
CONNECTICUT STUDENT WRITERS

Volume V May 1992



FIFTH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



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Foreword

. . . I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and pity and compassion and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.

—William Faulkner

Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

This volume of *Connecticut Student Writers* marks the fifth year of publication. Five years—years where we have witnessed a war in the Middle East, the dismantling of Communist Europe, an emerging new “world order,” and at home, a faltering economy and lowered expectations.

Over these five years, thousands of Connecticut students have submitted their pieces for publication. In their attempts to “make sense” of their world, to “write their world,” these students have met Faulkner's charge. In the strong, forthright language of youth, they affirm the human spirit and confront the joys and terrors of their world with honesty and courage and hope.

The Connecticut Council of Teachers of English and the Connecticut Writing Project congratulate this year's authors. As you read these young writers, remember that their hope is with us and ours with them. Join us in celebrating the student writers of Connecticut.

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Romekka Petty
Grade 1
Kendall Elementary School
Norwalk

I Miss Dr. King

I wish Martin Luther King didn't die. I miss Dr. King. I miss him because he changed the laws so black people and white people can sit together and play together. Now, we have to do what Dr. King did. We have to keep the dream alive.



Adam Terrien
Grade 1
Plantville School
Plantville

The Dream

One night I had a bad, bad dream. It was a horrible dream. It was about me. A monster was eating me. The monster looked just like me. We were twins. Then something happened to the monster. He disappeared. I was scared but I had to find the monster. Then he appeared. I had to beat up the monster. He ran away and I never saw him again. Then I woke up. The end.



Nicole Fusco
Grade 1
Nathan Hale School
Enfield

The First Time I Rode A Two-wheeler

It was a sensation!
It was my first day riding a two-wheeler. At first, I got some bruises. But after that, I did not fall or get any more bruises, but I was scared and nervous. After, I rode my bike forever.
The End



David Soson
Grade 1
Columbus Magnet School
Norwalk

I Like Pizza A rhyme book

I like pizza in a tree, I like pizza all over me!
I like pizza that's okay, I like pizza I should say!
I like pizza yessiree! Won't you have some, come with me!
I like mine with extra cheese. I would like some meatballs please!
It's okay if you don't eat. I will put it all over my feet!
Now it is the end of the book. Close it so that we can look!



Building a House

I'm going to tell you how to build a house.
First you get an architect to draw the plans for the house.
Then you get a person to check the land.
Then you dig a hole if the land is big enough.
Then put some special boards in the hole.
Then you buy some fiberglass.
Then you put it on your house.
Then put the walls up.
Then paint the walls.
Then you buy a rug and put it on your floor.
Then it is done and ready for someone to move into.



Amy Burn
Grade 1
Prudence Crandall School
Enfield

The Pumpkin Family

One day there lived a pumpkin family. The littlest one said, "I don't like this house." The mom said, "We will move." And they moved and moved. At last they found a house and they decorated the house. Then they went to bed. That night the littlest one had a loose tooth. It was a pumpkin seed. She ran into her mama's bed and showed her. She said, "Mom, I need the pumpkin seed fairy to come." Mom said, "Yes." The night went on and on. The next morning she looked where she had left her pumpkin seed. It was gone. So she ran into mama's bed. She told mom how she lost it and put it under her pillow. She told her how the pumpkin seed fairy came and took her pumpkin seed away. Mom said, "That's what pumpkin seed fairies do." "Oh," said the little pumpkin. So they went down to breakfast and that's the end.



Elizabeth Frele
Grade 1
Redding Elementary School
Redding

Winter in the Country

Winter in the country is beautiful and white. Snow is drifting through the air. Snowflakes look like tiny cotton balls. Painted white branches are rustling in the silent night. Pine trees are all dressed in white. My windows are all covered with frost and my sled is ready to go. The snow is whispering, "Nicole, come out and play." When I go outside, my cheeks turn fluorescent red. My nose is like an icy blue popsicle. Falling snowflakes melt on my tongue. My snowsuit is so snug and warm. I

Nicole Fulton
Grade 2
Crystal Lake School
Ellington

run through fields of wet snow. Then I lay down on the cool white ground and make a beautiful snow angel. I look up at the sky and see the snowflakes swirling and twirling in the air. I love winter in the country. It's the best time of the year!



*James Potter
Grade 2
Riverside Elementary
School
Riverside*

The Seashore

As the waves rub
against the rocks
under the ground
crabs fiddle with their claws.
Overhead gulls sing
a high pitched sound.
Along the shore
people find shells
of all different kinds.
In the water a school
of minnows
dilly-dally around.
They swivel through rocks
and shells.
The seagulls sit on
the water
like a robin on its
nest.



*Stephanie Nachemja-Bunton
Grade 2
Allgrove School
East Granby*

The Talking Floor

Once upon a time, a mother, a father and a little boy named Michael moved into a new house. It was a magic house because it had a talking floor. One day Michael heard the floor humming to itself.

"Who's there? Who's there? Who's there?!" exclaimed Michael.

"Meee, Meee, Meee!" answered the floor. That's how Michael found out that his bedroom floor is a chatterbox.

Michael called the floor Jonathan. Jonathan made up bedtime stories and told them to Michael. The stories made Michael feel good and snugly.

Michael's parents never found out his bedroom floor could talk. One day

Michael's family had to move. He didn't want to move. Michael was feeling scared and sad. He told his parents he didn't want to move. His parents said they would stay. Jonathan and Michael lived happily ever after.



Clara's Christmas

It was a beautiful day and snow fell like powdered sugar. Clara cried as she planted the seed at her mother's grave.

"Clara, my stepsister, hurry up! The train won't wait." Clara hugged the tree that had grown from the grave with her tears. She'd never see it again. It would be used as a Christmas tree, the last thing of her mother. Now she had a wonderful and kind stepmother and stepsister. She hurried to the train. They were moving to the city. She'd never see it again. She sat on the seat, her nose pressed flat on the window, while the train went rickety-clack bang! Soon they came to her new house. This would be an awful Christmas.

Next morning after she had eaten breakfast, Clara went out with her stepsister. Veronica wandered off and left Clara behind. She hurried around in weeds and brambles, then she fell! Clara scrambled back up, only to hear a little voice. She looked down. There, on the ground was a fairy! The fairy had black, long hair that fell around her shoulders. She had long, transparent wings, a white gown and a face as beautiful as a cold night.

"Hello! My name is September! Who are you?" she said in a little sweet voice.

"I'm Clara! I'm looking for my stepsister!"

"I know where she is!" said the fairy, "Follow me." She rushed over to Veronica's side (the stepsister). Clara comforted the crying girl. They rushed to the new house, hand in hand. Veronica was smiling a wide smile on her tear-stained face. Five days went by, and in five days Clara and September played together. One day September asked Clara what troubled her. As soon as she heard about her mother's grave and the tree, she said, "Your tree is in great danger! Come with me tonight! Bring your stepsister!"

That night, the two girls went outside where they found September.

"Now we'll fly! Come here and I'll give you the powder I got from Great Aunt Tinkerbell!" Soon they were flying above the tree-tops to where the tree grew. Clara hugged her endangered tree, the last part of her mother.

"Hurry!" cried September, "We must take it before they chop it down!"

"Oh no! I will not be able to lift that thing!"

Suddenly, a bright light hurt the girls' eyes. There she stood; she was just the size

*Lily Sparks
Grade 3
Tracey School
Norwalk*

of Clara. Her huge wings flapped powerfully. Now her voice was strong, and she looked more beautiful than ever. Her hand grasped the tree and summoned the others. They pulled and tugged until out it came, with its roots wrapped tightly around it. Up they went, above the trees and houses, past all things below!

“Whee,” cried Veronica. Now it was snowing. Snow mingled with Clara’s tears. The next day was Christmas. The tree had been planted in the garden. It was the last tree of its kind in the world. Clara and Veronica hurried down. Clara found a gift addressed to her. She opened it up. It was a locket with a picture of her mother and the words,

BE KIND TO THE EARTH
AND IT WILL BE KIND TO YOU!

“Oh September!” Clara whispered. This would be a good Christmas after all.



*Abigail Veronneau
Grade 3
Flanders Elementary School
Southington*

Why is Everyone Laughing?

One sunny day in Pennsylvania, a little boy named Jason was doing homework from his special school that he goes to. His special school is for children any age with Down’s Syndrome. Down’s Syndrome is a type of disability some people are born with. These people all look alike and they learn slower than regular children.

While Jason was doing his homework his father and mother came in and said, “We have news for you. We are moving.” It was silent for a moment. “Where are we moving?” Jason asked.

His parents told him that they were moving to Connecticut. “You will be going to a new school; called Flanders School,” said his parents.

Jason asked, “Is it going to be like my old school?”

Jason’s father came over to him and put his hand on his shoulder and said, “No, Jason. You are going to go to a regular school.”

Jason felt surprised when he heard the news. He smiled at his parents but deep down inside he was very worried.

They finally moved. Jason had gotten used to his new house and it was his first day at his new school. He was eating his breakfast when he asked his mother if kids would laugh or make fun of him.

His mother looked at him sadly and said, “No dear, they won’t.”

Jason said, “O.K.” and at that very moment the bus had reached his house. He waved goodbye and hopped aboard. When he got on, the kids were looking at him, but trying not to. Jason thought they were just looking at him because he was a new student.

When Jason walked into his classroom, everyone started giggling. Jason went right up to the teacher and asked, "Why is everyone laughing?"

The teacher said, "I'll tell the class a little bit about you and you can listen."

As the teacher was explaining about Down's Syndrome a little girl named Sally said, "We weren't laughing because he has Down's Syndrome, Mrs. Chryzownoski, we were laughing because he forgot to put his shoes and socks on."

Everyone in the class started to laugh, even Jason and Mrs. Chryzownoski. From then on no one laughed at Jason at all and he ALWAYS remembered to wear his sneakers!



My Brother (Matthew)

When I see my brother sleeping,
I always wonder what he's dreaming.
A world of cuddly teddy bears?
Playing, dancing, running, jumping?
Coloring books with crayons bright as the sun?
Tan puppies?
Yellow Big Birds?
Fiery red Santas saying Ho! Ho! Ho!?

One eye opens, two eyes open,
Looks around and yells loud as thunder...
"Mommy!"
Dream's over, Matthew's awake.



The Ballerina Who Lost Her Toe Shoes

One day Karen was walking to dancing school. As she walked she looked into her dancing bag to make sure she had all of her shoes. She walked up to her dancing school. She opened the door and went in. She got her ballet toe shoes out, put them on and went out on the floor.

Karen danced and danced and learned a lot of new steps. She practiced at the bar and learned how to balance real stiffly and high on her toes. She bent real low on her plié without sinking down too far.

*Cynthia Henry
Grade 3
Riverfield School
Fairfield*

*Marisa Testa
Grade 3
John C. Mead School
Ansonia*

It was the end of the class and Karen was tired. She got on her sneakers and left, but she did not notice that her toe shoes were stuck under the bench.

Mary, a little girl in the next class came and saw that Karen, the best dancer that she knew, had left her shoes! Mary thought that if she took Karen's shoes, she would dance as wonderfully as Karen did. Mary put them on and went out on the floor to start her class.

The teacher began the warm up exercises, and then the teacher asked Mary to do a "tourjete." So Mary got up on her toes and tried to do this hard step. She just couldn't get it perfect! Not even with Karen's stolen toe shoes.

Suddenly Karen rushed back into the dance studio. "Excuse me, Miss Cheryl, I thought I left my toe shoes here, but I don't see them."

As Karen turned to leave Mary quietly called, "Wait, I found your toe shoes. I thought if I wore them, I would be as good a ballerina as you are, but it didn't work. I'm sorry," said Mary.

"The shoes don't matter," said Karen. "Come over to my house and I will teach you to dance like I dance. It takes a lot of practicing and you can use your own shoes."



*Maria Wang
Grade 4
Beecher Road School
Woodbridge*

Pearl

Once, a long time ago, there lived a very poor elderly couple named Mr. and Mrs. Lui. They lived in a home near the sea, on the coast of China. They were happy except for one thing. They never had a child. Although they longed for one, they never had any.

For a living, Mr. Lui dug for clams, oysters, and crabs and Mrs. Lui sold them in the market. One evening, when Mr. Lui returned home with a large basket of oysters, his wife started cleaning them to make soup. One oyster she opened held a large, pure white pearl! They were very excited to own such a precious object. Before they went to bed they placed the pearl on their night stand.

In the morning, they were awakened by a tiny cry. On the night stand, in place of the pearl, was a tiny child, no taller than a small marble. Mr. and Mrs. Lui were very happy to finally have a child of their own, even if she was tiny.

At breakfast, Mr. and Mrs. Lui decided to name the tiny baby Pearl. Even though Mr. and Mrs. Lui didn't know where Pearl came from, they loved her as if she were their own daughter. Mr. and Mrs. Lui taught her many things, but she knew more about the ocean than anyone in the village. Under their care, Pearl grew into a beautiful maiden. She had long black hair and was very cheerful. Everyday, Pearl was busy with the work that had to be done in the village.

Pearl taught the villagers where to catch the best fish. She also knew how to find the most beautiful pearls. With her help, the villagers never went hungry.

