



CONNECTICUT STUDENT WRITERS

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FOREWORD

This publication is a celebration of talented authors, kindergarten through twelfth grade. These poems, short stories, essays, and play represent the best of over 850 that were submitted. Those 850 represent the thousands and thousands written daily, at little classroom desks, in sometimes noisy study halls, at solitary kitchen tables across Connecticut.

Eudora Welty in One Writer's Beginnings talks about childhood learning: "Learning stamps you with its moments. Childhood's learning is made up of moments. It isn't steady. It's a pulse." This magazine reflects a few of those moments.

We salute the teachers and parents who helped to encourage students to capture those moments as writers. We salute the young writers whose collective voices made us laugh, made us pause, and made us cry.

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The Waves

The Waves,
Rocking
Forever,
Crashing against the rocks,
Never stop,
High tide,
Low tide,
In between,
Swallow sandcastles in one gulp,
An open mouth,
Ready to save,
Ready to kill,
It depends,
The waves may be kind,
Beautiful,
Cool to the skin,
A true friend,
The waves may be merciless,
Roaring,
Killers,
The devourer of man,
The sand smooth and sleek,
Seashells brought and taken by waves,
A split personality,
You can jump,
Over glistening waves,
Move in a boat,
Waves are nature's gift.

Nicole Estvanik
Thomas Alcorn School
Grade 3

A Ballerina

With a sparkling tutu
shining and glittering
the ballerina dances
graciously and carefully.
High in the sky
the star, with her shining
head, arms, and legs
jumps
then falls to me.

Erin Florio
Brookside School
Grade 5

"I'm From Brooklyn, New York, Myself"

Babbles in a constant
traffic jam
of useless information
watching for his
eyes
which he carefully hides
curtained in platinum blonde
chatter on
in a Brooklyn voice
that echoes
the city streets he was born on
his armor of flash
neon-sign clothes
tangled his beautiful
fingers
in fishing line
in guitar strings.
His hair slips
as he cocks his head
he looks
with chameleon eyes
to songs that have
never been written
pieces that have never been played
instruments that he has not learned yet.
Wink
and a sly smile
his hair slips back
his talk is still tumbling on
saying nothing
meaning nothing.
He paces behind it
where he is silent
where the music
of his city self
sings.

Juliet Francoeur
East Granby High School
Grade 12

Summer at Grandmother's

The house was big, split in half down the middle and shared with the neighbors next door. The white, cracked walls gleamed in the sunlight. The small windows framed by brown shutters and the red sloping roof perpetually inhabited by pigeons lent the house a homey feeling. To me it was a place I could go to anytime and it would always be there, greeting me with the cricket's song in the trees, a single light lit in the kitchen window pouring, out onto the patio. I'd carefully open the iron gate, but no matter how I tried, it would always squeak, its joints worn out by countless generations of children swinging upon it. Walking up the driveway framed with flowers, I would soak up the sweet smell of roses which filled the garden and climbed up the walls.

Every summer I spent three wonderful weeks away from my parents, alone and independent. Just me, Grandma and the house. I couldn't imagine summer without them.

The house wasn't fancy, but in its simplicity it was beautiful. Situated in a suburban neighborhood, it had a huge backyard with a forest beyond; a garden full of roses alive with the buzzing of bees; an orchard full of fruit trees with a wooden swing hung on the biggest apple tree; and a garden brimming with vegetables all carefully tended by Grandmother's loving hands. All this was surrounded by a wooden fence. Through its multitude of loose planks I'd sneak out into the street to play jump rope or roller-skate at dinnertime. Not that I didn't like dinner; my grandmother was a culinary genius (and she never served leftovers). But like all children I had better things to do than eat.

After a day of fun I'd come home, tired, my shoes full of sand, my feet covered with tar, to devour my supper.

The house was always full of children running around, laughing. Even rainy days were fun. I spent hours sitting in the gingerbread scented kitchen coloring pictures. The kitchen was always full of sunlight in the morning and dusky and comfortable in the afternoons. Its walls hung with old photographs and pictures of saints, giving it a church-like atmosphere. The other rooms weren't as comfortable as the kitchen with their hardwood floors, polished tables and cabinets filled with clay figurines and crystal glasses taken out only at Christmas. The cabinets within our reach were locked with a key, hiding their contents from our greedy hands behind polished doors which reflected our faces like mirrors. These rooms were cool during the summer which gave them an unreal feeling.

My favorite room was the bedroom upstairs where I slept. Its single window looked out onto the orchard and the vegetable garden. In late summer the soft smell of hay or freshly cut grass would pour in through that window, bringing with it the realization that summer was almost over. The room smelled fresh and crisp, like an autumn morning, and it was always cool on hot summer nights. But this coolness was different from the coolness of the rooms downstairs. This cool was pleasant like a dip in the pool on a scorching day or a glass of sparkling lemonade. Since it was on the top floor, the room had a sloping ceiling painted light, sky blue like the walls. My bed was on the low end, and I had to be careful not to hit my head. Next to the window was a huge, full length mirror with a dresser. Many wonders were hidden in its drawers.

The best part of the room was a large wardrobe which stood against the high end of the ceiling. It was an old fashioned wardrobe sporting four doors made of beige, polished wood. It looked like an oversized jewelry box. We weren't supposed to open it, and most of the time it was locked anyway. But I found a way to get inside with the help of a stickpin. I couldn't resist it; I was drawn to that wardrobe like Pandora to the magic box.

When I finally unlocked the secret, it wasn't at all what I expected. The interior smelled of mothballs and potpourri, and it was full of girl's clothes. On the shelves, stacked like wooden blocks, were many boxes. Some were full of old photographs, some full of junk, others sealed with tape. The clothes were very old, wrinkled and faded. Petticoats, dresses and straw hats occupied the hangers and shelves. I found myself in another place, another time. I wondered who those clothes belonged to. Opening one of the boxes, I discovered stacks of old photos, pictures of people I never met because they died long before I was born. They were brown and blurry, but I could discern that all of them were of a girl. She wore a big bow in her curly hair, a long dress and button shoes. Perhaps she was the owner of all those clothes. I'd probably never know, all I knew was that her name was Emily. It was written on a big picture of her along with a date: May 16, 1921.

That summer I swore to myself that I would find out who Emily was and why my grandmother kept all her clothes locked in the wardrobe when I visited again next year. I was afraid to ask lest they find out I opened the wardrobe unauthorized.

