
CONNECTICUT

STUDENT WRITERS

Volume IX May 1996



CONNECTICUT STUDENT WRITERS

Volume IX May 1996

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FOREWORD

"Children should be seen and not heard." We have long since moved beyond this view in education, but moved to what? Too often in our schools we ask children to write to tell us what we have taught them, or we ask them to write to learn how to pass a standardized test. Rarely, do we ask our students to write to discover what they think, to express how they feel, to find their own meaning. And yet, as Peter Elbow has written, "writing is the mode of discourse best suited to helping us develop the reflective, private dimension of our mental lives."

In these pages of *Connecticut Student Writers*, we read the words of students making meaning of their lives. They are writing for an audience, but they are also writing for themselves - to express their thoughts and feelings, to question and to understand. Student writers need these opportunities to use language to explore and to discover, not simply for themselves, but also for us. For when they share that "private dimension," we better understand them and each other.

Join us in continuing to make these opportunities available for students in Connecticut. We ask you to be a part of our community by supporting the *Connecticut Student Writers* magazine, and by joining us in celebrating these student writers.

Editors

Dora Glinn

John Goekler

Steve Sweet



CONNECTICUT STUDENT WRITERS

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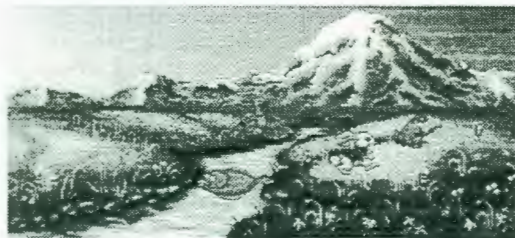


Freddy the Frog's Birthday Party Book

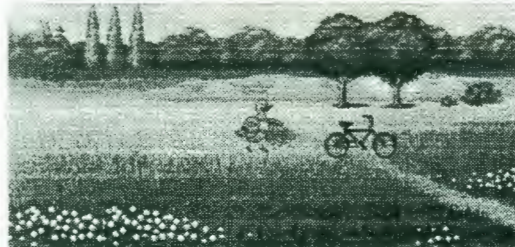
Once upon a time there was a frog named Freddy.



Freddy's friends came over to Freddy's birthday party.
The friends were a duck, fish and a turtle.



The duck brought a bike for Freddy.



Freddy and his friends had to clean up their mess. Freddy loved
his birthday party.



Freddy's birthday party was over.



Ranisha Miller
Kindergarten
Clinton Avenue
School
New Haven



Alexander
Goldowsky

Kindergarten
Riverfield Mill
Plain Road School
Fairfield

I Can See Something

I can see the sky
Because I have two eyes

I can smell a rose
Because I have a nose

I can hear the sound of prancing deer
Because I have two ears

I can see a rainbow
When I look at children in a row

Charlotte
Cipparone

Kindergarten
Regional
Multicultural
Magnet School
New London

Two Friends

I see the white world
I see the glittering snow
I see the snow-covered pines
I see the frosted hutch
I open the door
I see the two ducks huddling close
Two friends.

Owen Freeman
Grade 1

Natchaug School
Willimantic

The Burning Mill

Do you know the old thread mill? It burned down. When I was playing T-Ball, I saw the smoke. The smoke was coming the way the wind was blowing and that was toward the playing fields. I was coughing a lot. It was pitch black.

The fire lasted for a couple of days. My friend, Kory, and I went to see it up close. We saw bricks falling down a lot, and we saw tiny explosions that looked like teeny, tiny fires. My mom said that she thought there were tanks full of gasoline and that some smoker threw a match or cigarette in and started the fire.

We lost a big piece of history.

The Dandelion

Flowers bloom in the spring
And in the fall some fly like a bird and his wings.
Which flowers do this? Don't ask I.
Dandelions do it. Their seeds fly.
So, when you smell a flower, please think of I,
And just remember, dandelions fly.

Molly Bahre
Grade 1
Frank M. Kearns
Primary School
Granby

When I'm Grouchy

When I'm grouchy I'm mad. I can't think. I just stare at the TV and lay there in my mom's covers. I think of my mom. I want attention. I want my brother to carry me on his shoulders like he does sometimes. I want a friend to come over to play. My mom wants me to take a nap, but I don't want to take a nap.

Darcy Fiscella
Grade 1
Hawley Elementary
Newtown

Prose

My new notebook will hold the games I play with my teddy bears at night, the igloos I build with snowy mounds, the underground palace I make in bed with my quilt.

And all this will be in this notebook's hands.

Evan Skorpen
Grade 1
Wooster School
Danbury

Untitled

One day I went to Africa; and when I came back from Africa, I noticed that a giraffe followed me home. The next day I went to school, and the giraffe followed me there, too! Mr Girard, the principal, said, "Oh no!" I brought him down to my class, and Mrs. Giantonio said, "Allison!" I said "what?" calmly. I told her he followed me from Africa. "I thought you wouldn't mind if I brought him in for show and tell," I said. But the ceiling was too small so I had to bring him outside.

After school, I walked home with my new friend, the giraffe. The children laughed when they saw him. He lived with me forever in my back yard, and we both lived happily ever after.

Allison Ryan
Grade 1
Dr. F. H. Mayberry
School
East Hartford

The Two Different Gifts

Crash, boom, bang! It was another rainy Sunday, just like the last one. I wondered how my Aunt Elli could get here in such a rainy storm.

"Mom, when will Aunt Elli be here?" I asked.

"She should be here in a couple of minutes, Jen," answered my mom.

I looked out the window. The rain was drizzling down the window pane. It looked as though it was hurtling toward the cold, moist ground. I waited patiently on the couch for her to come.

I checked the window again. The rain was gushing harder than ever. I knew it was going to be thundering tonight. Ding dong.

"Yes!" I said very excitedly: "That must be her." I opened the door.

"Hello darling," said my Aunt Elli.

"Hello Aunt Elli," I said. She had silky black hair with lovely, kinky curls. Her glowing blue eyes were shining like gold.

"How did you ever make it in such a pouring storm?" I asked.

"Just drive safely and there's nothing to it. And Jen, I have a present for you." She gave me two presents in wrapping paper. Little pieces of curly string hung on the boxes. I started to open them gently and carefully. The first one I opened contained a little wooden man. He was just plain and old. "This is a wooden man that can dance," said my aunt. I wasn't quite sure if I liked the gift. After saying thank you, I decided to open the second gift. It was bigger than the first one. My heart was pounding. There, inside the box was a beautiful porcelain doll. She was a lovely bride doll. Her eyes were bright light blue. She had a long elegant white silk gown. The elegance of her veil made my eyes widen. Little pink bows were all over her dress. "Which would you like?" asked my Aunt Ellie.

"I can only have one?" I asked.

"Yup. That doll, you see, was very expensive."

"Well, what about that man?" I asked.

"That has been passed around the family for years," she said.

"I think I'll take the doll," I said in a way I knew I was sure.

"Well okay," said Aunt Elli, "if that's the one you want."

I put her in my room. She sat on the top shelf where she was safe. I thought she looked so beautiful.

The next day, after school, I went upstairs to my room. My doll was still as beautiful as could be. I just stared and stared at that doll. After a while, I was getting bored, so I went and did my homework.

The next morning, I got ready for school. Five minutes later, I noticed that something was beginning to bother me about my doll, something that I didn't like.

I looked out my window, and the rain had turned into snow. The snow was blanketing the window, the ground, and almost the whole bottom of a tree. The wind was whirling around, and snowflakes were



fluttering everywhere like butterflies coming down. I dashed out of my room into the kitchen. I didn't even stop to look at that doll.

"Hello darling," said my Aunt Elli.

"Hi Aunt Elli....," I said in a kind of sad way. Just at that moment, I remembered the present, and I knew what was bothering me about the doll. She was totally boring!

"What's the frown?" asked my aunt.

"Aunt Elli," I said in a teary way. "Remember that doll you gave me?"

"Yes," said my aunt.

"Well, I think she's a little too boring for me," I said.

"Why?" asked my aunt, with a twinkle in her eye.

"Well," I began, "I'm a person who likes toys you can do something with and play with," I said trying to hold back the tears.

"I understand completely," said my aunt.

"You do?" I asked with surprise!

"Absolutely," she said. "Jen, have you learned a lesson from this?" asked my aunt.

"Yes," I said. "The most beautiful toy is not always the most fun or magical."

"Right," said my aunt.

"So," I said, "may I please have the wooden man?"

"Certainly," said my aunt.

I loved the wooden man. I used to make him dance all day. Even though I am much older now and have given the wooden man to my own niece, he will always be a memory of my favorite aunt.

The Village Drought

In my village it is always sunny. The pretty purple, red, and green floweres are dying. All the plants are drooping. The village is looking very dull. I always dress in green to make it look more alive. I'm hoping that it will rain soon.

My house is very tiny. The good thing about it, is that it's a ten minute walk to the ocean. When I walk on the sand at the beach, it makes a crunchy sound. The water feels very cold. It is refreshing. After a game of volleyball, my friends and I cool off in the water. We don't look at the sun because it can blind us.

At night the air cools down a little. A dry wind blows through the village. Gigantic waves crash on the beach. At night I hear the whistling wind through my open window, and I hear the thunder of the ocean water slamming against the rocks. I know it will rain some day, and my village will look good again.

Eileen Haire
Grade 2
Great Neck
Elementary School
Waterford

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At night the air cools down a little. A dry wind blows through the village. Gigantic waves crash on the beach. At night I hear the whistling wind through my open window, and I hear the thunder of the ocean water slamming against the rocks. I know it will rain some day, and my village will look good again.

Eileen Haire
Grade 2
Great Neck
Elementary School
Waterford



Geoffrey S.J. Giller
Grade 2
Island Avenue
Elementary School
Madison

Gone

When I face the setting sun...
I know I will be through and done.
I think of beauty,
I think of friends,
I will not be the same again.

Krystle Keena
Grade 2
Lincoln School
New Britain

Heidi Cat

I got a new member in my family not too long ago. It all started when I was cleaning the car. Suddenly I saw a cat! She started to follow me around. My sister and I began to play with her. My sister named her Heidi because she hides under bushes.

At first she looked like an old dust rag or mashed prunes. She didn't want anyone to pet or touch her for long. We gave her milk and tuna fish too.

For a few days she didn't come back. Then we started to call her. She would come. She would sit by the front door and meow. We decided to keep her!

First my cat made a bed in a flowerpot. Then we made a box for her in the basement. But she likes to sleep in places like these:

1. In a winerack.
2. On boxes.
3. On our dryer.
4. On my dad's work bench.
5. Under my dad's work bench.
6. In our computer case.

We got her a blue, furry, fuzzy dog bed for the garage.