The people grew to love Pearl because of her kind ways. They thought of her as good luck.

One early morning, when the villagers were preparing to go fishing, the clouds became dark and the wind began to howl. The people gathered on the shore and looked toward the ocean.

Suddenly a large figure appeared above the waves. It was the King of the Ocean! He had a blue body that was covered with slimy green seaweed and was wearing a crown of starfish. "I demand you return Pearl back to the ocean!" he said in a thundering voice. The villagers didn't answer. They just stood there trembling. "If she does not return by sunrise tomorrow, I will cause a tidal wave to wipe out the entire village!" He then disappeared beneath the waves. All of the people quickly returned home. When Mr. and Mrs. Lui returned home, they begged Pearl not to leave them. She told them she'd think about it. Pearl knew that to protect the village and her parents, she would have to return to the ocean.

Early in the morning, before sunrise, Pearl quietly left the hut with tears in her eyes. She knew she would never see the village or her parents again.

Hurrying to the shore, Pearl dropped her scarf on the beach. She sorrowfully looked back at the hut that had been her home, and walked into the ocean where she immediately turned to sea foam.

When the Lui's woke up they found Pearl missing. Quickly they ran to the shore and began to weep when they found the scarf on the beach.

Mr. and Mrs. Lui lived in great sorrow all their remaining years. They received a little comfort from looking at the scarf, reminding them of Pearl's goodness.



The Great Snowball Machine

Summer 1975

"Well, why can't I play baseball?" Mike said to John.

"Because you're too short and puny. You can't even swing the bat and hit the ball and you can't catch grounders or fly balls," said John.

"So what," said Mike angrily. "I do my best and that's all that counts."

"Bug off!" John exclaimed. So sadly Mike walked home. The neighborhood kids, who were mostly all in sixth grade, treated Mike like he was dirt the entire summer.

Winter 1975

"Well, how come I can't play with you in the snowball competition on Crossberry Hill Road?" said Mike.

"Because you can't make a snowball and you can't throw it without falling flat on your face," said John.

"I do my best, and that's all that counts," said Mike.

*Christopher Dautel
Grade 4
Wilcoxson School
Stratford*

"Too bad. GET LOST!" John said angrily. So Mike walked home.

When Mike was on the way home, he found a book titled, How To Make Your Own Invention. Mike picked it up curiously and walked home. For the rest of the week, nobody saw Mike around. All the other kids started to get suspicious. Everytime they walked past his house they heard banging, pounding and squeaking. One day, Mike played sick, so he wouldn't have to go to school and he could work on his invention.

At three o'clock, when the big kids walked past his house, Mike got out his invention and started putting snow in it. Before the big kids knew it, snowballs were being flung into the air at them. This went on for a whole month. And every day the snowballs kept getting bigger and bigger. One day there was only one snowball. It was nine feet around! The sixth graders walked around the corner and that big humungous snowball scared the living daylight out of them. They froze in their tracks! They couldn't move! It came closer and closer and closer! Then SPLAT! That snowball knocked all ten kids down like bowling pins in one launch. The kids were so stunned that they never bothered Mike again.

Now that snowball, well, it was never heard of again but those ten kids sure learned their lesson from Mike and his fabulous Great Snowball Machine.

The lesson in this story is that you should let people participate in things even though they are smaller than you, younger than you or not as good as you. Because, you never know, that NINE foot snowball might just be lurking around the corner.



Regina Hunt
Grade 4
Carmen Arace School
Bloomfield

"I Can't Go Into That Room!"

I can't go into that room, I say.
It's got monsters and goblins who think I'm their prey.

They've got beady little eyes and a crooked little nose.
They've only got three fingers and forty-eight toes.

They've got a sharp little tooth that they call a peg.
And with it they bite and pull at my leg.

First they break off my fingers and gobble them down.
Then they take off my smile and make it a frown.

They cough and they sneeze and they twitch and they bite,
And. . .
Oh!

I think I'll just turn on the light!



Danse Macabre

The cemetery was dark and cold,
The cemetery was damp,
In the cemetery there was not a light,
Until the clock struck 12 times - MIDNIGHT.

It was then the cemetery came to life,
The graves began to shake,
Bony fingers reach-ed out,
Calling for others to wake.

The skeletons, they came to dance,
They came to have some fun,
Out of their graves they rose again,
They climbed out, one by one.

The skeletons formed a circle,
And began to dance round and round,
Then, lo and behold, their master rose up,
Rose up from out of the ground.

He was a skeleton, cloaked in black,
His face shadowed by a hood,
A crown rested upon his brow,
He was evil, far from good.

Out of his cloak he drew a fiddle,
Which he began to tune,
A towering, dark, ghostly figure,
Silhouetted against the moon.

A haunting, spooky melody
Floated through the air,
All the skeletons look-ed up
And stood there, silent, and stared.

Suddenly, Death, their master,
Raised his arms majestically,
Then played a deadly waltz,
Which the skeletons met with glee.

*Isabel Nelson
Grade 4
Northwest Elementary
School
Storrs*

They formed into couples,
To dance to the creepy sound,
Got into waltz position,
And danced, round and round.

But then came a sound yet unwelcome,
That stopped their merrymaking,
The cock threw back his head and crowed,
At which the earth began waking.

Death stared at the cock in horror,
Wondering how dawn could come so soon,
Then looked directly at the sun,
Which had taken the place of the moon.

The skeletons also heard the cock,
And sadly began to retreat,
Back into their graves they sank,
Their coffins they did meet.

Death, too, sank into the soil,
The upper world he did leave,
He went to where he had come from,
To wait for next Hallow's Eve.



Daniel Pinkowski
Grade 4
Mary T. Murphy School
Branford

An Alaskan Adventure

1

The vast land was cold and still. Mountains lined the snow covered ground. Two men struggled up a tall peak. They climbed through the knee-high snow, leaning over their large sled. Six breathless huskies did their best to guide the sled through the snow and ice, but they also suffered along with the men.

"What is that thing, Bill?"

One of the men turned to stare at a shadowy figure in the distance. Then he turned back around and scowled.

"It's after us, Jack. We'd better make camp."

Jack nodded. "Meat is scarce," he complained.

"We'll have to eat these." Bill pulled out a package of beans. The two men ate their beans in silence around a blazing fire.

"I've got to feed the dogs," stated Jack as he finished his beans.

Bill stared at Jack in admiration.

"Be careful," murmured Bill as he watched Jack walk off into the darkness.

2

As Bill awoke the next morning, he stared around the area where the fire had been. It had burned out, as usual. But then, he turned to where Jack was sleeping. He was gone! Bill immediately stood up and looked around frantically. The sound of twigs crunching caught Bill's ears. They were crunching under the feet of a human...

"Jack!" cried Bill in relief.

"I was out gatherin' some firewood for tomorrow," replied Jack. (Bill shed another sigh of relief.)

"Bill, how many dogs are there?" asked Jack in a puzzled way.

"Six."

"That's impossible. I fed seven dogs last night."

Bill scowled and took a deep breath.

"Remember that shadowy figure you saw yesterday?" Jack nodded.

"That was a bear, and I think it's still after us, Jack..."

"You mean that the seventh 'dog' that I fed last night was really a..."

"Yes, Jack, it was a bear."

3

Bill loaded up the sled and tied the cargo down tightly. As Jack hitched up the dogs, Bill shouted out with expression, "We're off!" And with a slap of the whip, they set out toward civilization.

Jack stared back at the forest and tried to catch a glimpse of any pursuing animal. He suddenly caught sight of something through the corner of his eye. It seemed to be some sort of huge, bulging creature. It seemed to very slowly be following him. He turned around and tried not to look back to where the creature was following him. In cases like this, Jack usually told Bill about the important information that he had found. But this time, he decided to keep it a secret. Jack was starting to get curious now. But he didn't turn around because he was afraid that the big, bulging animal was on his tail. His curiosity got the better of him. He whirled around and realized that the animal was no longer behind him, but was out of sight.

4

Bill guided the sled beyond the peak. The dogs though, were getting awfully tired. Bill decided to stop until the dogs rested up. He looked down to the edge of the hill where their sled was conveniently parked. It was a long way down, but at the bottom lay the civilization where Bill and Jack had to go for more supplies. Jack took a walk around the area while Bill fed the dogs. Jack walked slowly and steadily. He was as cautious as he could possibly be. Jack started to feel as if he was being followed. He could feel himself starting to perspire under his fur coat. Just as he

turned around, he saw a huge, hairy animal leap upon him and bare its fangs.
"Aggh!" Jack fell to the ground.

5

Bill was getting nervous. He had waited over an hour, and Jack still had not shown up. Finally, after a long time of thinking, Bill decided to set out and look for Jack. He did not leave a stone unturned. He whipped and scolded the dogs to go faster, but he only got more worried.

Suddenly, Bill noticed a big, brown object standing over something which was lying on the ground. Bill decided to go and investigate. As Bill got closer, he saw that the object on the ground was Jack and the thing standing over him was the bear!

Bill got off the sled and started to run toward Jack, but just as Bill was about to grab him, the bear swung around and knocked Bill to the ground. Fortunately, just as the bear was about to put an end to him, Bill slid over toward a stick which was lying right next to him, picked it up, and whacked the bear right on target.

"Roarrrrrr!" The bear whimpered off to the unknown depths of the forest.

6

The sled was fixed and the dogs were rested. Bill slowly covered Jack in a warm blanket and placed him very carefully into the sled.

As they rode over a small hill and scraped through the icy snow, Bill unloaded the supplies and prepared to pull into the civilization. He stopped the sled right in front of the entrance into the small town. He gloomily strolled over toward the dogs. Then he started thinking about all the good times he and Jack had together.

Suddenly something interrupted his thoughts.

"You didn't have to cover me so tight," said a muffled voice.

Bill turned around in puzzlement. Then he almost cried as he looked into the bright, gleaming eyes of Jack and shouted out with joy, "He's alive! Jack is alive!" Leaping upon the sled, he grinned a smile of happiness and excitement. Bill and Jack would be continuing their adventure after all.

§

*Allan Javery
Grade 5
Ridgebury Elementary
Ridgefield*

Poem

A bird flies high in the sky
Floating on a gust of wind.

The eagle circles above
waiting, waiting.

There it sees
Its first meal of the day.

A newborn baby rabbit
Knowing the eagle was coming.

The mother dives for cover
Leaving its young behind.

As the eagle swoops down,
It spreads its wings.

The eagle opens its sharp golden talons
And it strikes.

As it flies away,
It carries with it the rabbit.

High above, waiting in a tree,
Three little eaglets await their mother's return.



Pickle Power

Gramma's plane was nearly two hours late. I had been looking around in the gift shop without buying anything for so long that the clerk finally kicked me out. By the time Gramma arrived at four o'clock, I was in a snit and my parents had taken away my allowance for the next three decades. I guess my face must have looked a little twisted out of shape because when Gramma first saw me, she said, "Lizzy, have you been eating sour pickles again?" Then she hugged me and tried to pinch my cheeks, but I blew them up with air so she couldn't get a good hold. She laughed and then I laughed and we all went to pick up her suitcases.

I could hardly wait to get home so that we could have a real gabfest. I didn't know what I was going to tell her, but I would find a way. I knew that she would believe me, eventually, because I had some proof.

While we were walking to the car, I squeezed her hand and whispered, "Gramma, did you ever have a dog named Danny Heinz Fifty-Seven Kinds?"

She smiled and said, "I sure did, Pickle. When did I tell you about him?"

I grinned up at her and said, "Pickle Power." Gramma calls me Pickle because when I was little I used to love dill pickles and because when I get mad my face kind of twists out of shape.

*Elizabeth Archibald
Grade 5
Seymour School
East Granby*

After dinner that evening, Gramma and I took a walk to the playground behind the school. Even though it was only March, we didn't need sweaters. Gramma wasn't used to our Florida weather and said she thought she should wear a hat and mittens. Finally I persuaded her not to embarrass me by looking like a bundled-up snowman.

"What was that you were saying about my dog Danny at the airport?" she asked as she was swinging and I was climbing on the jungle gym.

"Well, he and I are good friends," I answered mysteriously.

"Do you mean you know another dog named Danny?" she asked.

"No, I mean I know your old dog Danny," I insisted.

Gramma laughed. "I guess he came back from the dead?" she asked.

"Not exactly," I said, "but you're close."

"Tell me more," she said.

"Well, Danny is best friends with Aunt Olive's old cat Meow Davenport, and the three of us have been having fun together," I said.

"For land's sake," Gramma exclaimed. "I wouldn't have been able to remember that cat's name for the life of me! Did you find some old letters or something?"

"No, I went back in time and I was you!" I blurted out.

"Sure, sure," Gramma said sarcastically. "Did you find a time machine somewhere in the attic?"

"I mean it, Gramma, but it wasn't a time machine exactly. I think it was sort of a tesseract, you know, like in that book we read together," I said.

"Oh, Pickle, I think your imagination has gone haywire," Gramma said.

"Listen, Gramma, you're the only one I can tell this to. Everyone else will really think I've gone crazy."

"You're serious, aren't you, honey?"

"You bet your suspender buttons I'm serious," I exclaimed.

"OK, Pickleseed-sourpuss, tell me all about it."

"It's a long story."

"Shoot. I'm all ears."