Next year never came though; I never went back. During the holidays there was a fire next door. It spread and destroyed my grandmother's house too. Everyone was all right; they got out in time, but the house and everything in it was gone. So was the wardrobe. Grandma lived with us

until she got an apartment. It was the worst Christmas of my life.

Now Grandma lives in the city. The kitchen is sterile white and reeks of Lysol. The rooms are even colder and more polished. There is no upstairs room because she lives in a one story apartment and we have to walk softly since there is a baby downstairs. There is no rose garden or orchard, the apartment is on the fifth floor, there is a wide expanse of cement for a yard. But above all there is no wardrobe.

I never found out who Emily was. Once I asked Grandmother, but she looked at me strangely and didn't answer. It's been five years; we still visit, but it's not the same.

In those flames died the house and the wardrobe, but in my heart there will always be a special place for the memory of Emily and Grandmother's house in the summer.

Joanne Binkowski
St. Joseph High School
Grade 9

A Ballerina

Flesh glides through the azure, majestic skies,
In a world far from our reality,
It appears up high as mere butterflies,
Moving peacefully in tranquility.
Who am I? What am I going to be?
I am one who will dance through ancient time
A lovely dance against earth's gravity,
So soft, sweet sounds pattered by silent mime.
Each act, each move, each step with polished poise,
I correlated with chic precision,
perplexing thoughts are said without a noise,
And given to the world for decision.
My feet will move softly with pinkish lace,
To the upbeat tempo in lovely grace.

Bonita Hunter
James Hillhouse High School
Grade 12

I Love and I Hate

I hate bites,
I love fights.
I hate being late,
I love being eight.
I hate bees,
I love peas.
I hate rats,
I love cats.

Jeffrey Audet & Courtney Steele
Nathan Hale School
Grade 1

If I Were a Kite

If I were a kite,
What would I do?
Would I steer myself?
Would I go north or south?
Would the birds sing at me
or tweet at me?

I don't know.
I want to find out.
Could you tell me kite, please?
I want to know how it feels.
I know kites can't talk.
I want you to show me how by letting
me fly you.

Fairy, oh Fairy.
Could you turn me into a kite?
"I sure would."
"Being a kite is good."

I go south to let my new self
get flown by my new owner.
Her name is Ashley.
She is very nice to me.
I like her.
She takes very good care of me.

Alexandria Barrett
Natchaug School
Grade 1

The Overbearing Elm

She sits in her spacious, yet tastefully furnished living-room. Her arm is cast tensely behind her comfortable, over-stuffed, white sofa which is placed upon feverishly waxed, solid oak floors. Before her huge, stone fireplace she sits, with a glass of bourbon in her hand. As the moonlight flickers through the big French doors at the far side of the room, the shadows from the overbearing elm right outside the door are dancing upon the leather-bound books on the opposite wall. This was the same tree which, despite all of her efforts at cutting back the branches, kept stretching its arms too close to her house, above the roof top, reaching for heaven. Her eyes are fixed upon the flames fighting one another inside her fireplace.

Her mind wanders back to her childhood. Memories of white picket fences, rose gardens, Saturday afternoon baseball games and of the oatmeal cookies which were waiting for her each day after school. She remembered the comfort of the big kitchen and all of the wonderful smells that always filled it while the sunlight flickered through the big windows over the sink.

"What did Daddy's little girl accomplish in school today?"

"I got three more feathers in my reading headband, Daddy! I have twice as many as any of the other reds! And I got two gold stars on my math test!"

"That's my girl; keep making Daddy proud!"

"What are you going to be when you grow up?" her grandpa always asked.

And she always answered with the same trained response. In an enthusiastic voice which she had long ago mastered, because she knew it made him happy, she answered, "Anything I want to be!"

"That's right, sweetheart, anything in the world!"

When she came home with her first "C," she knew that she had failed them; what would they say?

She stood in front of them alone, praying that they wouldn't love her less.

"You'll have to fix this," they said. "You have college to think about," they said. "You've disappointed us," they

said. "You are capable of more," they said.

When she was seventeen and young, her best friend said to her, "You'll make it in life. You're going to be better than the rest of us. You have nothing to worry about."

She didn't know what to say. It was true. It was simply the way it had to be. It had long ago been decided.

"Are you going to marry him after college?" they asked her of her first love.

"No, I've got to wait. I've got other things to do first."

"That's right," they said, "live a little first."

She is suddenly jerked back into the present. One of the doors has blown open and has knocked a vase full of flowers onto the floor. She runs to close the door. She is angry because it took her a long time to arrange the flowers in a way which pleased her; now all her work was destroyed. She picks up the flowers but grabs them too hard. The petals crumble in her hand and fall back to the floor. She bends down one more time to pick up the pieces, but it's too dark and the shadows from the overbearing elm are scaring her. So she leaves them as they are and goes to bed.

Kelly Campbell
Enrico Fermi High School
Grade 12

Haiku

In the dewy morn
Lies a silky spider web
Full of silver stars

Tracy Edgecomb
Carl Cutler Jr. High
Grade 9

A Broken Friendship

You climbed up that asperous trunk
Clutching its stiff branches.
You groped to the top of the tree.
She never failed you.
She held you with open arms.
Looking down, you saw the green grass,
her lumpy roots protruding from the moist soil,
Balancing herself and you
against the playful wind.
She gently leaned from side to side
never more than you could handle.
You had a view of the red and baby-blue sky.
It lightened you to see the clouds drift
like a sail on the icy waters.
She felt the beating of your heart.
Her leaves responded by tickling you.
That made you angry,
because you were unable to see the setting sun.
You tore off some leaves
and swatted them wildly.
She swayed too far
and you fell.
Leaving with a pout,
returning with a grin,
you grasped the bark which flaked in your hand.
Oblivious to the cries of the cool summer wind,
and the frantic ruffling of her pleading wings,
You began to cut into her with the saw's sharp teeth.
When she fell to the ground,
you laughed out loud and walked away,
but you did not realize that at the base of her trunk,
a tiny branch clung and smiled to the sun.

Vincent Candelora
North Branford High School
Grade 12

ANIMALS ARE NICE TO YOU. I LIKE THEM. DON'T
STEP ON THEM BECAUSE I DON'T WANT YOU TO.

Vanessa Valentin
North Windham School
Kindergarten

New Territory (after reading Hemingway)

"Was that the last?"

"No, we have still to see an emergency case on Ward thirty-one. Young fellow, actually. Poor sod, in a geriatric ward."

Numerous brogue shoes advanced along a lengthy tiled corridor which smelt strongly of disinfectant.