Every morning my mom calls her up from the basement to eat. Every night we give her supper in the basement. Heidi likes ice cream! We found out when we dropped some ice cream on my sister's birthday. Since we've been feeding her, Heidi's fluffy and beautiful. She's a calico.

Heidi likes to do things like:

1. climb trees and walk down backwards.
2. climb the garage door.

My family loves her, they really do. She loves us because we feed her and give her a home and a cozy place to sleep. I know she loves us because she rubs against us, and purrrrrs perrrrfect purrs.



The Beach

The rough sand rubs against my feet.
The waves roar in onto the sand and my
feet get soaked in water.
The small stones dig into my feet and
scratch them.
And as I walk down the beautiful beach
and look for seaglass and pretty shells
Seagulls dig up food in the smelly
marshes.
Little fish get a glimpse of my feet
coming and quickly scatter into the rough
waves.

And as I leave
the rough sand,
roaring waves,
pretty shells,
sea glass,
marshes,
and small fish
I think about my next trip to the beach.

Feeling Happy and Scared

There I was looking straight
at the audience.
There I was with my feet shaking
and trembling.
There I was quiet while I was
waiting for our turn.
There I was trying to sing a duet
with my sister Tara.
There I was scared while I was
holding the microphone to my mouth.
And there I was on the stage at
church singing in front of everybody
Tara and me!

Julie Slomkowski
Grade 3
John Lyman School
Middlefield

Brandie Chaney
Grade 3
Robert J. O'Brien
Elementary
East Hartford



Devin Bush
Grade 3
Forbes School
Torrington

One Magical Day Out

One fine morning I woke up bursting with joy! I was going to Fenway Park to see the Red Sox play. I hurried to put on my Red Sox shirt. Nine A.M. was the magic time to go. I was going with my uncle, my dad, and five cousins. The second we reached the beginning of the highway we listened to rock and roll. The Rolling Stones and Dire Straits were my favorite tapes.

After a very, very fast three hours we reached Fenway Park. As we walked towards the park, people called vendors tried to sell us Red Sox hats, gloves, and all kinds of stuff. Once inside the park we had to go up several flights of stairs to our seats. We were behind the first-base line. I was very impatient for the game to start. I noticed some of the players taking batting practice. I anxiously went down to see if I could get somebody's autograph, and I did!!! It was Frank Rodriguez. He took the black magic marker Uncle Bill had given me and signed my glove. This may be a collector's item because he was traded from the Sox to the Twins two days later.

The team that the Red Sox were playing that day was the Detroit Tigers. My dad said tradition called for a lunch of a Fenway frank, peanuts, and a Classic Coke. It was perfect.

Finally, the game started. It was a great summer day, sunny with a little breeze to get any extra heat away. Up first was Detroit. The first Tiger struck out. The third player hit a home run over the Green Monster. I was sitting thinking, "this was going to be an excellent game." Next the Red Sox were up to bat. They hit a single, a double, and a home run, all in one inning. The next three guys were out. Detroit was back up. Up in the stands the fans started the wave. Then again, again, and again. It felt good to stretch my legs. While I was doing the wave, the Tigers got three outs.

Towards the end of the game an amazing thing happened. I caught a foul ball hit by Valentin. He is my favorite Red Sox player. The foul ball was right above my head. I was wearing my autographed glove. All the people around me were trying to grab it. I had the glove above my head, and I heard a couple of people around me saying that "the little kid" was going to catch the ball. SMACK, the ball fell right into my autographed glove. Quickly I handed the ball to my dad and jumped into the air. I did a full turn and said, "WAHOOOO!!!!"

The last few innings of the game had homers, fouls, pop flies, strikes, doubles, and singles. It was the most exciting day of my life. Boston won 7 to 6.

We left the stadium full of memories to last a lifetime. I climbed into the car and that was the last thing I remember until we pulled into my driveway. I had slept the whole way home, dreaming about becoming a Red Sox second base man.



Burt

Part One - Burt

Burt could only walk on his two front legs. His back legs were dragging. He did not eat or drink. Burt was trying to go somewhere, but we did not know where. So we put Burt on the rug near the open door in the hamper room. He was meowing weirdly when my mom and dad were in the kitchen. I think he wanted the family with him, so Mom and Dad stayed with him in the hamper room.

They called the vet to make an appointment. It was at 10:00 in the morning. They went upstairs to get dressed. I asked if I could go. They said no. When they came down, they stayed in the hamper room with Burt. I wanted to go in, but they said no. My mom and dad said to me, "He might be dying."

I said, "No, it can't happen." I was crying. I went upstairs to my room. A few minutes later I came down. They were ready to go to the vet. I asked again, "Can I go?"

The answer was no. I cried again, not because I couldn't go. I was just afraid Burt would die. Then one of my brothers, Keith, said to me, "What's the matter?"

"Nothing."

A few hours later they came home. I said sadly, "Is he dead?"

"I'm not so sure," said my mom.

The next day when I came home, my mom said to Brittney and me, "Burt is dead."

I cried. My mom said, "Can I cry too?"

I said, "Yes."

Part Two - The Grave

The same day Burt died, my mom and dad dug a grave hole while Brittney and I were at school. They put the grave where he liked to sit. It was near the garden. They laid Burt in the hole, shoveled dirt on top of him, and then put grass on top of the dirt.

When we came home, Mom told us what happened. I was saying, "I wish I could give him one last kiss." Then my mom and dad had to go somewhere. While they were gone, Brittney and I made a headboard that said,

Burt (cat)

Burt

Trum

Russell

1983-1995

I got a hammer and rocks. First, I hammered the board in the ground.

Mark Russell
Grade 3
Mary T. Murphy
School
Branford



Then I put rocks around the headstone. When Mom and Dad came home, we told them to go to the grave.

My mom said, "It's beautiful."

My dad said sadly, "H-m-m-m-m. Nice work."

My mom put flowers on it. Everyday we had to water the grass so it would grow. We watered it till it began to rain a lot.

We sometimes pray to Burt at the grave because he loves us, and we love him.

Ellen Julia Brown
Grade 3
Wells Road School
Granby

Snowball

It was a snowy Saturday morning and little Marie Brown was already outside with her thick purple snowsuit on, prancing around in the powdery, fresh fallen snow. She was five years old and went to kindergarten at Rockwell Elementary School in East Granby. She didn't have any friends, and her mom was allergic to animals; so she didn't have any pets to keep her company. Marie loved animals and longed for just one to keep her from getting bored on rainy days and to cheer her up when she was feeling lonely. Once in a while Marie would run up to her room and cry, and cry, and cry because she would get so upset.

But today was different. Today Marie was happy because she was going to her friend Elizabeth's house, and Elizabeth had many pets, two brothers and a sister. Marie never got bored there.

Marie's cheeks were quite red, and she was about to go inside when she heard a crunching sound behind her. She turned just in time to see a thin tree sway back and forth, as if something was rubbing against it. For a few seconds it was silent, but then Marie saw something dash out of the woods and stop right in front of her house. Marie couldn't quite see what it was because of the falling snow, but then, like a miracle, the snow stopped and Marie could clearly see what the object was. A tiny fawn was standing only a few feet away from her! He was beautiful. He was a tannish color, and it looked as if his fur was made of *soft* velvet. Marie's face lit up. "A *pet*!" she thought to herself. She would never be bored again. She wouldn't be lonely anymore. A warm feeling came over Marie. "You stay here," Marie whispered to the beautiful creature. "I'm gonna get you some food." She slowly shuffled back to the house, so she wouldn't scare the young deer away.

Marie grabbed a bag of carrots from the fridge and then got an apple from the fruit bowl. She hurried back outside. Sure enough, the fawn was still there waiting patiently for her to return. The fawn took one wobbly step forward and then another and another. Pretty soon he was inches from Marie's face. She picked up a long skinny carrot and held it out for the fawn to eat. The young deer did not move. "Eat



it," Marie whispered. The fawn seemed to understand. He lowered his head and took a big bite of the orange carrot. Minutes later the carrot was gone.

Then he turned and dashed back into the woods. Poor, poor Marie. She sniffled and then a tear ran down her cheek. "No pet," she thought.

Marie went to Elizabeth's house but didn't have a lot of fun like she usually did. She was too busy thinking about the young deer.

The next day Marie sat on the porch calling, "Come back, come back little deer." Finally, it worked. The fawn walked out from behind a nearby pine tree. He wobbled over to Marie and rubbed his cheek against Marie's leg. He was trying to say, "Hello, I missed you." Marie reached out to slowly pet the animal on the back. She was grinning from ear to ear.

"If you're going to be my pet, you have to have a name." Marie thought for a long time. Finally, she decided to name him Snowball to remind her of when she found him out in the snow. "Snowball," she said over and over aloud. Snowball rubbed against Marie's leg once more to say that he liked his new name.

Marie decided not to tell *another living soul* about Snowball because someone would just take him away and say that he belonged in the wild.

From that day on, Snowball always came to visit Marie, and Marie and Snowball always enjoyed their visits together. Marie and Snowball became inseparable friends, and Marie never forgot the day they met. Marie never got lonely or bored again because she knew that she would always have *one special friend*.

The Block

I grasp my pencil like a boa constrictor on its prey.
Fifteen more minutes of writing
You can take it, Josh, or can you?
My brain's blanker than a piece of paper.
People are talking throughout the room.
Sounds like lions roaring in their den.
Shut-up!
Head spinning faster than a car wheel
Thoughts sink to the bottom of my brain.
Eyes roll backwards into my head.
My skull is going to crack!
Crack!
Pencil shatters into wood and lead.
Grab a new pencil.
Thinking becomes weaker and weaker like I'm drowning

Joshua Atwood
Grade 4
Tashua School
Trumbull



in a pool.
Forehead **explodes** with more sweat than the Great Lakes
have water
Think harder, Josh! You're gonna make it!
No-I can't!
How does R.L. Stine do this stuff?

Jason Cable
Grade 4
Booth Free School
Roxbury

Icicles

Icicles are as cold as popsicles
With sharp points at the bottom
And clear as a glass
And drip like a faucet.

Rows of icicles
Look like a pipe organ playing a tune
Sounding as if glasses were breaking
In the kitchen sink.

Icicles are chunks of ice
Holding onto roof tops
And sometimes on gutters,
Reaching down to the frozen ground.

Esme Cullen
Grade 4
Academy
Elementary
Madison

The Ending of Fall

The sun shimmers
as the last of fall's crumpled leaves
swirl in circles
round and round.
One last bird soars aimlessly
in the sky.
The clouds become heavy and dark
and cover the cheerful blue sky.
The trees tremble
as their only twigs snap off
in the wind.
Suddenly,
everything pauses in silence,
but then starts up again.
This time the wind blows wildly
and the first flakes of creamy snow
fall from the gray sky.