Chris O'Neill
Grade 5

R.D. Seymour School
East Granby

The Plunge

Early in the evening
The birds circle the ocean
Waiting for a fish to come in sight.
The sun is like a great big flaming ball of fire
Yellow, orange and red
Reflecting off the water.
The beach gets much colder.
The sun plunges into the waves.
Beneath the sea, the sun sleeps.



Desperately Coping in St. Petersburg

A city in Russia
Vaguely known by its actual name
 St. Petersburg
But called Leningrad
By the common folk.

LENINGRAD
Gateway from Russia to the world
Filled with hope
 Ballerinas danced
 Poets wrote
 Artists created.

Littering to the people
Is like feeding the streets
Of what they have so little of, paper.

Beggars barely seen
When beggars are sighted, their words
Repeat in peoples' minds.
Beggars seem to be at the doorstep
Of death.
But when people pass
No more coins in beggars' pockets.

Lines for food
Never ending - miles back - hours long
Food so scarce
People raiding farms.

While the people raid
Their hearts are dropping
To the tips of their toes,
With the goblin of guilt
In their thoughts.

Now this sad happening-
Leningrad exists no more.
The beautiful cultured Leningrad is dead.
Leaving us with
Poor almost non-existing
 ST. PETERSBURG.

*Kristen Coleman
Grade 5
Ridgebury Elementary
Ridgefield*

Tracy Wu
Grade 6
Academy School
Glastonbury

Waves of the Ocean

They lap against the rough ridged rocks
Against the sand, warmed by the sun.
Sweeping in gravel, shells and sealife.
Sweeping out gravel, shells and sealife.
The deep aqua water
Cools us,
Calms us
And floats out to the ocean again.
Salty aroma fills the air,
As a callous storm presents itself
To the world.
The waves crash,
And throw themselves onto the sand.
Time passes, and the waves calm,
To return to the
Gentle lapping,
Lapping,
Lapping
Against the warm sand and the rough, ridged rocks, once more.

§

Rob Hicks
Grade 6
Canton Intermediate School
Collinsville

Death

Death is
Hard Sharp
Like a guillotine
Fast Sting
Like a hit from a hand
Never do it twice
Deep Dull
Like a punch in your stomach
Strong Heavy
Like a baseball bat in your back
Never do it twice
New Strange
Like the day you were born
Bitter Easy
Like drinking poison

Never do it twice
Thick Sticky
Like a sap-filled balloon
Metal Wet
Like a knife
Never do it twice
Why do it once?



The White Ballet

Twirl and jump
With ribbons flying behind,
Flutter like a snowflake
Be graceful like a swan
Be a part of the music.
Become part of the picture.
Once again you are swept
Away into the music.

Silence!
You are fresh and dying,
Turning ghostly white
Shake!
You have heard bad news
That white brings
Leap!
Your secret has escaped,
You must mask it with white
Fall!
Shake with sympathy
For the one who died
Twirl!

You are part of the wedding
That white has caused
Spring!
The blankness of the paper
Jumps out at you,
Leaving you wondering, thinking

Shira Kafer
Grade 6
Latimer Lane School
Simsbury

Freeze!
The silence is broken by applause
And once again you are part of
The real world.



Graham Sheldon
Grade 6
Canton Intermediate School
Collinsville

Little Red Riding Hood

The grandmother was sick in bed,
so the girl with the hood of red,
said, "Mother, dear, may I bring some treats,
for our sick grandmother to eat."
"Yes," replied mother with a smile,
"make her happy and stay awhile."
Off she went with basket in hand,
skipping and hopping, but you understand,
there are bad kinds of creatures in this land.
But just by bad luck, coincidence, misfortune,
she met up with the gruesome wolf, teeth sharp and eyes
scorchin'
now Red was quite sharp and keen witted,
told the wolf where she was going and got ridded,
of the wolf, also smart, took a short cut,
got there before Red and knocked on Grandma's hut.
"Who's there?" cried poor Grand lying in bed,
"It's me," said the wolf with basket and shawl red.
He came in, and did meet two blue eyes,
but then shoved in a closet turned distress surprise.
The wolf's scheme was working out well,
now to dress up like Grandma with make-up and gel,
finally Red was close and approaching,
the wolf licking his lips, ready to do some poaching.
Knock, knock from the door, the reply, "Come in",
and as Red came, from the closet a din.
Little Red sat, but saw to her surprise,
said, "Grandma take Visine, just look at your eyes!"
a very gruff Grandma replied and said,
"The better to see you with implanted in my head."
Again something struck her with fears
"Grandma are you okay? Watch out for your ears."

Said Grandma, "The better to hear you with my dear."
My gosh, oh Grandma, they look so lethal.
Just relax take a breather take a look at your teethal.
To this reaction the wolf jumped up fierce
and drooling said the better to eat you my dearth.
The wolf was chasing,
Red was sure racing.
Good thing misfortune turned into luck,
there happened nearby a woodsman named Huck.
Hearing all the bustle and commotion,
went in gear, hit the road, came in motion.
Came blasting in where Red and wolf were,
Huck chased 'em out, the scene turned quite gruesome.
Red being saved asked Huck to be a twosome
living as wife and husband.
That is when poor Grandma was found
so the treats were eaten on grass and ground,
at a picnic where there was much laughter,
and as they say everyone lived happily ever after.



The School for Girls

"But Mom, I don't want to change schools," Anne said.

"You're going to have to. I'm sorry you have to change your school. I know you don't like it at the moment, but your father's got to move because of his job and all," replied Mom with a sigh.

"But I don't want to go to Japan," moaned Anne.

"That's the problem, Anne."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you have to go to boarding school." She rushed on, "It won't be too bad, honestly, your friends will be able to sleep over every night. . .once you make them."

Anne stared at her Mom in horror, "Boarding school!?! Me? You must be joking. I won't be able to cope, how could you do this to me! I understand about Dad and all, having to move because of his job and you having to go with him - but boarding school!"

Ten minutes later Anne was on the phone with her best friend Paige.

"Anne, you can't go to boarding school, I'll be stuck with Rebecca all by myself. The only reason we stay friends is because of you! You're just going to have to tell your parents you can't go!"

*Laura Aldred
Grade 6
Academy School
Glastonbury*

"It's not that easy," Anne said with a sigh. "My Dad has got to move because of his job in Japan. My parents feel I'm too old to go to Japan and learn Japanese, so the only thing they can do is send me to boarding school. It's just not fair - oh Paige, what am I going to do? I don't know if I can look at my parents without screaming at them."

"Listen," Paige said sympathetically, "Meet me at the Pizza Place and we can have some dinner and talk this over. There has to be something we can do."

Later that night at the Pizza Place, Anne met Paige.

"Hi!" said Paige.

"Hi!" Anne replied.

Anne and Paige sat down in corner seats.

"Paige, help me!" Anne said straight away.

"Calm down, let's talk this over. Now - you said you had to go, but it's your life. You can't let your parents ruin it; you have to stand up to them."

Anne could tell Paige had prepared a speech before she came. But Anne knew it seemed like good advice to Paige because her parents were not moving to Japan! If her mother heard her talking like that she would go crazy!

"Can I take your order?" the waitress said.

"Yeah," Paige said, "Um, medium size, tomato, cheese and mushroom - oh yeah, and two Cokes."

"Paige," Anne said after the waitress had left, "will you write to me?"

"Anne, you shouldn't talk like that."

"I guess you're right," Anne sighed as the waitress came with their pizza.

As the car pulled away, Anne gave one last look at her house, tears filling her eyes. Anne knew that this was the drastic change that she had been thinking about. She thought the change would be nice, like her reddish-orange hair turning into a beautiful black or her freckles (though she only had four) going away. "No," she said, "I'm going to boarding school."

They were there. Anne's father got out of the car and opened the door for her saying, "Well, what do you think?"

"OK, I guess," was all she said.

There were two ladies walking towards them. When they got to the car the elder one said, "Hello, my name is Miss Carter. I'm the principal of Sussex School for Girls, and this is Miss Burnes, Vice Principal and English teacher. She will show you to your room while I talk to your parents."

Miss Burnes led Anne to her room and then poked her head out of the door and called out, "Sarah, Robin, Vicky, come here girls and meet your new roommate, Anne."

Three girls walked in and said, "Hi, Anne."

"Hi," Anne said with a stiff mouth, trying her best not to cry.

Miss Burnes left them to talk amongst themselves.

Anne sat on her bed and got out her Garfield toy Paige had given her for good

luck. Now that she was feeling better, Anne took a look at the girls around her. Sarah, she noticed, looked a bit like Paige; she had the same expressions and hair.

The girls were chattering and trying to include Anne, telling her they knew how it felt to be new and that she'd soon fit in as everyone was so nice.

Anne felt herself beginning to relax. By the time her parents walked in, she was talking as much as the others. She looked at her mother's worried face and smiled at her reassuringly. "Don't worry, I'll be fine." Anne surprised herself by finding she meant it.



A Life of Change

Yesterday I was a stormy ocean,
Rolling my way past harbors,
Never stopping to help a poor, shipwrecked sailor,
But making few enemies in my path.

Today I am a subtle stream,
Weaving through obstacles to escape harm,
Working into rapids of fierce anger,
But finding a gentle way out.

Tomorrow I will be a babbling brook,
Bubbling through luscious green forests
Where native plants derive fresh water from me.
Their companion for life that gives help to others.



The Wise Man

There was once a very wise man who traveled all over the world to give advice to the people who needed it most. He came upon a baker in France who had become tired of his simple work.

"I have nothing else to live for," said the baker. "I no longer love my work. Can there be happiness in the world for a man who no longer loves his work?"

The wise man took the baker by the hand and led him to a small window of the bakery. "You see there?" he said, "There is a world waiting to give a man who no longer loves his work a new work to love."

The wise man then traveled to England where he met a priest who was unsure of his religion.

Catherine Williams
Grade 7
Gideon Wells Jr. High School
Glastonbury

Brooke Kelly
Grade 7
Bedford Middle School
Westport

"Wise man," said the priest, "I am unsure of my religion. When a priest is unsure of his religion, how can he be sure of anything?"

Laying a withered hand on the priest's shoulder, the wise man replied, "You may be unsure of your religion, of your life, but you can always be sure of God."

The wise man next went to Israel where he came upon a man who had lost his arms and legs.

The man said, "I have no life. I hardly have a body. I feel as if I am no longer a human."

"A human," said the wise man, "is held together by one thing alone. Arms and legs don't make a person; a heart does."

Now the wise man went to New York City. There he met a little girl living in the slums of a run down housing project.

"Each day I see people lying in the streets dead. I see greed and crime. I have never seen the light of happiness," said the child, "and I never will. I have lost all faith in the world."

The wise old man stood there speechless for a moment. Then he replied, "When a child has lost all faith in the world, there is no need for a wise man." He turned and walked away. Soon he was swallowed by the dark shadows of the looming buildings.



Heather Murphy
Grade 7

Chalk Hill Middle School
Monroe

The Snowfall

I reached up and pressed the button. The garage door started to rise with a jolt. Then a dull hum filled my ears, the sound reverberating off the cement walls. I walked toward the garage doors, dragging my old orange sled with the blue handles that were falling off.

Then, as soon as the garage door was up - silence. The air was so still and quiet that when I stepped into the powdery snow, the noise startled me. There was no wind, no shouting children - just quiet.

Crunch, crunch, crunch. I walked over to the top of the hill. Suddenly, I heard a jingling noise. I jumped, and whirled around. It was just my dog, Ginger. Boy, did I feel stupid! I called her down and tried to coax her to sit in the sled. After awhile, she did. I used the heel of my boot to push us off, and we began to rocket down the hill.

Ginger immediately jumped out. That put the sled off balance, and I tipped over, landing in the snow. I stayed in that position, there in the snow on my back, staring up at the grey sky. After awhile, Ginger trotted up and lay down beside me.

In my head, I danced and drew pictures. I was a singer, then an actress, then myself again. As me, I had freedom to do whatever I wanted for an entire week. Yeah, that was better than being anyone else!

I thought about my school, my friends, my cousins. I just let my head swim.

I turned my head to one side. My dog was still there. I reached out and ran my hand over her soft, golden fur. She thumped her tail against the snow, spraying wet powder in my face. Laughing, I wiped my cheeks with my sleeve. Then I stood up and headed for the house, thinking about how good hot chocolate would taste.



The Canoe Ride

A quiet cabin sitting by a still lake,
Dad and I riding in a canoe -
He and I paddling,
And the soft plunk of the paddles in the water.

Dad and I riding in a canoe,
Enjoying the quiet and the beautiful view,
And the soft plunk of the paddles in the water,
And Dad yelling as I almost let my paddle fall loose from my hand.

Enjoying the quiet and the beautiful view,
And the beautiful woods on the opposite shore,
And Dad yelling as I almost let my paddle fall loose from my hand,
Precious time that I shared with my father.

He and I paddling,
And the soft plunk of the paddles in the water,
A quiet cabin sitting by a still lake,
Dad and I riding in a canoe.



Michaela

Michaela huddled against the wall, protecting the long black hair her mother had so lovingly brushed and curled for her first morning at Woodville Primary School.