Suddenly, they surrounded him - many harsh white lab-coats. That was the first thing he noticed. The doctor in charge was now carefully studying the charts on the clipboard which hung from the end of the cot.

"Platelet count?"

"The same as before."

So that was that. They would test the bone-marrow after all. He looked up at them - all here in case something happened. Not that any thing would happen.

The doctor in charge smiled, too encouragingly, perhaps.

"You'll be fine. Won't feel a thing."

White screens appeared around his bed. He turned over onto his front. The starched linen sheets felt hard and rather scratchy. He felt a chill on his back as someone lifted the heaviness of the sheets off him, leaving him exposed and vulnerable. He remembered being told time and again, "Never leave yourself exposed; you are open to attack and have no protection." But those days were over now. He watched the weak sunlight filter through the yellowing blinds and waited for the pain.

It came. He clenched his teeth and fists. There was a distant groan of pain, but he knew it was not his. He could feel himself sweating, hot and cold. Strangely enough, he kept thinking of Indian initiation tests, the coming of manhood. He grimaced. It was quite ironic really. It was as though someone were pulling a red-hot poker from the small of his back.

"Hold his feet."

One last stab of intense pain, and it was over. He was tucked back into bed briskly and given a drink of cool water. It seemed suddenly very quiet. The screens had been removed, and he stared out. The yellow streetlamps from outside accentuated the dull metal of the restraining bars

of the cot. He looked through them. The shuffling old men were being helped into their beds. He thought idly; perhaps he would be like that one day. His eyes alighted on a saline drip. He followed the angular shape until it reached a crack in the wall. The crack went all the way up the wall, across the mottled ceiling, down, and stopped just above a clear, precise clock: 7:17. He watched the seconds ticking by, in rhythm with the blood surging in his ears.

He wondered when the doctors would be back.

By the time the brogue shoes were advancing along the tiled corridor again, he supposed that it really didn't matter. Either it would be quick and agonizingly painful or a slow disintegration of his body.

Catherine Dean
Darien High School
Grade 11

Penguins

17 kinds, tuxedo
pushing, hopping, arguing
cute animals
penguins

Randy DiMartino
Gainfield School
Grade 1

The Molting

Cast of Characters
(in order of appearance)

- Miss Rose Jones -- a dedicated, middle-aged science teacher whose midwestern ways are respected though recognized as old school.
- Clifford Jamonski -- a lackadaisical, Connecticut fifteen-year-old who enjoys using his self-imposed outcast position to be either an observer or a sarcastic commentator.
- Hank "The Hunk" Davis -- a sixteen-year-old Floridian body builder who knows he is short on "smarts" but thinks muscles can conquer all.
- Reginald Humphrey -- a preppy, fourteen-year-old computer whiz from D.C. who doesn't need any help boasting about his unique and superior intellect.
- Kandy McBinney -- a pretty, fifteen-year-old cheerleader from California whose main priority is maintaining her popular image.
- Maria Cortez -- a pleasingly plump, fourteen-year-old exchange student from Spain whose sincere and caring ways are not easily understood or appreciated by her American peers.

Scene I-- Miss Rose Jones' science classroom at Kentworthe College Preparatory Boarding School, on a Friday afternoon late in the school day.

Miss Jones: Now that we have finished our lessons for the week, I would like to discuss this weekend's wilderness field trip. As you know I have been taking five or six students each weekend to remote hills to collect specimens, such as leaves and tree barks, for our science laboratory studies. I must say that last week's group behaved so poorly that I have decided to regroup the remaining members of the class so as to avoid problems. (Whispering is heard throughout the classroom.) Therefore, I have decided that the following students will be going this weekend. First, Nancy McBinney, next Clifford Jamonski. (All the students groan when Jamonski's name is mentioned.)

Clifford: (After being nudged by a fellow student)
Did you say something?

Miss Jones: I called your name as one of the students who will be joining me this weekend on a wilderness field trip. We will be leaving just before dawn, driving in my mini-van into the magnificent Berkshires.

Clifford J: Weekend? Mini-van? Berkshires? What you talking about, teach?

Miss Jones: The name is Miss Jones. The weekend is the wilderness field trip, offered only to my science students. The mini-van is my own vehicle, which I use for this excursion. And the Berkshire Mountain range is the pride of northwestern Massachusetts.

Clifford J: Gotcha!

Miss Jones: Now, where was I? Kandy, Clifford...uh...
Reginald Humphrey, Henry Davis.

Hank: The name's Hank, ma'am.

Reginald: (With hand raised for permission to speak)
Miss Jones, I believe there is a serious flaw in your selection. I will not wish to spend my weekend with this "hunk" of meat.

Hank: Who are you calling a "hunk of meat"?

- Reginald: Why don't you sit down with a calculator and figure it all out?
- Miss Jones: I sense some tension here. Gentleman, that will be enough.
- Reginald: It's an insult having me waste my time with him.
- Miss Jones: You are only going on a field trip together; you're not getting married.
- Hank: Guys don't marry guys. Is someone trying to get funny here?
- Reginald: Yes, and you are the joke. Listen, if I have to go, there had better be room for my IBMPC Ultra 10,000 K. I'll have to amuse myself with something.
- Hank: (using his hands as if crushing a coconut) I'll turn your computer into a compact model so that it will fit. Get my drift, "Great Cerebrum"?
- Reginald: What are you taking? Barbells?
- Miss Jones: I will determine what is taken. Space is limited, and necessities will come first. One can get quite cold and hungry in those hills. Maria Cortez, you too will join us this weekend.
- Maria: Oh, me, Miss Jones. How exciting! What is this trip field like? Since I am new to your country, and this class, I do not know about this thing.
- Kandy: (in a low but audible voice spoken to Hank) How boring!
- Miss Jones: Did you say something, Kandy?
- Kandy: Not really, Miss Jones. It's just that-- well you see--I really would prefer going with my friends; you know, the other girls on the cheerleading squad.
- Miss Jones: We don't always get what we want. Think how exciting it will be to get to know someone new.
- Maria: I'm sorry if I said something wrong.

Miss Jones: You said nothing wrong, Maria. Did you have (with emphasis) "field trips" in your native country?

Maria: (Pronouncing with difficulty) Field trips, what is field trips?

Miss Jones: Field trips are group learning experiences that take place with the teacher but outside of the classroom, such as visits to museums. What is learned on the field trip helps the students understand what they are learning in school.

Maria: Si. Si. Yes, in Spain students go on (now said with greater ease) field trips.