An Immigrant's Letter Home

My dear friend and cousin, Peter,

I must tell you how extraordinary my trip to America was. We left Clonakilty in the wee hours of the morning with my father and the rest of my family. We bought our tickets and were told to go to steerage. What I saw gave me true horror; people were crammed next to each other, and some people slept in the same bed. It was then that I realized I would not be down there often.

One night a violent storm raged through the sea. I, of course, stayed on deck for the beginning of the storm. When the storm really started getting fierce, Maeve came to get me. I was doing nothing but holding on to a post. I enjoyed the feeling of the deck shifting under my feet and the water swishing across my face. Then, lo and behold a wave picked my sister up and threw her across the deck. When I saw what had happened, I rushed to the deckside. I grabbed onto Maeve's legs, and it was only then that I realized how shifty the ship really was. I hung on for dear life with the legs of my sister in my hands when waves washed down the smoke stacks. They exploded, sending pieces of melting metal sparks flying through the air. Then something hot hit the back of my neck. I screamed and turned around to see a wave thrash against a metal bar. I woke up two hours later with a bandage around my head.

I looked around for Maeve, but she was nowhere to be found. I prayed the rest of the day to Saint Patrick until alas, I was informed of her death. I mourned for her for the next seven days. Then bright and early on Sunday morning, I awoke to cheers from the upper deck. I crept out of bed, for I had not had much sleep that night, and stumbled up the steps to the top deck. Then I saw it off the bow. It was Lady Liberty.

We are here, Peter, we are here.

Your loving cousin,
Seamus

Sluggish Happenings

"Oh gross, guys, look," I exclaimed.

My name is Sonya DeVitz and I was walking home with my friends Alisha and Arlene and had just bent down to look at a slug.

"If it's so gross, I don't want to see it," Alisha said, princess-like. But Arlene leaned over to gaze at it.

"Looks like Mr. Finsterwald, the principal," she said giggling. Then she went off to walk with Alisha.

I stayed behind, though, staring at the slug. He was really disgusting. Then something came out of his mouth. It looked like a bubble. It was a bubble! It got bigger and bigger until I could fit in

John Murtiashaw
Grade 4
North Stonington
Elementary
North Stonington

Laura Jawitz
Grade 4
Bowers Elementary
Manchester

it!!

A gust of wind came and blew me into it and then blew the bubble away! "Hellllpp meeeee!!!" It was no use. The bubble's walls were sound-proof.

I breathed hard, searching the bubble for fresh air. The offensive vapors of slug and rotten egg filled my nostrils. I tried to break or pop the bubble, but all I received were bruised, bleeding hands.

I slipped and fell, lying uncomfortably on the dark green slimy floor of the bubble.

Tears filled my eyes, and I wept heavily for an hour. Then I was blown over a green marshy area where, in the air, there were other bubbles, quite like the one I was riding in.

Soon something caught my eye. Amidst the bubbles was a dark green tower-type building and in it was a fierce-looking man. He shouted to all the prisoners in the bubbles: "You have ten seconds left to live. The bubbles you are in will pop, and you will plummet to the ground below where poisonous slugs hungrily await you! Six! Five! Four! Three!"

"Three more seconds" crowded my mind. I tossed and turned feverishly.

And then...umph! I rolled out of bed.

"Good morning sweetie," my mom said. "I brought you some ice water."

Later that day, when I was walking home from school, I saw a slug.

"Barf-o-rama," I said. "Hey guys, check it out. It's a slug! He's so big!"

Just then something came out of his mouth...It looked like a bubble!

Mark Buzzee
Grade 5
Farmingville
Elementary
Ridgefield

July 10th, 1993

The screen door slowly squeaked and closed with a clang. I bounded down the brick steps and came to a halt. I heard a pounding in the garage which, when I looked, turned out to be my dad. He was fixing a bookshelf with his hammer among all the rubble that was scattered upon the cool cement floor.

It was July 10, 1993. My family and I had moved into our new gray house on 100 Fulling Mill Lane three days ago. We have a steep driveway. It had already caused us trouble. The moving truck skidded and left a three foot gash in the bottom of our driveway. Also because of the truck's height, it had knocked down the phone lines so that they were slumped across the road. We had a lot of trouble moving in, but there was more to come.

My mom had gone to Boston Chicken to buy dinner, and



wouldn't be back for a while. I took a seat on the three-foot-high stone wall that runs up the side of our driveway. I hummed a tune and looked at our new property. Suddenly, a large, yellow moving truck came roaring down our street. It caught onto the slumped wire hanging in our street. (I didn't notice because my head was turned looking at the bottom of the truck.) A couple of seconds later I heard a whirring sound. I took no notice of it until the next moment. At that instant I felt the most excruciating pain of my life.

I was lying on the ground screaming my lungs out. The wire attached to the phone box had pulled really tight and the phone box came flying off the side of the house, hit a rock, a bush, and still at full speed hit the left side of my head.

My dad heard me screaming and quickly carried me upstairs into the house. My dad carefully put me down in the bathroom and darted into the kitchen to get ice. Blood was pouring out of the gash in my head. There was no ice because our icemaker wasn't working. Fortunately, my mom had put two ice packs in the freezer. I put them on my head.

About to dial 911 my dad forgot that the phone wasn't working because our phone box got ripped off the house. Dad told me to keep the ice packs on because he was going to run up the street to a neighbor's house to use the phone. I missed my dad for those three minutes more than I ever had in my entire life. No luck though, they weren't home. So my dad flew out the door for a second time, and our other neighbors were home. "Call 911, my son has a head wound!" my dad yelled after giving them our address.

My mom was departing from Boston Chicken with dinner when she saw an ambulance with a high-pitched siren and red and blue flashing lights coming down the road. "I hope that person is all right," she said, as the ambulance turned onto Farmingville Road. "It couldn't be Mark or Larry; many people also live off this road," she was wondering, but got really scared when the ambulance turned up our street and into our driveway. As my mom got shakily out of the car, our neighbor who had called 911 said, "I think your son was shot!" "What?" my mom screamed in horror as she ran up to the house. "Hi mom," I said, trying to be cheerful, but my mom just screamed and ran upstairs.

By this time I was feeling much better. My mom was in the front of the ambulance, I was in the back, and we were zooming off to Danbury Hospital. There were more lights, buttons and gadgets in the back of the ambulance than I had ever seen in my entire life. The paramedic in the back was nice. I got to talk with him, and he comforted me. When I got to the emergency room, doctors were busily talking and looking at patients.

All I remember after that was my mom getting candy, because she didn't have dinner, getting a novocaine shot that made my head numb, and getting six stitches in my head.

I don't remember the ride home, but to wash off the blood I had



to take a shower and that was painful. That was the worst experience of my life!

Kira Taylor
Grade 5
Mansfield Middle
School
Mansfield

Symphony

A lingering note
broke through the glass wall of silence
breezing through the air
with a lulling melody.

A string of high notes
like a bird's call flew
through the sky
splitting and falling
like crystal raindrops
that drift to the ground
and vanish
as each note slowly fades,
then dies away completely.

A low rumble, like distant thunder
combines with the sweet, high notes.
like the dewdrop spray of a waterfall
leaping into the air as it crashes
into the rocks.

Next comes a shy "ping" that flutters
slowly and carefully above the straining audience.
It pauses for a moment,
then falls gracefully to the ground
without a whisper.

Then, giving no warning,
a low vibrant note
flashes, followed by a loud "boom"
that ends the rainbow of sounds.

Andrew Packard
Grade 5
Old Greenwich
Elementary
Old Greenwich

Evening Walk

Walking through the woods
on a cool autumn night.

Every little step on the



thick carpet of leaves
makes a soft crunch,
waking only the insects
that sleep below it.

Looking at the dark
sky and full moon
makes me sleepy,
but then a gush of wind
hits my face chilling my
bones.

The rich smell of
wood burning in fireplaces
makes me feel warm again
and I head for home.

My Sister's Heart

Elizabeth Klein
Grade 5
Royle Elementary
Darien

On July 9, 1990, my baby sister was born. When she came out, she was all blue. The doctors tried to figure out what was wrong, but they couldn't. They wrapped her up, and she turned to a normal color.

My mom and dad called to tell us that we had a new baby sister, but her name had not been decided on yet. They said we should go out and buy some pink balloons for our mailbox.

My parents did not tell us that she was blue when she was born because they did not want to scare my brother and me. Later that afternoon my mom called to say that our sister's name was Maggie, and that we could all come see her in the hospital. She was so cute.

One Month Later

We had all gone up to my grandmother's house in Wellesley, Massachusetts to visit. We had only been there a few days when my sister got very sick and we had to leave because we needed to see our doctor back home.

The doctor told my mom and dad to take my sister to be x-rayed. The x-ray showed that my sister had a big hole in her heart. The man who took the x-rays was also a doctor and told my parents to take my sister to Yale-New Haven Hospital, which they did.

Maggie had to wait twelve days to have her surgery, and in those twelve days she could have died. Luckily she was hooked up to a breathing monitor fast enough. Finally, she had her surgery. After



she had surgery, she had to stay in the hospital at least another two weeks.

Soon after my sister came home we got a nurse to look after her for a while. In that time my mother told us everything that had happened to Maggie when she was born. She explained why everything was happening to Maggie now, because, of course, I was confused and so was my brother.

Now, I look back five years ago and say if it was not for modern technology, my little sister would be dead. It really gives me the chills to think about it, but it is over now and my sister is a funny, crazy, normal kid.

April Nizlek
Grade 5
Old Greenwich
Elementary
Old Greenwich

Montana Moon

I sit in silence,
Listening to the wind rustling in the trees,
The mountains tower over me,
Deep green and white,
Snow begins to fall,
Pure as the summer sky's blue.

The silver moon,
A big, glowing ball,
Looks down upon me with motherly eyes,
Shimmering and sparkling like the star of a show.

Its silver shine lights up the night,
Glowing peacefully,
It seems as if the night will never end.

A wolf howls,
The fire indoors crackles,
Grandfather clocks chime midnight,
An eerie wind begins to blow,
Sending a cold chill down my spine,
I shiver.

Disturbed by the noise the valley loses its magnificence,
Only until tomorrow night.



Baba

Baba, my great grandmother, was an unforgettable woman. She was kind, gentle, and made memories in my childhood I shall never forget.

Baba came over from Czechoslovakia as a young girl. She spoke calmly, softly, and hesitantly in broken English. Baba spent most of her time baking and preparing food. I was always fascinated as a young child to visit and find her quick, agile, flour-covered hands with chubby fingers lifting and hefting shapeless masses of dough—her wedding band sinking and then emerging again, as she kneaded the white mounds of dough.

Baba's elbows were dimpled, her upper arms soft and fleshy. She was quick with the rolling pin, smoothing and stretching the dough until the once rounded balls of dough were now turned into long, rectangular shapes, ready to be put in the oven and baked.