"Stupid Chinese girl!" taunted a short blonde girl, using her fingers to pull her eyes into slits. "Why don't you go back where you came from? We don't like you." She grabbed a lock of the black curls and pulled.

Michaela winced and tears flooded her eyes. "I'm as American as you. I was born right here in America, in Farbrook, New Jersey."

*Harry Smith
Grade 7
Dolan Middle School
Stamford*

*Johanna Kalb
Grade 8
Bedford Middle School
Westport*

"Then why do you look different, Slanty Eyes?"

"Why do you have a boy's name?"

"Hey Michael, this stupid girl stole your name!"

Michaela burst into tears and fled. The kids didn't bother to chase her, but their taunts followed her as she ran out of the school yard. She went to the bathroom and cried for a few minutes. "Why do they hate me?" she wondered. "What have I done wrong?"

The afternoon was better because she sat near the teacher in class. Michaela walked home by herself. "I'm not going to tell Mom," she decided. "I'm going to deal with this myself."

The next day was even worse. The children tortured her. They called her names and pulled her hair. Michaela ran home crying. When she got to the door, she stopped. "Mommy's feelings will be so hurt if I tell her what they're saying about us. Well, I'm not going to tell her." Michaela ran out into the yard and climbed quickly into the treehouse her father had built her. She cried and cried. "What have I done wrong?" she wondered.

"That's your treehouse!" a small voice said incredulously. "Can I come see it?"

Looking out of the tree and into the next yard, Michaela saw the small blond girl who had been so mean to her. "I guess so," Michaela replied hesitantly.

Michaela and the blond girl, Katie, played happily all afternoon. Michaela was happier than she'd been since she left Farbrook.

Katie and Michaela walked to school together the next day. A group of kids huddled together in the schoolyard. Michaela hesitated, but Katie grabbed her arm and pulled her to the center of the group. A short girl with heavy braces on her legs stood there, trying not to cry. The children were teasing her, making fun of her braces. Michaela felt terrible. She wanted to help the girl, but she didn't want her new friends to be angry at her. Determined to prove herself to her new friends she called out, "She's stupid. You're only supposed to wear braces on your teeth."

All the children laughed. Michaela felt happiness flood through her. Her new friends thought she was funny. Someone pushed the girl over. This time Michaela joined in the laughter as they watched the girl struggle to get up.



Sarah Laffargue
Grade 8
Mystic Middle School
Mystic

The Rain

I stared at the sky, watching the clouds drift by. My golden blonde hair spread over the yellow daffodils, the green grass cushioning my body. It was so peaceful here in this field. I remember playing here with my father in this field after church in my new sundress.

The clouds kept running by. It started sprinkling lightly. The rain pelted on my

face, progressively getting faster and harder, but I did not move, I was too peaceful and tired. I closed my eyes and let the rain run down my face.

Suddenly I was running and laughing. My purple flowered sundress trailed behind me. The sun was shining brightly. As I ran, I could feel the grass tickling my legs.

"I'll catch you," my father yelled playfully in his monster voice.

I squealed and tried to run faster but just tripped in the overgrowth. I got up quickly, but my father grabbed me by my waist and we both fell to the ground laughing. My dad's laugh lines around his eyes made him look older. When I was little, I loved to rub my face against his brown mustache, and play with his full head of brown hair. We did not look alike, except for our identical blue eyes.

I spread out on the grass and looked at the sky. My dad put his hands over his eyes to block out the glare of the sun.

"Daddy?"

"Whatty?"

"I'm gonna fly someday," I said matter-of-factly.

"We all would like to. I'll take you on an airplane when you get older."

"No," I said, irritated, "I mean, when I get older I'm gonna fly, really fly. You know. . . all by myself, no wings, no nothing, all by myself."

I opened my eyes slowly and looked around. It was not raining. The sun was shining, and the grass glistened, with only the memory of the passing rain.



A Friendship of Childhood

When I
Walked down the street
A wave
Of nostalgia
Swooped down upon me,
A bird of prey,
Grasping its kill
In unyielding claws.

My driveway
Came into view
And recalled memories
Of us
Playing baseball
You stood near the car

*Emily Bolon
Grade 8
Saxe Middle School
New Canaan*

And patiently taught me
How to throw
Like a boy.
Hours passed,
We,
Children in our own world,
Completely oblivious.

Traveling further,
I passed your house,
Its wooded yard,
A perfect harbor
For childish games of
Hide and seek.
The gargantuan tree trunks,
Legs of giants,
Obscured my view.
Your revealing shock
of golden hair
Always gave you away
Anyway.

Then I spotted
The place
Where you crashed on your bicycle
While doing your paper route.
I,
Only twelve,
Heard your cries.
Rushing down the street,
Which seemed to have become endless,
I found you,
A limp rag doll.
Clinging to my shoulder,
I dragged
You home.
Washing your cuts,
I noticed,
Out of the corner of my eye,
Your smile,
Peeking out
Through streams of tears.

It wasn't long after this
When I was at camp
And found out the news.
You were moving
In five days.
Our friendship
As ephemeral as a springtime flower,
Was being ended
Without a final goodbye.
I cried,
Looking back on memories
That somehow bonded
Our childhood innocence
Into one.



A Christmas Star

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mrs. Jones	A woman, approximately 38 years of age, attractive figure, shoulder length hair, who works as a 6th grade teacher in an inner city school
Mr. Jones	A tall, handsome, business executive and president of his own company
Lauren	11 year old, pretty young girl, who is quite spoiled and selfish
Jonathan	Lauren's six year old brother
Susan	An 11 year old girl with very few family members left (they were killed in a car accident). Susan lives in a town shelter at the Marriott Hotel where she shares a room with four other distant family members. She is a rather tall, plain girl, a student of Mrs. Jones.
Narrator	Provides the background in the play and keeps the reader informed of the action

*Meredith Bucci
Grade 8
Hillcrest Middle School
Trumbull*

ACT 1, SCENE 1

Narrator: It is the day before school closes for the winter holiday, December 20. The weather is cold and threatening snow again. The scene opens in Mrs. Jones' 6th grade homeroom, room 205. The children are bustling with excitement and are waiting for the bell to ring.

Mrs. Jones: Susan, May I speak to you for a moment, please? (Susan proceeds to the front of the room to Mrs. Jones' desk.)

Susan: Yes, Mrs. Jones?

Mrs. Jones: I would like to extend an invitation to you, as I have already discussed this with your family, to have the Christmas holiday with our family. I am sure they would love to have you with us, and we would like to share our Christmas joy with you.

Susan: (very surprised and temporarily speechless) Oh, I would love to spend the holiday with your family, if it is okay with my family. I have never been away from them before, but I do not think they'd mind. I am afraid I have nothing to bring your family, though.

Mrs. Jones: Oh, Susan, we would just like you to be with us. Nothing else is important. I will work out the details with your family and will pick you up at the hotel tomorrow around 4:30 p.m.

Susan: (almost in tears of happiness) Oh, thank you Mrs. Jones. This is going to be the best Christmas I have had in a very long time. I am very excited to be a part of your family for the Christmas holiday.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Narrator: It is now December 21. Mrs. Jones and Susan pull into the driveway of the Jones home. Light snow has begun to fall and the first snowflakes fall on the windshield of the car. The house is brightly lit and waiting for the two to come home.

Mrs. Jones: (turning off the ignition) Here we are, Susan.

Susan: Mrs. Jones, your home is absolutely beautiful. It is so decorative.

Mrs. Jones: (smiling at Susan) Thank you, Susan. Let's go inside and meet the rest of my family.

Narrator: Susan walks inside behind Mrs. Jones. Her eyes are big bright pools of darkness as she takes in the details of the main floor of the house. She looks all around and her mouth gapes open at its beauty, size and very festive decorations. Her exploring comes to a halt when she hears feet running down the winding carpeted staircase and a young boy appears.

Jonathan: Mommy, Mommy. Look what I made for you in school today. (He hands her a picture mounted on bright cardboard.)

Mrs. Jones: Oh Jonathan, is this for me? I love it! Thank you so much. I will put it on the mantle so that your dad can see it when he comes home. Jonathan, this is Susan. She is going to stay with us for a few days. She is a student of mine.

Jonathan: Hi, Susan. Do you want to see my room?

Susan: I'd love to see your room, Jonathan. Just lead the way.

Narrator: Susan and Jonathan go upstairs. As they disappear from sight, the front door bursts open, letting in a burst of cold brisk air. Lauren slams the door behind her.

Lauren: Hi Mom, what's for dinner? (as she pulls the scarf from around her neck and unbuttons her coat)

Mrs. Jones: (coming to greet her from the kitchen, wiping her wet hands with a dish towel). Hi, honey! We just got home a few minutes ago and dinner will be ready in an hour. I have a surprise for you. There is someone I want you to meet. Susan, could you please come down here for a minute?

Narrator: Footsteps and laughter are heard upstairs. Lauren looks quite confused and a look of surprise fills her face as she sees Susan and Jonathan hand in hand walking hopping down the stairs.

Mrs. Jones: Lauren, this is Susan, a student of mine from school. Susan, this is my daughter, Lauren.

Susan: (extending her hand in a waving gesture) Hi, Lauren. It is very nice to meet you. Your mother has told us so much about you at school.

Lauren: (harshly scrutinizing Susan) Hi, what are you doing here?

Mrs. Jones: (in a low voice) Susan is our guest for the Christmas holiday. She will be spending some time with us, and I'm sure that the two of you will get along beautifully.

Lauren: (scowling) That is just great! She is going to spend all of our free time here, with us? She just better not get in my way, touch my stuff or go near my room. She looks like a ragdoll. You entertain her, Mom. She is your guest. (Lauren starts to turn on her heels avoiding looking at Susan).

Mrs. Jones: Lauren, I cannot believe what I am hearing. Susan is our guest and she will be treated as such. She is a very welcomed addition to our family for the holidays. I think you had better go upstairs and get ready for dinner. I will speak to you in a couple of minutes. Now, go upstairs!

Mrs. Jones: (to Susan) I am sorry for the way Lauren just acted, Susan. She has some serious adjusting to do and a lot of learning about others' feelings, beside her own.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

Narrator: It is now about 7 p.m. and Mr. Jones has just returned from work in the city. Susan and Jonathan were watching TV in the family room and Lauren is nowhere to be seen.

Mr. Jones: Hi everyone, I'm home. Boy, is it getting very slippery out there. (as he is shaking some loose snow off his hat and collar of his coat) Hi, honey (planting a kiss on her cheek). How was your day? Crazy?

Mrs. Jones: (smiling at him) It was great. I would like you to meet our little house guest for the week. (summoning Susan to her side) Susan, this is Mr. Jones.

Susan: Mr. Jones, it is very nice to meet you.

Mr. Jones: Susan, it is a pleasure to meet you. I hope you enjoy staying with us.

Mrs. Jones: (whispering to her husband after Susan and Jonathan go back into

the family room) Lauren is upstairs. Apparently, she does not feel the same way that we all do. She does not like this arrangement. She would not even talk to Susan. I do not want to make her feel uncomfortable. Maybe you can talk to her later, dear.

Narrator: Dinner is ready, all sit around the table and Lauren is summoned from upstairs to join the rest of the family.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

Narrator: Christmas Eve has arrived. The house was very festive. The girls spoke very little during the day, as they helped Mrs. Jones with last minute shopping, wrapping, cleaning, etc. They were all tired from a very long day and now were ready to retire for the evening. Jonathan had already gone to bed.

Lauren: (to Susan) You know why you're here, don't you, Susan?

Susan: Your mother is a very special person, Lauren, and your family is wonderful. I really do not know why she chose me to come to stay with your family.

Lauren: (in a cold and icy manner) Because my mother feels sorry for you, because you do not have anything of your own. Personally, I could care less about you or anyone like you. I have my own problems. Why should you have to come and spoil my vacation?

Susan: (in a very meek and upset voice) That is not true. I am here because. . . well because Mrs. Jones likes me.

Lauren: You know that is why she had you come here, don't you? She feels sorry for you and all the teachers were taking stray cats into their homes so my mom had to do it too. She really did not want to.

Susan: (now sobbing quite uncontrollably) No, you're wrong. Oh, please tell me you are lying!

Narrator: Mrs. Jones comes into the room to kiss the girls good night and to wish them a Merry Christmas. As she turns the light off, she hears Susan sobbing under her pillow.

Mrs. Jones: (pulling the pillow away from her face) Why, Susan, what is the matter, dear? Why are you crying?

Susan: (sobbing, hardly able to get a breath) I know the truth, Mrs. Jones. Lauren just told me. She told me the real reason why I am here, because you felt sorry for me. I thought you really liked me for me. I don't want anyone feeling sorry for me. (still crying)

Mrs. Jones: (trying to soothe the young girl) Oh Susan, that is not true. Lauren is just jealous of you, I think, because we are devoting so much attention to someone else besides her. Please do not worry, Susan. You are a very special young girl and I am very fond of you. Please try to get some sleep and we will work this out in the morning. (Mrs. Jones lightly kisses Susan on the forehead, strokes her hair, and gets up from the side of the bed. Susan falls asleep some time later.)