(Scene begins to fade slowly)

Scene II: 6:30 a.m. the next morning in Miss Jones' mini-van, somewhere in the Berkshire hills.

Kandy: Finally there's enough light to do my nails. Now you know why I just had to have a window seat. This color nail polish is awesome. Do you like it, Hank? How do you think it will look with a pale blue formal?

Hank: Great. I guess?

Maria: Oh, Kandy, everything looks so pretty on you.

Kandy: Maria, I don't need your compliments.

Miss Jones: Please don't spill any nail polish on my upholstery.

Reginald: While on the subject of potential casualties, let me say that it's bad enough that I have to hear Hank's groans as he pumps up his biceps. But why must he lift his hand weights over my computer equipment? I doubt that he could afford the replacement cost.

Hank: I don't plan on losing my grip on anything, Reginald.

Maria: When will we get there, Miss Jones?

Miss Jones: I expect it would take longer than usual since the roads are so icy, but I'm beginning

to wonder if that last turn was a mistake.
 Clifford, check the map. (No response.)
 Clifford, the map. (Still no response.)
 Hank, would you kindly unplug Clifford from
 his Walkman?

Hank: Sure thing.

Clifford: Hey! What's the idea? Whatever it is you
 want I'm not interested. I'm busy counting
 oak trees, very scientific stuff.

Miss Jones: Hold on, we're skidding. (Black out) Oh my
 God! Children!

CRASH--sound of the van hitting the tree and sliding into a
 soft shoulder ditch, shattering of glass, cries and screams.

Maria: Miss Jones! She's hurt. Help! Help!

Hank: Ouch! My foot!

Reginald: My computer! My floppy disks!

Kandy: I'm bleeding.

Clifford: Sure enough. It's blood, not nail polish.

Hank: It's your cheek, Kandy. Here's a towel.

Kandy: I can't move my right arm. It hurts. It
 hurts a lot.

Maria: Miss Jones, wake up! Wake up!

Reginald: Maria, stay calm. She is probably unconscious
 from hitting her head.

Clifford: What fun do we have next?

Reginald: Let's get everyone out of the van before
 (pauses, thinking it best not to be specific),
 before anything else happens.

Scene III--(Reginald enters stage left carrying his computer
 equipment as if it were a child being rescued from a fire.
 After placing the equipment down, he exits left.)

Reginald: (off stage left) Hank, set up a sleeping
 bag for Miss Jones. She needs to be kept
 warm, at approximately 70 degrees Fahrenheit.
 That is the optimum environment for efficient
 healing.

Hank: (retorting) I would have done that without

you telling me.

(Hank enters stage left with sleeping bag; places it down; exits left.)

(Hank reenters left carrying Miss Jones. He places her down carefully in the sleeping bag. As he begins to exit left, he sees Maria helping Kandy on stage.)

Hank: Here, let me help.

(Hank helps Maria with Kandy.)

Kandy: Oh, Hank, you're so strong.

Hank: Yeah, I know.

Hank: (to Maria) Maria, let's put her over here.

(Hank and Maria try to maneuver Kandy into a comfortable position.)

Hank: (to Kandy) Let Maria help you. I'll be back in a flash. There are some things I have to attend to. Who else is there to move the injured or lift the heavy stuff?

(Hank exits left)

Kandy: (offended) That's just wonderful! My arm is probably broken; my face is scarred for life; and the boy I care about leaves me to "lift heavy stuff."

Maria: Just relax, you'll be ok.

Kandy: (with pain and disgust) What do you know?

(Clifford wanders on stage; seems to be oblivious of Maria and Kandy.)

Maria: Does it hurt badly?

Kandy: (snapping back) Of course!

Maria: Let me help. I'll get the first aid kit.

Kandy: Hurry back! I'm afra... (reconsiders her word) cold.

Maria: Cold? Here, wear my sweater. I made it from natural wool; it will surely keep you warm.

Kandy: (horrified) What?! (After a moment and more composed) Just hurry.

Maria (exiting to the left): I won't be more than a second.

Clifford: How convenient for you that Maria is here to help. I'm sure you wouldn't want it any other way.

Kandy: (emphatically) Who asked you to butt in?

(Reginald enters left)

Kandy: (to Reginald) Would you look at my arm? Do you think it's broken?

Reginald: (closely observing Kandy's arm and said without emotion) It's probably a chip or break at the proximal end of the third metacarpal. Under normal conditions I would estimate a six-week to two-month healing period.

Kandy: Two months! The basketball season will be over by then. What good is a cheerleader with a broken (struggling over the pronunciation) meta-car--or whatever you call it. Your diagnosis is not very consoling, Reginald.

(Maria enters from left with a blanket and the first aid kit. Hank also reenters carrying materials.)

Kandy: Finally, you're back.

(As Maria attends to Kandy's arm, Hank and Reginald busy themselves with moving equipment.)

Kandy: What are you going to do?

Maria: For now I'm going to wrap your arm securely with this cloth.

Kandy: Will that stop the pain?

Maria: It should help.

Kandy: Ouch! (and then) Oh, that's a little better.

Maria: Good.

(Maria continues to care for Kandy)

Reginald: (to Hank) See if Miss Jones is conscious yet.

Hank: Who made you boss?

Reginald: Who else is capable of the position?

Hank: Me for one.

Reginald: I'll let you know when we need muscle power.

Hank: (raising his fists at Reginald) I think we need muscles now, right in your face!

Reginald: My, my, how ready you are to resort to violence.

Clifford: (walking between Reginald and Hank) Still arguing? Maybe you two could resolve this power struggle at the flip of a coin?

Reginald: Why don't you materialize into another galaxy?

Hank: Yeah, go space out.

Clifford: Okay, okay. I just hope you two stop fighting before it's time to go home. Certainly you wouldn't want your perfect conduct records tarnished.

(Miss Jones begins to make groggy sounds.)

Clifford: Miss Jones, your students are out of control. (Spoken with a familiar ring.) This work is significantly below the performance level one would expect from a teacher of your ability and expertise.

Reginald: (to Clifford) Your sarcasm is grossly inappropriate at this time.

Hank: (also to Clifford) Yeah. Knock it off.

(Reginald and Hank turn their attention to Miss Jones.)

Miss Jones: (awakening) What's happened? Where are we? (Looks around. After a moment....) Oh my word! Is anyone hurt?

Reginald: Everyone survived the crash, Miss Jones. The van, however, is stuck in a ditch.

Hank: Yeah, it wasn't that bad. Other than you, Kandy is the only one that needs some medical attention. (Proudly) Things are under

control.