Baba's kitchen in a child's perspective was large and exciting. It always smelled of various spices, baking fruits, cookies, and breads. Around Baba's waist was always an apron made from tiny scraps of fabric. Pieces of tablecloths, girls' outgrown dresses, and old, tattered curtains were what made up her aprons. There was never a time I saw her without one of her creations tied neatly around her waist. Her aprons had become a part of her, a sort of uniform.

For as long as I can remember, Baba always wore her hair in a tight bun at the nape of her neck. The scent of Ivory soap, with which she washed her hair every day, was strong and noticeable. Her hair always smelled clean and looked sleek, never a strand out of place.

During visits at Baba's house, I usually kneeled silently on a stool beside Baba in her kitchen, intently watching her every move as she rolled out cookie dough. Breathing in the Ivory scent and the spices, I waited earnestly to cut out different shapes with her old, tin cookie-cutters, all of which I took home with me after her death.

Baba's gentleness, quietness, and kindness have always stuck in my mind. I can picture her standing at her counter, flour streaked across her patched apron and her hair pulled tight into a bun. I can smell the bread baking and the cookies in the oven. The sweet smell of Ivory soap mixed with a medley of spices still makes my nose tingle. All these memories have been kept in my mind for many years. All these memories were brought about by one woman, an unforgettable woman, my great grandmother, Baba.

Alexander Sabia
Grade 6
Torrington Middle
School
Torrington

Katie Nassef
Grade 6
Tomlinson Middle
School
Fairfield

The Orange

I sat on the hard steps of cold stone in front of the large brick building, watching younger children play on the equipment. I looked up when I saw someone's shadow.

The person it belonged to stood staring at me, taking me in. Wild gray hair as stiff as wire erupted around his face and from under his old hat. Icy blue was the color of his eyes. His withered face was as cold and as without expression as uncarved marble.

His eyes let go of mine, and I took a glance at the rest of him. He wore old boots, worn through in many places. I could see parts of his feet protruding. He wore no socks, and what I could see of his feet was blistered and bruised. He caught me staring and grunted in reply. He started up the stairs. He sat down carefully on one of the steps.

With a bandaged hand he produced a large orange from his overcoat, a tattered old thing that seemed hardly sufficient for weather at this time of year. He started to peel the orange. His motions were very cautious, as if he didn't want to miss any peel or tear any fruit. First one peel, then another. Never too fast, never too slow.

The citrusy aroma filled my nostrils and made me realize that I was hungry. I couldn't ask him for a piece though - this poor, dirty, tired, and shivering person.

I suddenly felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned to see him holding a piece out to me. I heard the clattering of chains which turned my attention to the equipment. All of the children were gone. A few clouds of dust rose from the sand, but other than that, it was motionless. I could almost taste that dust, dry and bland, unlike that piece of orange.

He was still holding the orange piece out to me. I slowly reached up and accepted the piece. My hand touched his. It felt like leather.

I noticed that he wasn't sitting down. He was waiting for something, probably for me to eat. I respected his manners and didn't want to prolong his waiting. I sank my teeth into the piece. This was the best orange I had ever tasted, sweet, ripe, and juicy. I watched as he ambled back up the stairs, sat down, and shivered.

He tore a small piece off from the rest and bit down on the center. He sucked the juice for a long time and when he couldn't get any more, he popped it into his mouth. He even chewed on the peel after finishing the rest of the orange.

I finished my own piece, stuffed my books into my backpack, and started walking.

I smelled an apple rotting in an open lunch box, forgotten on a bench. I looked at the man. His grin sagged and his icy blue eyes looked empty. He suddenly looked back at me and smiled, thanking me for giving him company.



Reverie

Silvery moonlight caresses the sand
as a man walks the beach

Recalling his life and its happenings
as a salty sea breeze whips at his hair

His footprints mold shallow holes in the earth
while the ocean laps at his heels

He remembers his children and grandchildren
like a foggy mist rolling towards him

A gull swoops and dives into the dark vast waters
as the man plunges into his life's memories

He casts his mind back to his childhood days
like a fisherman casting his line out to sea

Grasping a smooth stone as a reminiscence of old days
he gazes out to sea, and skids it across the waves

Sitting down at last on a sea stained bolder
the man opens his eyes and mind

To the wonderful world around him
and to the wonderful world that will be.

Untitled

The man weeps as he pulls the
old apple tree out
from its roots.
He remembers fresh apples
and resting
with a
cup of juice under its shade.
He whimpers then throws
the old tree into the gnarled
brush pile.
With a nod of reassurance,
he finds
himself reaching his branches
high into the sunset of
the day.

Amy Breglio
Grade 6
Hebron Elementary
Hebron

Read McKendree
Grade 6
Latimer Lane School
Simsbury



Alexandra Taylor
Grade 6
R.D. Seymour
School
East Granby

The Gathering of Mythical Creatures

Deep in a rosebush,
where no one ever goes,
a splendid party is being held,
within the petal of a rose.

Fireflies cluster together,
to form a perfect chandelier,
while little gnomes in little clothes
make music for all to hear.

Elves dance with fairies,
and the other way around,
with every waltz so light and airy
they hardly ever touch the ground.

As the clock draws closer to midnight,
everyone grows tired and weary,
until the gnomes change their tune, and play
a merry melody, to help them dance the night away.

As dawn approaches and morning draws near
the time they had feared, is now here.
Elves, fairies, and gnomes depart with one another
and the only sounds that one can hear are the faint callings of

"Same time, next year."

Eric Young
Grade 7
Granby Memorial
Middle School
Granby

The Way Not to Clean Your Room

By the time you're a twelve-year-old, you have learned a lot of important things, like how to leave your homework to the last minute and still finish it, or how to tease your younger sister and still get away with it. But my personal favorite is how not to clean your room. It happens something like this.

"Eric, your room is an absolute mess. I want you to clean it."

"Aw, Mom, not today," I plead.

"Eric, it seems no day is good for you, but I don't care. Clean it!"

"But I had plans..."

"Just do it," my mother tells me. I sometimes think that Nike got its slogan from my mom.

As you can see, arguing rarely works, so I now have to state the obvious.



"Mom, my room does not need cleaning; it is creatively organized. Mom, you are squashing my individuality. You are forcing me to conform to parental ideas of organization. I know where everything is - I want my room this way - I planned my room this way."

This will almost always be followed by the famous words, "Just do it," so I must now move onto "the stall."

My stall can take many forms, but my goal always remains the same; to gain some time in hopes she will forget what she wanted.

"Once again, Eric, clean your room."

"Mom, can I just finish reading this chapter?"

"No!"

"Then can I watch the rest of this movie?"

"Just go clean your room!"

Because I can act I can plead extreme hunger, or a splitting headache, or lastly, overstate my homework burden.

Since I share a room with my brother, I have an edge.

"Eric, why haven't you cleaned your room yet?" my mother asks.

"Mom, none of this mess is mine; it's all Ethan's junk."

Unfortunately, this method only works when my brother isn't home which wasn't the case today.

"Eric, what are you talking about? I cleaned all of my stuff up yesterday," my brother chimes in. "Would you care to take a look?"

"No, I know it's all mine," I must quickly say.

If all of my methods fail, I can always use room cleaning to my advantage. I go up to my room and shut the door then find a good book or game and enjoy. I stay there all afternoon and when they call for me, "Eric, I need you to take out the trash," I just reply, "I can't, I'm cleaning my room." I make sure to make occasional noises by moving a chair, or dropping a book, or stomping on the floor.

Sooner or later, my mom will either demand that I do another chore; or she will forget about me, and I can escape. Of course you may think that I am safe, but with my luck, the other chore will be to clean the garage.

Cat's Cradle

From time to time
she would shift with smooth perfection,
let her tail overflow the couch like water,
tame and wide awake.

Tail drawn back suddenly,
energy sparks at the ends of her whiskers:

Ariel Isaacson
Grade 7
Schechter School
West Hartford



Something has moved.
She changes from pet to hunter.
She would dance with the updrafts
and their flecks of dust,
would unsheathe a darting claw,
snaring sunlight.

Four paws leap from carpet
to windowsill, miss their target,
fall to the whispering grass.
She stretches, feigning ennui:
cats like to be perfect.

Ted Cheney
Grade 7
Cornwall
Consolidated
School
Cornwall

Adirondacks

Early in the morning
thin mist covered the lake,
The sun reflected gold, pink and red.
A loon cried.
The canoe sliced through the water
leaving a trail in the mist.
Water lapped against the sides as the sun rose.
How smooth the lake was
frozen in time.

Later
At night
The lake turned a deep rich blue.
The full moon and a starry sky with shooting stars
were reflected in the glassy dark water.
A loon cried.

Emily Moos
Grade 8
Henry James
Memorial
Simsbury

Tea for Two

Once in a while when I come home from school on a wintery
afternoon, my mother, still dressed in formal work attire having
gotten home from school early, will be waiting expectantly in the
kitchen. As soon as I throw open the door, make my way in, plop down
my backpack by the refrigerator, shed my jacket along with various
other winter outerweares, and finally give her a hug, she says, "How



about we put on the tea water?" This is my favorite question to answer on a wintery afternoon especially when I've had a hard day at school; so, my reply is always, "OK."

I then proceed to get out the tea kettle, fill it with water, set it on the burner (one of the small ones because Mom always says, "Small pots belong on small burners"), and turn the knob on the cooktop range until it says "high." After the kitchen section of the afternoon ritual is complete, we move on to the garden room. The garden room is a funny but not very original name for our family room which looks out over the garden in our backyard. My mother, with a weary sigh, takes the raspberry leather reclining chair most often, and I, the tan-colored couch. She puts her feet (or as she refers to them, tootsies) up on the footstool with a yawn, relaxing after a hard day at school. She proceeds to ask me about my day. I tell her, and she laughs at the new jokes I've heard and the slightly peculiar things I've done through the day, like saluting the sun in English class. She congratulates me on an A+ in history and tells me to work harder on my tricky math assignment. I can tell that she cares a great deal by the way she comments on every part of my day. After I'm finished sharing my day's experiences, my mother starts relating hers. She always has a funny story to tell about her students. She describes Edmund Lipschitz using his lap-top printer to print out his English paper as my mother walks around collecting them. Myeer, myeer, click, click, beep, beep, and he rips it from the machine saying, "Hot off the press, Mrs. Moos."

We sit and chat a bit longer laughing at how tired we are until the singing of the tea kettle joins our conversation. We remember the tea. Usually my mother gets up to fix it, telling me the secrets of making a good cup of tea. "Always heat the cup first. If you are using a teabag, put the teabag in first, then the water." She says the same thing every time or something very similar. I don't listen to the words but the love in her voice. The words wrap me like a soft, warm blanket. She brings the tea back so that we may drink it together.