Narrator: Christmas has arrived. A new blanket of snow covers the land. The pine trees in the yard are laced with snow at the edges. The sun is bobbing its head up and the first birds have begun to sing. In the house, the children awaken too. They run downstairs to see what surprises are there for them under the magnificently decorated tree. Christmas carols are playing softly in the background. Susan has gotten up, and very reluctantly goes downstairs to join the others. She is surprised to find that there are even some gifts for her under the tree.

Lauren: (addressing her mother) Why did you get Susan anything? She doesn't belong here.

Mrs. Jones: Lauren, I have tried to make you understand. I want Susan to have the best Christmas she has ever had. I wanted her to come to our home and be welcomed by all of us. She has been without a family for a long time and I wanted to make this particular Christmas very special to her. She goes without so much all year. I wanted her to share in our happiness. We have so much. It is up to us to be able to share what we have with others.

Narrator: Lauren and Jonathan proceed to rip open their Christmas presents. Susan sits on the edge of the sofa, watching them, and drifting off to look at the star at the top of the tree. She sat mesmerized by the spirit of the very special day. She was so deep in thought that she was startled when Mrs. Jones called to her.

Mrs. Jones: Susan, I believe there are a few presents for you tucked under the tree.

Susan: I can't believe it. Oh, thank you Mr. and Mrs. Jones.

Jonathan: (very excitedly) Open them now, Susan. I want to see what you got. Merry Christmas, Susan!

Narrator: Susan opens the presents that the family has given her. Lauren just sits and stares at her.

Lauren: Hey, (as Susan carefully opens the gift wrap and ribbon from the package) that box was mine! I want it back. NOW! (Mr. and Mrs. Jones look horrified at each other and then back to Lauren. Susan, quite embarrassed hands the package to Lauren.)

Lauren: (after she understands the looks of her parents hands the box back to Susan) Here Susan, I was mistaken. This is not mine. I made a little mistake.

Narrator: Susan was so thrilled with the present. She had never had such a fine gift. She was then handed a couple of more presents and this time ripped open the wrappings. She was so excited! Mrs. Jones begins to open her present from Lauren.

Mrs. Jones: Why Lauren, this sweater is lovely. The color is just perfect with my new skirt. I will wear it today. Thank you honey.

Narrator: She is handed a present by Jonathan and kisses him. He sits on her lap.

Mrs. Jones: Oh Jon, thank you so very much. This is what I always wanted, next to the picture you gave me, of course. This is my favorite perfume.

Narrator: A silence filled the room and Lauren glared at Susan. Susan, quite uncomfortably and somewhat embarrassed, pulled something out from under the sofa. She addressed Mr. and Mrs. Jones.

Susan: I am afraid that I had no money to buy you beautiful presents, like the sweater or the perfume. I do want you to know that I am so very happy to be here. I wish I did not make Lauren so unhappy though. I do like you, Lauren, even if you do not like me. But I do want Mr. and Mrs. Jones to have something that I made myself. I enjoy drawing very much and I made a drawing for you. It is the star at the top of your Christmas tree. It is a magic star because it

brought me here to you for Christmas. I am so very happy to be here and sharing it with you. This is the Christmas star, (pointing to the picture on the paper) and it is filled with so much love from my heart to all of yours. I love you all very much.

Narrator: Mr. and Mrs. Jones are speechless for a moment, and then hug Susan with heartfelt thanks and love. Jonathan joins in the hugging. Lauren jumps up and runs up the stairs toward her room. Mrs. Jones begins to get up and Susan asks if she may go first.

Susan: (entering Lauren's room) I am really sorry, Lauren. I never meant for you to have a miserable Christmas because of me. I want you to like me so much. I do not have as many friends as I am sure you do, but I want so very much to be your friend.

Lauren: (sobbing) Please go away, Susan.

Susan: (still sitting on Lauren's bed) I would give just about anything to have a room like yours, the clothes you have and all the things you have. But most of all, Lauren, I just want you to know that you have the most precious gift of all, and that is a family who loves you so much. I miss my mom and dad so much, but especially around the holidays, when I see so many others happy and laughing with their own families. I enjoyed sharing that in this house for the last couple of days. I would love to have a mother to tuck me in at night, or someone to help me when I need help, or a friend when I need one. You are so lucky. I had to tell you that before I go. I am leaving today. I am going back to the shelter. I will not ruin any more of your holiday. The day is early. You can have your family back now. (She gets up to leave.)

Lauren: (wiping her tears from her cheeks) Wait. Can we please try all over again? I will try my hardest to make you forget the way I have been acting. I would like you to stay. I had no idea of what your life was like, nor did I really care. I guess I have a lot to learn about people and about life. I am very sorry for the way I acted. I think my mother did a very kind and wonderful thing by letting you come here this Christmas. It has taught me a great deal about myself and about the true meaning of Christmas and of giving to others. May I begin again with you? Can we be friends?

Susan: I would love it. (She puts her arms around Lauren and hugs her.)

Narrator: Susan and Lauren go downstairs laughing, arm in arm, while Mr. and Mrs. Jones stand there smiling and crying at the same time. They all look at the tree and stare at the magical Christmas star that shines so brightly atop the majestic tree. The star looks even brighter now than it did before.

Merry Christmas!



Busy Signals

We spend our time laughing, chatting
Wheeling, dealing
tying up the phone lines
of our lives.
Oblivious
To all those receiving our
busy signals.



Colors

The sky was gray again today. I hate it when it's like that. The clouds are mapped all over, and there's no sun or color slipping through anywhere. When we first came here, it was like this, too, and I wondered what kind of beach has hazy weather. There were a couple of weeks that the sun shone through, and it was like a different world here. Everything kind of lit up and filled out with color. It was really gorgeous, especially the sun sets. I love watching the sun set. Bright orange and vermilion red and golden yellow hitting the gray water. I love the colors that the world can sometimes perform. Now the water is just gray all the time, and at night the black comes to envelop it, no sphere of colors or anything. I wish the sun would come back, though.

"Steph, dinner's ready." My mom's voice released me from my thoughts.

"Is Dad up?" I asked, but I already knew the answer.

"No, and don't wake him. He's relaxing."

My dad is always sleeping or "relaxing" as my mom calls it. You'd think he was really sick or something; but it's not even that serious. Dad was working straight through the summer since money became tight with the recession. Months ago, July I

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think, he had a nervous breakdown. It wasn't really as scary as I always thought one might be. He just came home one day from work and sat down in his easy chair and wouldn't talk, eat, or anything. My mom got really frightened. She kept asking "Jack, Jack honey, what's wrong? Are you okay? Jack, Jack. . ." I thought her questions were really dumb - I mean of course he's not okay. Just look at him. So a couple of days later she took Dad to the doctor. By then he would say things in short sentences, and the only thing Mom got out of him was that he was really tired and that all he wanted to do was sleep. The doctor concluded that Dad had had a nervous breakdown from too much stress and should take a vacation or find an easier job. Mom then started yelling, "Why?! Why did this happen to him? Why!" Then she broke down and started to sob. I know all of this because I was outside the office listening. My mom didn't want me to go, but I demanded that I must. It was really sad, but I didn't know what to feel or how to react. I mean, how should I act around him now? We were once very close, and that changed so abruptly. I was confused.

So after that, Mom told me to pack a big suitcase because we were going some place quiet for a long while to spend family time. I was mad. My summer was practically ruined. But, after I got over my anger, I started feeling bad. It wasn't Dad's fault, and I guessed I should make the best of it. So I did. Or at least I tried to.

That was when we ended up here on Cape Cod. Our house is on the beach, but it seems like the weather is always mild, never hot like summer is supposed to be. But since it's a couple of days before September now, I suppose the weather isn't going to get any brighter.

"Steph, come on! The hot dogs are gonna get cold!" My mom broke into my thoughts again.

"Yup, be right there." I replied. I got up from my window sill and went into the kitchen. The house reflected the weather. It only looked pretty when it was sunny. Strange house.

I sat down at the table with my mom. She's attractive for a mom; my friends always told me. She and Dad were or are, I don't know anymore, a good couple since he is attractive, too.

"What were you doing?"

"Nothing, just thinking," I answered.

"You should get out, meet some kids. We are going to leave soon, and you'll want something to remember this place by."

"I already do," I thought, but I said nothing.

"How's Dad?" I said.

"Okay, just tired." My mother was definitely an optimist. That is beneficial most of the time, but she bothers me by making things look better than they are.

"Mom. . . when will he be back to, well, you know, normal?" I knew perfectly well that my questions about Dad would make Mom edgy and disapproving, but I wanted to ask anyway.

"He's fine now. Just see for yourself," she snapped defiantly. "But don't you dare disturb him!"

Something inside of me seemed to bite away suddenly. I pushed my chair from the table and ran out to our deck, which overlooks the ocean. The wind lashed away at me, and I felt the sting of the cool air against my face. The waves spilled onto the rocks, not caring what or whom they hurt. The ocean was so blue, and I wished I could go jump into it and never have to face life again.

But I couldn't.

Then I heard a cough, and I looked to my right and saw my father. I hadn't even noticed he was there. He was just sitting there calmly, glancing at me for seconds at a time. There was an empty deck chair sitting diagonally to his so I figured I'd sit down, but not for his sake.

I turned to gaze at him, with all my vehemence churning inside of me. I wanted to scream at him and tell him what he'd put me through. I wanted to shout and cry and make him hurt the way I had all this time. I wanted to fly out and pound my feelings into his ignorant head, putting my violent feelings, which had eaten away at me, to rest. But most of all, I wanted to go over and hug my dad, cry into his arms, the way I used to when I was little, and the way I hadn't for so long.

But I didn't.

I stared at him through my tears pouring down my face. He looked at me, and his expression told me that maybe things would be all right now.

So both of us remained there in repose, while the wind became bitter, and the sun died into the ocean, until the stars were hung in the night sky. And once again he and I parted company, silently complacent with one another.



The Dinner

"It's time to eat!" My younger cousin Kim burst out of Ada's old-fashioned basement kitchen and into the family room, where my father and uncle were watching television and we were playing Cat's Cradle. My mother, aunt, and grandfather appeared from the kitchen with Ada and Joe. Ada was my grandfather's second cousin, and we had come to Boston to visit her and her husband, Joe.

We had just returned from Quincy Market in Boston, and since Ada had forbade us to eat anything there, we were all ravenous. We all squeezed around the table in the cozy family room, then a deep bowl of ravioli and homemade sauce was set before us. We helped ourselves to the ravioli and piled our plates high with meatballs and sausage.

Everyone was eating contentedly. My cousins had sauce smeared on their faces, and even my talkative grandfather was silent while eating. I glanced over at my father. He was not Italian, and some of the less common Italian dishes did not always appeal to him. Everyone enjoyed ravioli and meatballs, though, and my father had filled his plate for the second time already.

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Suddenly I realized that Ada was not present. She was in her little kitchen, bustling about her old stove. My mother and aunt noticed, too, but no amount of coaxing could persuade our busy hostess to sit down. "Later! I will-a eat-a later!" she said.

Ada was a short, plump lady in her early sixties. She had come from Italy when she was sixteen, and now lived near Boston with her husband, Joe. Ada's small, split level house was decorated with elaborate, out-dated furniture. The gold and white European-style end tables in the upstairs living room, or parlor, as Ada called it, held out-dated bric-a-brac such as small china figures and vases of plastic flowers. The aged furniture must have been top-of-the-line in its time, but now it looked old and faded.

As we were finishing our ravioli, Ada appeared with a pan of baked chicken and potatoes. Ada surveyed the big bowl of ravioli, of which we were barely able to eat half. "Dio mio!" she exclaimed. "Eat, eat!" I was already full, but I managed to take some chicken and potatoes as Ada nodded approvingly. She stared at my father's dish, which was empty. "Dave! Come on-a!" She heaped a large spoonful on his plate, and he could only sigh and pick up his fork.

Next, Ada insisted that my father try some spinach pizza and stuffed mushrooms. Everyone else thought them a delicious treat, but my father wrinkled up his nose in disgust. He managed to squirm about in his chair and move the mushrooms around on his plate until Ada turned her back, when he slid them on my mother's plate. But Ada noticed, and clicked her tongue disapprovingly.

As a final course, our hostess carried in a giant dish of eggplant parmesan. She set it right before my father, and gave him the biggest piece. With much urging from Ada, he finally put a minute forkful in his mouth. He went a little pale while swallowing it, and quickly reached for his glass. Ada threw up her hands angrily and opened her mouth to scold him, but my mother interrupted. "He's English," she motioned toward my father.

"Ah, Ingles!" Ada threw up her hands. "When-a you eat-a in Roma, you do like-a da Romans!" she replied.

When we were done eating we could hardly move from our chairs, but Ada had the table cleared and was washing the dishes before anyone could offer. And, of course, we had to have a generous helping of ice cream and spice cake.

After we had relaxed a little, we said good-bye to Joe and thanked our generous hostess, who tried to persuade my grandfather to stay overnight and made us promise to celebrate Thanksgiving with her. She then hurried into the kitchen and called my father after her. A few minutes later he appeared, balancing a gigantic tower of leftovers in his arms, securing it with his chin. It took us almost two weeks to finish Ada's leftovers, but our fond memories of the biggest, most delicious meal we had ever eaten lasted long after.



He, the Master

As he listens his eyes can wander.
His soft ears revolve noiselessly,
simply drinking in the wonder of it all.
A spider web winks at him mischievously
and a shadow flits over his poised reflection.