Miss Jones: What's wrong with Kandy?

Hank: I think her arm is broken.

Reginald: A brilliant diagnosis.

Miss Jones: What's been done to facilitate rescue? Have the State Police been notified? Oh! Oh!
(Holding her head) I'm so disoriented.

Reginald: Miss Jones, please do not exert yourself. In the case of concussion, it is best to...

Hank: (interrupting, to Reginald) Will you quit with the 50 cent words? (Now to Miss Jones) What he's trying to say, Miss Jones, is that you need to rest.

(Hank and Reginald attend to Miss Jones. Once she seems to be at rest, Hank pulls Reginald aside.)

Hank: We need to get Miss Jones and Kandy to a hospital. Do you know where we are?

Reginald: I'm not sure.

Hank: (seeing a possible solution) There's a map in the van. Come on. Let's check it out.

Reginald: Good idea.

(Hank and Reginald exit left.)

Kandy: (complaining about the sting of disinfectant) You're hurting me.

Maria: I'm sorry.

Kandy: Do you think the cut will leave a scar?

Maria: I don't think so. I'm sure it's going to be fine.

Kandy: That's just what I always wanted--sympathy from our little Miss Foreign Exchange.

Maria: I'm sorry; I didn't mean to cause you offense.

Kandy: Will you stop saying you're sorry?

Maria: (with some whimpering) I don't know what to say. Everything I say seems to come out

wrong.

Kandy: Oh, I guess you can't help it, being that you are a foreigner.

Maria: Yes, being different makes everything difficult. Everything is so wrong for me, and for you everything is so right.

Kandy: Everything's right? Maybe it looks that way from where you stand, but I don't feel that everything's right.

Maria: But, Kandy, you have so many friends; you're so popular; and everything you wear is so pretty.

Kandy: Sure I'm popular, as long as I look "perfect" every minute...not even one eyelash out of place. You know, it gets a bit boring being perfect every minute. For once I would like to be just plain me. No makeup, no "in" hairdo. Just me! How popular do you think I would be then?

Maria: I would like you.

Kandy: I guess you would. I don't have to impress you. You know, that kind of friend would be nice. Real nice.

(Maria continues to care for Kandy; however, both notice Hank and Reginald, who have entered from the left with a map.)

Reginald: (examining the map) Let's see. "Fenn Road." That's the road we should be on now.

Hank: How do you figure that?

Reginald: I just followed the southwestern route we took off Route 91. The nearest town may be as much as fifteen miles away. (Tossing the map aside) That's no help.

Hank: No, wait. I'll jog there. Five miles is my regular workout distance, and I've done ten before. What's a few more. No pain, no gain. (To Reginald) While I'm gone, you keep things under control here.

Reginald: I must admit, Hank, your idea appears to be a feasible plan. Let's put it into motion. You can count on me to care for things here.

One way or another, we're going to get out of this OK.

Scene IV-- (A few days later in Miss Jones' science classroom just before class is about to begin. Kandy's arm is in a cast and there is a medium-sized bandage on her cheek. Maria looks a bit different, perhaps more "American." When the scene opens, Reginald is helping Hank with homework, and Kandy and Maria are engaged in "girl talk.")

Kandy: (to Maria) She was taken aback when I told her exactly how I felt. Now it's her move.

Maria: (to Kandy) If you feel good about all this, Kandy, then it is worth the effort.

Kandy: (to Maria) Feel good. That's an understatement. I haven't felt this good since I was nine or ten.

Reginald: (to Hank) Now you divide it.

Hank: (to Reginald): That's what I thought.

Kandy (to Reginald and Hank): How is the algebra going?

Hank: I think I get the hang of it. Reginald isn't a bad teacher. He just showed me an easy way to solve the word problems we had for homework.

Reginald: It's just logical reasoning, mental gymnastics.

Maria: Speaking of gymnastics, I saw you two in the gym yesterday afternoon.

Reginald: Yeah. Hank worked up a fantastic incremental physical fitness program for me. I never knew I had mass in any part of my body other than my head.

Hank: Wait till I get you on my Schwarzenegger Program # 2.

Reginald: What I'm doing now is writing a program to keep track of my progress. You know this collaboration has marketing potential.
(To Hank) I could do a computer workup of a client's physical condition, and you could

design an individualized exercise program.
It would be a great partnership--
R&H Enterprises.

Hank: Sounds good, except for the name.

(All acknowledge the humor of Hank's remark. Meanwhile, Clifford enters reading a biology textbook and mumbling to himself.)

Clifford: (to himself) Endo, exo, endo, exo.

Kandy: (to Clifford) What's that you're mumbling?
Sounds like witchcraft.

Clifford: Yeah. That's what biology is, witchcraft.
It's bad medicine.

Reginald: (to Clifford) Are you trying to "cram" for
Miss Jones' test?

Clifford: Sure enough.

(Clifford stamps his foot and makes a "crunch" sound.)

Kandy: What was all that about?

Clifford: I just killed another beetle. (A pause for
contemplation and then said with seeming
seriousness) Do you think I could go "buggy"
studying the little buggers? This exoskeleton
stuff is driving me crazy.

Reginald: Oh, that's not hard.

Clifford: (looking quickly for the material in his text)
I'm sure the book said it was "hard."

Reginald: Funny man. You know that crunch sound you
just made when you stomped on (pointing his
finger) your beetle, that was the exoskeleton,
the outer skeleton structure common to many
insects and best known in the beetle. The
exoskeleton defines the insects body shape
and protects the internal organs against
injury, but not against big feet.

Maria: Yes, it's a kind of armor protecting an insect
from shock or impact.

Hank: That's why some bugs seem to bounce off a
window.

Reginald: Yes, that's the plus side, but there is a

minus. Though the exoskeleton supports the body mass of an insect, its firmness or rigidity prevents growth.

- Clifford: You mean these bugs never grow?
- Kandy: Exoskeleton bugs grow by molting.
- Clifford: By what?
- Reginald: Molting is the name given to the process of shedding the external skeleton so as to allow growth.
- Maria: I worry about how the insect must feel without its skeleton.
- Reginald: It's true that at this point the insect is in danger of losing its shape or collapsing. But, the new soft exoskeleton structure will harden with time. And once it has hardened, the molting process occurs again to allow further growth.
- Kandy: Great explanation, Reginald. All of us, including you, Clifford, should get a good grade now on Miss Jones's test.
- Clifford: Yeah, this stuff makes some sense. I'll probably do better than usual.

(Miss Jones enters stage right. Her walk and manner are as they were in Scene I.)