Although sitting lazily on a wintery school afternoon chatting with my mother before plunging into homework doesn't sound like a very exciting thing to do, it's my cup of tea.

The Artist's Favorites

My family lives in an artist's studio.
My father is the ruler,
Precise and handy when needed,
But not always available for assistance.

My mother is the watercolor,
For she is bright and vivid,

Katherine Ilagan
Grade 8
Rippowam Magnet
Middle School
Stamford



But cannot always mix with the crowd.

Kristin is the marker.
She is almost always accurate,
But must have the ruler to back her up.

Of course you know,
That I am the clay
Molded into anything by everything
And anyone.

David Hostler
Grade 8
New Fairfield
Middle School
New Fairfield

The Longest Wait in the World

Old Billy Croff slept, as always, with his hands behind his white onion of a head. That was the only correct way, he believed. The morning sun cracked like an egg and sent a shimmering beam of yolk dripping onto his leathery face. Suddenly, that face seemed to crack as well, as the weary old man snapped to attention like the soldier he once had been.

As he stood up and stretched his weary muscles, he looked around the sagging old barn that was his refuge. He then sat down on his bed of moldy hay to do what he did every day: wait for his daughters, Jane and Sue, to arrive. As he glanced about the small farm building, nothing seemed quite right to his myopic eyes, or could it just be his groggy state of mind? He saw what he called "green wheat," and it was so tall! How could that be? It seemed just yesterday that he had first sat here and there was no wheat whatsoever. He could not fathom how the sun could be so brilliantly golden while the dawn sky around it remained such a dull lavender. He knew not how the trees remained so green and lush in this baking, oppressive heat; he felt that at any moment he would surely shrivel up and leave only a pile of ashes behind as a solitary clue of his depressing existence. He struggled to remain awake, but the short hours of his fitful rest and the moist, sticky heat of early morning lulled him back to sleep.

At noon, the old man rose from his slumber once again. The first sight that greeted his tired eyes was that of a juicy side of beef out to pasture. In fact, the old heifer was nearly as lean as Billy himself, but the old man's eyes often deceived him. The barn seemed a fresh, crisp red apple in this continuous green landscape. Everything now looked wonderful! The old man ate a luscious apple as he listened to the twittering birds, to him the gossipers of a cheerful society. He ate slowly and thoughtfully, enjoying each wonderful, fulfilling bite, and meanwhile contemplating the anticipated visit of his daughters. A symphony of birds, bees, and wet wind whistled in his ears and a glazed look came over his eyes. The grass felt like a marshmallow, a



soft, feathery pillow beneath his feet. His wonderful bed of moldy hay was a masseuse for his back, and he became so comfortable that he fell asleep once again. This time, he was reluctant to slide into slumber, thinking that he must not miss Jane and Sue's arrival.

The late afternoon thunder rolled in claps and booms, waking the old man once again. To him, now, everything was miserable. The angry grey clouds threatened the perfection of his day. The old tractor was a steel monster, creeping with its claws outstretched, ready to maul the helpless old man. The numerous weeds bullied his allies, the delicate flowers, while the grass and the haystack beneath him were the quills of porcupines. Meanwhile, the old screen door at the back of the barn seemed a trap set for the weary, wary old man. He suddenly hated this horrid day, this miserable life, this dingy old barn in this one-horse town of New Fairfield, Connecticut.

As the moon came out that night, the lonely old man fell into a deep but unsatisfying sleep. Jane and Sue had not come that day, as they had not come the day before, or the one before that. As always, Billy slept with his hands behind his head as the soft summer rain pattered down like the paws of a kitten on the roof of the barn. He dreamed that night, as he did every night, of the next day. He dreamed of Jane and Sue's arrival, for he was certain they would come on the next day.

Overtired

My eyes are sore,

Yet,

When I shut them,

They do not rest.

My mouth is weary,

Yet,

When I close it,

It persists to smile.

My arms are limp,

Yet,

When I lay them down,

They need to play.

My legs are exhausted,

Yet,

When I lay down,

They won't stop twisting and turning.

Jaclyn G. Volkman
Grade 8
Rippowam Magnet
Middle School
Stamford



My heart aches,
But,
I can not put it to rest,
It keeps on lovin'.

Kristen Scott
Grade 9
East Hartford High
East Hartford

Dad Day

I believe that there comes a time when black becomes white, when a person you love becomes a stranger. I always loved my father. He was the greatest guy that I had ever known. We would go to the George Washington Diner for breakfast when he came to pick me up. Every Sunday I would eat cottage cheese with three strips of bacon. I would look at a statue in Hartford and wonder why the horse had a ponytail. Every Sunday we would throw pennies into the George Washington fountain. I would go to Bushnell Park and ride the carousel. Every Sunday was wonderful. *It was dad day.*

My father lived in West Hartford. He had the most uncomfortable blue corduroy sofa that I loved. There was a little grey cat living there. That cat used to bite me and scratch me all the time. The first time I rode a bike that was bigger than me was in the basement of his apartment. I hated that basement. It was so scary and damp. Machines would hiss all over the place. As long as dad was with me in that grey basement, I was safe. *It was dad day.*

He used to have a woman living with him named Annie. She was blond and very sweet to me. Once I called her, and we stayed on the phone for over two hours. I never talked to dad. I really loved Annie. On Easter, they set up eggs all over the place for me to find. The little grey cat would chase me and play with the eggs before I got to them. Dad would make real buttermilk pancakes when I stayed over on Friday nights. Annie never came with us on Sunday, though. *It was dad day.*

When it snowed, the three of us would go in the courtyard and have a snowball fight with the other kids. Sometimes the little cat would come, too. He actually liked snow. Sometimes we would go to Annie's parents' house. They lived in Farmington, I believe. They always bought me presents and let me play on their trampoline. That was the best. I loved the warmth of that house. They were so rich that the house just seemed to have a feeling of security. Annie's parents were some of the nicest people I had ever met. I loved those days. *It was dad day.*

Annie moved out one day. She told me that she was going to be a maid, and we went to help her settle in. Before I left her though, she gave me a card. In the card was her new phone number. I was to call her whenever I had the chance. She took her little grey cat and her trampoline, and I never saw her again. A few weeks later, I called her.



I just kept getting her answering machine. For a year I called every week on Sunday nights, but I never talked to her. I was too young to understand that they were broken up. Years later I learned that she was not mentally like the rest of us. She often called my father with threats on Sunday after I left. *It was dad day.*

Today, my father has remarried. He's moved to Enfield. We're not close anymore. Annie's threats have stopped. The George Washington Diner is still there. You can still order cottage cheese and three strips of bacon. One can still make a wish in the fountain, and one can still wonder about the horse's pigtail. To some little girl out there, Sunday is still a day of fun and laughter and love. *It's dad day somewhere.*

With My Grandfather

As a child, I thought the ocean was like the wheat fields, which rippled like waves in the sea when the winds blew gently before the harvest. I remember walking along the edge of the rows of wheat holding my grandfather's hand. I remember those hands. They were warm like the earth and hard with callouses. The skin on top was wrinkled and burnt black from the sun, and the veins were strong and stood up in ridges. One day I remember telling him that his hands were like the wheat fields: brown as the mud and ridged like the wheat. He threw back his head and laughed. I smiled because I loved to hear him laugh in his low, rich voice.

In the summer the monsoon rains drummed the dry lands, and the soil overflowed with moisture and budding green shoots. In the evening my grandfather would sit me on his shoulders and walk through the gardens. We would stand in front of the great big coconut tree. He would talk to me about when he was a little boy and how he and his brothers planted it with their father. I would listen and look wonderingly at the broad, flapping leaves, pondering how it had ever fit inside a coconut.

One day in the middle of the rainy season, the rains beat down on the world unmercifully. From the moment I woke up, I heard the sound of large raindrops hitting the tin roofs of the outer buildings and the rushing, splattering sound that was created when they fell on brick courtyards. Through the day I watched the rain fall and fall. Everywhere the smell of cool, clean rain water and washed-away dirt drifted to my nostrils.

My cousin Sonia and I built a house out of wet, black umbrellas in the upstairs hallway. Sitting inside on torn blankets, we whispered to each other in hushed voices. My grandfather peeped in and smiled at seeing us in deep conversation. We moved together to make room for him, and I nodded, gesturing him into the small space. Smiling

Poulami
Roychowdhury
Grade 9
Farmington High
Farmington

his half-toothed smile, he declined. That evening, when it came time for our walk, I found my grandfather sitting over his accounts.

"What is it, bhai*?"

"Do you want to go for a walk now, Grandpa?" Taking me on his lap, he pointed to the falling rain.

"Look, bhai. The rain is still falling, and if we go out for just a second, you will be soaked to the skin and catch a cold. Then your mom will be mad at me, right?" He chuckled softly. "No, we better stay inside. I know what we can do. Wait here." He swung me off his lap and disappeared down the hallway. I waited by the door, watching to see what he would bring back. He returned, carrying my red and blue bicycle.

"Get on. I will wheel you out to the hallway." I was agreeable to this new and exciting idea, of which my mother would certainly not approve. I jumped on, and slowly at first, then faster and faster, we moved over the smooth stone floor. I stopped pedalling and let him push me. Faster, faster, faster. My shouts of excitement sounded through the downstairs, and my grandfather's laugh echoed mine. At the kitchen door stood my mother. To my surprise, her dark eyes sparkled.

I remember my grandfather swinging me and Sonia around till our heads spun and our stomachs felt queasy with laughter. I remember standing with him by the banks of the lake as the fishermen hauled in their hand-thrown nets. I remember how the silver carp twisted and turned, flapping their shiny, scaled tails in the sun. I remember petting the newborn calf and watching him feed it milk from a baby bottle because it was too weak to suckle.

Many years have passed since those memories imprinted themselves on my soul. After six and a half years in the West, I went back to the East. I saw my grandfather again, and he was little changed. He still had broad shoulders, a narrow waist, and a half-toothed smile. I went walking with him again by the wheat fields before the harvest to watch the wind make waves on the wheat. I have seen the ocean, and I no longer think the wheat resembles it. To me the waves on the wheat are far more beautiful than the waves on the sea.

**bhai is a Bengali term of endearment*

My Italian Summer

Anna Rosenberg
Grade 9
Stamford High
Stamford

I sat in my special corner near the window, my pencil and pad of paper in hand. The blazing hot sun highlighted the words I had written, my reminiscences of how I had gotten where I am right now.

In late May of 1989, I sat on a plane and watched Russia, the country of my birth, get smaller and smaller until it disappeared under a cotton blanket of white...and never again was uncovered to my eyes. Instead, the eyes were destined to see beauty and adventure and, of course, the yellow brick road that would lead me home.

