayer for him and flushed him down the toilet.

But he went to heaven with God. His name was Flipper because he flipped his tail. He was a very sweet and cute fish.



Spring

Joey Olearnick
Grade 3
H.W. Porter
School
Columbia

Spring is the sight of birds.
The sound of grasshoppers.
The smell of flowers.
The taste of apples.
The touch of caterpillars.

Dreamful Life

A dreamful life
Is a
Fantasy
With lots of adventures
That fill your head.
Dreaming doesn't
Always
Make sense
But that's the fun of having
Them.



Just Pick Me Up

Jordan is my baby cousin.

He is a black baby.

He likes to cry often.

He likes to laugh a lot.

He has to be changed a lot.

I don't see him very much.

He's at his grandma's and grandpa's house.

He has dark hair.

He has a stuffed Ernie

like me when I was little.

He likes to drink formula.

Likes to be laying down.

He likes to be picked up.

Need I say more?

I wish sometimes

somebody would just pick me up!

Zoie Chen
Grade 3
North Stratfield
School
Fairfield

Anthony Swaby
Grade 3
University of
Hartford
Magnet School
West Hartford

Tanner Abel
Grade 3
Roxbury
Elementary
School
Stamford

The Big, Black Hood

Once upon a time there was a place called Wizard Land. All kinds of wizards lived there, especially the magic frog. The magic frog had to run away from the dark wizard, Lord Black Hood. He killed almost every frog in the world. A wizard named Herman Phipper was the magic frog's owner. He also ran away from Lord Black Hood. Herman and the magic frog always traveled. When they saw Lord Black Hood, Herman would use the magic frog's magical powers, but one night Lord Black Hood snuck up on the magic frog and Herman. Then Lord Black Hood captured them in his bag and took them to his evil castle. Herman woke up when they just got in the castle then he woke up the magic frog. The magic frog woke up. "Shush!" said Herman. Then he said, "Where are we?" Lord Black Hood heard him. Then he cackled. Then he said, "You're in my evil castle." Herman did a little scream. "Silence!" yelled Lord Black Hood. "Now I am going to kill you two!" cackled Lord Black Hood. "You're what?" yelled Herman, almost fainting. "I'm going to kill you," said Lord Black Hood. The magic frog did a loud croak and started to shiver. The magic frog was so scared that he couldn't use his magical powers.

Lord Black Hood put Herman in a cage and the magic frog in the other cage. Lord Black Hood was going to put them in soup. The magic frog sang rock-a-bye baby by croaking. Before Lord Black Hood could yell, he fell fast asleep. Then the magic frog used its powers to get him and Herman out. Except Herman almost fell in the soup, but the magic frog caught him. They went out of the room. As soon as they were almost out the castle door, Lord Black Hood screamed "Oh no, you don't!" Herman and the magic frog ran, but Lord Black Hood was a fast runner. Except he tripped and broke his leg. He could not get up. Then Herman ran home safely with the magic frog. Lord Black Hood was down there forever. Herman and the magic frog lived happily ever after.



Hannah
McNabney
Grade 3
Gallup Hill
School
Ledyard

A Dream Come True

One cold, snowy, winter morning I heard my noisy alarm clock tell me to get up. Gring! Gring! Click! When I was about to get out of my cozy bed, I felt a cool breeze pick me up as if I could fly! And I could!

Then as if by magic, I was sitting on a cloud! Soon, I saw a cloud puffed horse come quickly toward me. I loved horses, and I always dreamed of flying. OH!! Maybe this was a dream.

Suddenly, when I was thinking of all this nonsense, the beautiful horse scooped me up and flew me away! I felt scared at first, but once I got the hang of it, I loved it! Just then, the horse stopped, he stood a couple of minutes, but

then barged back! My long loud scream made the horse gallop faster and faster! I said "No," but he said "Go!" "AAHH!!" This wasn't the way I planned. I didn't know what to do, and I didn't know about this horse. He seemed to have a mind of his own. Then the cloud puffed horse slowed to a canter. "Fwue!" was I ever wiped out

The horse finally stopped. Then, the clouds seemed to form themselves into a stable. My! It was! But there the horse put himself in. Then I jumped off the horse. The stable was made out of pink clouds with purple trim. It was as beautiful as the horse himself.

Then ten more horses appeared in the stalls. I just then remembered home, school, oh no! and chores! What would my mom and dad say! I had to get out of here! The horse suddenly stopped his play and scooped me up! "Not again!" But I was home, the horse turned into the horse statue in my room. There was my mom, dad, and brother! "We have a surprise for you." And there was the horse I met on a cloud! And I kept him forever!



My Friend Barry

The most important thing I want you to know about my stuffed clown, Barry, is that he is always around me when I go places. Barry comes on almost every airplane trip that I go on. Barry likes to come on airplane trips with me because he gets to play. He gets to play with Treckles the Leopard, and he gets to play with Mr. Monkey. All they do is jump from armrest to armrest. Barry comes on almost every airplane trip I go on because Barry likes looking out the airplane window seeing all the cars and trucks are play cars and play trucks. Barry comes on almost every airplane trip I go on because he wants to see all the clouds fly behind us or when we go through the clouds. Barry comes on almost every airplane trip I go on because I want him to help me go to sleep if I am really scared. Barry comes on almost every airplane trip I go on because that means almost everywhere I go because he is fun to bring on airplanes with my whole family. Barry comes on airplane trips with me because he likes to watch movies and he likes to play video games.

Andrew sometimes makes fun of Barry and dresses him up or stuffs him in a box and shuts the lid. Barry is like a huge pillow to my brother because if he finds him he lays on him. He'll use him as a pillow. He'll hide him from me until I get really mad and tell my mom. Then he'll get Barry out of the hiding spot and give him back to me. Barry gets mad when Andrew puts Barry in a box or stuff like that because it is uncomfortable in a box. Andrew likes to hide Barry to get me annoyed, but he hates it when I go and tell Mom.

Barry sometimes plays Yu-gi-oh with me. I love it when he plays Yu-gi-oh with me. Barry always wants to play X Box on weekdays, but we are not allowed to play with video games or television on weekdays.

Hugh Rinaldi
Grade 3
Parkway
School
Greenwich

I am not scared at night when my mom puts Barry in my bed because I am thinking in my sleep that Barry is a Kung Fu fighter, and he beats up all the bad dreams and the good dreams are his sidekicks. I am not scared at night when my mom comes in to say good night because I think that he is protecting me from the bad monsters trying to eat me. Barry is like a huge cover to me because whenever I'm scared at night my mom comes in and puts Barry in my bed with me. I am not scared at night when my mom comes in when I call her because she puts Barry in my bed, and it is like Barry is a light bulb that scares away the scary things. I am not scared because Barry is there.

Barry is like a play doll to my mom because whenever he's on the table my mom picks him up and makes him dance. Barry is like a joke machine to my dad because whenever my dad sees Barry he picks him up and pretends that Barry is saying really, really, funny jokes.

Barry is the best friend that I have in the whole wide world.



**Raymond
Arnold**
Grade 4
Mathewson
Elementary
School
Milford

Silence

Silence is never really silent.
You'll learn that as you grow.
You'll find when the teacher says
To be silent it never will be.
There's the sound of the person
Always saying, "Shhh!"
The sound of the pencil on the
Paper.
There is the sound of the teacher
Correcting the work you did
Last Wednesday.
There's the two friends seated
Next to each other murmuring.
A pencil drops. Your math book falls.
A cough
A sneeze
A snuffle
A wheeze
The turn of a page in a
Book.
They all make a sound so
Never try to make things
Silent.

I Am Winter

I am a river in the sky. I plunge from the clouds, taking a trip to the unyielding ground. Sub-zero I am, pilfering the season of fall. I am white as a beard of an elder man.

At various parts I am firm, where I am called ice. I trickle down the roofs of the shelter and turn into sticks called icicles. People come and take me down and take a lick out of me, their mouths saying, "This tastes like water!" in a way I don't seem to recognize. I ally with my cousin, called water, and become solid. People shovel my soft parts out of the way and put blades on people's feet and glide on my friend and me for satisfaction.

Whereas ice does the job of being licked and being glided on, I also have parts as pliable as a pillow. I am called snow. People walk in me and put cavities in my body. They also lie on me and wave their arms and legs around. This hole is called a "snow angel." They roll me into three balls and stack me up from largest to smallest. They make eyes out of coal, a vegetable for a nose, and carve me and in that hollow hole they put a smoking pipe for a mouth. They call this method "making a snowman."

Oh, they may do many things to me for a while, but alas, for I do go away from the human world. A big yellow ball called the sun comes out, and once again, I evaporate. They do know I will come back soon, for I AM WINTER, and I come back for eternity.

**Nicholas
Zanca**
Grade 4
East School
New Canaan

David Egeler
Grade 4
King Street
Intermediate
School
Danbury

The Shark That Won't Eat Meat

Ferocious Freddy Finback
Is a shark that won't eat meat.
He'd rather munch some seaweed,
Or some plankton, or some peat.

His mother says he's crazy.
His father thinks he's nuts.
But Freddy's gills turn green
At the thought of gulping guts.

His friends all call him spineless.
They think he is a wimp.
But Freddy only shrugs at them
And plays peek-a-boo with shrimp.

You too may be like Freddy,
And have a quirk or two.
Just remember that your true friends
Will like you cause you're you.



Samantha
Mairson
Grade 4
Parker
Memorial
School
Tolland

Prince Augustus Has Gone Missing

Drip drop, drip drop! Lady Nell sat in the tallest tower in Prince Augustus' castle looking out the window sadly with nothing to do but wait for Augustus to arrive. She watched him day after day talking to his people, and it's like he never stops. It seems as if he never has time for her anymore. She stood up and ran down the long stairs to the bottom of the castle. She stopped when she got to the basement door. When she got there it was like she'd just run 15 times around a football field, a huge distance for a mouse such as Lady Nell. She opened the door and wandered into the dark, gloomy basement.

Finally, she reached the end of the stairs to the basement and started searching for the lights. Just then she tripped over something or someone's foot. As she got up she heard something behind her. She looked. There was nothing there. She looked the other way, but there wasn't anything there either. Then something put their long, slippery, and very slimy hand on her shoulder. Just then she found the light and turned it on quickly. When she turned around she hoped to see Prince Augustus, but instead she found someone else. Lady Nell didn't happen to catch who it was because she was too busy running.

Lady Nell didn't bother to stop when she got to the top of the basement stairs. Instead she ran to the tallest tower in the castle screaming, "Someone is in

the basement!" Everyone in the castle who was working stopped to see what all the noise was about. When Lady Nell reached the tallest tower she fell to the ground. Her voice ached from screaming, and her legs were tired from running, but after a little while she calmed down a little. She got up and sat in the little chair by the window in which she had been sitting before.

Lady Nell sat down and looked out the window with a sad look. But when she saw what was going on outside, she jumped to her feet and ran back down the long stairs to the bottom and out the door. Lady Nell was too late. Prince Augustus was gone! Someone had taken him into the dark, gloomy forest. "Well I must go get him," said Lady Nell in a sad but brave voice. Out went Lady Nell through the gate of Prince Augustus' small village, down the hill and into the dark gloomy forest.

The forest was cold, and Lady Nell was all alone. Lady Nell was scared, she wasn't sure where to go. The trees bent over as if they were watching Lady Nell, and there were so many leaves falling that it was like a shower of leaves. Just then Lady Nell heard music, beautiful music. Lady Nell followed the music. The sound of it felt like an ENORMOUS piece of cheese just sitting in front of her face and Prince Augustus was there.

The music started getting louder and louder until Lady Nell saw a cow sitting on a chair playing a banjo with tons of animals surrounding him listening to his beautiful music. When the cow saw Lady Nell standing there he screamed, "Ahhh, who are you? Are you Furious Frog?" All the animals scattered in all different directions so did the cow. Lady Nell was puzzled. She wanted to know a lot of things that so far she couldn't explain, like who is Furious Frog? Where is Prince Augustus? Why did they run from her? Did she look like a frog? Those weren't even all the questions she had! Lady Nell was completely clueless.

At that time there was no sound or movement anywhere in the forest. Everything was silent. The trees stopped blowing in the cold March wind, and the tigers stopped growling and searching for their prey. The birds stopped chirping, and everything was quiet, except when a hideous laugh echoed through the whole forest. Lady Nell jumped in fright! Then she quickly followed the laugh before it was gone. She knew it would lead her to her dear Augustus. As she ran to the laugh she started to slow down and look around her. It started to get darker and darker until it was so dark you couldn't even see something that was supposed to glow in the dark.

Just then Lady Nell tripped over a huge rock and landed face first on the ground or so she thought. Instead Lady Nell landed on her dear Augustus! Augustus was tied in tight ropes that if not untied soon could have hurt him. But Lady Nell was there to the rescue again. She quickly untied Prince Augustus and ran as fast as she could out of the cave with Prince Augustus by her side.

Soon Furious Frog was right behind them. He had seen Lady Nell escaping with Prince Augustus and now he was REALLY furious. He kept hopping after Lady Nell and Prince Augustus. Soon Lady Nell and Prince Augustus were very tired, and they couldn't run anymore, but that wasn't the problem. The problem was that Furious Frog was right behind Lady Nell and Prince Augustus, and you could tell he wasn't tired a bit.

Just as Furious Frog reached for Prince Augustus, the cow who had been playing the banjo ran down the path lying ahead of Lady Nell and Prince Augustus. He was wearing a clown suit, taking his banjo, pretending to be a rock star, and singing. Lady Nell and Prince Augustus would have fallen to the ground in laughter, but they noticed that Furious Frog already was laying on the ground laughing, and they knew it was the perfect time to get away. Finally they reached the gates of the village. They burst through the gate and ran quickly to the castle.

The next day Lady Nell invited Prince Augustus down to the garden to enjoy a fresh sandwich. It was the perfect day to ask Lady Nell the question he had been waiting to ask her for a while now. As Prince Augustus reached the garden all the birds started chirping loudly playing the wedding song. Prince Augustus looked surprised at the birds. Then the birds looked at him and then stopped. The sun was shining beautifully with golden rays of sunlight shining down on Lady Nell. As Prince Augustus approached Lady Nell he mumbled, "Lady Nell, will you marry me?" Lady Nell answered quickly but quietly, "YES!"

Later that month a wedding was held at the castle. Everyone in the village was there, especially the cow. Later that year Prince Augustus and Lady Nell had two children, Troople and Sue. Troople's nickname was Trouble because he always got into trouble, like the time he wandered off into the gloomy forest and got lost. But that is a whole other story.

Soon the cow lived in the village and taught animals how to play the banjo and other instruments. He taught Lady Nell how to play the alto sax, and she became a famous musician. Every year around the same time Prince Augustus was mousenapped, and Lady Nell saved him, they would hold a party in honor of her bravery. She would play songs at the ball and have a great feast after that everyone always enjoyed. Every day since that day of Lady Nell's bravery rules and laws were decided and made. But they were little rules for little mice and other small creatures. Now the only thing we need to decide is where is this village and forest? Check under your bed or in the closet. You never know!



Double Trouble

I have twin brothers. They are sick, and they have autism. They are not normal children. For example they don't listen as well! Once I had to baby-sit my brothers, and their not listening made things harder!

"Mommy, can I have a hamaburger?" asked Tyler in a whiney voice. Tyler's favorite food in the whole wide world is a hamburger, though he calls it a hamaburger.

Danielle
Comeau
Grade 4
Latimer Lane
Elementary
School
Simsbury

"No, Tyler. Kellee and Danielle will baby-sit you. Daddy and I are going to a meeting." Once again Tyler was up to his usual not listening!