Miss Jones: Students, please take your seats. We need the whole period to complete the test.

THE END

Robert Alexander (Grade 6)
Joshua Farrell (Grade 6)
Brian Glenney (Grade 8)
Gregory Martin (Grade 7)
Amanda Murdough (Grade 6)
Meghan Pontbriand (Grade 6)
Lynn Prevost (Grade 8)
Jennifer Terry (Grade 7)
Jonathan Welch (Grade 6)
James Wright (Grade 6)

John Wallace Middle School

Unforgivable

Your suitcases are stacked like
Dominoes--
Waiting for the slightest touch
To file out the doorway.
Your own conscience
Gently bends to pick them up
One by one.
Silent tears
Shield your face
As you lift a picture frame
Into the trunk
On top of your carry-on bag.
I see our smiling faces of
So long ago--
Mocking me through the glass.
No, you're not going on a trip--
But you're trying to take us with you.
We turn to each other
But there is
Nothing left
To say.
I used to feel special
Your "little girl"
But I grew bitter--
As I grew older.
I search your face
For some sign--
Though I'm afraid
Of what
I might find.
As your seatbelt clinks
The door slams with a thud.
The engine puffs
And there you go...
Leaving the driveway
With nothing more
Than the sound
Of screeching wheels
To remember you by.

Julie Marie Anderson
North Haven Senior High School
Grade 11

The Eyes

The eyes are used for seeing.
Seeing crying, seeing dying.
Seeing caring, seeing sharing.
Seeing shame, seeing blame.
Seeing emotion, seeing hope.
Seeing hatred, seeing love.
Seeing the whole world around us,
Working together as one.

Jaclyn Concatelli
Charter Oak Elementary
Grade 5

Who Am I?

I am a free spirit
 always willing to learn
For all of life's knowledge
 and insights I yearn
I am Emily Dickenson
 probing my emotions
I am Madame Curie
 conjuring up potions
I am Sally Ride
 exploring the unknown
I am Mother Teresa
 caring for my own
I am Betsy Ross
 filled with a land's pride
I am Joan of Arc
 on the loyal side
I am Marie Antoinette
 brave in danger's face
I am Queen Victoria
 always showing my grace
I am all that I will ever
 think or do or say
In wisdom I grow
 with each passing day

Alena Cybart
West Side Middle School
Grade 8

You Think You've Got Problems

My name is Julie Heinz. I'm eleven years old and have brown hair. I live in a small apartment in New York City. I'm an only child, and I want to keep it that way.

My mother and father are acting funny. I don't know what's wrong. Do they think my dad's got problems with the mob? Or my mom is a robber?, or maybe they adopted me! I feel awful.

It's summer vacation and I can't have any fun. My friends come over every day to see if I can play. I told them my problems, but I know I shouldn't have because they gave me dumb reasons like maybe your mom's pregnant!

That would be awful. I HATE kids. They're small and mean. My parents would never do this to me. Never, never, never!

So I asked my dad. He just giggled and looked at my mother funnylike. Come to think of it, my mom has been looking bigger, a lot bigger. Maybe it's true, she is pregnant! Oh, I'd die; I'd absolutely die!

The next day was Monday. I walked to the park with my friend, Angie. She didn't say anything about yesterday. I was glad. I just wanted to forget everything that happened the day before. It was a pretty nice day even though we had leftover meat loaf for dinner. (Yuck!) We walked home together again and we played at her house.

The next day my parents told me something I didn't want to hear. We were moving! I couldn't believe it. I wasn't happy, and I really wasn't sad. I was in a middle mood. I didn't know what my feelings were doing. Sure, I would miss my friends but I would make new ones like my mother said.

Boy, I'm glad the big news wasn't something else. I was getting sort of worried. I told my mom and dad the way I felt about babies (because we're the kind of family that can talk about everything). After I started talking about it they started frowning. They weren't too happy about what I was saying!

That night I heard my mom and dad having low discussions about something in bed.

The next day I was so happy I felt like a cloud! I had a fabulous day! I told all my friends we were moving. They weren't too happy.

My mother was acting really depressed. She was also throwing up a lot in the morning. She also quit work. I

was glad because I could spend more time with her.

That night my favorite aunt came over. She kept on asking how the little bundle is. But I'm not a little bundle! I wondered what she was talking about!

Then my mother told me something - she was going to have a baby! AAAAAAYYYYYY! I ran up to my room and slammed the door. I could hear my mom crying, but I didn't care a bit.

Six months later.....

I was waiting patiently in the waiting room. I was going to see my new brother named Matthew J. Heinz. Finally, the nurse came and took me to my mom. Oh, he was so cute! I wish she had a million. I didn't really say I hated babies, did I?

Bethany Gorman
Buckley School
Grade 5

Sweet Dreams

While sleeping, I'll dream and
dream and dream.....
I'll dream I am a unicorn
prancing,
Dream I am a red rose growing,
Dream I am a butterfly dancing,
Dream I am a daisy that's not
dying,
Dream I am a cherry picked,
Dream I am a unipeg flying,
I'll dream I am a ball running in a
bouncy motion,
Dream I am the deep blue ocean,
Dream I am some toys on a shelf,
But most of all.....
I'll dream I am myself.

Christine Eslao
Coventry Grammar School
Grade 2

Lost Dog

Snowy's Lost

The dog's name was Snowy. She was a poodle, white as snow with black ears. She had a snub nose with a spot of pink on it. Her owner was called Jane. Jane was very kind to Snowy and took her for lots of walks.

Then one day Snowy ran away.

One morning very early, at 5:00, Jane woke up with a big yawn. She expected to find Snowy curled up in her arms snug and warm, but she wasn't there.

Then Jane whispered to herself, "That's funny! Snowy's always curled up in my arms. She must be downstairs." So she got up quickly and ran downstairs quietly to find Snowy's basket empty. She looked in every room and peeked inside her parents room quietly, so she wouldn't wake them.

Then she went outside, but only found the dew on the grass. Then Jane shouted, "Snowy, where are you?" She heard nothing but the birds chirping.

No School

Jane ran upstairs to tell her parents the bad news. Her mother said, "What do you want?"

"Oh mother, Snowy isn't anywhere inside or outside," Jane sobbed.

"Oh no! That's awful!" said Jane's mother who loved the dog too. "I think we should wait to look for her when it's light," said Jane's mother.

Suddenly Jane's father, not knowing about Snowy, woke and said, "Go back to bed, Jane. It's too early to be up!"