My memory is vague, and the picture a blur, and loose threads hang in my head unfit to be intertwined into the quilt of retrospection.

My family and I had arrived in Rome to be settled in "Villa Maria," located in Rome's suburbs. The house was white, though its size I cannot tell fairly, for to me it seemed a mansion; maybe it was. It was the beginning of June, and the grass was the hearty, healthy green that reminds you of being young, unless you are, and then you take it for granted. The sun shone its brightest, and there stood a few trees, whose branches were wide open and so seemed to hug the world, and in some way succeeded since they drew people to themselves, for the large, open branches gave excellent shade.

I remember meeting a girl there, maybe five years older than me. The girl seemed incredibly smart because she said that she liked other people's little sisters but wouldn't want to have one of her own. I think her family was going to California. It must have been California because she said it was going to blow up.

We were supposed to spend a week at "Villa Maria." My parents had to rent a place where we would reside while waiting for permission to enter the U.S. After a painful search my mother managed to find a place to live in a sea-coastal town of Nettuno about an hour away from "Villa Maria."

We left in the late morning after an unexpected summer shower cleaned up the dust and events of the past week. The narrow country road seemed foreign. The sounds and smells of a different world surrounded us. We walked through the Italian village, a small village where it seemed that everyone knew each other by name. We passed the train station and went past people heading toward it: groups of summer-dressed, olive-skinned, loud-talking, carefree, cheerful, buoyant people. And we were cheerful and buoyant, too. Frightened and excited with anticipation. Walking arduously with the hope of mind and fatigue of body. My three-year-old sister was cranky, because her stroller was taken away to carry a large suitcase. This suitcase held all our personal things and was developing a hole on the bottom of it.

So we walked with uncertain clouds above our heads and heat in and outside our bodies and perspiration forming on our foreheads.



Finally, we reached the bus stop. Unfortunately, there was no bench on which we could recline. And we just stood...and waited...for the bus.

An hour went by, another followed. No bus came. Across from the bus stop there was a cafe where working-class people sat, relaxed, and enjoyed a cup of coffee or a glass of wine. My mother (who had an Italian dictionary) went in to the cafe to ask why the buses were not coming. No one knew. The owner suggested that the bus drivers were on their lunch break. After all, somebody told her, this was Italy.

More time passed. What could we do? We just stood and waited, reasonably thinking that if we missed one bus, another would come. No one but a fortune teller could have told that the bus drivers were on strike that very day. So we waited. Cars and cabs were passing by. We, of course, could not afford such luxurious means of transportation. A couple of people came along, waited a while for the bus and then took a cab.

My sister and I were hungry, and my mother gave us some rolls she had with her. They were soft but unbuttered. Still we devoured these little treats. The clouds became sort of grey and tiny drizzles gave us a summer shower. And time went on, and we still stood and waited for the bus, which did not come.

The sun's bright glare went down with the sun; the blue sky turned a velvet grey and dimmed at no certain point I can remember, but soon became the period of darkness before night. The wind was calm and peacefully wrinkled the air, reminding me of satin or silk in a fine fabric shop being rolled out to catch the buyer's eye.

When there was no hope left of the bus coming, my father went to the cafe and asked the owner to keep the suitcase there till morning. We went all the way back to the "Villa Maria" and asked to stay another night.

Looking back it seems to me like a scene from a movie: bright colors of Italian summer, a little cafe across the road, two pretty little girls, young parents painted with colors of despair. I remember the darkness of the night, my father carrying my sleeping sister, a policeman asking us who we were and where we were going. It is strange, but I don't know where they went - the two little girls and the young parents. It seems we went through a metamorphosis and became different people, not so young, not so little.

Some Nights Are Darker Than Others

Jesse Zeigler
Grade 9
Danbury High
Danbury

Alice heard the alarm. She listened for a minute, then cracked an eyelid. The blurry image on the clock came into focus. She lifted her arm and let it slam down on the nightstand. The clock went abruptly silent. She then pushed off the covers and grudgingly rolled out of bed. It was 3:30 a.m.

The funeral was nine hours away. She slumped into the chair by her desk and gazed at the house directly across the street from her window and thought..."I wonder what Daniel's mother is dreaming about."

Alice buried her face in her hands and began to weep. A few moments passed.

She couldn't stand the silence that hung in her room, so she clicked on her desk light and rummaged through her drawers to produce a pen and small notebook. She thumbed through the various pages of teachers, parties, and boy dilemmas, in search of where she left off. She found blank page and began to write:

6/29/94

Dear Diary:

It's been a while. I've been negligent keeping up with you since school has ended. Well, there is no logic in apologizing to a piece of paper so I won't.

I have a story to tell, but no one to tell it to. If I did tell it, nobody would believe me. I still don't believe it myself, but I have to tell someone so it might as well be my diary.

It happened last Friday the 24th. I was going out to a party. Nothing big, just a few friends and sixers. Michael was going to pick me up at the end of Filmore Avenue at nine. As I started out the door Dad said to me, "Home by midnight. Any later than that and it's a week's worth of grounding. You know the drill." He was propped up in his Lazy-boy, Bud in one hand, remote in the other.

I said, "I know, I know."

He looked up from the T.V. and shouted at me, "Hey! You're lucky I'm letting you out. I've taken a lot of crap from you lately!"

I didn't know what to say, so I left.

I walked down the road and took a right onto Elm Street. The stars were out. The moon was clear, and I could hear nothing but the crickets and my own footsteps on the pavement. As I reached the top of Filmore, I was on a hill looking down at the bottom of the lamp-lit street. I saw someone standing under the last street light. Whoever it was, they were waiting at my corner. So I walked down. When I was twenty feet away, I saw that it was Daniel. He was leaning against the lamppost with his hands in his pockets, staring mutely at the moon.

I've written about Daniel before. He moved here six months ago. He was quiet. That's all I can really write about him. I never really talked to him. He was just the kid who lived across the street from me.

I walked within five feet of him, and he still didn't notice me, so I said, "Hey Daniel, what's up?"

He then very steadily turned his gaze toward me. He was looking through me as if I was transparent. His face was drawn and sullen. Then he smiled at me and replied, "I'm waiting for my ride."

It felt good to see him smile. I asked, "Where are you going?"

He smiled and said, "That's the beauty of it; I don't know."

I didn't understand so I asked, "What do you mean, you don't know?"

He responded, "Well, I don't want to go into the details, but you'll figure it out eventually." As soon as those words left his mouth, the moon disappeared behind a cloud cover and the crickets fell silent.

Then, off the top of my head I said, "It's dark tonight."

He looked at me and said, "Some nights are darker than others." Then without a warning, a car was coming up the street. I swear it appeared out of nowhere. It moved toward me without a sound, headlights blinding me. Once the headlights left my view I could see what it was. A hearse. The jet-black paint reflected my image back at me. I gasped. Then the passenger door swung open and a gangrened hand beckoned Daniel. He smiled at me again and said, "That's my ride."

I couldn't move. Terror tugged at every nerve in my body. He climbed into the passenger side and shut the door. Just as it pulled away, he stuck his head out the window and winked at me. Then the hearse left as silently as it had come.

I don't remember what happened after that, except for Michael shaking me into consciousness. The next morning, Daniel's mother found him hanging in the attic.

Alice put her pen down and waited for the sun to rise.

Aswini Anburajan
Grade 10
New Fairfield High
New Fairfield

To Avalon, Brother

The vultures have come
The bodies on the field, one nameless corpse after another
And you my brother, left alone
Your once golden battle armor tarnished
Your crown long tossed aside
Treachery, madness, greed, lust, hate - they have all
Ruined you
Your once great kingdom, golden and true



It is gone now brother
The time of the Round Table comes to an end
I cry for you brother, for no more are you able to weep
You and I, brother, the only ones left
Mordred, let him rule, in a way that suits him
He was your son, brother
But not one to be proud of, not one to deserve love
Guinevere, as golden as the sun, is at rest somewhere
Lancelot, true and courageous like the lion, is gone as well
The others, scattered like feathers blown into the wind
Who knows where their corpses lie?
Have they too become nameless faces?
The vultures that will devour their flesh
The thieves that will steal their bodies' possessions
Leaving behind withered white bones, grim grinning skeletons
Generations of posterity will find them
And will they know, brother?
Will they know of the battles those piles of bone once fought?
Will they know of the tournaments, the feasts, the splendor they
Lived in?
Or will they be like blank pieces of parchment?
The stories of their lives buried by the sands of time
The sun is setting, brother
A horn is blowing in the distance
Tripping, thundering, tempests of horses coming in
Battle armor, I can hear it clanging
Your land, your kingdom, is gone now brother
Its downfall beginning when Merlin was imprisoned
So long ago it now seems, brother
The old man, his beard as white as a dove's wings
A wise old owl, he was, watching over you
But his time had come
And now, brother, it is ours
I cannot let you become one of these bloodied corpses
Your life and name and deeds forgotten
No, brother, our time is over for now
But we will return, brother, and walk the earth again
Until then, brother, let us rest
To Avalon, brother, we shall go
To Avalon, brother, we will lie in wait
Until the circling of the universe once more
Until once again your greatness is needed
To Avalon, brother, we go!

Danielle Descoteaux
Grade 10
Farmington High
Farmington

Jigsaw

We never
Understand-

Today: walked home from school
drenched in this unexpected torrential rain, soaked khaki pants
clinging to my legs.

Rivulets of cold water run down my neck and back, fierce arrow-
droplets strike me hard.

At last I fall into the house sit down take out the papers which
beg to be read

pore over your words in absorption mint tea steaming onto my
face as I bend my head over
the letters

Today: sat silently stunned
as I learned new things: that you
are sexually active.

Clinical term.

I want to understand these emotions so far removed from them as I am.
Sexually active? And what do those words hide? You said
you *prefer to call it making love* and I could only blink behind this
veil of naivete.

You have already planned your life around every angle of this sex:
you will bear the child that you conceive with your boyfriend.

Today: ground my forehead into my palm as I thought of you
your easygoing brilliance
a life destined for greatness and into the empty house I scream for you.
Nothing has happened yet but you are planning for the
consequences

and I cannot agree with your decisions

If I get pregnant, my boyfriend and I will most likely get married

You, college-bound woman, sure stride and piercing eyes
how can you take this risk? And yet in your own words you said
It's a risk I'm glad to take.

Today: I read of you also, gray-eyed one
a past I never imagined alcoholic father sober for a few years now
and you wrote: *I was happy for a first time in a long time*

You, with your strength and courage
every day life met by that gaze

and you are fighting with an instrument of peace and love: a voice
spilling across the heavens of my consciousness like a sunset
a voice that ties you to greatness also.