"But I want one and I'm hungry!" Tyler said now with tears coming from his eyes making his cheeks moist, "I need a hamaburger! I have to have a hamaburger!"

My mom just left us with now two crying boys! While Tyler was crying for a hamaburger, Teagen was crying because earlier Tyler had hidden his toys and never told him where they were. Dad did nothing about it. *Now I know what baby-sitting means!*

Oh good! HEY ARNOLD is on, I thought as I turned on the T.V. The twins kept quiet for a few minutes. However, the T.V distracted my sister and me. We did not know that the twins went upstairs. My sister and I heard a big slam of a door! I looked at my sister; she looked at me in horror as if it was the end of the world. In a flash, my sister and I were racing upstairs. **THEY WENT INTO THE DORM PART OF THE HOUSE!** While my brothers aren't typical, my house isn't typical either! We live in a dorm with 66 other sisters. My brothers could be anywhere!

My sister swung the door open with all of her might! "I'll look that way! You go that way!" I raced down one of the halls. *Will we find them?* I thought. It seemed like they were gone forever! Then at one end of the hall, my sister and I met. She came over with a screaming Teagen locked in her arms. "Any Luck?" she said, "No" I said, "bring Teagen back to the apartment. I'll look for Tyler; it is easy to get him to say something."

I walked down the halls. Then I shouted at the top of my little lungs, "WHAT IS TYLER'S FAVORITE COLOR?" I went down another hall and repeated it. I didn't want him to get scared and think that he was in trouble, so I asked him that simple question! Then I heard a little boy say, "...red." I looked in a closet and there he stood in a corner, crying all by himself. "Teagen was here too. He left and I was alone!" Tyler cried and cried on the way back to our apartment. By the time we got home, his cheeks were rosy red, they had rashes on them.

My mom and dad got home the second we got into the apartment. The boys had stopped crying. They watched T.V. like angels. Mom asked me if there were any problems.

"Nope." I said, grinning at my sister. My sister grinned back. It was our little secret.



Brian Reed
Grade 4
Hawley School
Newtown

My Sea Adventure

Crash! Waves crashed against the sizzling hot beach sand. The foam from the waves was white and bubbly. The heat and the burning sun made a haze. People dove for white volleyballs. Big and small people paraded into the water, splashing, dunking, and playing with one another. Being relentless, the water kept pounding against jagged, gray rocks at the bottom of a tall, white lighthouse. The water was in front of a long, yellow beach and a row of white cottages.

Sunburned, short people lay on long, white towels. As the water from the last wave was being swept out to sea, a new wave would crash. Holding my long, white surfboard, I pranced to the water's edge. Walking as far out into the water as I could, I breathed a sigh of relief, for I had found a way to escape from the sweltering heat.

When I couldn't touch the bottom, I got on my surfboard and paddled farther out into the water until the water was about fifteen feet deep. This was where you could ride the biggest waves. Little did I know what would happen.

A breeze blew my hair flat against my head. I waited for a couple of minutes until a gigantic wave came closer and closer to where I was waiting on my long, smooth surfboard. People shrieked in terror and fled from the beach area at the site of the gigantic wave. Suddenly the wave changed! It was no longer a huge wave, but a tall black shape that resembled a sea monster.

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhh," I cried out of sheer terror. Its massive, ragged body hung over the sea like a bad omen. I tried to paddle the fastest I could in a mad dash for land.

"Do not be alarmed," it boomed. "I come in peace and I will not hurt you." I climbed back onto my smooth surfboard for in my scramble for land I kept slipping off my surfboard. Listening the hardest I could listen, I could barely make out this creature's bizarre accent. It was made even harder to understand because the tall creature spoke rapidly and in a slur. Before I could ask one of my million questions, the sea monster started talking again.

"I need to ask for your assistance," the creature boomed, moving its faint red lips on its round face ever so slightly, "My underwater city's dome seems to be leaking water in and that's why I need your help."

Thinking for a minute, I finally replied, "Well I guess I could." Trying to hold back my pleasure, I turned away from the sea monster. The jet black sea creature stuck out one of his long, skinny, black fingers. I witnessed a very strange sight. A bubble seemed to be coming out of his long fingers. When it was fully out of his finger, I could see that the bubble was no ordinary bubble. The bubble had a slick, black steering wheel with two blue gas and brake pedals, a long, tall leather chair and a stereo system.

"Follow me," the sea creature said. Where is he leading me, I wondered.

I climbed into the bubble and I sat down in the comfortable leather chair. The sea monster led me under the water. Green soft back turtles swam in the crystal clear water. Smooth, green fish swam in large schools. I turned the black knob that turned the radio on, but the language it spoke in was foreign to me, so I turned it off.

As we neared the ocean floor, I viewed what an oceanographer would have thought to have been an amazing sight. Jagged coral reefs stood up tall. Crabs skittered on the ocean floor, businesslike. Barnacles clung to round, gray rocks, as if nothing could pry them loose. Green seaweed swayed back and forth like dancers. Above my bubble a gigantic blue whale swam. A gray shark chased after a sleek gray dolphin.

The way the sea monster moved in the water was very bizarre. It seemed to drift through the water without moving any part of his body. Me, on the other hand, well I was a different story. I had to jerk the black steering this way and that to avoid the fish and other sea animals that came in front of me.

After a little bit we reached a vast canyon carved into the ocean floor, like a gigantic hole. The canyon was filled with a bubble-like dome that was home to rows and rows of huge black buildings, one just like the next with the exception of only one building. We went down to the dome and I found out it was made of a liquid-like substance. Somehow, most of the water seemed to be kept outside the dome, except for in a couple of spots where the water seemed to be pouring in.

We went through into the dome. The clear dome was full of creatures, just like the monster, only the monster that led me to this dome was not afraid of the water, and the other monsters all seemed to be afraid of it. There was a round, black building that all the creatures fled to, like people going to a bomb shelter.

In a little while, my bubble popped and its contents went with it. Now the sea creature started talking again. "The reason I have brought you here is to repair the dome," it said. "Our smartest people have tried to fix it but have failed. Everyone is terrified of water and can drown, but I had to face that fear when I brought you here."

"I will try the best I can to fix the dome," I said, wondering why he hadn't drowned before.

"Thank you," the sea creature said. As I walked on the rocky ground, I tried to think of different ways to stop the water from leaking into the dome. I trotted behind the sea monster, who seemed to be leading me towards the round shelter. He was leading me there, and we had to get through a mob of people to get to the entrance of the dome.

The sea monster, who was evidently later said to be Matt, explained to me that the city we were in was once above water, but a hurricane had sunk the city. That was why everyone was frightened of the water, since it was that that sank the city. He said that nobody could breathe underwater. I turned around and gazed at the buildings as tall as the Empire State Building.

Then after a little bit, I turned back around and Matt opened the doors, pulling on the silver door handles. Now the water had crept up to the second row of buildings. We stepped inside, where I found what seemed like it must have been thirty rows of sea creatures just like Matt, sitting people-like in smooth, gray chairs that were just like the chairs in the party rooms at ice-skating rinks. They were sitting in front of a stage. Bright lights lit up the room. The walls were made out of wood.

Matt led me up to the stage through an aisle that ran through the center of the rows. I climbed onto it and walked over to the black pots that resembled

cauldrons. Then I peered inside. There was a red, a green, a blue, and a purple chemical separated into different pots, and there was one pot that held not a chemical but a silver serving spoon. He announced to the crowd that he had brought help. He whispered to me that what I had to do was to mix the chemicals together until I came up with the material that the dome was made of.

I began to work. Using the serving spoon, I scooped up some blue and purple chemicals, and I poured them into the empty pot. The results this gave me did not match what the dome was made of, but it made something along the lines of glass. I took a little bit of chemical from the black pots that held the two chemicals I had not used, and I poured them into the once empty pot. Yes! A piece that would fit perfectly in one of the spots that the water was leaking in from.

Matt rushed over to the spot where that piece would fit. We did the same for every other leak hole in the dome. Soon everybody in the city was praising me because I fixed the dome, so they annointed me their first-ever king. The first thing that I did as king was to put bright lights over the water so it evaporated. I solved every problem that came my way. I even burdened myself with a nickname, King Solveaproblem. Until I died, I was the ruler over the city in gold robes.



Melody Pabon
Grade 5
Hamilton
Avenue
School
Greenwich

If I Were

If I were a viola,
my tune, melody, and harmony
would lift heads, heal wounds,
ease pain, and send tulips
swirling and dancing,
kissing people's foreheads.

If I were a dancer,
my feet would float off the ground
as I hold my arms before me,
fingers pointed,
as if I'm about to take flight.

If I were a clown,
my red nose would honk,
and my huge sneakers would squeak
with every step I take
while children's laughter
fills my ears.

If I were a fire,
I would warm cold feet and hands,
homes, and broken hearts,
my glow lighting the world.

If I were this planet,
I would protect myself
and my people
forever and ever
Amen.



Soccer

I run for the ball, my legs pounding.
I see the opponent running too.
We meet at the same time.
Collision!
I am tripped.
The referee doesn't notice.
I stumble, fall.
A hand wearing evil gray, not maroon,
reaches to help me.
"Sorry" a voice whispers.
I am back in the game,
Fighting with her for the ball.
"It's okay," I whisper back.
I kick the ball and steal it.
Our friendliness is over.
She chases, I kick it away.
One moment friends, the next enemies.
That is the game of soccer.



**Brianne
Mirecki**
Grade 5
Regional
Multicultural
Magnet
School
Waterford

**Joseph
Vazquez**
Grade 5
John Barry
Elementary
School
Meriden

Anger

Anger travels inside you like fire.
The fire burns like the flaming sun.
You can't control it rising in you.
It travels through your blood like an animal.
Making your heart pump like a drum.
Your breath is getting heavy like a rock.
Your veins get over powered.
All of a sudden you cry.
You cry till your eyes can't take it anymore.
Feel better?



**Ingrid
Adamow**
Grade 5
Myrtle H.
Stevens
School
Rocky Hill

Diminishing Warfare

We always have to fight for our opinions, never expecting anytime that everyone would accept them, causing warfare. The courageous take a stand, hoping for peace at war's end. The nation's people hold hope in their hearts, stopping at nothing to let it go. Why do we bother with warfare, if we know that in the end, most are traumatized or dead? Just to prove a point, or out of pure hatred? War can weaken a soul, yet strengthen a body. A soul or heart symbolizes much more importance emotionally, than that of a body, physically. Actually, most of the time, a war weakens both a soul and body, killing two birds with one stone. I know, in most cases we don't have much choice, because another country attacks. Even still, we could create an atmosphere like the one Ghandi tried to create, without fighting, and settling deep conflict with the power of words. In doing so, we'd keep thousands alive and become known as a nation of peace. We don't want to seem like weaklings, who think about demonstrating new, improved ways, and don't because we're afraid that countries amongst us will bomb or attack if they disagree with our ideas. The majority of our country's population would find themselves agreeing that our country could potentially be a place where all could feel safer during times of conflict if we put the ideas of this essay into consideration. Together, let's diminish warfare!

The Window

I looked at the night sky that was black with a mixture of blue. Something out there was calling me. The wolf's cry, the owl's hoot, but especially the way the stars gleamed if I looked at them the right way. It wasn't really the night sky; it was the whole atmosphere from my window.

I had been staring out the window all night long. My legs itched to run, and my feet longed to touch the summer grass. There was only one problem about doing that: it was winter, my least favorite season. I refused to go sledding or ice-skating or take part in any winter "fun."

Suddenly, I realized that my window seat was getting cold, so I pulled a blanket over my lap. I looked back out the window and watched four deer walking beautifully in the snow. That was the only thing I liked about winter the deer. I loved the deer. They seemed so confident in themselves, so unlike me. I loved that feeling.

The feeling was so intense, so very hard to resist. Unlike the deer, I was trapped. Unlike everything outside the window, I was behind the glass. I had an urge to run out of my house and live within the beauty of nature. I had an urge to live free.



Silver Blue Light

In a land far beyond Elder lay in a bundle of leaves, Teo the unicorn. His silver, blue horn stuck out and gave a shy mysterious shimmer.

Karin floated through the thick layers of mist, her wings flapped peacefully against her arms, and her long, damp, red hair hung down to her waist. As she flew through the beautiful weaving of leaves, Karin noticed a light. It was very faint, but Karin could see that it was not just an insect. The light shone wide, and it was pale silver blue which made it look secret. Karin was very curious to see what the light came from.

With much unsuccessful struggling, Teo managed to poke his head out of the leaves. Curiously, he looked around. A winged figure was coming his way. It had red hair down to its waist. Even a young baby unicorn from Elder was smart enough to recognize this figure. It was a Kalarian forest fairy. They were not common in Elder, so Teo was very anxious to meet this fairy.

As Karin approached Teo, she saw that he was a unicorn, just a baby. Karin knew the great powers of the unicorn and was quick to take him in. Cautiously she picked up the bundle and flew it slowly through the mist. Teo looked around. "How amazing, I'm flying!" he thought. Karin's fairy den was a long distance away, and Teo peacefully fell asleep dreaming of having wings of his own.

Ashley
Gustafson
Grade 5
Earl M. Witt
Intermediate
School
Stafford
Springs

Nora
Rossberg
Grade 5
J. Milton
Jeffrey
Intermediate
School
Madison

When Teo awoke, he saw a hill filled with beautiful white flowers. On top of this hill was a hut constructed of nothing but giant green leaves. Tired and exhausted from carrying Teo, Karin was happy to be home. She landed at the bottom of the hill and set Teo down. Limply, she walked and disappeared through an opening at the far side. Awake as ever, Teo sprang out of the bundle and tried out his legs which had not been used since Teo first learned to walk in Elder. At first his legs were wobbly, but as he began to walk a few steps his legs improved and held his body firm and tight. Content, he walked to the awkward den where Karin had went once they had landed. The door was simply a giant leaf which Teo moved with his head. The inside of the den was bigger than it looked from the outside. There were comfortable chairs in which Teo would have loved to sit if only his body were a bit more human shaped. There was a beautiful but small fountain which had water as clear as diamonds. In the way back of Karin's den was a bed. The covers were make of leaves, and the pillow was made of blue flowers woven into a firm pillow case. Slowly, Teo walked to the bed and saw that Karin was sleeping. "She must be very tired after carrying me this far." Teo thought, and he let her sleep.

"Wake up Teo!" a pleasant voice called. It was Karin. A handsome young unicorn stretched tiredly on his bed of grass. For four years Teo lived with Karin in her delicate fairy den. He had grown tall and sturdy and very kind and caring. His white body was pale as the moon, and his tail and horn shone like no other color in the world.

"We are going on an adventure!" said Karin happily for she had not been on an adventure since she had found Teo in the Kalarian woods. "Where are we going?" Teo asked curiously. "To Elder where you come from!" Karin replied. With that the two packed a small supply of food and headed out on the Dusty Road, which is (as its title describes) very dusty. The road was long and few people ever traveled far. On the first two days of traveling, Karin and Teo went side by side, and at night they camped in the woods that surrounded the Dusty Road. Then as the woods no longer surrounded the road, the two camped in the meadow which was always very wet because the rains had been falling for days, and there was no shelter on the fields of wild flowers and grass. Finally, on the sixth day of traveling, the gates to the castle of Elder were visible, and the two traveled fast with hope.