It's the red flowers in the pot that hold the most fascination today,
the scent that rests in the nose,
beckoning for recognition.
He sniffs suspiciously.

We are his slaves; he is our master.
He is following the never-ending pilgrimage
for endless affection, which we,
simple humans, must provide.

He can't contain the excitement he feels, and he is off.
Over the grass.
His back glints and shudders in the sun.
Goodbye Cat.



The Backyard

Shimmering banana curls fly in the wind,
A little sprite rides an imaginary horse with wings on its feet,
A satin dress kisses the coat of velvety gray.

A great willow tree cascades into a palace,
A million enchanted flowers, with special names
like Alexandra, Rebeccah, and Victoria, sing their various songs.

Delicately entwined in a branch,
A wondrous line of silver spun rope holds the royal laundry,
Drying in the playful sunlight.

The Queen Mother lies in the swaying grass,
Mesmerized by a leather bound romance
With pages, yellowed and torn.

Chloë Fowler
Grade 9
Greenwich Academy
Greenwich

Amanda Wiehe
Grade 10
East Granby High School
East Granby

Giggles overflow animated blue eyes,
That dance like fawns in an open meadow
Starlight twinkles in one set of pearly white teeth.

“Mommy! Mommy! I’m a princess!” a golden voice sings in gaiety.
“I know, sweetheart. I know.”



Kristy Howe
Grade 10
Watkinson School
Hartford

Remember Me

Remember me when our flower dies
When this part of our lives withers—
stunned
tired
bored—
On the windowsill.
Pick it when I’m gone.
Run your fingers over its dryness.
Feel it crackling
And know that there was life inside it.
Don’t
forget
To crush it with taut skin on bones.
Let the pieces lift from your flexed hand
Into the wind,
To take me away
From the cracked windowsill,
The musty flower pot,
And you.



Cairn Ely
Grade 10
Granby Memorial High
School
Granby

A Hungry Young Boy (with apologies to Edgar Allen Poe)

I knew it was my destiny. It was the only thing I thought of. You may think me mad, but I tell you this was fate.

It hadn’t been long that I had this feeling. My mother went grocery shopping, and it started. The pressure built slowly beginning with me noticing the box of them in

one of the brown grocery bags. I could actually feel the tension grow against my chest stronger and stronger. I tell you it was like having my body caught in a vise. It seemed as if this anxiety created a staleness in the air that just hung there, mocking me, while my mother was putting away the groceries, but not the chocolate chip cookies. No, it seemed that she knew what was happening to me. Slowly, she put the eggs away, then the cereal, next the cucumbers, but still the cookies remained. She knew! I tell you she knew, and there wasn't anything I could do to hurry her in her task.

I started to blubber incoherently about how she could speed up and get to the cookies. My speech began as a low mumble and grew into screams of rage. Shocked, my mother turned and gave me a look of complete bewilderment, as if she didn't know, the devil. Then it dawned on me that this was the wrong approach. Does a predator lash out wildly at its prey without any preplanning? No, I had to wait. You see now how crafty I was. And still you think me mad? But they would be mine - all mine! Of this, I was sure. As I retired to my room, leaving the kitchen, my mother withdrew the box of precious morsels, and she said something about me staying away from them. She enjoyed this torture.

It was the following day when I proceeded with my plan. The chocolate chip cookies were in a jar on the highest shelf in the cupboard. I knew I couldn't reach them through normal means, this would take time. Oh, but that was on my side. Patience, yes, patience was my weapon. I would go slowly, ever so slowly, so as not to arouse the female demon that was reading in the living room.

The first step was to get to the counter top. There were cupboards below it which would be my stairs. I grabbed the cupboard door and started to pull gently; gently it came open. I leaned down and cleared away the pots and pans, leaving a space for my feet. Carefully, I put one foot on a shelf, then resting my hands on the counter for balance, I placed my other foot next to the first one. The tension was so tremendous, and the room so silent. I needed to relax, so I took a long deep breath. Does a mad-man judge himself this well; is he so careful? No, and still I was in complete control.

Next, I lifted one knee onto the top of the counter. Under the weight, it let out a loud screech. I dared not move. Long minutes went by, and I was in the same position, but no sounds came from my mother. Cautiously, I raised my other knee so that I was kneeling on the counter. I took another deep breath to celebrate my cunning. And do you see this cunning? Surely, you have found my manner too convincing to think me mad.

Then, I rose to my feet, so that I was standing on the counter. Suddenly my concentration was broken. A weird, unearthly sound came out of the living room. After a bit, I recognized it as snoring. My mother must have fallen asleep on the couch and was snoring in her sleep. Of course she snored. Any monster like that would be crude enough to snore. Well, all the better. Now, I would surely be successful.

I crossed the counter to the cupboard which held the jar of chocolate chip cookies. I could smell them. Oh yes, I could smell them. At first it was faint, but gradually

it became stronger, yet stronger, until my mind was possessed. I had to have them! I needed them! I could feel a gnawing in my stomach. I craved them!!!

Impetuously, I yanked open the cupboard and grabbed for the jar. But my hand knocked over the wheat thins, and a chain reaction started. Like dominoes, all of the snack foods in the cupboard fell over, one after another. To my horror, the teddy grahams tumbled into a salt shaker, which then fell to the counter with a loud smash. I turned to stone. My fear of being caught by the feminine fiend kept me glued to the spot. I listened intently to see if the sound had been detected. Each second passed as if it was an hour, but five incredibly long minutes after, I decided to go on.

I grasped the cookie jar and took it from the cupboard. They were in my hands! Before retreating I picked up the shaker and righted the boxes of snack food in order to hide my blunder. Quickly, I made my way to where I was above the cupboards I had used before. In order to climb down the shelves, I had to put down the jar. I carefully descended to the floor, not making any noise. All at once, a sound came from the living room. She had awakened and was coming into the kitchen! I wavered undecidedly between escaping with or without the jar. Ignoring the possible consequences, I took the cookies and dashed into my room.

After a half-hour, I had eaten three dozen cookies, and there wasn't a crumb left in the jar. Apparently, my mother hadn't noticed the missing chocolate chip cookies. Just then, she called me into the kitchen. Again, I was frozen with fear. But she hadn't uncovered my actions. I had been too careful, too silent. I wiped my mouth with my sleeve to make sure there wasn't any evidence.

I went to the kitchen. When I arrived there, my mother told me to sit at the table. She started asking me about school. I answered about my grades and was at ease. She didn't know. But of course, I had already figured that out. My grades were good too, so I totally relaxed. But now she was talking faster and a little louder. Her voice rose and rose in my ears until I couldn't hear my own thoughts! In turn, I started shouting my answers. My arms gestured wildly as I got out of my chair. I wandered throughout the kitchen and yelled to her. She still sat at the table and talked. My dad came into the kitchen and joined my mother at the table. The two demons chatted between themselves and also questioned me. I was frantic! My stomach started to churn. At first I didn't notice, but soon a low growling was coming from it. It grew until I could not hear anything else. I felt sick. My parents still talked. I cursed! I shrieked! Yet, my stomach roared. I felt the partially digested cookies bubble in my belly. Still my parents conversed! But - oh, wait - they knew! They were mocking my horror. I was crazed and they wouldn't stop! No, no, I couldn't take it!

"Stop, evil-doers!" I screamed.

My body convulsed and I felt the cookies rise in my throat.

"There!" I shrieked, "there are your wretched cookies!"



Untitled

Halloween I spent with a chemistry book and calculator to
pass the time
Christmas for me was 4:30 p.m., December 23rd
My childhood is gone from my mind, and I cannot find it or
make a new one or steal one from my friends who were more
CAREFUL
My school bag is filled with the responsibilities of an
adult thrust on a child in a world full of children
wanting to be adults
Not knowing how but pretending very well to each other and
to themselves
Childhood outruns us and we ask, "Do we really want or need
or care for it?"
We don't know, or we just don't want to
As we trudge to our old schools and new schools and say
our pledges of allegiance to the gods we trust and the
people we don't
Live our lives in an ignorance special and close to our
hearts but one which we do not tolerate in others
My uniform doesn't fit anymore on me or people like me,
but can we find new ones?



Depression's Reflection

The beach is still and quiet except for the breaking of the waves upon the shore. The sky is grey and heavy, and in the distance I can hear a low rumbling of thunder. I walk slowly through the cool white sand, and then when I reach the middle of the beach I sit down. I grasp a handful of sand and watch as it sifts through my fingers. When it has all gone, the silver ring on my finger catches my eye. It is a simple band with a small deep purple stone in the center. Sometimes, the stone seems black and mysterious; other times a brilliant violet shines off the silver band. Inside of me, something stirs, and all my emotions boil and rush through me. I jump up screaming and run to the water, rip the ring off and throw it as far away into the grey ocean as I can. Then I stop. My lungs are heaving and my heart is racing, but at last I am calm.

I was sitting at my desk, doing algebra calculations when I received the phone call. It was from Todd. I knew something was wrong from his voice. When you are

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Stamford High School
Stamford

Bridget Green
Grade 10
St. Bernard High School
Uncasville

friends with someone for a long time, you can sense when there is a problem. Todd was not only one of my closest friends, but he happened to be my boyfriend, too. Well, not for long. He had called to break up with me, using as an excuse that he didn't want to put a strain on our friendship. Of course I was upset, partly because I knew that wasn't the real reason he wanted to break up, and partly because I knew that we could never go back to being so close.

When I hung up, I slipped a Paul Simon CD in my stereo and flopped down on my bed. Then I reflected on the good times I had had with Todd. (That's part of my problem; I live too much in the past.) I had images of us coming back from a day at the beach, all sunburned and salty, but very happy. More than once we missed the bus and had to walk the two miles back home. I remembered the night Todd got his license and he planned a drive to a fancy restaurant out-of-town. About fifteen minutes after leaving my house, his car broke down, and we spent the night dancing at an old disco club in our fancy clothes. I remember how much we laughed that night. The last memory of Todd was when I went on a trip for a couple of weeks and on my return Todd took me to the beach for a walk in the moonlight. When we reached the middle of the beach, he stopped and then gave me a simple gold lover's knot ring and told me never to leave again. My thoughts were interrupted by the grandfather clock chiming downstairs.

When I got to school on Monday, everyone had heard about my break-up with Todd. I received a lot of what I didn't want - sympathy. However, my best friend Hawke was quiet about the whole issue. Then at the end of the day, when I was walking to my locker, I glanced over at Todd's locker out of habit and I almost dropped. There he was with one arm against his locker over a girl who was backed against it. She had short blond hair and was smiling coyly at Todd. At first I thought I was seeing ghosts, but then she laughed and I knew it was her. Only one person laughs like that. . . it was Hawke.

I got out of there fast, but not before seeing Todd and Hawke kissing at his locker. I ran wildly, finally finding a door and rushing outside. Tears blurred my vision, and I accidentally knocked someone over. Then I tripped over their fallen books and stumbled to the ground, bruising my ankle. I didn't stop, but kept running until I reached my house. I crept up the stairs to my room, hoping not to disturb my father who was sleeping on the couch. (My mother died fourteen years ago and my dad works nights and early mornings at a chemical plant.)

I had an urge to write. I used to write a lot; however I always wrote fiction stories never poetry. But I had this unexplainable black hurt that I felt could only be expressed by poetry. And so I wrote down my innermost and darkest feelings in a dark blue notebook long into the night.

I continued to do this day after day, slowly becoming more and more anti-social. After a while people stopped inviting me places, and even though Hawke and Todd had broken up and tried to talk to me, I just blocked them out. I was late for school and always ran home when the last bell rang. I didn't talk at dinner, which didn't

matter because my dad was hardly ever home by 6:00. I thrived on the night darkness and would take long walks in the pitch black.

My father began to notice the change in my personality, and he switched to a day job, so he'd be home when I was. He tried to keep up a conversation when we ate, but it was difficult. Then one day at dinner I had this strange feeling, and I brought the blue notebook downstairs and showed it to him. Things between us changed. He became my friend. We went to places like art museums, big cities, the theater, and we even went to the opera once. Together we read poetry, and I read him more and more of my own words. My dad gave me what he called a ring of change; it was a silver band with a purple stone set in the middle. The stone appeared to change to different colors, from deep black to a shining violet.

Then my father became one of my poems. It was a poem about death. He weakened, and we no longer went anywhere. His skin was damp, saggy and wrinkled. His clothes hung loosely on his once manly frame, which was now sixty pounds lighter, and his bones stuck out. His hair fell out, and he had to be hospitalized because he couldn't feed himself. Then one day he died. I experienced the loss of my father, my closest friend; but in my mind he was only a page in my dark blue notebook.

The sun is shining brightly,
But I hide my face.
I want to be alone,
But not lonely.
If the sun's rays were not so harsh
I would not be irritated.
But they scorn and scorch me
So I wish I were far away.
In a world without color
A cool, dark place
With the wind blowing, but not moving my hair
I would feel nothing,
Just space surrounding me.
I am alone, totally, and there is nothing.
I cannot be free of this
But I have no desire to leave.
No sound is heard, no hate is felt,
But there is no love either.
There are no interruptions
And the silence is forever.
But I cannot stay.
Something pulls me even though I don't want to go.
Life calls me away from that deep eternity
Which is death,
And its penetrating presence leaves my mind reluctantly.