And yet it was you I saw
down on the floor of the busy indifferent hallway
your legs skewed out awkwardly as you sobbed your frustration
screaming *goddammit* and pushing away those who offered you their
arms for comfort
This strength crumbling in a moment of weakness
this strength fiercely denying comfort
and I learned of a dark well of pain hidden behind the gray of your eyes
and I wondered

Yet both of you write the words that march across the page
like a line of soldiers
fighting with pride

There is something safe and sheltered that I can no longer accept.
A clock has struck some significant hour and a deep chord
resounds.

It is suddenly time to stop seeing you as smoothness inside and out
and instead realize: *In me, I carry the pieces of you and so I must
understand*

And yet we never understand each other, our fingers are struggling
with the jigsaw pieces
but we don't know what we are working for; a clear picture has not
been given to us

and it's only rarely that we find parts that fit together.
I am shrouded in an ignorance that leaves me trembling with cold .
A bell is ringing and you are teaching me to do what I need to learn, and
a steady rain is piercing my skin like so many thousands of silver
needles.

Checking Out

Watership Down, *Tuck Everlasting*, *Tiger Eyes*, *Winning*, *The Incredible Journey*. The alphabetical order, so important to me at age eleven, has lost its meaning now. Instead, each title evokes the same explosion of the brain as a tangy orange does when I bite into a segment. From the struggle to leave home in *Watership Down* to the struggle to get home in *The Incredible Journey*, each explosion of memory is unique. *Tuck Everlasting* remained in the car for nearly half a year. *Winning* was read in one sitting during a book fair. For *Tiger Eyes*, I simply curled myself into my closet space and didn't get up until I finished. Perhaps I thought that because I, too, had the gray-green tint to my eyes, I would be able to accept saying goodbye as well as Judy Blume's Davey did. But I didn't. I never have.

My eyes, misty with nostalgia, scan the shelves until they reach Fulghum. There they stop as I remember my grandparents' house in North Dakota, spring of 1989. I always read while the adults talked over me, and never did anyone, in the family of mine that always focuses more on education than communication, comment on that fact. My grandfather sold furniture but was constantly trying to solve Fermat's Last Theorem on the backs of invoices. Even on the day that my grandmother died, he wasn't as morose as the day they published another man's proof.

That April day, I finished *The Yearling* hours before we were to go back to the hotel. My grandmother, seeing my dissatisfied empty hands flutter, produced the strange book about which I had heard so much: *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*.

To be honest, I never finished that book. Flipping through it now, I laugh at the lyrical prose of Fulghum I couldn't appreciate at age nine. My smile, however, is strangely altered, as, a few pages before the end, out drifts a twenty dollar bill still fresh from the bank. I watch it float as aimlessly as my empty hands had those years ago and then sink to my floor. It rests there, expectantly waiting, finally revealed. I fear this gift, last touched by hands which long ago ceased to be. I wish my grandmother could hear me tell her "thank you," but my throat is too constricted with hardened lumps of tears for me to utter these words, my ears too full of the sound of my own sobs to hear them uttered. I could not cry at her funeral as everyone wanted me to, but now, at this gift which should have made me smile five years ago, I can weep for the woman I am just beginning to know.

"Erin!" I hear my mother's voice echoing through the drafty halls. Jumping at the break in silence, I instinctively scan my room before realizing that the current mess of books, clothing, toys, and games is not one for which I will have to apologize. She has asked me to pack my childhood into 24x24 inch boxes. She should understand that such an endeavor causes a mess.

"I'll need you for dinner in about thirty minutes," she tells me



as she appears in my doorway. Her worn skirt, as always, is pressed to perfection. I can see in her face, however, that the long summer season has given her wrinkles even her expert iron cannot steam away. No one knows what it takes to single-handedly run an inn. She prepares breakfast: eggs, toast, and hot coffee. She cleans rooms: new towels and bedsheets for each guest. She delivers smiles with a complimentary sandwich for the road. I envy her stamina; yes, it's true to say I always have. But I feel her holding herself apart from me when we embrace - though I know that I give myself completely to her. There is a hard core inside her that even my desperate tears of childhood were unable to break.

Looking about the room, she asks me, "Do you have any idea how many suitcases you'll need for Choate?"

"I don't really know yet. But I'm going to definitely need more boxes for storage. I can't bear to give any of this stuff away." But I have blocked from my mind the reality of storage: lonely dolls next to decaying swimming trophies, forgotten stories next to a child's clothes long outgrown.

"I'll get those for you. It would be nice, though, to give some of your old stuff to the daycare center downtown. What, for example, do you need with these silly things?" She plucks a few of the Noel Streatfield series off my shelf, "I bet you haven't looked at them in years!"

She's perfectly right: I haven't. Yet inside me now rises a compassion for the plain Petrova (who went on, by the way, to become a pilot) and a seething hatred of the young Posy for whom everything was so easy. "I'll think about it, Mom," I tell her, pursing my lips and turning away, "And I'll be down to dinner in a little bit."

This wouldn't be so hard if I didn't have to move everything. If I could at least leave a part of myself to come home to, this packing, this saying goodbye would not seem so overwhelmingly permanent. My mother, however, a believer in efficiency, has decided my room is to become one for a guest. My childhood things will simply have to move over.

I won the county spelling bee when I was young, and I came home to see my seven-year-old face plastered on the front of the local newspaper. That weekend, I stood in the market debating between Skittles and M&Ms. Behind me, I heard a whisper, "Isn't that the little girl who won the spelling bee?"

Another voice continued, "I think so. What a sweetheart. A precocious little one, too. She's going somewhere." Going somewhere. What an awful phrase. But they decided it for me, years before I could voice my own opinion. Since I am not wanted where I am, I might as well go somewhere. I only wish I knew where.

Melissa Lavin
Grade 11
Trumbull High
Trumbull

Business as Usual

In the corner of a mind
all unpleasant feelings
are cast
stuffed there
among the cobwebs
and left
like an attic would
be locked
so things then
can go on
business as usual.
But eventually
you stumble
and trip on
an old toy
because it waited there
to be stumbled upon
and never again
will be stuffed away
because the dam broke
and the old memories
came flooding out
like little thorns
and they poke
until you bleed
and bleed
until you can climb bravely
up those stairs
of your mind's attic
seize all the hurts
and throw it off a cliff
to land
with impact enough
to shatter it forever.



Suddenly Speechless

Sara Zarbo
Grade 11
Rocky Hill High
Rocky Hill

I gazed out the oval window at my side, wondering who would be at the airport to pick me up; my mother, most likely. Dad has to work, and the boys won't care enough to come. I sighed, looking towards the front of the plane. A young man was coming down the aisle. I thought he looked interesting - not gorgeous, but attractive nonetheless. He wore clothes that looked loved. His chocolate hair, if I were to give it a flavor, fell to the perfect length. It just covered the top of his ears. His eyes were gray, and I decided they were my favorite part of his face.

He passed my row, and I sighed again. Of course, I'd hoped he would sit near me. If I had the nerve, I would talk to him. I use that phrase all the time. If I had the nerve, I would do a lot of things. As I was thinking this to myself, a passenger dropped his carry-on in the seat beside me. I looked up, and was delighted to see the same guy standing in the aisle, searching through the overhead compartment.

I felt my entire mood lighten. I just had to seize this chance to meet him. Suddenly, a million catchy phrases and conversation pieces flooded my head. I wanted to say something so witty and interesting that he would be the one dying to talk to me. He found the immoderately small pillow he was looking for, and sat down in the aisle seat. He glanced my way, to see what stranger he was stuck sitting next to.

"Hi," I practically whispered, my throat forgetting how to work. He nodded, smiled just enough to be polite, and leaned back. Those gray eyes I was so fond of closed. I could have kicked myself - I bored him to sleep. Just like the million other times I've said stupid things, twenty perfect icebreakers popped into my head two seconds after I could have used them. I watched him out of the corner of my eye. Every time I began to open my dry mouth to talk, I lost my voice. After several torturous minutes of this, I decided to ask his name and be done with it. That's when I heard a snore emerge from his half-opened lips. I felt relieved to have an excuse not to bother him, but at the same time I was disappointed that I didn't talk sooner.

He slept for the entire flight, and I amused myself by imagining what kind of a person he was. He looked like a Joshua to me, Josh for short. He was definitely a vegetarian, and a leader of some environmental group. I decided, of course, that he didn't have a girlfriend. I thought a minute, and then designated the age of eighteen to him, a senior in high school.

He stirred, and I quickly turned to look out the window. I could see the ground and knew we were descending. I wondered if it was too late to say something to him. Every funny comment I thought of sounded too artificial and planned out, so I remained quiet. The plane landed, and we both stood to gather our bags. He opened the overhead compartment and pulled my duffel bag out.



"Here," Josh offered, handing it to me. I blushed and thanked him just as quietly as I had said hello. I stood behind him and made my way down the aisle. When I stepped out of the connecting tunnel and didn't see my mother, I continued to move in the same direction he did. He strolled over to the snack bar, so I sat down where I could see him.

When he bought a chili-cheese dog and threw the napkin on the ground, I knew I was wrong about him. He pulled a sports jacket out of his bag and put it on - the name read "Jack." I was disappointed. Suddenly he wasn't as attractive as I thought he was. I reminded myself that it was all my imagination anyway. He gave me no reason to believe that he was an earth-conscious vegetarian. Still, I felt let down. For all the time I spent wondering about him, he could have at least been impressive. I looked down at my worn clothes and remembered how I messily pulled back my hair. I felt guilty. I wasn't at all impressive either.

Beth Royer
Grade 11
Jonathan Law
High School
Milford

Kansas

Once, I was on a train.
For four long hours I watched the earth erupt before me -
flooding by on long tracks.
The train moved into the evening and stopped along the way,
in half-towns and wide cities.

In the late evening, a man came and sat down next to me.
With stranger shoulders and stiff movements,
he asked me the time, and when I told him,
he turned to me and half-hummed a song in my ear.

He said his name was Daniel, and he was 27.
He just thought I needed a song. He said.
Then, I sang one for him.

Daniel thanked me, with a tired smile and asked
"What are you going to do with a voice so beautiful, Helen?"
He didn't know my name was Anne.
But I hadn't bothered to tell him.

He fell asleep on my shoulder and
breathed soft, heavy breath into my
hair, skin, and ear. It was like honey and sage,
with dampness mixed in, and it lingered on my clothing

for many, many months after I'd seen him.

The next morning, he'd gotten off in Springfield, Kansas.
Said he hadn't wanted to wake me, the beautiful sleeper that I was,
because he thought that I looked like I needed the rest.

All of this was written on a note, which he had set firmly in my hand
by uncurling my palm and then reclosing it, like a tight oyster.
I knew, even though he had left his address
on the badly written note, that I would never see him again.

And, as he stole all the money from my wallet -
while I pretended to be sleeping at four A.M. -
I remembered the color of his hungry brown eyes.