That afternoon the sun rose high in the sky to greet them. Teo was the first to skip happily into the large village next to the castle, but Karin stopped. Something was not right. There was no cheerful talking of people walking on the streets. There was no one at all! Teo stopped too as soon as he noticed that so many of the shop windows were smashed, and every single one of them was dark. Not one fire was lit. Confused and afraid that something bad was going on, Teo and Karin went to the castle. As they entered the gigantic gate, Karin looked up to see the magnificent towers of the castle. She was very surprised when she saw that the towers were crowded with an unusually large number of castle guards and defenders. When Teo stepped into the castle courtyard he was surprised to see that thousands of people were all crowded into the castle. The two amazed and confused travelers went straight to the king. "Your Majesty, could you please tell

us what is going on here in Elder? I do not understand why all your people have come to stay in your castle!" Karin asked with a bow. "I am afraid that Elder is under attack. Goblins and giants have been threatening my whole kingdom with their dangerous weapons. I am afraid our soldiers are being attacked and we cannot heal their wounds." The king replied sadly, his great beard shook as he talked. "I am sure my powers will help your soldiers!" Teo said excited. "Great, a unicorn is just what we need!" the king said smiling at Teo. "Sir Unicorn, would you please help the people of my kingdom? It would make me very glad!" the king asked. "Of course, I would be very glad to help your people!" Teo said. Now that the king had found a way to heal his soldiers he called for a feast. Teo had never seen so much food in his life. There were turkeys, salads, vegetable platters, and fruit dishes. Something from every single food group imaginable. That night Teo slept comfortably on a soft feather bed, and Karin enjoyed sleeping on a beautiful red lounge chair.

The next morning was terrible. An aggressive battle was being fought right in front of the castle. Teo and Karin could see goblins in ragged clothing carrying fierce spears with needle sharp points and giants carrying huge spiked clubs. Angry and merciless they came upon the defenders and the guards. Teo was quick to rush out of the castle after Karin had made him a potion to protect him from the nasty weapons. Teo stormed out of the castle gates and looked around. Wounded soldiers were rolling among the battle dodging spears and weapons as best as they could. A young man with blond hair covering his damp eyes lay closest to Teo. Cautiously, Teo made his way over to the man dodging several spears on the way. When finally Teo reached him, the man pointed to a deep cut on his arm. Teo was glad to be helping out. Gently, he put his horn on the cut and closed his eyes. He had done this once before to an injured field mouse. Teo had to concentrate hard on his powers. A silver blue light came from his horn and swirled over the wound. Teo opened his eyes, the man was smiling, and the wound on his arm had disappeared. Thankful, he stood up and continued shooting arrows from his wooden bow. Teo ran around the battle field dodging weapons while healing soldiers.

After more than half a day of fighting, the giants marched off, carrying their huge clubs on their shoulders. They were followed by the tired goblins. Thanks to Teo no one had gotten killed or greatly wounded. Teo was a hero. In the evening the king announced another feast, greater than the last. It was at this feast that Teo was named the first ever Unicorn Knight and Karin was named the best potion maker in the kingdom.



Nicholas Oliver
Grade 6
McAlister
Middle School
Suffield

Backyards

Out the train window, backyards
are passing, heaped with don't need it,
where else should we put it, someday
we'll want it, wait until later, forgot
it's still there. Front yards are boring.
Backyards tell stories. Out the train
window watch them pass.



Sarah A.
Barringer
Grade 6
Sarah Noble
Intermediate
School
New Milford

Old Lady Tree

I remember when horses were to be seen
on my cobblestone road and curb.
I remember when children ran
happily along the hem
of my ragged dress of green,
giggling and smiling and chasing and tripping.
But now,
days have changed.
Carriages move by themselves,
and roads are a tar black.
Children don't come as often.
I miss them.
I wait patiently
amongst honks and blows and screeching of tires.
But who's that,
coming down my path?
It is a child!
I waved my knarled hands in greeting.
She sat down there,
at my feet,
and there she began to draw.
I watched intently.
She was drawing me!
She didn't care that
I was old,
my knees knobbly,

my fingers gnarled and twisted,
my emerald dress wrinkled and tattered.
I was a thing of
majesty and knowledge,
a symbol of days
passed.
I remembered when horses were to be seen
on my cobblestone road and curb.
I remembered when children ran
happily along the hem
of my ragged dress of green
giggling and smiling and chasing and tripping.
They knew who I was
and still am.
I am a storybook of history.



Fake

The sunlight warms my face,
The bright sky smiles down at me,
The clouds seem not like black burdens but light puffs in the sky,
And the wind hums a gentle tune.

My eyes bright as can be,
Looking so bright and cheery,
My face appearing happy.
But one thing is amiss in this portrait,
My eye luminous and big, yet not showing joy.

The appearance is deceiving,
As my heart is still aching,
But I put on an act,
That fools far too many.

My eyes never deceive you
And always tell the truth.
The dark mystery hovers deep in my eyes,
And no one realizes the pain.

Ireen Farah
Kashem
Grade 6
New Fairfield
Middle School
New Fairfield

Cassandra
Rasmussen
Grade 6
Juliet W. Long
School
Gales Ferry

The Road

(This is a scene unlike most. It represents two sides of the cycle of life: Death and Birth)

Death: Never Again

Birth: And never yet

Both: Will the sun shine on my face

Death: For I am the oldest of old,

Birth: And I am the youngest of the young.

Both: In my

Death: Long years

Birth: Short minutes on Earth,

Both: I have been joyful.

Death: I shan't see dawn.

Birth: I've never seen dusk.

Death: I'm saying goodbye.

Birth: I've yet to speak at all.

Death: I've often

Birth: Never

Both: Heard birds sing or seen a rainbow bridge across the sky or
seen my earthly future, and it is

Death: Not there

Birth: Long.

Death: I am soon to solve a great mystery.

Birth: Where do we go after death?

Death: I'm at the end

Birth: The beginning.

Both: I hesitantly step

Death: Off

Birth: On

Death: The road.



Emily Bar
Grade 6
Saxe Middle
School
New Canaan

Selling Memories

"It has to go dear, there's nothing we can do," sighed the sweet wrinkled old lady to her elderly husband. The old man sat admiring his property. His aged wrinkled hand was placed on a nearby rock while the other gripped his cane. He took a deep breath of the crisp fall air and closed his eyes. The warm sun heated his rough skin as he tried to remember the old days when he was a child. He was wearing a worn, ripped sweater with three faded red buttons holding it together

and dirty faded jeans. The corduroy cap on his head had a flood of white hair tumbling out of it.

He looked up, wrinkled his gentle blue eyes, and noticed the beautiful sapphire color of the sky. A light blanket of clouds covered the sky, allowing the baby blue color to seep through. He looked around, slowly examining every detail of his yard. There were little patches of dirt scattered randomly across the grass. A grasshopper jumped from one blade of grass to another. The morning's moisture speckled the rich green grass, giving it a little twinkle. The old man sighed and slowly moved away from the rock reaching for his "for sale" sign.



My Great Grandma

My great-grandmother (Alassandra Lucia Vitale Prisco) was an extremely brave and intelligent woman. She was an Italian immigrant, who taught herself how to read and write the English language.

My great-grandma was born on November 1, 1902, in Besacia, Italy. She lived a lonely and simple life. When she was two, her father left home to go to America, but he never came back. Most of her childhood wasn't very exciting, but when she was nine, a new town hall was being built in Besacia. The architect spotted her on the street and thought she was so pretty that he had her face sculpted on the top four corners of the new town hall. To this day it is still on the town hall.

In 1913, when she was eleven, she fell and hurt her knee badly. A few days after that incident her mother died. Back then it wasn't as easy to diagnose and treat injuries. Because her mother had died, everyone completely forgot about her hurt knee. When the family gathered for their mother's funeral, her brother, who was in the Italian army, noticed how bad her knee was. He knew he had to bring her to the hospital in Naples. She stayed in that hospital for eight months, alone, knowing nobody. Her brother knew he couldn't stay because he had to return to the army. Every day in the hospital, the doctors would cut open the same place in her leg and squeeze all the pus out. After eight months, her brother brought her home.

When she was finally home from the hospital, her brother decided he needed someone to take care of her because he had to go back to the army. Her sisters were teenagers, so they did not want anything to do with taking care of her. Therefore, they brought her to an orphanage. My great-grandma was so bad there that the nuns would not take care of her anymore, so her sisters had to take her back. Because her sisters still did not want to take care of her, they sent her to live with her aunt for a few years.

Michele Brault
Grade 6
St. James
School
Manchester

In 1919, when she was seventeen, my great-grandma was walking down the street when my great-grandfather (Carmine Antonio Prisco) saw her and fell in love with her. Soon after this happened, they got married.

One year later, she and her husband left Italy to go to America. At this time she was pregnant with her oldest daughter (my great aunt).

When my great-grandparents finally reached Ellis Island, the government would not let my great-grandmother in, even though her husband was a citizen of the country, because she was pregnant. They would not even allow her husband to stay with her. But he bribed one of the guards and gave him money to let him in because his wife could not speak the language and she was very scared.

After two weeks of staying on Ellis Island, they took a train to Hartford, Connecticut. As soon as she saw what kind of place it was, my great-grandmother wanted to go home right away. The buildings were all black on the top because the trains would go through the city and all of the smoke from it would brush onto the tops of the buildings.

But she stayed and had all four of her children (the fourth one being my grandma) in the United States. She died at age ninety-five on December 7, 1997. I was lucky to have known my great-grandma for six years of my life. I spent a lot of time with her, and I will never forget how loving and caring she was to my family and me.



Daisy Schmitt
Grade 7
Haddam-
Killingworth
Middle
School
Higganum

Poem

I planted my ideas in a pot
Mere seeds, barely fruit,
And one morning under a quilt of light,
A green traveler emerged from his safe home
And found his way onto the page.
Soon after his journey had begun,
He discovered whatever it was that he wanted to find,
And a bloom graced his tender stem.
Somehow the beauty of that blossom
Escaped my mind to my pencil tip.
With the final word uttered
And the traveler's last step,
My overflowing ideas
Became soil once more.

Jealousy

Could I be somebody else for just one day
To make my jealousy go away?
I want to be pretty.
I'd like to be thin.
I wish I was blonde.
I need clothes that are in.

My hair is a mess.
I hate my round glasses.
I don't have a chest.
I'm failing my classes.

I look at you,
And think in my mind
Why can't I just leave this world behind?
Nobody loves me.
Nobody cares.
I'm pierced by ignorance,
Frozen by vacant glares.

I am invisible.
Why can't I be seen?
Existence and nonexistence.
I walk the fine line between.

In chemistry,
Some substances are acids.
Another might be a base.
I am a neutral.
Just a plain girl, with an ugly face.

I want to be noticed,
By people at school.
I want to have friends.
I want to be cool.

Somebody, anybody!
Who would know what to do
Help me please.
I'm begging you.

Holly
Battaglia
Grade 7
Sedgwick
Middle School
West Hartford

Carolyn
Shefcyk
Grade 7
Sedgwick
Middle School
West Hartford

Writing

Writing is a tunnel to an alternate world
In which I travel at the speed my pencil meets paper.
My hand grips the steady stick of wood and lead.
My arm rests upon the pale blank page.
The pencil starts its magic.

I travel swiftly through time,
Its mists faint and warm.
I meet new wondrous people,
Whom no soul could possibly imagine.
I fly through enormous breathtaking trees
Like a bird with ease.
I can be the person behind the mask,
Within the protective darkness.

I love to write, because I can feel freedom
Shining brightly on my face like
The warmth of the sun,
A place which I can visit that never repels me.
Suddenly, when I remember my homework
Or when distant voices call,
The flying ends, the freedom halts,
The tremendous power of light fades away.

I rise up with groaning knees, and
Down the stairs I saunter to continue my reality,
Yet really I live in two worlds standing side by side.
My writing world sleeps, waiting to continue.



Peigeng Liu
Grade 7
Sedgwick
Middle School
West Hartford

The Riot of Tiananmen Square

June 4, 1989. "We want justice" yelled one of the protesters. The young man was dressed in a white T-shirt and a pair of blue jeans. Waving a sign over his head, he continued to chant this phrase. Like the hundreds of other protesters he was gathered here in Tiananmen Square in Beijing for one reason. These people had put up with Chinese political corruption long enough and could wait no longer for reform. The sound of their voices echoed across the grounds through the sounds of automobiles and pedestrians. Looks of determination and

unwavering courage flashed in their eyes as they endured the freezing temperatures. Only meters across from the demonstrators were ranks of heavily armed police and a row of tanks. Holding their fiberglass shields and with electric prods at their sides, they were an intimidating force. Despite their obvious advantage in firepower, they too feared for their lives for they knew the protesters wouldn't surrender easily. The fearsome looks on their faces alone showed this. As minutes past, the tension became almost unbearable. The two masses stared each other in the eye, challenging each other. This peaceful demonstration was sure to explode into a massive riot.

"Attack!" commanded the captain. With this, the rows of tanks charged forward, along with a bombardment of tear gas canisters. The massive vehicles refused to stop for anybody and within the first few moments, dozens of students were killed while the rest retreated. Without warning, the entire arsenal began pouring in. The scene was total chaos. The two forces clashed; enraged protesters desperately punched at the police behind their barriers, only succeeding in being shocked by prods. Cries of help and anguish were muffled by the earsplitting sounds of tanks. As the young student looked around, he could see green gas protruding from the dozens of scattered canisters. The stench brought tears to his eyes instantly and he could hardly breathe. His throat and nose burned. Many of his comrades were dead while many more lay severely injured. Blood stained the marble ground. In the middle of the fighting lay a man, blood cascading down his forehead, who must have had his skull hacked open. Rushing to aid the fallen man, a young student lifted him off the ground and carried him away from the scene to a nearby hospital.

Sitting next to the hospital bed, he gripped the hero's hand. As he looked at the bruised and bandaged face, he noticed the man's life slowly draining out of him. He would be dead in a few moments. The man lay silently upon the death-bed, probably thinking about the life he had lived and the future of his country. A few minutes later, the screen of the heart monitor went blank; the only thing that could be heard was the monotonic beeping of the machine. His eyes became cold and desolate, and his hands felt like the icy chill of death. The young students quietly left the hospital. My father, Peng Liu, felt enough death and suffering that day.

All those who lost their lives for their country that day are heroes in my eyes. This event came to be one of the most important and controversial riots in Chinese history. To this day, people still pay remembrance to the protesters who died. The families of those who lost the lives are still attacking the Chinese government. I'm sure many people feel that what happened was an injustice. Although many sacrifices had to be made, the outcome was generally good.



Dylan
Anderson
Grade 7
Pawcatuck
Middle School
Pawcatuck

The Street Light

The days are growing longer, and the sun is getting higher in the sky, leaving behind the coldness of winter and the green days of spring, letting go to summer. Rising temperatures and the blazing sun beat down on the old rusted street light, which hangs over the little lane that stretches to the shore.

With no trees over the middle of the street, the sun has a straight path all day to the street light. Some days even the crows won't touch its metal siding because the sun has torched the light to amazing temperatures, and the birds are afraid of being burned.

On days when the sun is behind the clouds and does not appear, the light must face the summer's thunderstorms rolling in off the water. The wind picks up and blows the light, making it sway from the wire it is hanging on. Claps of thunder shudder the light and echo off its worn, rust-coated, metal sides. Rain pours from the sky as if being dumped from buckets, hitting the light with tremendous force as the wind blows the rain so hard it could pierce a human's skin. The water seeps inside the little box from every which way, shorting it out, sending it to darkness. Yet the light must still face the strongest force of summer: lightning bolts that clash with high objects, sending down electrical charges through their capture and setting sparks to the air.