"Your father's right. It is too early. Besides, we decided it would be better to search for Snowy in the morning."

Soon it was 7:00. Jane got up and went downstairs drowsily.

In the kitchen, her parents were finishing breakfast. Then Jane's father kissed his wife and Jane, said "Goodbye" and went to work.

"Good morning," said Jane's mother cheerfully, forgetting about Snowy. "You look positively sick!"

"I think I am," Jane responded.

"I'll fetch the thermometer," said Jane's mother worriedly.

When Jane's mother came back she took Jane's temperature and found Jane had a fever. "Good heavens, you've got a fever! No school for you, back to bed," she said.

Jane was unhappy all day. "I wish Snowy was here," Jane sobbed.

The Doctor's

Next day Jane's mother took her back to the doctor.

They entered the building and Jane felt very scared.

When they got to the desk Jane's mother said, "I'd like to see Doctor Casey please."

"Just a moment," replied the lady at the desk. Jane and her mother waited for a few minutes.

Then Doctor Casey stepped in and said, "Is Jane Corny here?"

"Yes, she's here," Mrs. Corny called.

"Ah yes, what's wrong with Jane?" asked the doctor.

"Well, our dog ran away and Jane was very upset. I think that's why she's ill. She's got a fever," Mrs. Corny answered.

The doctor examined Jane and gave her some antibiotics and said "You must take one every day and be out of school for three days."

"Well thank you. Oh, please put that on the account," said Mrs. Corny.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Corny," said the doctor.

Where's Snowy?

Jane lay in bed wondering where Snowy was.

Snowy was caught in a rabbit trap. She was whimpering sadly. Sometimes it sounded as if she were saying, "Jane, where are you?"

Just then Snowy heard footsteps. "It must be the person who set this trap," Snowy thought, and it was.

He was a tall, big man but he looked kind.

"Well what have we here?" the man said. A dog? Here, come with me." The man released Snowy, took her into his house and gave her some food, but in the night Snowy ran away just like she did in the beginning of the story.

Well Again

It was Martin Luther King Day and three days since the Corny's visit to the doctor.

"Well, it's back to school," said Jane's mother.

"Oh no it isn't. It's a holiday today," said Jane.

"Oh yes, how are you feeling today?" Mrs. Corny asked.

"Great!" Jane shouted. "But I still wish Snowy was here."

Later that afternoon, Jane went on a walk to the park to look for Snowy. All she heard was the leaves rustling, birds singing and the branches blowing in the wind. She also saw the birds, squirrels and even chipmunks, but no sign of Snowy.

Jane called a few times, "Snowy-yyy," but she heard nothing.

She felt so sad that she cried for a few minutes.

When she came home her mother was making a sign for Snowy. It said:

LOST DOG - WHITE,
FLOPPY EARED POODLE
WITH A SPOT OF
PINK ON THE NOSE

REWARD!

Phone No. 625-9231
Contact Mrs. Corny
97 Bubblee Road
Greenwich, CT 06830

"Why are you making that?" Jane asked.

"To help find Snowy," Jane's mother answered.

"Now, we have to go to the library to get the poster photocopied," Mrs. Corny said, as she put the poster in her bag.

"Why don't we go now?" Jane asked.

"Alright, let's go," said her mother.

They went to the library and got the posters photocopied. After that they went home and colored them and put the posters up on telephone poles. The posters made the dark, droopy telephone poles look much brighter.

A Surprise!

It was early in the morning, and Jane felt something soft on her stomach. It was Snowy!

"It's Snowy!" Jane screamed happily.

Just then her parents ran in and said, "Oh that's wonderful."

"Oh, Snowy, you came back! I was so worried about you," Jane said. Then Jane gave Snowy a big hug and kiss, and everybody was happy.

Oh, by the way, Snowy got in the house by crawling in a cat flap she uses!

Later on, Jane said, "This was the greatest day of my life," and started to laugh.

Victoria Hampton
Greenwich Academy
Grade 4

A Crying Child

The rhythmical music of my feet pounding up and down came to a stop as I neared the vast expanse of water. Sinking downward until my eyes were level with the mist rising off the lake, I observed my surroundings, much as an eagle scans his empire. An earth-smelling springtime breeze lifted my hair with its gentle fingers and gradually it fell back into my face. As my hand lifted it up and back again, I became aware of the many statue-like, bluish-gray mountains towering over me, unconquerable, forever untouchable--making me feel small and vulnerable, as an ant is in comparison to man.

A pebble unleashed from my protection, rippled and splashed as it skipped along. The splash interweaving with the saddening cries of a mourning dove broke the silence and my concentration. Suddenly I became aware of the fact that I was slowly sinking into the mud surrounding me. Briskly standing up and shaking my already tiring legs, I started off again, brought back to the reality of life, torn away from nature. Neither was I sure which was real and which was fiction.

* * *

I suppose it was the scent of the brittle wood slowly burning that called on me to go forth to sit near the fire. Closing my eyes and feeling the warmth of the fire and the deliciously scented steam rising from my mug, I would sit for hours on end, just thinking. The taste of the coffee was so distinct, more so than last time. Then again everything is clearer after a morning jog. The sound of the popping and crackling of the flames became a lullaby to my ears, and I slowly fell asleep.

* * *

Little wet paws on my face and a vibrating repetition of purring slowly brought me to my awakening. I gazed upon "Alex," my kitten who was always "getting into" something she should not. Even before I opened my eyes my sense of smell told me my "little investigator" had found my half full mug of coffee.

Picking her up and placing her in the tub, I cleaned her off. It really was a shame that her beautiful white fur was always soiled the minute I was not watching her. Her emerald eyes dancing in delight and her pitter patter paws prancing about, she was the only feline I have known to

adore baths. Maybe that was why she loved the beaches so much.

Drying her was a challenge also. It seemed that her body wriggled in every which way it could until it gave in from pure exhaustion and she let me cradle her in my arms. She was my little companion, always bringing a smile to my face. I gather Jake is the reason for my pet. Sort of ridiculous, I suppose.

Leaving the room, I took a quick glance in the mirror noticing that time had taken a toll on me. Thinking back, I can still remember one of my friends saying they were "lines of knowledge" to an elder. Maybe so, I had thought nothing of it then, however.

* * *

Strumming, like the wind makes ripples in the sea, my fingers tenderly and lightly touched the aging ivory of the baby grand. Lost, finding an outlet, I would harmonize with my soul, unaware of the many happenings around me. As I stopped, the monotonous sound of the grandfather clock took over. Ticking its message away for all to hear. Crash! Bang! Boom! Across the keyboard! "Alex, darling, you always want attention."