Joel Burges
Grade 11
Conard High School
West Hartford

I Do Not Want You Ever To Die: A Poem in Four Parts

1. ANDREA

I do not want you ever to die,
even if my memory squeezes our walks and talks close.

On that June night, like a night ride home on a black highway -
the sky a blended black. . . blue. . . purple. . . violet -
the moon lingered on the edge of a fairy ring: palest of yellows,
the stars were silver stoplights in your soul.

I listened to you, and the pain resounded in your voice,
as if a star pattered and bumped into death, and light
flickered away, darkening a piece of the midnight sky.
As if our frozen tears burned a flower in cold, white flames.

I wanted to hold you. Sometimes I still do.
I longed to warm your body just enough to melt
someone's tears;
to make your blood so hot that it could heat you
in a snow-covered grave.

Maybe you and I became one bird:
a purple, violet, blue, and black swan.
We stretched our neck, leaned into the air,
and flew. We returned a moment later.

I don't want much, my friend:
I do not want you ever to die.

2. KARI

I do not want you ever to die,
for your voice and your music
fill the air with sound, like
crickets that pluck violin strings,
and the notes breathe a question into
my ears. My soul vibrates an answer.

I remember your red, wet eyes that morning
I remember when you tickled my smile as the

music slipped from your violin. Your soul
is as sturdy as sheets and sheets of golden
blue silk. You cut out a pattern from the
fabric of me. This is how I hold on.

Your symphony for the crickets continues today.
Now cicadas add a percussion section; now spring
green grasshoppers play violas; now another instrument,
another player joins the orchestra. I'm not sure
what it is: maybe canaries tooting flutes and piccolos.
That is life if you listen closely. It is a
layered symphony that you and I cannot miss.

Come too close and your music asks questions of me;
all of them quietly repeat three or four times.
The answer is my song, my prayer for your
symphony: I do not want you ever to die,
I do not want you ever to die.

3. ALEX

I do not want you ever to die,
because I fell in love with you.
We became brothers, younger and older.
My love settled like the time your
autumn brown eyes sank into me,
when you came to say Goodbye, for now.
It was a crackling yellow red
and orange August afternoon.

You stood at the door of my home:
your face in some half light of
departure. I felt as if an iron
sphere crept from belly to sternum,
and squeezed spikes into my heart.
This was pain as it had always been:
mourning blackness, morning light.

I felt it all, but didn't understand.
I lost myself in the ripe light of
darkness, like a black & purple plum.
I am not the same. I love you still.
I do not want you ever to die.

4. LIZ

I do not want you ever to die,
because when your brother hit
you I felt like I was dead.
There was nothing I could do.
I had to watch. I had to watch.

It was like
the time my dog had maggots.
One layer wiped away, and
another surfaced. The blood
of the open wound nourished them.
I had to watch.

I held you. A catharsis. . .
Like after nine months when a fetus
pushes out of the salmon-pink liquid,
green edged membrane of the uterus,
out of the inside of the mother.
Or when we splash into a pool on
a red-skinned July day into iris blue
water. We scream, we play, we laugh.
God, I can't give that up.
I do not want you ever to die.

I feel that I must give credit to Mark Doty, who wrote the poem "Turtle, Swan," from which the line "I do not want you ever to die" comes. The swan in Part 1 of my poem is not borrowed from Doty's poem. The choice for that metaphor was wholly independent; one I made without thinking of the similarity to Doty's poem.

Doty, Mark. TURTLE, SWAN. Boston: David R. Godine, Publishers, Inc., 1987.



Kevin O'Leary
Grade 11
New Fairfield High School
New Fairfield

Internal Bleeding

Melissa sat by the window, holding the ice compress against her eye. The entire right side of her face was numb with cold, a contrast to the warm spring day outside.

A spider crawled across the windowsill and over her left hand. She sat motionless as its tiny feet tickled her pale hand. Soon he was gone - leaving her alone.

She sighed and ran her finger along the sill; it needed dusting, later. Through her good eye she looked at the clock. She gasped, already two? She had forgotten to thaw out the pork chops. How long had she been daydreaming? She jumped up, but a wrenching pain shot through her leg, forcing her to sit down again. She tried once more, this time slowly. Joe would be home in a few hours.

She cursed herself and threw down the compress. How could she be so stupid? She moved as fast as she could into the kitchen, leaving one of her green house slippers behind her. Today was Monday, so he would be in an especially bad mood. She opened the refrigerator and found nothing that would please him. A few vegetables, but that was all. The pork chops were still in the freezer.

She thought of cleaning the house, but her body hurt too much.

She held her breath and entered the bedroom. The stench of sweat and liquor, his smell, filled her screaming lungs. She tried to fight him, refuse him, but he ripped through her, exploring every deep, private corner of her mind, her spirit. She limped over to the closet door, and rummaged through the clothes. The white dress with the red collar would probably be the best choice. He liked that one, and it would please him.

It wasn't there. She went to the bureau and ripped through the drawers. Where was it? Then she remembered. It was in the hamper, with the rest of his dirty clothes. She pulled it out; there was a little red stain on the shoulder. She would have to wear the blue one. She was counting on that white dress. She had trouble finding his favorite earrings, the gold ones with the little stars on them. He had given them to her for Christmas three years ago.

She found the damn earrings and walked into the bathroom, closing the door behind her. She filled a glass with cold water and drank it down with one toss. She breathed in the perfumed smell of the soap, attempting to overpower the bad air, but the purity was no match for him. Gasping for air, she looked up, catching her weathered image in the mirror.

She remembered the letter, left at the bottom of the pile, addressed to Melissa Bowman, her maiden name. Her old high school up in New Hampshire was having a ten year reunion. She wondered why Joe let her see the letter. Was he taunting her, daring her to leave, to go back? Or had he just made a mistake. Not her Joe. He was making fun of her. She had put a match to it and watched it crinkle and burn in his ashtray.

Melissa began to cry. She raised her hand, and her fist flew into the mirror, sending shards of glass onto the floor. She immediately regretted it. Joe would kill her for this. And she hadn't started dinner. Still sobbing, she knelt down and began to pick up the hundreds of faces looking up at her. She noticed that her hand was bleeding, stood up and quickly held it under cold water. It stung. She then wrapped a bandage around it. That done, she got the broom and swept up the tiny slivers from the floor smeared with her blood. She quickly cleaned it away. She was good at getting rid of blood stains. He would kill her for breaking the mirror.

Her stomach churned as she thought of what Joe would do to her. It was all her fault. He would be home in five minutes, exactly. She sat on the couch, her body rocking back and forth, waiting.

She thought of the dust on the windowsill.

Four minutes.

She thought of the pork chops.

Three minutes.

She thought of the letter.

Two minutes.

She thought of the mirror.

One minute.

She thought of him.

Click.

And then she didn't think at all.



Amber Trudell
Grade 11
Bolton High School
Bolton

While Jogging

There is a man following me.
He has on a red coat with a hood.
What if he tries to abduct me?
What if he plans to rape me?
I'll just have to turn to him and say,
"Listen, I haven't even brushed my teeth yet."
Hey, I may be lonely, but not that lonely.
He crosses the street.
I walk fast,
Trying to get my pulse ready
to jog.
I pass a girl on the street.
She is one of those "loafer and bobby sox" types.
I smile at her anyway, I'm a happy jogger.
Here I go,
Brookfield Street
I start to jog
My face starts to shake.
I start to think about the novel I just read.
He was so obsessed with that Japanese girl,
Just like I'm so obsessed with you.
Two years,

That's a long time to forget.
I wish I had the answers,
But all I have are these pathetic running shoes,
And they aren't even mine.
Maybe I'll get a package on my door step that reads:
"For the running girl."
I'm a size seven.
I'm running out of neighborhoods to run in.
I'm running out of
I'm running out
I'm running
I'm
not the same.



Flickering Eyelids

I'll never forget the night I left my village in Canton, China. It was a sticky, summer night when mosquitos and flies were fat and juicy from the nourishment of the heat. The silhouette of a small hand slipped through the transparent curtains of my bed, like a black cat floating through a window. Its coarseness slapped softly on my cheeks.

"Nui-Nui, hay sun, hay sun. War-day yill jow la. Little Daughter, wake up, wake up. We have to leave now," whispered the dark figure hanging over my six-year old body. "We will go together. I don't care what your grandmother says," she whispered to herself.

"Hahhh? . . . I'm very sleepy. . ." I mumbled a little annoyed that someone had disturbed my dream. I turned my back to avoid the voice. Unfortunately, while doing so, I accidently thrust one leg onto the small body lying next to me, sending her into a frenzy.

"Way, what are you doing? That hurts!" my four-year old sister shrieked.

"Hmmm?" I asked flickering my heavy eyelids, trying to figure out what had just happened.

Suddenly I felt a blow in my stomach. A painful sensation shot up my thirty-five and a half pound body. My eyelids immediately popped open.

Flaring with anger, I was ready to do anything to avenge my injustice - from screaming to scratching to even killing. But before I could move a muscle, my mother twisted my ears. She raised a dim candle to my angry face.

"Aiya, bad Daughter! This is no time to fight one another! We are a family. We are leaving to go to Beautiful Country. You know what that means? Means no more

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Grade 11
Darlen High School
Darlen*

suffering work, no more starving, lots of food, clothing and shoes. Means we can finally be a happy family. If you are a bad girl, I will leave you here to sweep the floor and wipe your grandmother's behind!" She harshly scolded me in a whispering tone.

She released my ear. I was silent. I bowed my head in shame, for I had displeased her. Then she patted my back. With that, I raised my head in enthusiasm. "Don't forget the stockings. We're going to have lots of stockings right?" My mind had suddenly wandered onto the finer things in life. Somehow, I was given the impression that America was a small island somewhere out there with mountains stocked with gold, new clothes, new shoes, oranges, and stockings. Stockings were rare in my village. Any of these items signified wealth and luck.

"And stockings," she flashed a smile. "Lots of stockings. But if we want them, we must be fast. Your father and brother are waiting outside. We must leave quietly before sunrise. No questions asked. Yes?"

"Yes, ma-mi. I will be good girl now."

"Good." She quickly began to tuck, push, and shove until my sister and I were dressed in our best clothing to greet our uncles in Hong Kong. (I only had one good outfit, which I had worn on Chinese New Year for the past two years.) Hong Kong was where we would get the necessary documents to immigrate to America. She then braided our hair into two sets of ponytails and tied them with red ribbons. "Look. How beautiful you look together. Your uncles will be very pleased," she said examining us with pride. Then with one hand she grabbed us and with the other our baggage, and headed out the door.

Outside awaited the enlarging shadows of three bicycles, my father, brother, and two relatives who were to help us with our journey. Behind them, dusty sunlight seeped through the misty mountains.

"Hurry up! The sun is rising! It is best that we leave before the people wake up!" cried my father. I'd learn later on that the people in the village did not want us to leave. In fact, the conductor of our village became so jealous that when the government asked for a report of our contribution and productivity to the commune, he wrote that we were very lazy and were always visiting other villages for fun, which wasn't true. This inhibited us from going to Hong Kong for two years.

On the second seat of a two-seated bicycle, my mother strapped my sister on her back, and held me tight to her chest, leaving the first seat for my father. Then suddenly from the dark doorway, I heard a woman's scream.

"Don't leave me now! I will be very lonely. Who will care for me if you are gone? I am very old. Have a little bit of heart. Don't do this to an old, lonely woman!" she cried in a quivering coarse voice, holding her hands out. "Give me my granddaughter."

My mother lightly lifted herself from the bicycle and approached the ash-dark doorway. She gently grasped the fluttering hand. She whispered with pleading eyes, "Mother, I cannot give you my daughter. I cannot separate her from her sister and

brother." I heard my mother's voice echo disturbingly in her chest as she clung to me tighter. She glanced to the floor. "This is my daughter, my own flesh and blood."

"Son, you owe this to me. I have picked you up from the streets and raised you. I have diapered, fed, and cared for you all these long years. Where would you be if not for me? You owe me this debt!" She paused to catch her breath and swallow her tears. "You are my only son. You cannot do this to your own mother, to this old, lonely woman!" she tried to reason with my father. "Order your wife to release my granddaughter!" Her voice became louder as her presence approached closer.

"Husband, this is your own daughter, your first daughter. . .can't. . .can't. . . I will not allow. . ." I heard my mother mumble as she covered my face.

"No, do not disrespect me! What have you ever given me but a lazy daughter-in-law and much suffering? My bones are old now. Leave me one daughter. You still have two other children. You cannot watch your own mother sink slowly into her grave!"

My father stared at both women speechlessly, mumbling without words. Then suddenly words stumbled out. "Stop it! Stop it! Don't know! Don't know! . . . Do anything. I don't care." He threw his hands in the air and shook his head in confusion and shame.

Then my eighteen-year old uncle intervened. "Let them leave in peace. This is best for April girl. She is a human being and needs to know who her family is. If not, she will forever wonder and will not grow up properly. Anyway, they can send you money when they are in America. They can care for you that way."

"No, not good enough! I cannot walk very well. I need a person to pick me up when I fall."