Then the storm is over. The sun peeks out from behind the clouds, and once again starts to torture the street light's metal with its blazing heat. Soon workers come out from hiding and fix the old street light, bringing it back to life and lighting up the three holes in the sides. Before long, the summer traffic starts up and many cars pass under the light on their way to the beach where the waves hit the shore. The lane is covered in cars noisily beeping and honking their horns and motorcycles revving their engines while waiting at the light. Most follow the street light's directions, but a few in haste rush through the red light signal, not caring about the others who sit at the light.

The beach visiting season is gone as quickly as it came. The weather is cold, and the frost of fall and winter bites the air. Not one car passes under the lonely street light down the lane to the beach. The light watches, looking from its high position down on the empty lane, with the first snow falling, and waits for the next season of fun. Waiting and waiting.



People Tell Me

I hate it how people tell me
I'd be agreeable if I
never stated my opinions.

I hate it how people tell me
I'd be studious if I
got rid of my sense of humor.

I hate it how people tell me
I'd be a better person if I
adjusted my personality.

I hate it how people tell me
I wouldn't get in trouble in class if I
didn't always help out my friends.

I hate it how people tell me
I'd be respectful if I
never questioned authority.

I hate it how people tell me
I'd be admired if I
wasn't such an individual.

I hate it how people tell me
I'd be "popular" if I
shopped at the right stores.

I hate it how people tell me
I'd be cool if I
didn't stick up for others.

I hate it how people tell me
I'd be liked if I
listened to everything they said.

And most of all, I hate it how people tell me
I'd succeed if I
changed everything I believed in.

Sarah Ceponis
Grade 8
East Ridge
Middle School
Ridgefield

Alexandra
Tasak
Grade 8
Saint James
School
Manchester

Ghandi

From a small town in India
Into the ignorant minds of the world
Came a revolutionary, a victor for peace
Striving for rights of his brothers
Never using forceful actions
Showing us all a lesson
About who the sages really are.
"And a fist shall not be raised."

Protests of meditation and prayer
Visions of equality for all
Beaten down by a policeman's club.
"And a fist shall not be raised."

An embodiment of love and faith
A visionary of a new world
From a united place and time
Where all is well and all are equal
Where open minds and open hearts
Dominate racism and persecution.
"And a fist shall not be raised."

All too soon the victor retreats
For narrow minds and empty hearts
See no place for people such as this.
Once cloaked in grace and innocence
Now shoveled in a body bag.
"And a fist shall not be raised."

His mission still lives on
In those who see more than what is there
And will forever state that peaceful actions speak louder than words
A loss for the frauds who call themselves wise
They are to blame for the rejection of a great enlightenment
A revolutionary who showed the world
No matter what the question, violence is never the answer.
"And a fist shall not be raised."

Trapped in Gray

Though his dreams
Never listen
To his heart's
Deepest wishes,
He finds
Will
To make do.

To go left
Or right,
Yes or no,
Something inside him
Just can't decide
Trapped,
In a gray between
Black and white.

Like a prisoner awaiting
Certain doom
He puts one foot in front
Of the other
Marching reluctantly
Into his foggy
Future.



Lonely Karl

The kids have left, and Karl begins to feel the array of late afternoon sunlight. In his pale skinned hand he holds a mop, most important tool for his job. He pulls his hand through sandy brown hair and lets out a deep sigh. The drenched mop hits the floor and water begins to pool around it like blood from a fallen soldier. Wearing his aging jumpsuit, he begins to mop. He is hard working with eyes tired gray that when looked at by a person, they can almost see the long empty hallways he cleans. A chill runs along Karl's back. Deep in his mind he can almost see something like ghosts passing by the empty classrooms. It is the afternoon of ghosts. Karl reminds himself of his work and continues to polish the floor until it sparkles like angry crystal. He enters a dark classroom where the only source of light besides the small window is the glowing exit sign. He is attentive to detail as he cleans the desks. His arm grazes a pencil can. It falls to

Amy Radovic
Grade 8
Fairfield
Woods Middle
School

Ryan Steinke
Grade 8
Weston Middle
School
Weston

to the floor with a loud clank. When he picks it up he looks into the face of a stuffed scarecrow against the wall that seems to be laughing at him. The sudden hissing of the radiators brings him back to reality. As long October hours pass, Karl finishes his side of the school. As the night engulfs his surroundings he takes one last look at the long lonely hallways where the ghosts run back and forth. "I need someone," he whispers to himself.



Sam Jossen
Grade 8
Bedford Middle
School
Westport

Little Sammy's First Philosophical Meditations

When I was younger I wanted to be older, and now that I am older I want to be younger. But in some cases now that I'm older I want to be the same age or even older. And if I am younger, then I may want to be even younger than I am, which could be either old or young. That may not seem clear to you, but I finally understand the big picture. Sometimes you want to be young and sometimes you want to be old, it's that simple. Sometimes you want to be consoled and sometimes you want to do the consoling. Sometimes you want to get advice and other times you want to give it. I like to think of myself as borderline, and I'm sure that it works like that for everyone at any age. I'm sure people turning 40 think that they are borderline between young and old, and they could be right. But for me it goes like this. If I need to be young I'm young, and if I need to be old, I'm old. If I need to be fourteen to get into a movie, I really am fourteen. If twelve-year-olds get free tickets, I really am twelve. So that is the thing with me and all kids my age. Do I want to be young or do I want to grow up, which means taking responsibility.

"Ma, can you get me a drink?"

"Get up and get it yourself."

Can you believe this? Last year she would have gotten it for me and given me a kiss on the cheek as she handed it to me. But now I'm "older and more mature." That is a small price you pay for growing up. In that case I'll take young. But there are much more important decisions than who's going to pour your orange juice.

Have you ever gone to work with your dad? The "provider" for your family. Well, I have, and to grow up to do what they do is not too appealing. My dad has to drive into the city to be in a room with 500 people yelling and screaming out numbers to these guys in yellow jumpsuits. He is deaf and dumb at 45. A dad with a tough job or an easy job still has to pay the bills, maintain a family, and bear the weight of the world. I guarantee that every so often he wants to be a kid again. But then again he is young when he is playing basket ball with me. And

he is old when he pays the bills and goes to work. So is he young or is he old.

OK, now I have really confused myself. Do I want to grow up and have a family but take on the responsibility of it like my dad, which seems rewarding, yet very stressful? Or do I want to stay young and have my mom get me my drinks and do everything else for me.

I'll be driving soon. My dad says that if he doesn't think I'm responsible enough, and mature enough then I won't be able to drive right away. So if I don't play my cards right he may hold it against me. For instance, if I say I'm too young to do this or worry about that, he might call my bluff by saying something like, "well if you're too young to do this maybe you're too young to drive."

September 11th came as a real shock to me. The months and years before I knew little about the real world, so the attacks really woke me up from my little boy trance. I started to think, and every night I felt sad for a while. I felt really bad for all the families that lost someone. I felt grateful. Two years before 9/11 my dad's company moved out of the the World Trade Center to a building a block away. His old building collapsed, and his new one was damaged. He didn't go to work that day. I never had felt that sad and grateful for my life. When I was younger, my mom always told me to be grateful for what I have because there were a lot of boys and girls that don't have what I have. I just said, "be quiet mom." Now I understand. I grew older after 9/11.

So how do you know if you are young or old? I think it can me determined by many things. Are you experienced are you wise? Are you responsible and mature? Those are questions you have to ask yourself to figure it out. I think that your age is not as important as your other properties in determining whether you're young or old. Maybe it is a state of mind, do you think you are old, do you think you're young. Maybe we should just live and not be labeled young or old. The point is that there are no answers to these questions. When I ask myself these questions I think that I am in some cases young and in some cases old. I know that I am young just because I haven't lived much of my life, I'm still in school. But I feel that I am responsible and I feel that I act mature for my age. So I'm in the middle of the transition between child and semi-man, as I'm going to call it. And I think that there are more transitions between young and old all through life. After high school, I'll be having another transition to an adult. And after than a parent, and a grandparent. So it is this transition that is tough, and had to be made sometime soon. I don't know if I want to make it because I don't know what it is like.

I don't know if I want to be young or if I want to be old. Or if I'm old then I don't know if I want to be old or young. If I'm still young, then I don't know if I want to stay that way or grow up. I don't know.



Kelsey
LeBuffe
Grade 9
Hall High
School
West Hartford

A Set of Three Poems Portraying The Life of Georgia O'Keeffe

Despair

Soaring through the darkness of the night sky
On a path, forgotten, the road to love
Many promises now broken, and I
struggle to fly on the wings of a dove.

We speak, and your voice brings comfort to me
A soft blanket to heal the wounds of time
You can't see how your presence sets me free
So depart, as the clock will ever chime.

Counting the hours until we reunite,
I hide in the shadows of time, of space.
No one must witness how I break with light
of each day, knowing I won't see your face.

My love for you will never cease or fade
And would only grow if with me you stayed

Restless -- A Free Verse

Once I was alone in this world
While you took your life to
another.

We exchanged letters, words of consolation, yet not enough to fill the everlasting
hole in my heart.

I waited for the day when you, my dear,
Would come to me, knowing that you needed me as
Winter needs snow and spring needs rain.

I beckoned, you came.

And now I lie with you under the stars

Counting on each one the reasons I love you so.

You mean to me what words mean to a poet, a way to free the soul as I do with
my brush.

You allow me to paint your exquisite features,
And I strive to capture the essence of your loveliness.
Inside, I am filled with the wonder of a thousand possibilities,
And you gaze at me with your impassioned eyes.

You photograph me, and I pose, torn apart by my passion for you.
 My every emotion displayed in these pictures: trepidation, anguish, love, despair.
 Enveloping me in your soft touch, you soothe my agony.
 I know that forever I will cherish you.
 The next morning
 Sun breaks through the curtains, casts a heavenly glow on your aging face.
 I witness in it
 contentment, stability, and strength.
 After sweet talk over croissants and tea, your strong black coffee pungent in the
 sweet, fresh air,
 We walk to a field,
 Lay under the shade of a thousand trees,
 And speak of commitment, of change, of hope,
 And I feel that this time will be different.
 You will stay ever more.
 Days pass and we live to the fullest
 The life that has been presented to us as you were presented to me.
 One afternoon, the sky changes,
 its colors gone from piercing blue to solemn gray,
 And who knows how?
 Our relationship remains a mystery to all.
 None know the passion that we share as I run my fingers through your thick
 peppered hair,
 But these times remain overshadowed by doubt and restlessness.
 I yearn for you as a baby cries for its mother,
 And you stay, sensing my loneliness.
 We've made it through the rain.
 How I wish I were you, with your fleeting nature, inability to linger in one place
 for too long,
 And how I hope that one day you will settle down
 Content with me.

Broken - A Haiku

Once again, you're gone
 Left with but a lone goodbye
 And I lay broken.



Jill Asensio
Grade 9
Simsbury High
School
Simsbury

Tampa Water

The azure sky with clouds of reaching fingers
Beckoning me into the waters of the horizon
Also blue,
And glittering like the joy of angles.

The journey across the plain of beach,
Sand the purest white.
And my feet making imprints in the soft, damp, powder.

A shadow soars over the land,
Like time passing quickly by,
Startles me at first.
But then I hear the cry of a gray and white seagull,
And there is nothing to fear.

Breathing deep,
Filling my lungs with salty freshness,
And my head is clear.

My hair is lifted behind me,
The sea breeze comes off the water smoothly,
Like butter on the thinnest bread,
And refreshes me in an impossible way.

Walking still, my hands ending arms as limp as yarn.
Closer to the water I become.

The wave crashes on the shore and soon embraces my foot,
As lava swallows villagers at the base of a volcano.



Beth Scorzato
Grade 9
Newington
High School
Newington

The Rose

On the surface
showing brightly like the reddest rose
my love glows
but alas, I pity the man
who picks my rose

For a while its beauty shines
its peril never shows
so I pity the man
who picks my rose

For it hides in the shade
afraid to be found
Afraid to be swept
from its place in the ground
Afraid to be told
of the beauty it holds
Afraid of someone reaching
behind its petal folds

to see the hidden danger

But love it still he may
yet he'll learn someday
how a flower
afraid of love
might turn and fight
leaving an open scar
that it regrets each passing hour

So it sits and mourns
for the one who knows
the things it never shows

That poor, poor man
who picks my rose



Who Am I? A Celebration of African Heritage

Who am I? Who is the *real* Genesis Iman Mullins? I am Genesis. Strong beginning. Faith of my beautiful ancestors. I am their boastful pride. Not afraid. Not ashamed to reveal whose I am -- a true descendent of their beginning. I am part of the dark and dusky night that conquers the day through severe and treacherous battles. I am the dreams and hopes of my people. I am the persistent, self-determination of my ancestors who made it through captivity, the Middle Passage, slavery, wars, the civil rights movement, poverty, discrimination, and racism. I

Genesis
Mullins
Grade 9
The Dublin
School
New Haven

am the wisdom, creativity, and mindpower of my people. I obtained the knowledge of survival from my ancestors who have subsisted for hundreds of years. Who am I? I am the mighty Harriet Tubman. Sojourner Truth. George Washington Carver. W. E. B. DuBois. Jacob Lawrence. Langston Hughes. Marcus Garvey. Duke Ellington. Zora Neale Hurston, Malcom X, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. of today. I have been changed, transformed from a beautiful black princess into a hard laboring cotton picker to a consistently gay minstrel into strange fruit that hangs from a poplar tree into a black panther to a dilligent vice president in a major firm. I am the beginning. The perpetual future of my ancestors. The living intelligence and truth of my people. I will be the one who passes down the important heritage forever. *Who is Genesis Iman Mullins?* I am the brisk morning of a new dawn. I am the first budding dark flower at the beginning of spring. I am a stunning black Papillion that continues to fly through harsh weather. I am strong. A self-determined heritage. Rich and empowered Black woman.



Aimee Spicer
Grade 9
Norwich Free
Academy
Norwich

Racing the Wind

Racing the wind,
I sit here anxiously waiting for the clicking noise and the wind and the winding of
the roller coaster twisting and boggling my brain.
The ride engineer yells to the programmer.
I scoot back in my seat as if I was going to fall if I didn't.
My hands are sweaty and my teeth clench together. I feel an overwhelming rush
of adrenaline going through my veins.
As I clench the seat the car starts moving with a jolt.
I look over the sides asking myself
Why did I get on?
I look over the sides and watch as people turn into dots.
We near the top then we start going so fast it seems like we're racing the wind.
Gravity turns off as I close my eyes.
We go
Right
No
Left
No up
No down
It's just so hard to tell.
People scream and the wind rushes by and for a split second I lose my breath.
Then the loop throws everyone into a dizzy daze.
The ride starts to slow to a stop.
People release their hold on the bar in front of them as it rises releasing them.

I step off cautiously, hoping the earth doesn't fall from under me.

I take a breath of the still air much different than the

Ferocious speeding whirling chaos it once was.

I take a few steps winning back my balance,

Then I wait in line to buy another ticket to ride the roller coaster again.



Pink Granite

The monotone of the priest shook the fragile morning's air, disturbing the painful delicacy of that agonizing moment. The atmosphere surrounding the gaping hole in the stark, frozen ground was devoid of all substance, all feeling besides grief. I, however, cannot say I was a part of this outpouring of collective emotion. I did not want to be there. I had neither the responsibility nor the right. The people standing around me, distraught expressions paling and dulling the youthful innocent shine of their teenage faces, were not my friends. This was not my family, sobbing quietly into crumpled handkerchiefs held against their faces tight with pain. I didn't belong, as always, for that was the story of my life. Alienation from the complete conformity of my peers was not something I liked, but I had grown accustomed to the blank stares, the sneers, the jeering looks of my peers. I was alone. It might as well have been me down there in that gray rectangular crevice. It was like a black hole, pulling, taunting, mesmerizing, antagonizing me with the irrational idea of release from the world, which had never wanted me in the first place. I was the mistake, the screw-up of humanity. Like a defective little doll in a sick toy factory, I was just *wrong*. And in the world that the people around me on this grim occasion had created, like the dolly with the black eyes instead of blue, I was worthy of being discarded.