Scars

Kimberly Paulus
Grade 11
Woodstock
Academy
Woodstock

You can tell much about a person from his or her scars. I have
a scar on my knee from when I was five, learning to ride my bike at
a local park. I have a multitude of little circular ones from my tenth
birthday when my sister gave me chicken pox instead of a present.

I have a scar on my head from where my neighbor hit me with
a croquet mallet. I have a scar on my back from falling out of a pine
tree, one on my cheek from a disgruntled evergreen, and one on my
knuckle from an oak.

Although I can't see them, I can feel the scars on my heart from
my first love and smaller ones from my second and third. I have a scar
where I used to have an appendix. Sometimes I wonder what it looks
like from the inside.

I have a scar on my left temple from when I was drunk and
couldn't tell where my bed ended and the floor began. I have one
across my forehead from a run-in with a boomerang, quite a freak
accident really.

I have glaring scars on my arms from a close encounter with
a razor blade. It was a fair trade, though, the world's sorrow for my
life's blood. I'm sure I have dozens of scars on my brain from harsh
words and painful memories. I remember the time I saw my aunt,
three months before she died of cancer, a garish blond wig poorly
concealing her bare skull where red hair had once sprung like fire
from her soul.

Scars are like labels, markings, name tags. Each time the
human body is wounded, the scar records the event. More than just
an imperfection in the flesh, a scar is a necessity. It symbolizes the
remarkable ability of the human spirit to heal itself.

Jason Miscia
Grade 11
Southington
High School
Southington

Freddie the Bear

I remember when I was about five. My parents took me out after a considerably awful day and they bought me Freddie. He wasn't the most impressive of teddy bears. He didn't have a string to make him talk or any special outfits like some of the more modern bears. He was just brown and furry. But he became my best friend. He was my only real friend when I was little. None of the kids in my school really liked me. After a little while, it seemed like my family shared their opinion.

But Freddie liked me. He never laughed when I wanted to draw pictures instead of play baseball. He always cared when I came home crying from school. Freddie knew what I felt like, so he didn't offer any "do this and your life will be bright and fluffy" solutions like my parents.

When I was twelve, and I had the blade in my hands, Freddie was the only one who noticed my pain.

Freddie was the only one who told me not to die. Sad, isn't it? A kid in elementary school wants to kill himself, and the only one who gives a damn is a stuffed animal. But I think it was because of Freddie that I'm still alive. I can't remember anyone else helping.

Well, you grow older, and you get new friends. I found out that sensitive little kids who spend their childhood being treated like crap turn into your basic "high school freaks" and enjoy life more. It seems that there are a lot more of those people than there should be. Still, through all this, my best friend was Freddie. He even helped me get through the male puberty thing. I know. What would a stuffed bear know about puberty? Don't ask. Anyway, I would go into my room and the two of us would talk. My parents hate it when I'm in my room. They probably think I'm smoking pot, looking at dirty magazines, or one of those other things your parents aren't supposed to see. I don't think conversations with a teddy bear fall into that same category, but maybe it does. At any rate, I don't know what I would have done without Freddie around.

I remember one time when I gave one of my male friends a hug. This guy who didn't like me, Dan, called me a "gay faggot" and pushed me. I told Freddie about it. He said that Dan feared me because I wasn't like him. Therefore, he had to resort to pathetic, homophobic phrases to be powerful. Not only that, but he was too stupid to realize that the phrase "gay faggot" would mean that a person is straight. Freddie said that morons like Dan just weren't worth the waste of oxygen in fighting.

Later, Dan was caught drug dealing and had his sorry carcass thrown out of school. Freddie was right yet again.

Then I remember meeting her. The Life. That was the name I gave her. She made me feel alive. However, she didn't know this. She still doesn't. And I know we will never share the same feelings.

Freddie also knew this. And he said it didn't matter. He told me that the Life and I may never be together, but she was still helping me. She gave me purpose that I never truly had. She proved that I could love. As long as this was so, nothing else mattered.

This was the one time that I wasn't sure if Freddie was right. But he promised to help me if I needed him.

Now we come to a few days ago, when I came home and Freddie wasn't there. I asked my mother what had happened to him. She said that she had thrown the "piece of crap" in the garbage that morning. She asked why I cared about a stupid toy that we should have given away years ago. I gave her no reply. I just ran outside and sat on top of my car. I cried silently for ten minutes. I hadn't cried at all for over a year. It actually felt good. Then I stopped and sat perfectly still. Freddie was gone. That was it. My best friend was dead. It would be so easy to just give up. But I was not about to let Freddie die in vain. He had worked so hard. I got up and went back inside.

From now on, I am unaided. No one to talk to about her. No one to tell me who not to waste my breath on. But this was always intended. This is the way Freddie meant it to be. Pretty smart for a teddy bear.

Good bye, Freddie. Thanks for giving a damn.

Rite of Passage

With nothing separating her scrawny, prepubescent body from my own other than the modest tarmac playground and its prehistoric, wooden see-saw that squeaked and groaned, I heartlessly calculated all the cruel, spiteful acts I could inflict upon this odious little runt. Studying Jenny Buckley like a hunter observing his prey, I noted her every move. Her thin, twig-like arms reached tentatively to the first rung of the overwhelming climbing frame that loomed in front of her. She strained, lifting herself off the ground and up onto the play set. Oh, how I loathed her. Her cutsey manner of speaking, of calling me "Jamsie Wamsie," of wanting to play "house" and "let's pretend." I loathed her and all girls. She swung back and forth, gaining momentum, until she managed to hook her feet over the bar next to her. What would happen if she slipped? Or was pushed? A warm glow ebbed and coursed from my legs up through my body. I pictured myself in a trench, fighting the enemy, a band of screaming, whining eight-year-old girls. By the time my mind reached the finish of my fantasy, the utter annihilation of the female marauders, Jenny had resumed her arduous ascent to the summit of the monkeybars. She wore what her mother had chosen for her: a pair of white overalls, red sneakers with white laces, untied, and a red turtleneck.

James Pomerantz
Grade 12
Loomis Chaffee
Windsor

In her dress, Jenny differed little from her friends, yet her defiance illuminated her. She alone dared to retaliate my verbal and physical taunting, to throw food back at me at lunch, to pinch me.

Tom and I had been friends for as long as our parents could remember. We lived in the same apartment building, one-eleven East Eighty-Fourth street. I lived on the fifth floor, he on the tenth. After school he and I would sit in front of my television. As we paid homage to our electric god, we would concoct our devilish plans for the next day, for Tom, like me, loved to hate girls. We had seen innumerable smooches on the soap operas that would inundate our senses daily; we had witnessed our high school idols flirt with the more attractive girls; we had even seen my older brother come in late at night after one of his dates; nothing, however, could sway our young minds from believing that girls were evil personified.

Christmas was coming; the geese were getting fat; and the parents associated with our school held the annual Park Avenue Christian Day School Christmas Party. All of the students had been invited. The children, spruced by their parents, arrived at the party on time, not yet understanding the term "fashionably late." Standing by the punchbowl, filled with a lethal combination of raspberry sherbet, ginger ale and orange juice, Tom and I inhaled our snacks with limited social etiquette. Uninterested in conversing or even extending the most basic courtesies towards the other kids, we held our strategically chosen ground, as according to the plan. Tom and I, with our stunning intellect, had come to the conclusion that if we stood our place, we would come into contact with the least number of people.

After several hours, countless crackers, and ridiculous amounts of potato chips, Tom and I still held our place, and then what could be considered the most unexpected action in history happened. Jenny, having approached us unnoticed, leaned forward and delicately kissed both of us on our cheeks. Tom and I, as if running from death itself, tore ourselves from our base camp, and ran, only stopping once we had locked the bathroom door, with her somewhere on the opposite side. We stood, silently, not knowing what to make of the incident. Obviously disgusted by physical contact with a female, I felt strangely content, strangely happy. Tom and I, after much debate, decided that perhaps we should go back to our spot, and as we unlocked the bathroom door and entered the hallway, we had left behind our innocence; for now we were men of the world.

Saturday Phone-Sitting

Leticia Hernandez
Grade 12
Westover School
Middlebury

Feeling lonely, I sigh and shift my
knotted back away from the
seamless meeting of the oak
shelves and the grease-splattered
wall and try to keep my toes out
of the creeping block of sunlight
that is pushing me farther into the
sharp concave. I wonder why it's
taking you so long to call.

I finger the grimy, twisted
cord and feel the smooth
indentation running down
the middle like a mini-highway
worn away by the migrations
of forgotten travelers
that can definitely remember
their promise to call at 9 a.m.
on their hermanita's 9th birthday.

Then stretch my back
and my lap-sore calves.
How long has it been?
Time seems to be working only on
me, during these four year-long
minutes waiting for you.
Hoping to God you remember,
I whisper "Cumpleanos Feliz"
to the sleep-quieted apartment.
Love me.

Marc Parry
Grade 12
Stamford High
School
Stamford

The Sad Old Blues Man

The sad old blues man,
He sits down on the street corner,
And breathes in the air.
Another day of playing for pennies,
The only thing he knows.
Sighing, he pulls out a cigarette from a fresh pack of Chesterfields
Probably his ten-thousandth,
Oh well, too late to stop now.
With a deep drag he lights,
The red ember burning slow beneath the ashes.
The rusty latches creek as he opens his guitar case,
Nestled comfortably inside the red velvet lies his life, his love,
his passion.
Carefully, he pulls out his faded, rosewood Gibson electric.
Resting it securely in his lap,
He plugs into his tiny amp
The clouds loom gray as he strums his first chord.
Settling in, the music begins to flow,
The blues, coming from deep inside his gut.
His dark brown face winces with each note,
His life story pouring out through his song.
Tapping his shoes to the rhythm running through his body,
He becomes engulfed in his music,
Feeling nothing else,
Absorbed, at one with his guitar.
Every note, perfect,
And for a brief moment, he forgets his problems, his pain, his sorrow,
On a greater high than any drug could ever provide.
But the moment ends,
And he is just as he was before,
A sad old blues man.



Rapunzel's Scissors

Kathryn Sill
Grade 12
Greenwich Academy
Greenwich

Tower dark,
stoic and impenetrable, it looms thick against the sky.
Layered bricks sealed
heavy with mortar.
Ivy twists and moves seductively
heaven-bound.

Her calls no longer reach into the treetops,
the leaves formed a dense padding
to her echoing cries.

The slope of a turret,
frame of a room -
with a carefully embedded window.

A shaven scalp,
bristles of hair disregard life outside these walls.
A doll behind a looking glass -
she was so china pretty,
such delight was found in tying her locks with
satin ribbons and silken bows.

Now they drop past the sill,
catching ever so slightly
upon the creeping ivy -
faint streaks of crimson
against a closing green and despairing gray.

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