". . . And you need a person to cook, gather the wood, wash the laundry, fetch the water when you cannot. I cannot subject my daughter to such hardships," my mother suddenly fought back.

Then my grandfather who had been silent throughout the argument, spoke for the first time. "Leave them alone. They are right. This is best for April girl. As long as they promise to send money, it is good enough. Leave son. Leave son. I will care for her." He turned his head down and waved his hand to signal us to leave. He closed the door with my grandmother struggling in his arms. He could not look at us.

As we rode off into the sunlight, I heard my grandmother curse at my mother. "You damn, no good daughter-in-law! You will pay for this! . . . April girl come back. . . be a good granddaughter. . . come back. . ." Her voice faded into the sound of morning birds, and the tears in my mother's eyes.

I watched the landscape we were drifting by, the mossy lake where we fished for our fish, the rolling foothills where we gathered our wood, the green rice fields where my mother worked. The muddy land where the leafy lotus plants grew. The jade-green trees where the orange blossoms bloomed. The river where the high-pitched women washed laundry. Mile after mile, all was familiar, yet not the distance that separated me from my country. Nor was the closeness that bonded us, me with my mother.

*Sheri Bresson
Grade 12
Westover School
Middlebury*

Awaiting His Majesty (for Anne Boleyn)

Dried burgundy petals
Drained of their blood and speckled dead
Are all I am allowed.
I tease my skin with a dagger,
And I watch the chamberlain's dogs
Drink from the cloudy moat below.
Through these oak-trimmed panes,
I see his great figure,
Laden with velvet and gold,
Dismount a black stallion.
His calves bulging in the creamy stockings,
He moves towards the palace,
Trampling the flower bed,
His gestures to the groom
Cutting the air with the power
And precision of a French sword
Until he passes under the stone arch
And out of my sight.
Behind me, my servants ignorantly prepare
My bed with starched, rosewatered linen.
Embroidered at the center of the quilt,
The letters "H" and "A" struggle
Around and over each other
In silk and silver thread
To intertwine and knot on satin and lace.
My hands tingle and tremble,
My face burns with scarlet wildfire.
"I hate his desire and my own"; I argue
Until one pure droplet encrimsons the quilt
And a rusty-bearded man in hunting boots
Pushes into my chamber.



*Jennifer Liskow
Grade 12
Southington High
School
Southington*

Black-eyed Susans

I come slowly down the stairs, one dirty white sneaker in front of the other. I cling to the stair rail so I don't fall. I want to go pick black-eyed Susans in the field with Mommy. Halfway down the stairs, I hear a funny noise, so I stop. "Mommy?" I

say out loud, but not too loud. I want to ask for Daddy, but I know he isn't home. Even when he is, he's always in the office, and I can't go in there. The only one who hears me is my cat. She comes up and rubs her head against my legs.

"Pepper, what's that noise?" I ask the purring black and yellow cat. She only purrs louder. I sit down to try and figure out where Mommy is. "Mommy?" I say again. She still doesn't answer. I think she's in the kitchen, but that's where the funny noise is coming from. I start to cry. The cat climbs into my lap and rubs her face against mine. Tears land in her fur.

After a few minutes, I stop and listen towards the kitchen. The sounds in there match my crying. Arm around the middle of the cat, I stand up and start downstairs again. Halfway down the cat gets mad at being carried like a Raggedy Ann doll and scratches me. I let her go.

It takes forever to reach the bottom of the stairs and the doorway to the kitchen. I stand there clinging to the doorknob and look at Mommy. She is drying a plate, a plate that isn't wet. She can't see it, though, because the glasses part of her face is gone.

"Mommy?" I whisper again. This time she hears me. Turning from the dishes, she covers her face with the towel for a second. Pulling it away, she puts her glasses back on.

"Hi, honey," she says, voice shaking. "What do you want?"

I run across the kitchen and wrap myself around her legs. I can tell that I wasn't supposed to see her cry, so I don't say anything about it. "I want to go pick black-eyed Susans, please," I tell her.

She puts down the plate and the dish towel and unwraps me from her legs. "Okay," she says. We go out the back door and down the steps, her long tan legs moving slowly so I can keep up.

We walk to the field behind the house and pick yellow flowers with black centers until there is nowhere left to put them. I look at all the flowers we hold and wonder if there will be any left to pick next time. Then the wind blows, and I see hundreds of Susans turning to stare at us. I wonder if they saw Mommy crying, too.

Back in the kitchen, Mommy arranges the flowers in the big yellow pitcher that I'm not allowed to carry. She arranges flowers better than anybody; she can make weeds look pretty on the table. Daddy never says anything, though. He didn't eat with us last night. It was just Mommy and me. He was home, too. Mommy didn't say anything about it, though.

When we finish with the flowers, Mommy sends me to her and Daddy's room so she can braid my hair for the party at Aunt Sheryl's. "I'll be up in a minute," she tells me. The room looks different now. Daddy's stuff's not there. I go across the hall and peek into the office. There's a bed made up on the couch, and Daddy's clothes are on the floor.

I go back across the hall to Mommy's room. Downstairs I hear the front door slam shut and the heavy sound of Daddy's boots. He goes into the kitchen and unwraps something from McDonalds. I guess he's not going to the picnic at Aunt

Sheryl's. I wait at the top of the stairs for Mommy. I wonder why she's still downstairs; she and Daddy aren't saying anything to each other. Finally, I get tired of waiting for Mommy so I go downstairs to get her.

When I walk into the kitchen, Daddy looks up from his hamburger. "Hi, pumpkin," he says. "What did you do today?"

I tell him about the book I read this morning, one of my Paddington ones. Sometimes he gets mad at me because I skip the parts where Paddington gets into trouble. I don't like watching people I like get into trouble. Looking at the table, I see the flowers and remember we got those today. I climb up on the chair next to Daddy's and tell him, "We picked black-eyed Susans today. See?"

"That's nice, hon," he says in the voice that means he's not really listening. He doesn't listen when Mommy tells him we're going to Aunt Sheryl's either. He doesn't say anything when we leave.

When we get home from the party, the living room lights are still on. Daddy is sitting there, holding a book. Mommy goes in and tells him it's time to tuck me in. The two of them bring me upstairs, not talking to each other. They tuck me into bed and kiss me goodnight, then go back downstairs to sit at opposite ends of the couch.



Brian Uzwiak
Grade 12
New Milford High
School
New Milford

A Personal View of the Work of Henry David Thoreau

Orienteering

I

Spread across the forest floor in the vicinity of the hot-coal remnants of a once roaring campfire, lay a creased, crinkly, dilapidated, United States Geographical Survey topographical map, upon which, in the upper right hand corner read:

"NEWCOMB QUADRANGLE
NEW YORK".

A similarly disfigured compass rested upon the map, and emanated the aura of an old man—silent yet omniscient. The compass seemed anachronistic, yet it was considered by the precocious youth now sliding over it the cartographers' work, to be an extension of himself. The two had an uncanny relationship, like that of those who have been best-friends for years. Each knew when he needed the other, and was mutually reliable. The young man handled the instrument delicately as if not to upset it, continued maneuvering it, and began to take readings from it, which he wrote in the margin of the map: "190° N to Forks Mtn. — elevation 1990 ft.", "300° N to Pine Mtn. — elevation 2183 ft.", "10° N to Hot Water Pond."

He lifted the compass off the map, returned it to its case, and then folded the map, placing both in the pouch containing emergency survival materials. He then filled a bucket with water from the nearby babbling river, and doused the remaining

embers of the once roaring fire. The coals hissed and steamed like angry men, but he put his palm in the vicinity of their wrath to ensure that they were extinct and would not re-light. He then proceeded to put on his backpack, buckling the waist strap, and adjusting the shoulder straps.

Because the campground was a tiny island unclaimed by the voracious river, he was forced to exit by hesitantly traversing a section of this river. Step by step, stone by stone, he chose his path across the rill, and noticed the melancholy ballad of this babbling beast. He wondered at the lament of this disaffected malcontent, and what human travesty was welled up inside the flowing tears of the river. He looked into himself at his own melancholy and pondered it, something which was to occupy many minutes of the mightily splendid day.

II

He arrived upon a dirt road, removed the compass from its home, and orientated himself to his first direction. He focused upon the primary landmark in that direction — a monolithic boulder, directly adjacent to a huge old oak. He proceeded in this fashion along his pre-planned route.

The forest grew lush, and denser as the cacophonous discord of human society disappeared entirely. He grew closer to nature, returned in some perspective to his origin as a son of Mother Earth. He noticed the morose beauty of the barren, grey trees and underbrush, and sympathized with it. A tiny brook, caked in ice and the remnants of the last snow, which crackled underfoot, was met upon. Adjacent to this rivulet were fresh deer tracks. He sidestepped various types of mushroom, and noticed the profusion of birds. In many instances the wrath of nature could be evidenced in the remnants of the destruction and disfigurement of many ancient trees by wind, lightning, or terrible storms.

The boy arrived upon the ridge where were located the first two checkpoints of his walk, and found below him a beautiful view of the Adirondack Mountains dusted in white, and directly below, the white capped flow of the origin of the Hudson River. He was awestruck at the magnificence of the view from this precarious precipice and noticed that not one evidence of the existence of mankind could be seen below: not one house, not even a pasture as is commonly seen from high altitudes. Here the boy decided to stay the night. He established camp, rolled out his sleeping bag, and sat there all afternoon with only his thoughts to entertain him. Then, the sun set; the sky grew from blue to grey to black; the stars and moon revealed themselves; and the young man fell asleep beside a dying fire, under the stars.

During this trek was one of the first times I realized the diminutive nature of man, and experienced unadulterated wilderness. I became the closest to nature that I have ever been, and once I was over the fear of being without adult accompaniment,

or in a large group, I recognized the awesome nature of the wilderness, and loved it. Lamentably in this day and age — the age in which according to Lance Morrow, “The telephone and its elaborations (computer modems, fax machines, and so on) have endowed the planet with another dimension altogether: a dissolution of distance, a warping of time, a fusion of the micro (individual mind) and macro (the world)”¹ — there is neither the time nor the desire for a return to nature, or even a reverence of nature. This is probably why the work of Henry David Thoreau is not understood and is considered invalid by many students today.

I feel, however, that Thoreau is more valid today in his suggestions than was ever possible in his day. With the great destruction wreaked by world conflict, the potential of nuclear Armageddon, the homeless problem, crime and drug wars, and of course the **environmental crisis**, it would not be entirely unreasonable to suggest the theses of Thoreau (solitude and individualism through living in harmony with nature) are even more valid today.

As Nathaniel Macon is reputed to have commented in the 1830’s, “No man should live where he can hear his neighbour’s dog bark”. Because world population is so extraordinary, and we all live in such proximity to one another (even in a suburban/rural town such as New Milford), it is impossible to escape the overbearing influences of man, and enjoy the splendor of nature. Our society reads newspapers, and watches sensationalistic “news” programs on television. We all worry so about our appearance — our social selves, and about what everyone else is doing because we live in such proximity so as any tiny digression cannot go unnoticed. Indeed a solution to these problems may be a return to nature.

It may be that I am a misanthrope, but I can understand why Thoreau chose to live in solitude, out of contact with man, and in harmony with nature. There have been numerous times when I have been in the midst of decorous society with all of its artificed security, and have thought to myself how I wish “to go to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach.”²

Notes:

¹Morrow, Lance. “Hoy! Hoy! Mushi-Mushi! Allo!” *Time*. 29 January 1990. p. 84.

²Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press) p. 90.



August 19, 1991

Today I watched the storm.
Trees grabbed the wind and lost their leaves,
puddles gulped the rain until they swelled like rivers.
Raindrops stuck to my window,
dots like braille on a glass page.
I remembered a night in Old Saybrook
in the corner of a beach,
glass waves crashing on rocks where we sat,
drenched lips ringing,
after kisses had become stale,
grey breaths hung in black air.
Today I rinsed my eyelids,
hugged my knees,
wished
that I was just dreams.
Warm sighs clouded the window,
wet, my fingers rubbed glass
to spell your name.
Now, the rain after rain
drips from my roof and trees.
Instead of sleep,
I lie wide-eyed in darkness,
knowing tonight I will bite into my dreams
and suck bitter lemons.

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Crystal Lake School
Nathan Hale School
Greenwich Academy
Flanders Elementary School
Kendall Elementary School
Westover School
Beecher Road School
Challs Hill Middle School
Bedford Middle School
Tracey School
R.D. Seymour School
Mystic Middle School
Riverfield School
Gideon Wells Junior High School
Watkinson School
Carmen Arace School
Ridgebury Elementary School
Bedford Middle School
Academy School
John C. Mead School
Riverside Elementary School
New Fairfield High School
Granby Memorial High School
Darien High School
East Granby High School
St. Bernard High School
Hillcrest Middle School
Dolan Middle School
Conard High School
Stamford High School
Bulkley High School
Bloomfield High School
Latimer Lane School
Simsbury High School
Redding Elementary School
Canton Intermediate School
Allgrove School
Academy School
Plantsville School
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Jennifer Schultz
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Allgrove School
Ledyard Middle School
St. Bernard High School
Simsbury High School
Montville High School
Rocky Hill High School
R.D. Seymour School
Glastonbury High School
Coleytown Middle School
R.D. Seymour School
Academy School
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