But Dr. Foley, the Chamber Choir director of R. J. Sepherly High School, had pleaded with me to come and sing with the rest of the group this morning. "Carrigan, please consider," he had begged exhaustedly, as I sat in his dingy little office listening for the final bell of third, my open period. "It would mean so much to Christy. You know how much she had loved the choir, and it's the absolute least we can do, to have everyone sing for her one last time." That was it. Even if it hadn't already been predetermined by my parents (also mindless conformists to the psychotic cycle of false emotion and unoriginal thinking) that I would be forced to go, Foley was guiltting me into it. I hated that. Choir was my only escape from the idiocy and ignorance of my classmates. In chorus, there was no mindless babble about who was flirting with whose boyfriend intermixed with

Samantha
Miko
Grade 9
Masuk High
School
Monroe

snide remarks in my direction. In chorus, there was only song, and that was enough. So, for the sake of Foley, and as I put it to the choir director, "the avoidance of perhaps one more confrontation with my mother," I said yes. But these were not the only reasons; there was in fact, one more. Neither Christy, nor Dr. Foley's fragile state of frazzled mind would be enough to convince me to give up my Saturday, but if for no one else, I would go for Silas.

Christy had been a cheerleader, tall, blonde, thin, and absolutely gorgeous. Therefore, this, along with the fact that her parents made more money than God, sent her plummeting into the eye of the storm, the center of the elite group code-named "the popular crowd." She was both respected and desired, admired and envied. And it had been five-foot, black-clad, maroon-haired me who had envied, and at the same time despised her most. She was everything that I hated, the epitome of everything I believed to be false and corrupt and hollow. She was the girl who would have been prom queen of Barbie Town, U.S.A. And as wrong and shallow as I told myself that I was being, I wanted more than anything to be like her.

It was to that limit that loneliness had first brought me when I was not yet ten. Even then I had been labeled. Labeled for being different, for being a little strange, but I could never understand why. It was then that I thought in my small, frightened, eight-year-old mind, "Is it me? Do the other girls not like me for being me?" Following this first original belief had come years of longing to be as the other girls were, and of course, Christy was the queen of "the other girls." I wanted to be popular, to be respected, and loved, and accepted. In time, I came to realize that my solitary suffering was not of my own accord, but now the longing had turned into jealousy and then to hate, as all powerful emotions one day become. And now the hate had become rage and confusion. The world, which I had so carefully organized, explained, and ordered in my head, was pitched into a chasm of chaos. It made no sense. Mine was the world with the pain and misunderstanding, Christy's was perfect, and now a perfect waste of perfection.

As I looked back on it that day, standing above her shining polished wooden casket, I thought that perhaps both my adoration of Christy and hatred of all she stood for were what first drew me to Silas. He was Christy's half-brother, and at six feet tall with the palest blue eyes I had ever seen, he would have been their god. But Silas was not the same. He was one of those young men mothers warn their daughters to avoid. Last year he had broken into the school's science lab and set free several terrariums full of lizards, claiming they were being abused and wrongfully held against their will. He had been suspended for a while. I couldn't remember for how long, but through his father's influence he had been pardoned pending community service. In school he never even spoke to Christy, rarely even making eye contact with her in the hallways. He was like me, in this way, I thought: alone inside his head, and to tell you the truth I had a certain amount of respect for him. He was in my Business Law class, one in which, like all of my classes, I sat in the seat farthest from the front, preferably in a corner. I liked my privacy, liked being away from everyone else. Who needed them anyway? Why should I waste my time trying to put up with people if people refused to accept me? Alone was better anyways, alone was comfortable, alone was safe.

But here was where Silas and I differed: although he, like myself, preferred to remain near the edges of the curling linoleum of the archaic classrooms, Silas was never silent. As introverted as I had forced myself to become, Silas was equally expressive and overt. If he disagreed with the instructor's opinion, he would voice his own; if something did not seem just or fair in the cases we studied, he protested. On every level, he challenged popular belief, taking not what people decided to throw his way, but what he believed was right, what he thought was true. But now his voice was silent, choked, put down by the shock, the horror of what had happened.

After the final rights had been said over Christy's grave, the black mass, huddled against the cold for both warmth and support, drifted down into their blue Mercedes and silver BMWs. I followed, staring down at the untied laces on my shoes, stumbling intermittently over the scattered stones inlaid in the frozen earth. Both of my legs had fallen asleep, having stood unmoving in the bitter cold and wind for so long, and tiny pinpricks were beginning to poke and prod the muscles around my knees as I faltered wearily down the hill. My choir booklet, held pressed against my side by my elbow as I fumbled to find my keys, slipped from beneath my arm and fell to the brackish, sandy pavement, its pages fluttering wildly in the building force of the wintry gusts. Turning to retrieve the songbook, I glanced a solitary figure, standing morbidly atop the hill where I had been. It was Silas, I realized, who lingered a bit longer at the foot of his half-sister's grave, staring solemnly, without feeling, at her pink granite headstone. His father and stepmother beckoned him to the car, but he shook their hands rigidly from his shoulders.

I stuffed my now dusty packet of sheet music and car keys back into my purse, and walked carefully back up the hill, the frozen blades of faded green grass crunching beneath my tall black boots. Brushing my hair away from my face, I came to stand beside him and examined the headstone.

CHRISTINA ALLISON BLANK

1986 -- 2003

She was my age, and for God's sake, her birthday was even in the same month as mine. It made no sense. How could the prized one, the perfect-bodied goddess of the social elite have been the one?

"I found her in the bathroom. Found the pills, called the ambulance, but I knew -- she wasn't there. She was already gone a long time ago," he murmured, only half aware of my presence. "I thought I knew her so well. I tried to help, but she didn't want help. She was crying out, but I don't think she really wanted anybody to answer. Maybe she was afraid of the answer."

"You knew her well?" I asked bluntly in surprise. Then realizing my fault, I said, "Well I mean, I always thought you guys weren't close, just because of the way you two were in school and all."

"That wasn't Christy. That was her so-called friends. I don't think anybody ever saw the real Christy in the first place," he said stuffing his hands, red from the cold, into his coat pockets.

"Oh I'm sorry, I just --" I stammered, searching for words, but as always, there were none. "How do you feel?" It was lame and obvious, even to the point

of being rude again, but it was all I could think of, and he wasn't offended.

"I don't know how to feel about it. I have no feeling. I'm drained. I can't think. There are no words for it," he whispered.

"It was selfish," I muttered under my breath resentfully.

"Not selfish. She had no 'self'. She had nothing. She didn't think there was anything she had that was worth living for. That's why she did it. There was nothing inside," he paused. "She was completely empty."

"How can you say that? How can she even have thought that? She was the most popular girl in school; she led the other blondes in mini-skirts to the state championships for cheerleading, didn't she? She was smart, and people liked her; she was headed for college. She had direction, she had everything to live for!" I said.

"God damn it, Carrigan can't you see? She didn't want any of that! Her mother's been making her cheer since she was nine, and she only got good grades because my dad helped her all the time, drilling it into her head to make sure she'd get good marks. They were hovering over her all the time. After all, it wasn't whether or not Christy was actually learning anything that mattered. It was her mother's reputation with the Women's Club ladies and my father's credibility with his friends on the college acceptance committees that was important. All of that was *their* everything, those were *their* directions. But not just them. Those friends of hers. Idiots. Last night, after the wake," he coughed, wiping his blurring eyes, "I read her diary. She hated them all. They made her do things - try things, I guess, that she shouldn't have, you know? She felt like nothing about her was really hers, as if everybody held a peice of her, until pretty soon she had nothing about her left to take, not even for herself. You know what her diary said too, Carrigan? She said she envied you more than anybody else. She said you must know who you are; you have the luxury of being yourself, of knowing who you are, of not letting yourself be compromised by what others say about you, trying to make you change. She said you were more free than she could ever dream to be."

I stood in shock, my knees numbing, head spinning. "But how -- it's not supposed to be her in there, Silas. That's supposed to be me down there. She was the good one, I never expected --" he cut me off abruptly.

"Oh come on Carrigan, I thought you of all people should see! Everyone has problems, whether anyone else can tell or not. People can't exist in a perfect world, and do you know why? Because nobody is perfect, no one is completely infallible, no one has the right to tell you what is the absolute truth and what is not, and everyone, Carrigan, everyone worries, everyone doubts, and everybody needs someone else. You can't stand there and tell me that you can live your whole life alone can you?" he cried, his eyes glaring with a mix of fear and anguish and pain. "Can you?"

"But what if there is no one else? What if there's no one there that you can find who understands?" I whispered, the icy breeze whipping my crimson hair across my neck.

"I guess you aren't looking hard enough. I tried to get to Christy, but every time she would shut herself in, and try to convince me that she was fine,

nothing was wrong. But everybody is weaker inside, and few people can figure out soon enough how to sort it out for themselves. That's why we need other people, to help us sort it out. You've got to let somebody in. You can't keep the world outside forever. We're not going anywhere, and neither are you." Silas turned his back to me, and pulling a folded baseball cap from his jacket pocket, he slid it onto his head as he strode down the hill.

I stood there for a long time after he left, cold and damp in the misty gray sadness of the morning's air, just staring blankly at the blur of frosty pink in front of me, thinking. Shortly after the funeral, the Blank family moved away, running, as it was rumored, from the embarrassment Christy's "episode" had created for them with their high-status friends and in Silas's father's business. I'd like to say that that moment changed my mind and gave me a new life from that day forward. But it didn't. I didn't speak to Silas in the week after the funeral before he left, and I continued to sit in the very back of Business Law, never saying anything beyond "here" during attendance. But several months after Silas' departure on some strange impulse, I walked the halls of R.J. Sepherly High School to the dusty dimly lit library. I sat at a computer and through the Internet, discovered Silas's new address, and below it a telephone number. I reached into my purse and fumbled through the mess of lipsticks and expired unused gift-cards to the mall. I could not find anything to write on other than an old copy of my pocket first-aid handbook crammed into the bottom of my bag. So I turned to page twenty-three, my lucky number, and scribbled down the number in my faint barely legible script.

And now I am standing in my own bathroom, and the blackened tears are streaming down my face, and the razor blades are on the sink, lined in a pretty, shining row. I look in the mirror, and I ask myself why. The voice inside me, the only one who ever listens, says, "Because you are alone," and I look down at the tiny shards of deadly metal and see my reflection in them too. The tears are coming faster now, accompanied by an uncontrollable sobbing and clenching pressure within my chest. I don't know why, but I can no longer feel control in what I am doing, and the barbed wire barriers of my mind are falling crashing down. My head is in my hands, as I stand weakly; my weight propped against the pale blue ceramic countertop. I glance up for one last time and look hard into my black eyes, and I find that I can no longer see the passionate anger and desire for release, but rather fear and abandonment, instinctive, and unavoidable. Fear has overpowered hate, that fiercest of emotions, even in myself. And I think, but I can't remember, I'm not sure. With a growing desperation I throw open the drawers of the counter beneath the sink, searching frantically through the mounds of archaic eyeliners and toothpastes, but I cannot find what I'm looking for. Finally, I open the medicine cabinet and I see it. And in an old first-aid handbook, I turn to page twenty-three, and I dial the number. I do not want to be like this. I do not want a sickly pink piece of granite resting over my head stating all that I ever let anyone know about me. Someone needs to hear, I need to cry, I need to shout to someone other than myself. I dial the number and the phone is ringing. Someone says hello.

Michael P.
Gordon
Grade 10
Simsbury High
School
Simsbury

America

It was a
cloudless night in
the middle of the woods when
a father and son were cooking their
dinner in a cast-iron kettle over the embers
of a fire. That night, the father was teaching
his son how to bake bread. While they were
preparing the dough, the son asked his father,
"Dad, what makes us Americans?"
The father responded by saying, "I'll tell you after
dinner." Soon, the bread was cooked and eaten and
the dying embers of the fire cast an eerie glow across
the campsite. The curious son had not forgotten his question
and again asked his father, "Dad, what makes us Americans?" "Son,
you have just eaten the answer to your own question," said the wise father.
The son had a puzzled look on his face as the father continued, "You see, just
as the bread's basic ingredients are flour and water, a country's basic
ingredients are its diverse groups of people. However, America has an extra
ingredient that makes it rise and come together as one. In bread, it is yeast,
and in America, it is freedom. Without yeast, bread would never be bread.
Without
freedom,
Americans
would never be
Americans."



Caroline
Sennett
Grade 10
Conard High
School
West Hartford

Skin

There's a birthmark on my leg
Like a splash of cafe au lait.
And I found six constellations
In the cinnamon dots that spiral
My arms and rest lightly
Upon my nose.

An oyster shell left its silver seam
Upon my biggest toe
And beauty marks like drips of chocolate,
Lie upon my legs

There's more to my skin
Than just white cream.
There are dapples
And freckles and scratches
Dots and scars.
There's originality
In my skin.
It's no untouched canvas
And it may not be a masterpiece,
But everything's perspective
And that perspective's me.



in/sen/sational

i wanna slurp up the slush puppy of life
sittin' on a red swivel stool
in a close to closin time diner.

i wanna breathe
the fireworks art exhausts
the day after
the gallery openin'
debut on broadway's
biggest gig yet

i wanna
be in it
live through it
and tamper
with it

just enough so that
when all recall it's
seen as
mine.

i wanna
play it
hum it
so hard,

**Alesandra
Zsiba**
Grade 10
Miss Porter's
School
Farmington

i shed
my life's
interpretation.

i wanna be *contagious*.

And baby
there ain't no vaccine.



Anne
Lewandowski
Grade 10
Old Saybrook
High School
Old Saybrook

The Tortures of Writing

A mother and her daughter, Liz, are sitting at a kitchen table center stage; the mother is reading a paper written by Liz. An empty chair is at a desk downstage left, facing toward center stage. A pen and pad of paper are on the desk. Besides those props and pieces of furniture, the stage is empty. Liz slouches in her chair, her arms crossed over her chest, scowling at Mother.

Mother: *(sighs heavily, before dealing a crushing blow)* This play is about nothing.

Liz: *(angry, shocked)* What! How can you say it's about nothing!?

Mother: *(trying to remain calm)* It's the *Seinfeld* of plays. No wonder you were having such a hard time trying to think of a title.

Liz: *(an excited outburst)* But it's about *(pause)*, it's about people and not following your dreams...and...ugh!

Mother: *(trying to soothe Liz)* I mean it's a start, but...well...it...

Liz: *(on the verge of tears)* You hate it!

Mother: No, no, it's just that you leave things out. Like, what does this character truly feel?

Liz: *(frustrated)* But in real life, no one explicitly says how they feel! If the actors describe their underlying emotions in too much detail, it'll seem trite.

Mother: *(sigh)* But how can the reader or the person watching the play understand it?

Liz: Ugghh! Isn't it possible they say one thing while implying another, like in real life?

Mother: You don't build your characters well enough.

Liz: You just don't understand! *(beginning to sob)* I worked so hard on this play, and I've just been wasting my time. *(throws hands up in the air in frustration)* I'll never be able to write anything good!

A spotlight shines on Liz and the rest of the stage goes black. Liz walks down center and addresses the audience.

Liz: *(trying to control her raging emotions)* I am a terrible writer. I just cannot write decent fiction. Every time I write a story, play, or poem, the creative process goes exactly the same way. *(pause)* First, *(cheerfully)* I will get a flash of brilliance. *(She quickly takes the pen on the desk and begins to scribble across the paper)*. I am filled with jubilation; *(triumphantly)* I am writing something deep, soulful, and truly important! *(She stands next to the desk and faces the audience, beaming)* I will be the next Charlotte Bronte or Wendy Wasserstein or Toni Morrison! *(She pauses, sighs, and her smile fades.)* *(calmly, with a hint of bitterness)* Then I decide it would be a good idea to have someone else read my piece, you know, just to catch any typos.

The lights briefly go back up on stage.

Mother: *(cheerfully)* Honey, let me read what you've been writing.

Liz clutches her paper; Mother walks to Liz and tries to tug the pages from Liz's hands, but Liz will not relinquish them.

Mother: Come on! *(struggling to take the paper from Liz's grasp)* What's your piece about?

Liz: It's about...well...um...

Mother forcefully pulls the paper out of Liz's hands, causing Liz to lose her balance and stagger forward.

Mother: *(gleefully)* Hee hee!

Mother scampers over to the stage right chair at the kitchen table. The lights go down on stage except for a spotlight on Liz, who continues to address the audience.

Liz: *(ominously)* Anyone but her. When my mother offers to proofread a piece, I am plunged into a quandry. I know it would be a good idea to let her read what I've been working on. She is an excellent proofreader. The downside, or perhaps the benefit, of having her proofread my work is that *(pause)* she won't lie about it to make me feel like I've done a good job.

The lights go back up on stage.

Mother: *(emphatically)* This is terrible! There are major plot holes!

Liz: It can't be that bad!

Mother: *(irritated)* Jane got an 800 on the SAT Writing; have her read it.

Jane, Liz's sister, enters stage left and looks suspiciously at Mother and Liz.

Jane: Did I hear my name?

Liz: Could you read this?

Liz hands her paper to Jane and takes a seat at the table. Jane reads the paper and paces around the table, mumbling as she reads.

Jane: Did you really mean to have that sexual innuendo there?

Liz: *(shocked)* WHAT!

Liz stands and reads over Jane's shoulder. She mumbles while she reads, then she stops abruptly.

Liz: *(ashamed, shakes head)* Oh my God, I did *not* mean to say that.

Jane: Come on! What were you thinking when you said...

Liz: I know! I know! Geez, what was I thinking?

Jane: This isn't completely abhorrent, but I do understand Mom's point about

Seinfeld.

Jane exits stage left.

Liz: (*angrily shouting to Jane offstage*) Hey!

Lights go back down, except for the spotlight on Liz.

Liz: (*heavy sigh*) Now there are two people who think my play is terrible. Chances are, it is terrible because it's fake. Out of fear of people's reactions, I rarely write what I truly feel. Sometimes, I'm feeling depressed, and I want to express my deepest, darkest feelings through poetry.

Lights go up on stage. The mother is reading a piece of paper, shaking her head.

Mother: (*sadly*) Oh, Liz. Why is everything so depressing? Why can't you write about happy things?

Mother continues to shake her head, as Liz speaks, addressing the audience more than she addresses her mother.

Liz: (*irritated*) Why do I have to be happy all the time? If I feel sad or angry, don't I have the right to express myself?

Lights go back down onstage, except for the spotlight on Liz.

Liz: (*quietly*) It's almost as though she views me as incapable of having negative feelings. Of course, I can't write anything too dark, or else, she might start sending me to a psychiatrist. Ugh! Then, there are the times when I try to write plays or short stories. (*matter-of-factly*) Being only fifteen years old, I haven't had too much experience in the outside world. Since it helps to write about things you know, my stories and plays tend to talk about either school or home. (*sigh with visible discomfort*) This can lead to some pretty awkward situations.

Lights go up on the rest of the stage.

Mother: (*hurt*) Oh...I...Do you really think this about me?

Spotlight returns to Liz; the rest of the stage goes dark.

Liz: (*apologetically*) Of course, I don't hate my family or the people I have to deal with on a regular basis. The thing is, if a play or story focuses on one specific conflict and the resulting emotions, well, you can see how some negative aspects of people might be magnified. So, I end up writing spineless, vapid stories and plays about people I know nothing about involved in situations I have only heard of. (*emphatically*) And every now and then, I will pour my heart into something that I think is really good, only to have it dismissed as petty (*short pause*), or juvenile...

Lights go up on the mother.

Mother: (*turning towards Liz to address her*) Now Liz, you don't really mean that. Oh, and move around on stage more when you talk! (*begins to pace in front of the table*) You need to put in more stage directions; how will the actors or directors know what you want them to do?

Lights go down on mother; the spotlight illuminates Liz. Liz takes a piece of paper from the desk, crumples it into a ball, and throws it over her shoulder.

Liz: ...or lacking in substance. Then, I will be back to square one. I will be writing a soulless, spineless, heartless paper that will *probably* please someone, or at least get an A-. I write so many poems about nature because, well, (*quickly, forcefully*) how do you offend someone if you write about a tree? I avoid short

stories because I have tried and failed at writing something meaningful. Then, my first attempt at a play, well, you saw how that was received by the "critics."

Lights return to the stage

Mother: *(trying to soothe Liz)* I'm sorry dear, it's just that it really doesn't have much of a plot. Please don't be upset. You have two days until it's due. You just have to add some meat to its bones.

Liz: *(sigh)* All right. I'll work on it a little more. *(aside)* It's just that I really thought this was good. *(Liz begins to walk towards the kitchen table, but stops)* Wait! I have a new idea!

Mother: *(perks up)* Really! What?

Liz: Well, I'm going to write about writing.

Mother: *(enthusiastically)* That could be good! Put me in it! Have me ripping apart your work!

Liz: *(happily)* Oh, with pleasure! *(to audience)* And so the process begins anew. My elation at having a half-way decent idea will fade into despair as my dear, sweet mother offers me some "constructive" criticism.

Mother: *(loudly)* You're probably better off starting a new idea anyway; you can only fix that other play so much!

Liz: *(shrugs)* *(aside)* Oh well, maybe, someday, I'll write something we both like.

Liz returns to her desk and begins to write. Blackout.



Deirdre and Kurt

April 16

Daily Debates:

1) *What is with Kurt Raymond?* You'll love this story. Over the summer, Mr. Bocbinder hired Kurt to help me out a little at the store. We got to be pretty good friends and we joke around a lot. Well, I think spring made that boy crazy, because I swear he waits for me everyday to walk through the door after dragging my sorry, grass and mud-stained self from field hockey practice three blocks to make it on time. Then I have ten minutes to clean up from practice. That means pick grass from my hair and scrub the mud from my face before putting on my work shirt and school jeans.

Well, tonight I crawled in and there was Mr. B, just slightly shocked to see his lovely employee Deirdre covered in grass. I headed to the back and didn't even look up at him while Kurt explained to Mr. B why every hand towel the store owned was permanently stained with mud. After my ten minutes, I emerged from the employees' bathroom only to be informed by Kurt that I had to man, no wait, *woman* the register. I think it was punishment for turning the dusky rose towels dusky dirt.

Catlin Shaw
Grade 10
East Hampton
High School
East Hampton

So there I am, enduring snotty customers who swear the best-seller they want was on the discount shelf, and senile old women whose purses are filled with old tissues (eww), pill cases, and lots of change, but never a wallet. Then I get a wave of cold air on my back as about fifteen people walk in, maybe five or six different families have all decided to go book-hunting for dear Aunt Mabel and Uncle Ron. But until they waltz their way to the register, Kurt has to deal with them. That's what I love. Sometimes people can't find what they need, so after harassing Kurt or Mr. B, they leave and I don't have to deal with them. Well, Kurt saw them walk in and took them on a quick mini-tour of the store, pointing out all the sections so they wouldn't harass him for a few minutes. Then he came over to me and asked if I had enough money. I checked the register and all of a sudden the fives and singles were empty, and I needed more change. Mr. B has this thing, though, as he has to keep all the extra money in a little safety-deposit box that had always been right under the register. But when I reached for it, it wasn't there. Kurt was like, "Oh, yeah, he moved the box to the back." I was like, "Okay then, can ya grab it for me?"

Eventually Kurt comes back with the box (why exactly does it take so long to find a box if you know where it is?). Just for taking so long, I inform him of the massive mess in the back from a little boy and girl fighting over a book.

I open the box to finish putting money in the register and oh, what a cute little flower. This is one of the reasons I'm so puzzled by Kurt. He does things like this at work, but at school everyone still thinks he's dating this girl, Kelly. That's the long way of explaining why I'm mentioning him.

Anyway, back to the work part of the story. After Kurt cleans up the mess, or at least gets about halfway through, the panic starts. They're all lining up in front of me like crazed soccer moms at the toy store in December. But I get it over with as fast as I can and then go home.

April 20

Daily Debates:

1) *Why does gravity hate me so much?* Ouch. I never thought work would be more painful than practice. We had a relatively slow night, so Mr. B was all, hey, restock the shelves, you two. The only good thing about it was the only shelves we had to restock were the romance novels. So there's short, little five-foot me, balanced on the ladder (my ladder because I'm the only one that needs it) with an armload of steamy paperbacks while Kurt steadies the ladder.

As it turns out the store wasn't nearly as empty as we thought (okay, so a woman and her daughter doesn't make it crowded, but we thought it was just the two of us and Mr. B) when all of a sudden, the daughter raced past me to hide from her mother.

It wouldn't have been such a big deal, except the floor in that aisle is oh-so-slightly uneven, and when the girl oh-so-slightly jarred my ladder, gravity oh-so-slightly took over and I was on a collision course with the floor. But just in time Kurt turned and saw Newton's life studies occurring and caught me, then swung me out of the way so my ladder wouldn't dent my head or anything.

So there I am am, in the arms of a really good-looking guy, and I make a

complete dork of myself. Kurt's looking deep into my eyes and I'm like, "Oh, Kurt, you're my knight in shining armor." He must think I'm a total loser for that one. I didn't have a chance to ask him, though, because then he had to go deal with the cash register. Mr. B came over and started swearing in Hebrew, and then he finally managed, "Kurt deal with the register, Deirdre clean up these books. Now. Oye vey."

Bye the time I got the books cleaned up, Mr. B had sent Kurt home then all but kicked me to get me home. Great.

April 29

Daily Debates:

1) *How long has Kurt felt this way about me?* That's right, world. I, Deirdre Adkins, am mere inches from having a boyfriend. Kurt was like, "Yeah, I'm not ready for a relationship right now, but soon, so don't hook up with anyone else, okay?" I'm getting ahead of myself.

No practice today, so after school I walked down to the store and opened up, something I haven't done in a long time. It puzzled me because Mr. B is usually around. I found a note on the register written in his handwriting, something about he's feeling under the weather and not coming in, so could the two of us please keep things under control and keep the police out of it?

I'm in a great mood, so I'm prancing around the store for twenty minutes until Kurt comes in or some customers realize the store's open now. Kurt comes in first looking a little down, but then he sees that it's me dancing around and not Mr. B, so his face lights up. I'm like, "Yup, he's not in, felling a tad ill, I dare say." Kurt's ecstatic and hollers, "Oh, yeah! Sweetness!" He throws his arms out and I run at him and we start dancing around in front of the window for a few minutes and draw some customers. I give Kurt a hug and then go off to help a little old lady reach a copy of A Knight in Shining Armor. See, it's not often Mr. B calls in sick, so when he does Kurt and I can eat when we're not on break and accept personal calls on our cell phones. Time flies without Mr. B.

So we're sitting on the counter near the register around eight P.M. or so, having a bubble gum-bubble-blowing contest, and we're not doing so well because Kurt doesn't know what he's doing and my gum keeps getting stuck in my hair. Finally, Kurt says, "Forget this, I have something I need to say and if I put it off anymore I'll never say it." Then he starts pouring out all these feelings he has for me and I start doing the same thing. That's when he says "Yeah, I'm not ready for a relationship right now, but soon, so don't hook up with anyone else, okay?" I was like, "Uh huh, sure thing." See, that girl I thought he was still dating, Kelly, hurt his feelings pretty badly so he doesn't want to rush into anything right now. Hey, I've waited almost a year for him to notice me other than as a friend and coworker, I can wait a little longer to actually date him.

May 1

Daily Debates:

1) *What's to debate?* I fell off the ladder again -- I swear Kurt planned it -- and he caught me and whirled me around and asked me out. What do you think I said, no? I've got a boyfriend, I've got a boyfriend! Okay, I'll stop with that obnox-

Emily
Lemiska
Grade 11
Berlin High
School
Berlin

iousness. But I'm really happy. Really, really happy.

I'd say more, but, you know, I'm meeting Kurt in twenty minutes. I'd giggle if I was that kind of girl. Anyway, I have to go get ready, I'll write more when I get home.



Into All

into all
God and motion pictures, this
feeling of life in a glass box, hands pressed
against the walls, death, i press, the wall gives
and i cling to what i know.
tiny speckle, marching ant, grain of sand
lean in and breathe this life around you
hear the soundtrack of the universe --
it's in this,
swans who were not meant for flying
as wings break waves to defy.

into all the infinite space and time
within my heart
to feel the sun on my face and the world stretching out before me
and to know that this is my home, this is mine
i possess it as it possesses me, suddenly
i'm not afraid to be alone, not afraid to be anything but perfect
sky, here i am, before you, i
open my arms and beg you to swallow my skin, swallow these walls
make them transparent
let this swan fly
still
the sun falls like knives and waking in the middle of the night i feel
the cage close in and the beauty gray, slowly i step back from the edge and
wait for tomorrow, wait for eternity.

i wait
i wait,
i wait.

For Uncommon Colloquial Knowledge, Read This

Moms hate it. Teenagers love it. Second graders use only its nickname. It can be used to mean virtually anything. Despite its educational and misunderstood history, society keeps it off television. No one bothers to examine it because, frankly, no one wants to. Most importantly, it serves as a coming-of-age gauge, an indicator of where a person is on their torturous road toward adulthood.

Many believe it is an acronym for "fornication under consent of the king." The understanding is that, in Old England, couples had to ask for the permission of the king before attempting to have children. If they got this approbation, the couple would hang a sign with the abbreviation from their doorknob. This illogical concept is also a fallacious one. Another commonly held belief is that The Word abbreviates "for unlawful carnal knowledge." Supposedly, rapists, pedophiles, and adulterers were once punished by having to wear square signs around their necks with this acronym on them. Again, this is only a myth.

In truth, the origins of The Word remain very much a mystery. Unsurprisingly, scholars have been reluctant to trace its etymological roots. It is indisputably very old, first mentioned in *The Oxford English Dictionary* in 1503. In John Ayto's *Dictionary of Word Origins*, he claims that The Word descended from a comical epithet. According to Barbara Mikkelsen, an expert on the subject, this is "quite possibly proof [that] The Word we casually toss about today was being similarly tossed about 750 years ago" (5).

Today, the word is used incessantly in English and has a countless number of variations in other languages. In Swedish, there is the word *focka*. In French, there is *foutre*. Italian has *fottere*, Middle Dutch has *fokken*, and Latin has *future* (Accipiter 2). While The Word certainly implies dirtiness in each of these contexts, it more importantly entails a certain degree of purification, of catharsis. Just as people punch their younger sisters or yell at their husbands, simply uttering this strident syllable helps to discharge the strain of the daily grind. Somehow, using The Word helps people all over the world release their human penchant for aggression. Sigmund Freud wrote of this bellicose inclination in one of his books, *Civilization and its Discontents*.

The existence of this inclination to aggression, which we can detect in ourselves and justly assume to be present in others, is the factor which disturbs our relations with our neighbors and which forces civilization into such high expenditure [of energy]...Civilization has to use its utmost efforts in order to set limits to man's aggressive instincts and to hold the manifestations of them in check by physical reaction-formations. (Freud on Aggression 1)

This suggests that the opprobrium associated with The Word is nothing more than society keeping its own feral, belligerent instincts in check. While restrictions like this are necessary for atrocities like murder and rape, what's so immoral about The Word? If using it is an innocuous way of releasing aggression, why is society so compelled to prevent people from using it?

Glenn Thorpe
Grade 11
Staples High
School
Westport

The answer to this question lies in basic human development. And basic human development lies in the way The Word is used. The first six to seven years of life are spent in the blissful shell of pre-The Word ignorance. Not a care in the world -- just Mommy, Daddy, food, and diapers. The shell begins to disintegrate in the first or second grade, usually the time The Word is first heard. At first, it sounds just like any other word. But then comes the day the word becomes The Word, the day parents see that their children have put the shell of naivete aside for good: the day The Word comes home.

Some get spanked, some get scolded, some get sent to their rooms. Regardless, after the day The Word comes home, nothing will ever be the same. Nothing ever *can* be the same. Something changes about the way parents look at their children. John is no longer "my little Johnny," and Susan is no longer "poopsie-woopsie Suzy." In short, parents realize that their children have tasted the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Parents see that their children are changing. And parents don't like it.

They try to suppress the changing for as long as they can. They punish their children until The Word becomes the sacredly unutterable "f-word," which is not to be used under any circumstances. No exceptions. But when hormones first start pumping through the bloodstream, parents can do nothing to stop their kids from using The Word more and more throughout adolescence. Parents, desperately trying to push away the fact that one day their children will no longer need them, label the word evil and indefensible. Teenagers, with their burgeoning egos and swelling libidos, embrace the whole concept of rebelling against their parents. The generations grow farther and farther apart, the older reproaching The Word more and more and the younger using The Word more and more. Later, when these teenagers become parents themselves, the day The Word comes home part two starts the whole cycle over again.

Ironically, the infamy attached to The Word stems not from hate but from love. Parents feel that if they can stop its use, they can keep their sweet little babies just that -- sweet and little. Parents fail to see that The Word itself does not cause people to develop into adults; it is simply an indicator as to where this maturation process stands. Nonetheless, the infamy of The Word illustrates one of people's most basic desires -- the parental longing to keep children young forever. It is why parents cry at graduation and why they goad their children to go to college close to home. It is why parents discourage children from saying, thinking about, or writing essays on words like this.

Yet even with this in mind, it is truly remarkable how a certain arrangement of four letters can elicit such censure, notoriety, and scorn across the globe. It is probably the most powerful word in history. Somehow, the entire depth of The Word is paradoxical. It is enigmatic, yet few people have the desire to examine it. It is potent, yet people rarely search for what it can teach us. It is an important piece of human culture, yet parents tell their children that it is rubbish.



In Medias Res

In between the frames
Of a movie -- the projector blinks,
Quickly moistening its eye
And catching breaths --
Staccato, its flow
(jerky and white-boy,
entirely devoid of funk) --
Jitters, choking on its words
But getting to the point before
We have time to take notice
Of its hesitation --
Stuttering visual rhythms
And extemporizing music
To its tinny mechanical ear
(Morse Code?) -- Pulling blinds
Over windows through which
We eagerly dive headfirst
(glass shatters on screen and of screen).
Its reassuring break dance of black eclipses
Guards the interface between
McCoy and mock-up, real-deal
And Tinsel Town,
Momentarily reproaches us for out
Voyeuri -- but capitulates
The next instant --
Inevitably.



Writing

It's the nail-biting, hair-pulling frustration. It's the pounding of my head, echoed by the pounding of the keys on my keyboard as I punch carefully chosen words into it. It's the silent swoosh as the delete key wipes them away, because they're the wrong words to express what I want to say. It's the cage of ideas I find myself locked into so often, reaching out through the bars of language, groping wildly for the perfect word that will set me free.

It's the drive to write.

Townsend
Wells
Grade 11
Brunswick
School
Greenwich

Sara
Schneider
Grade 11
Westhill High
School
Stamford

It's difficult for me to pinpoint the exact moment in which I decided to open the door and hop in for the ride, but for almost as long as I can remember, I've been on a constant journey in which I'm driven by this force. For almost as long as I can remember, I've felt the quiet yet persistent voice from within, compelling me to "write, write, write!" For almost as long as I can remember, I've been a writer. I don't give myself this title because it's what I do, or want to do for a profession, or even because it's my favorite hobby. I call myself a writer simply because it is my state of being. It is not only what I occupy my time with, but also who I am, and it is equally important as the sequence of my DNA or the shape of my fingerprints. It is an integral part of my identity.

I believe that there are three basic elements of a writer's life: observing, deriving, and creating, and I spend my life in a constant cycle of these things. Whether I'm sitting on a park bench simply watching life happen around me, whether the gears in my mind are in full spin as I analyze what I see, or whether I'm sitting in front of my computer and searching for the right words, I'm always in the "writer" mode. Admittedly, it is sometimes hard. The distance from the idea to the page is a chasm I am often nervous to jump across, because if I fail, it is a long fall down from the height of my lofty ambitions. But time after time I take a deep breath and make the leap, and it never fails to exhilarate me. There have been days when I have stumbled and fallen, times where I have crumpled up pages and wasted ink. But there have been times, beautiful times, when I have written for hours, positively soared.

Some days I love words. Some days they have the ability to make people blossom, to bring hope and dreams into the light of reality, and even act as a soft pillow for the head of some lonely soul. Other days I see words only as useless scatterings, like bits of leaves that would be better left to float on the wind, unconstrained by my weighty thoughts. I feel on some days as though I have many things to share, beautiful ideas that I can express through words. But then, when I look around at all the people rushing frenetically between the commercials and the traffic lights and the crackling static of connecting modems, I wonder if anyone will even take the time to listen. And I pause and I wonder, if rather than suffering the agony of trying to transform an idea into words, maybe I should just go out and swim in the ocean, or watch the clouds or listen to the birds, and not let the beauty of this ever-changing world pass me by. I get confused, wondering if by putting down the pencil and experiencing the vibrant spectrums of this world, perhaps my life would be richer. Yet, perhaps, it is in the creation of new spectrums that fulfillment is achieved.

Whatever the ultimate truth may be, I will always be drawn to the pen and page. The drive will always persist, and the words will keep marching in their determined procession across the page. Writing is journey and a search, filled with constant self-discovery. I learn new things every day as I bush-whack through the uncharted wilderness of my own developing mind, and I know that the trail I blaze will never end. Stories will emerge, poems will climb out of the pages, the voices of hundreds of characters will rise into the air. And somewhere in the process I will continue to discover myself.

two

jesus.
she's so goddamn depressed,
like me.
surface has imperfections,
slender holes
in which something once lived,
and burrowed deeper inside.
coarse skin,
like calluses,
made from burns her mother left,
and never healed.
she's always looked after me,
and made sure she always
sheltered me from the same burns.
i guess that's why she's
coming home next week.
because her past has caught up,
and she realized when she left,
the same lacerations and bumps
she adorns,
were appearing on me.
and she wasn't there to bundle me up,
her little brother,
and keep me out of the rain.



Life in a Neon

There is a tornado on the East Coast. The wind in Connecticut is incredibly strong. Woodbridge, the forest where my house happens to be is usually overgrown with trees; it still is, except they aren't really standing anymore. The way I see it, God decided to have some fun with his gigantic leaf-blower, but it got a little out of hand. Yesterday, a man was killed by lightning, and this morning a school bus was electrified by a live wire that had fallen from a telephone pole a few days ago. Everywhere you look, there are branches, leaves and dust. If I were to step outside my house, I would be swept up, up, and away just like Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz*. Three thousand houses around the area have no power, including mine. It's been four days. Ninety-six long hours lacking electrical energy, running water, and phone lines.

This chaos is happening while a very unfriendly virus called Mono is living in my body. I am one of the unfortunate kissers that have been selected to

Daniel
Kennedy
Grade 11
Old Saybrook
Senior High
School
Old Saybrook

Talia Szydlo-
Shein
Grade 12
Wilbur Cross
High School
New Haven

be a host. Mono and I have been together for quite some time. We've been in my room, lying on my bed for four weeks now. I must admit that at the beginning it was great, but after a while it has become extremely exhausting, and ever since the hurricane began, all I really want is to get the power back and watch TV. Mono is offended; as usual, he wants all the attention for himself. I hope he soon comes to realize that I don't really like him that much. I am bored out of my mind, and every second I grow more and more irritated. What really gets me is that smell coming from the fridge: moldy mushrooms, rotten eggs, curdled milk, and spoiled tuna fish all in line to be cleaned out once this is over.

Mono doesn't care. He still wants to wear me out. Being with Mono is so much work. I don't think he understands what I'm going through. It is time to set the rules: "*Well you see Mono, I don't really think there's an easy way to say this but...well...you have to move out...It's not you...it's me...*" Whoa! That was pretty easy. Before I know it, Mono gets furious and attacks me. I begin to cough until I can hardly breathe. Finally, I understand that Mono is not leaving. After an extremely high dose of medicine, he calms down. I threatened to dial 911 and accuse him of abuse so he immediately proposes to make a deal with me. He promises that if I hang up the phone, he'll leave me alone as soon as he finds a new partner with low antibodies. Sounds good to me, after all I can't actually call 911 since the phone still isn't working. Gotcha Mono!

All of a sudden, my survival instincts spark up, and I get a great idea. Quickly, as if running away from a battle site, I drag Mono out of bed and we both stumble our way into the cold, dark garage. In a 20-by-20 room that I usually visit twice a day, I am more lost than ever. I turn on a lighter so at least we won't fall. Ah, I can see it: my old, ugly, burgundy Neon that has been parked all alone for weeks. Usually, I try to stay as far as I can from it. This car makes more noise than a mechanical lawn mower and is as slow as "Big-Brother's" brain. But today it's different. Today this Neon is my messiah.

Mono hasn't said a word. He is quietly observing every step I take. I slowly put my hand in my pocket and take out the keys. We both walk towards my precious baby and get in. I take a deep breath before continuing with my master plan. While I exhale I put the key in the ignition and wait for that heavenly motor noise. That is my cue. It's time to have a little fun. I turn the knob on the left of the steering wheel and suddenly a divine thing happens. We create light! There is an amazing feeling of power running up and down my body, and I feel a sudden impulse to turn the heat all the way up. Magically, the shivering stops. Then, Mono notices the *Enc* button, and I turn on the radio. The exhilaration spreads all around me as I listen to Eminem's song: "Cleaning out my closet." This guy should come in and clean my whole block while he's at it. I smile for the first time since Mono's advent. Suddenly I see an aperture on the board: A cell phone charger. Plugging in my link to the outside world, I put my seat back and relax.

So here we are, home alone, only Mono and I, winning a battle against nature in the middle of a power-cut town on a silent street, in the garage of a lifeless house, having a little party, inside of a parked Neon, surrounded by branches, leaves, and deadness...

A Hermit and Her Chair

So this is where I am now. In this small apartment, broke, and lonely. It's not even much of an apartment, either. Just two rooms: a bedroom, I rarely sleep in, mostly because my bed is covered with books and papers and it's so full of clutter that I can't concentrate enough to sleep; and a big room with my living room and kitchen. In the big room, a large bookcase fills most of one wall, with books I've read over and over and books I've never picked up, magazines, stacks of junk mail and unopened bills, and a small, dusty television. In the middle of the room is the sofa I sleep in and the chair I sit in. That chair. I stole it from my parents house when I moved in here. Well, I didn't really steal it from their house; I stole it from the corner where they left it so the garbage men could take it to the dump. It is the grossest, dirtiest, and most comfortable chair in the entire world. It's starting to smell like a combination of dust and dirty laundry, and I keep thinking that maybe one of these days I should clean it, but it seems all my energy keeps getting sucked away. I could never get rid of that chair, though. It's the one thing in this apartment that I value. My stereo is next to the bookcase, along with stacks and stacks of alphabetized CD's. Along the wall adjacent to the bookcase is a counter with my coffee maker and piles of dishes that have been there for who knows how long, a sink and a refrigerator that has nothing in it except milk, mustard, cheese, and a can of Columbia House coffee. The only things that break up my barren white walls are the small window with plain, vertical blinds, and the dark brown door with four brass locks. And that's where I live. It's disgustingly dirty, everything is dusty, worn clothes are strewn about, and I can't remember the last time I ever thought about vacuuming. It's dark, too, illuminated only by one naked light bulb hung from the center of the ceiling in each room. And, goodness, is it cold. But I can't turn up the heat because I can't afford it. I can't even afford my phone bill.

But this is my life. I sit and think in silence most of the time. Sometimes I listen to music, sometimes I stare out the window. Once in a while I might even go out. I went out yesterday. Down the street to a small coffee shop. I don't go in there often, but every time I do it seems the same woman is always working. I know her. Every time I go in, I order the same thing, a small French Vanilla with 3 creams and 2 sugars, and every time she manages to slosh some on the side so it makes the paper cup stained and sticky. Then she places it down on the counter and barks "\$1.16," that is, if she's having a good day. And I place my change; four quarters, one dime, one nickel, and one penny that I fished out of my jar of change; on the counter, take my coffee that had been sitting on the burner much too long, and that is the end of our interaction. But I know all I need to know about her. She's a miserable person, stuck in a menial job, stuck in a menial place, and she's too old and poor to ever get anything better. I know her so well because, in far too many ways, I am her. I'm a receptionist at an orthodontist's office about three blocks away. I only work on Tuesdays and Thursdays, thank goodness, because dealing with those soccer moms with their sport utility ve-

Amy
Schachtner
Grade 12
RHAM High
School
Hebron

hicles and their precious children's braces two days a week is just about all that I can bear. As far as jobs go, it's about as menial as they get. I do little to nothing most of the time, my co-workers ignore me, and my boss is a family man who sleeps with one of the other receptionists and checks out the little girls while he fixes their teeth. But, it's a job, and it puts just enough money in my pocket to support my hermit ways.

Yesterday was different from most times when I go out, though. Instead of rushing straight back to my apartment after getting my coffee, I decided to go for a walk. I wasn't at that time, nor am I now, sure why I decided to stray from my normal routine. Nevertheless, I walked several blocks in the opposite direction of my apartment and then sat on a bench and watched all the people for a while. It was a cloudy, cold, and generally unfriendly day. Everyone walked by and not one person smiled or even glanced at me. They were all much too caught up in their happy lives, with their jobs, their dogs, their kids they pretend to like, and their credit cards. For a long time I was thinking I might get a dog, but I decided against it when I realized that dog food is on the entirely opposite side from the bread and dairy sections. But it would be nice to have something that I could kick once in a while but would still love me unconditionally. So I sat there for what must have been an hour, just watching people and trying to figure out what exactly made them so damned happy. I couldn't figure it out, but I knew they all had so much that I didn't have. What a depressing thought. Then I remembered, this is why I don't go out, so I walked back to my empty apartment.

When I got back, I undid the four brass locks on the door and immediately redid them as soon as I entered. I plopped my depressed self down in my chair. "Why do I bother to leave?" I sighed. This apartment is where I belong. It doesn't matter if I'm crazy in here. If I'm worthless or unsuccessful in here, no one minds. Out there is everyone, parading around their success, letting everybody else in the world know how little they've managed to do with their lives. In here I don't have to know. It's safe in here.

I sat there for hours in the dim light, vegetative. Outwardly I didn't move. I barely breathed. But the thoughts kept running through my mind faster than I knew they could. I kept reminding myself what a large pile of nothing I had become. I would occasionally think of something else but, as soon as I realized it, I would remind myself again.

And then it occurred to me. All of those people are so happy because they know that, when they die, people will be sad. When I die, no one is going to care. Not one solitary person is going to care. It took a few minutes for that thought to sink in. "No one is going to care," I repeated softly to myself. Those quiet words resonated throughout the room. I thought in silence for a couple of minutes more until I could feel my anger start to boil up inside me. "Not one God damn person is going to care!" Those words burst from my mouth and didn't even begin to relieve any of my madness from that one single thought. I can never remember feeling more angry in my entire life. I jumped out of that wonderful chair that had supported me through all my moods before. It had cradled me for so long and sitting in that chair had given me endless excuses to perpetuate this pathetic lifestyle. And now I realized that that chair was what was holding

back. I looked at it, dumbfounded, as if my best friend had just betrayed me. I exploded suddenly and kicked it as hard as I possibly could, knocking it into the wall. I sat down on the newly chairless area on the floor, hugging my knees, tears streaming down my face. I sat on the floor all night, crying until I was too tired to cry anymore, but mostly just thinking. Thinking about nothing, about my life, and about all the things that I had not accomplished.

Eventually the morning sun began streaming in between the cheap blinds. My brain was too exhausted to think anymore, so I stood up. I walked around the room and looked out the window. On the street below me were a few people, probably walking to work. I guessed it was about seven A.M. I remembered being told once by an old friend that if I didn't like what was happening that I should change it, but that I would never change. I was just too anal. At the time, I didn't give a second thought to those harsh words. He was obviously wrong -- I was by no means anal. After all, there is a difference between being anal and being set in your ways. *I was not anal.* But, now what he said made sense to me. People pass me on the street and do not even notice me. If I stay like this, they will never notice me, and then one day I will die, and it won't make any difference to anyone. Maybe he was right. So maybe I'll change.

I walked into my bedroom and up to my jar of change. Hesitating, I pulled out five quarters and put them in my pocket. I put on my shoes and undid the four brass locks on my door, stepped into the hallway, and quickly redid the locks. Then I walked down to the coffee shop. The same woman was still working.

"How may I help you?" she muttered mechanically.

"A small French Vanilla with three creams and two sugars." She made it, sloshing some on the side of the cup, and placed it on the counter.

"Anything else?"

"No, that's it."

"\$1.16." I handed her my five quarters and she looked slightly surprised. She handed me my change, a nickel and four pennies. Ugh, I thought. Now I remember why I always brought exact change. I hate pennies. No, I reminded myself. It's not a big deal. They're pennies. Just pennies.

"So, how are you today?" I asked her, nervously. It had been a very long time since I had initiated a conversation with someone I wasn't being paid to talk to.

"I'm fine. You know, it's work. How are you doing?" She replied. Again, she seemed slightly surprised, as if no one had asked her how she was in so long she wasn't sure if people could see even her anymore, a fear that I could very much identify with.

"I'm doing all right, I think. We'll see. Thank you for the coffee," I said, taking my coffee, nickel, and four pennies, and walking home. Well, I thought, that was semi-successful. At least people can see me. At least I still remember how to have a conversation. How *am* I doing? That was an interesting question. Maybe I'll call my mom today, I thought. I hadn't talked to her in probably over a year. I couldn't remember if my parents even knew what city I was living in. Thoughts of past conversations with my mom ran through my mind. I missed her but, well, maybe I wouldn't call my mom. That seemed excessively stressful for

me one day. Maybe I would get a dog, though. I guess I'd have to just wait and see. All I did know for sure was that I was getting rid of that damn chair.



Timothy Van
der Voort
Grade 12
Woodstock
Academy
Woodstock

On First Looking into Keat's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer"

Cycle that stuff,
it's rough.
To be a critic
is acidic.
Muse the muse of another's muse.
Find some pretty words to use.
How long can one tale be told
before patience wears, the journey old.
Cortez would never say that he was Keats
standing where his twain'd page meets.
But no ill to so confused a man
to try, to touch, to verse if he can.
He stands upon the mountains of pages
the ideas and words to perch on the ages.
Sketch, scribble, scritch,
get confused with which.
Know what is needed to do.
Reach inside mercy,
make something new.



Edgar Degas' "Before the Ballet"

In hushed anxiety,
we wait
Amidst rustles of transparent tulle
legs sheathed in white
toes hidden beneath layers
of rosin
and satin
and leather

Amelia
Edelman
Grade 12
Weston High
School
Weston

and wood
and wool,
Camouflaging strength and grace.

I know it well
the august apprehension
the dusty scent
of exquisite costume
and delicate beads of sweat
the late afternoon light that creeps
and fades upon the shadowed floor.

The others queue up at the barre
stretching with expectation
to music not yet begun.
In placid preparation
poised for perfection
their limbs extend
their fingers flutter
like the anxious autumn butterflies
caged inside my chest.



Bookstore Blues

Pieces of styrofoam scattered across the vacant parking lot. From a distance, the building resembled a squished paper bag, slapped on a colonnade of fat, fake Greek columns. Pushed through the swinging doors. Walked to the children's section. Sat down. The world of reading blurred. Reading Grimm and Aesop was like watching television at three in the morning. I had scoured Roald Dahl's witty fantasyland, and there was nothing left to find. My eyes ached for black print -- the kind that provokes laughter and thought. Unfortunately, I was told that this type of print was extremely rare and quickly going out of style. A lot of take-out, short order books to be had, though.

While my sister played tag like a drunken idiot between the sagging rows of literature, I sat. The table was strewn with gray books, their bindings peeling. Wedged in, a shiny, hard-covered comic strip. I glanced at it. The cover drawing was of a little boy popping out his eyeballs. I had never cared much for comics, four-box jokes in great need of a laughing track. However, for lack of anything else to do, I flipped to the first page. "Not bad," I thought. I continued to glance through the collection. "Well, it's not as good as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, but it's a start."

Cristina
Tuluca
Grade 12
Stamford High
School
Stamford

Since that November afternoon four years ago, Calvin and Hobbes has earned a top slot on my reading menu. The two characters, Calvin, a mischievous six-year-old with a perpetual hair static problem, and Hobbes, a wise and sarcastic tiger, are a charismatic duo. Their personalities are distinct, and the animation is like a seven-course meal at a French restaurant. Watterson, their creator, has a talent for capturing expressions of surprise, fear, anger, happiness, confusion, and disgust -- especially when Calvin is eating gray glob that occasionally comes to life. Sometimes I laugh to the point of tears at Calvin's faces -- without even having yet read the strip.

However, it's not just the humor that caught my attention (and also my father's, mother's, and sister's,) but the depth of Watterson's words. Watterson utilizes Calvin as a tool to address society with his thought-provoking ideas. For example, in one of the collections, Calvin and Hobbes are standing next to a stump of a tree that is surrounded by filth and beer bottles. Calvin wistfully comments, "Sometimes I think the surest sign that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe is that none of it has tried to contact us." In a more humorous strip, Calvin questions Hobbes, "Do you believe our destinies are determined by the start?" Hobbes disagrees, and Calvin emphatically replies, "Oh I do. Life's a lot more fun when you're not responsible for your actions." In another, Calvin is confronted with the vastness of the cosmos. Gazing at the sky, Hobbes remarks, "What a clear night! Look at all the stars! Millions of them!" Calvin solemnly replies, "Yes, we're just tiny specs on a planet particle, hurling through the infinite blackness." After a moment of silence, he hurriedly continues, "Let's go in and turn on all the lights!" Watterson combines humor and sarcasm with ideas that concern life.

Calvin and Hobbes isn't just a commercial strip with superficial jokes and dull characters. They are alive. I can almost reach into the colored panels and ruffle Calvin's hair when he begins to devilishly grin, or rub Hobbes' tummy while he's sleeping by the fire. Calvin and Hobbes have affected my personal beliefs. For example, in one strip, Calvin is wearing a shirt plastered with logos of Gap, Abercrombie, Tommy Hilfiger, etc. When questioned by Hobbes of the purpose of wearing such a shirt, Calvin happily replies that he likes to assert his individuality the American way -- by buying clothes with labels so that he may resemble a walking billboard. Although I laughed at his answer, it affected the way I regarded the concept of individuality. After I read that strip, I never again bought clothing with the brand name printed on the front for everyone to notice.

About a year ago, I finished every *Calvin and Hobbes* ever published. Yet, unlike *Mathilda* and the *BFG*, which are marvelous stories, yet nevertheless, stories, I continue to learn from Calvin and Hobbes. The other day, I was listening to the incessant drone of the presidential campaign. It struck me that in half a page, Calvin and Hobbes could quickly denounce every aspect of our material world as trivial and superficial -- with a humorous twist, of course. As I become drawn into this adult realm of money, power and greed, and my personality begins to shift and develop, I hope that the Calvin within me will remain.

Ode to Factorials

6!

The number declares itself --
the first number on the page,
a proud number. It is too enthusiastic
for the Monday after vacation.

Factorials are maddeningly misleading,
with their seemingly sunny exclamations
that only really mean to multiply the number
by each positive integer less than itself.

The energetic symbol distracts me,
the daydreamer, who has a hard enough time
with math as it is. I can't help but contemplate
the lives of numbers, optimistic numbers,
vibrant and expressive numbers.

Or maybe they're angry numbers,
enraged at the students who carelessly mangle them,
impatiently asserting their existence.
Maybe, if I put my ears up close
to my math book, I might hear them
swearing in frustration: little algebraic curses.

Out of curiosity -- I know numbers
are supposed to be universal, unattached from fickle language,
but are Spanish factorials preceded by upside down !s,
like exclamatory Spanish sentences? Do they feel more comfortable
surrounded on both sides, punctuated with satisfying symmetry?

The preliminary ! in Spanish is like a road sign,
warning of strong emotions ahead.
Maybe it's the ! itself,
that footless line balancing precariously
above a dot, that has a personality.

Can the ! stand on its own,
like the exclamatory charm I wear on a chain
around my neck, an icon of directionless emphasis?

Or do the number and the ! go hand in hand,
partners in some mathematical crime? After all,
they have committed a theft of my time
and energy, and could surely be written up

Laura
Mandelberg
Grade 12
Simsbury High
School
Simsbury

for disturbing the peace,
with all their outspoken visual exhortations.

So now I pick up my calculator,
prepared to multiply 6 by 5,
4, 3, 2, and 1 -- to deal with the numbers
that shout, the numbers that rage,
the numbers that rejoice.

These numbers don't need words
to express themselves, to make themselves heard.
They only need a simple symbol,
a common gesture of closure,
to be meaning in meaninglessness.



Honorable Mentions

Courtney Escoda	Middle Gate Elementary School
Kelly Dodd	Old Greenwich Elementary School
Kelly Valette	Mary T. Murphy School
Emily Stumpf	Anna Reynolds Elementary School
Nicholas D'Agostino	Academy Elementary School
Rohan Paralkar	Academy Elementary School
Alexia Zagouras	Kathleen E. Goodwin School
Natalie Antenucci Weaver	Jeffrey School
Julie Blum	Daisy Ingraham School
Luana Dos Santos	South Street School
Stephanie Knowlton	Parker Memorial Elementary School
Julia Discenza	Lake Garda School
Megan Rand	Nathan Hale Ray Middle School
Becky Wagner	Earl M. Witt Intermediate School
Breana O'Brien	East Ridge Middle School
Alexandra Cassidy	St. James School
James Viega	Windermere School
Melissa Michels	Middlesex Middle School
Shelia Sennett	Sedgwick Middle School
Jonathan Meyers	Woodbury Middle School
Brittany Frohnhoefer	Fairfield Woods Middle School
Arijit Chakraborty	Irving Adler Robbins Middle School
Robin Warren	Fairfield Woods Middle School
Maria Genovese	Simsbury High School
Maddie Ward	Academy of Information Technology
Laura Dalton	Simsbury High School
Lindsay Carini	Mercy High School
Laurie Lomask	Conard High School
Suman Sridbar	Norwich Free Academy
Danny Wood	Conard High School
Matt Gallant	Simsbury High School
David Meincke	RHAM High School
Jessamyn Farkas	New Canaan High School
Antima Chakraborty	Farmington High School

Teachers of Published Authors

Leslie Abbatiello	Wilbur Cross High School
Betsy Acevedo	University of Hartford Magnet School
Asha Appel	Miss Porter's School
Robert Archibald	Simsbury High School
Tara Armstrong	Juliet W. Long School
Karen Barton	Tootin' Hills School
Carrie Becker	J. Milton Jeffrey Intermediate School
Valerie Bolling	Hamilton Avenue School
Diana Burns	Daisy Ingraham Elementary School
Joseph Calise	Berlin High School
Susan Caraher-Devine	The International School at Rogers Magnet
Christine Coffey-Carboni	King Street Intermediate School
Richard Collins	Latimer Lane Elementary School
Ginny Connors	Sedgewick Middle School
Jason Courtmanche	RHAM High School
Gwen Davidson	South Street School
Sandra Donovan	Norwich Free Academy
Diane Drugge	Stamford High School
Patricia Favolise	Gallup High School
Josephine Feola	Fairfield Woods Middle School
Sheila Ferrara	Osborn Hill School
Maureen Festi	Earl M. Will Intermediate School
Lori Freeman	Daisy Ingraham Elementary School
Michael Fulton	Staples High School
Annmarie Galgano	Parkway School
Kelly Gallagher	Hawley School
Joyce Grassl	Daisy Ingraham Elementary School
D. Greenidge-Copprue	Bruswick School
Susan Hackel	Sarah Noble Intermediate School
Phyllis Hameroff	McAlister Middle School
Michael Harten	Old Saybrook High School
Tom Hine	Sedgewick Middle School
J. Bradley Hoffman	The Dublin School
Jennifer Lanese	Hall High School
James Leigh	Pawcatuck Middle School
Mrs. Lemelin	Parker Memorial School
Maryann Lennon	Mathewson Elementary School
Monique Leonard	Myrtyle H. Stevens School
Marilyn Lindsay	Conard High School
Anne E. Lutz	Bedford Middle School
Holly Martocci	Saxe Middle School
Linda Miron	Simsbury High School
Laureen Mody	Osborn Hill School

Cathy Molnar	John Barry Elementary
Elizabeth Morrison	St. James School
Sally Myers	Regional Multicultural Magnet School
Penelope Odell	Masuk High School
Janet Orefice	Tariffville School
Breda O' Sullivan	North Stratfield School
John Perotti	Newington High School
Ms. Piatek	H. W. Porter School
Leslie Poltrack	East School
Susan Marie Powers, Ph.D.	Woodstock Academy
Jeanne H. Proctor	Old Saybrook Senior High School
Tami Raymer	Roxbury Elementary School
Paula Robinson	Simsbury High School
Gretchen Schwanfelder	Haddam-Killingworth Middle School
Michael Seal	University of Hartford Magnet School
Edward Siegal	Weston High School
Carolyn Simsarian	East Hampton High School
Amy Tenney	Weston Middle School
Ellen C. Visnyei	East Ridge Middle School
Jennifer Webb	Old Greenwich Elementary School
Pat Williams	Osborn Hill School
Edward Wolf	Middle Gate Elementary School
Laura Wonderlie	University of Hartford Magnet School
David Wooley	Westhill High School
Mary Ann Zoeller	New Fairfield Middle School