Sitting down at the kitchen table, I watched the teardrops from the kitchen faucet appear as crystals in the sunlight. The afternoon beckoned me to come, and I could not resist. Like a child in a candy store, I gave in.

The porch door creaked as if in pain with my coming and going--and crashed with a bang! I would have to oil the hinges; Jake would always have taken care of that. Running 'til out of breath, I came to my lake-- My Lake!

So desolate, no one was ever there except me, yet it was so full of life indeed. The loons created a mood of utter sadness, and a display of orangish sun cascaded across the water. Until my husband took ill, long evenings into the sunrise would be spent there, as if it were the best movie we had even seen. I stayed there until the stars brightly and distinctly shone through the black of night. Picking out certain constellations, which Jake had spent hours on end explaining about, I felt the wind whisk from the lake--chilling me to the bone. The cries of the night and of nature were my only companions now. Somehow, though, I was satisfied.

Like a crying child growing and overcoming faults, the hardships in my lifetime were over. One could say I was content; the wave had reached the shore.

Brenda Houghton
East Granby Middle School
Grade 8

I'd Like To

I'd like to coach Michigan, be just like Bill Freider,
There is just one little hitch, I'm not that good a leader.
I'd like to be a great point guard, I'd copy Gary Grant,
But flashy moves and controlling the game are 2 things that
I can't.
I'd like to be an intimidating forward, I'd imitate Glen
Rice,
But I'm not so good at rebounding and my inside game ain't
so nice.
I'd like to be a great 6th man; be just like Loy Vaught,
But I'm not so good at rebounding and only an average shot.
Number 55 is another guy that I'd like to fill his shoes
But I'm really kind of scrawny and nothing like Mark Hughes.
I'd also like to be dominating, just like J.R. Reid,
But I can't barely box out or handle the tough feed.
I wouldn't mind being a center, just like Louisville's
Pervis,
But if I got to the spotlight, I would get too nervous.
I'd also like to play hockey, be just like Wilson Carey
But getting nailed into the boards is what I'd call scary.
I'd like to play baseball too, I've surely got the hustle,
There is just one teeny problem, I don't have the muscle.
I'd like to play pro basketball and hit the dramatic "3,"
But I really don't have the range, so I guess I'll just be
me.

Jeremy Cohen
Timothy Edwards Middle School
Grade 8

Why Was It Me?

Ashley lived on Long Island. She was eleven years old. She lived with her parents and brother. Today was Monday. Her mom came in and said, "It's time for school."

Ashley got up, got dressed, ran downstairs, and sat at the kitchen table.

"Hurry, you'll be late for school. You still have to brush your teeth and hair," her dad said angrily.

By the time she got to school, everyone was in class. She went to her locker and tried to open it, but it didn't open. She decided that she would just have to go to class without books. She walked quickly to Miss Pavalaci's class. The teacher gave Ashley a dirty look as she walked in.

Miss P. said, "Open your books to page 139."

Ashley just sat there, her smile turning into a frown. Miss P. walked over to Ashley's desk. Ashley sank in her seat.

"Where is your book?"

She had to think fast. "Um I - I . . . forgot it at home," she stuttered.

The teacher gave her an icy stare and said, "We did not have homework yesterday!"

Ashley answered, "I was studying!"

"The test isn't until three weeks," Miss P. said.

The teacher finally said, "Go and explain it to the principal."

She walked to the office. She stopped at her locker, and kicked it. When she got to the office, the principal opened the door, glared at her and said, "I've been expecting you!"

Mr. Weller said, "Tell me what happened."

"Well I - I couldn't open my locker so I - I just went to class without books," Ashley stuttered.

Mr. Weller said, "I'll let you go this time."

When she got home, her parents were fighting. They had been fighting a lot lately.

Her father came into Ashley's bedroom. He looked at her and said, "This is hard for me to say. You know your mom and I have been fighting a lot. Well, we've decided we've been fighting too much. We decided we shouldn't live together. We think we should... get divorced."

Tears grew in Ashley's eyes. She tried to blink them back, but she couldn't. She yelled, "You mean, just like that? How can you say that you don't love Mom and you want her out of your life? You always tell me I have to learn to love my brother. You're just going to have to learn to love Mom."

Her mom walked in then and said, "Ashley, it was my fault too. Don't just blame your Dad."

"Oh believe me, I'm not only blaming Dad. I hate you both. Get out of my room," Ashley yelled.

She sat down on her bed and said, "I can't believe this. I'm not mad... Oh, who am I kidding. I'm so mad, I could do something bad."

Her mom walked into the room and said, "I know. It's hard but you're going to have to live with it. There's no way to change it."

"Yes, you can. You just have to love Dad just like you love Billy," Ashley cried.

The next day in school, Miss P. asked everyone to pass in their English homework. She noticed that Ashley didn't have her homework. She walked to Ashley and said, "You don't have your homework AGAIN!"

Ashley just yelled out, not really knowing what she was doing, "Why don't you just divorce me, huh?"

Miss P. said, "Ashley, please step out into the hall with me."

All the kids were whispering, except for one girl. That girl's name was Lisa. Her parents were divorced. She knew how it felt.

Meanwhile, Ashley and Miss P. were in the hall. Miss P. said, "Hon, I know it's hard, but you're going to have to live with it."

Just then, Lisa walked into the hallway and in a small, shy voice said, "May I speak to Ashley?" Miss P. looked puzzled but said, "Why, yes, you may."

She walked back into the room. Lisa said, "Ashley, my parents are divorced. It's not that bad, you know."

Ashley started to cry while Lisa continued talking, "Usually your mom gets to keep you. If you want to, you can come over to my house."

Ashley smiled and said, "I'd love to."

Both girls happily walked back into the classroom.

After school Lisa met Ashley at her locker. They walked to Lisa's house. They went into Lisa's room and sat on Lisa's bed. Lisa said, "Would you like to see a picture of my father?"

"Sure," Ashley answered.

Lisa pulled out a round gold locket. She opened it. Ashley said, "He's very handsome."

"Yeah," Lisa answered.

Ashley began spending most of her afternoons with Lisa. She would have gone over on the weekends also, but she was never home. Finally, one day she asked Lisa, "Why aren't you ever home on weekends, Lisa?"

"I visit my father," Lisa answered.

"Boy, you always visit your father," Ashley said.

"Exactly," Lisa said grinning.

Ashley said happily, "You're the best friend a kid could have."

Both girls laughed and hugged. Ashley said, "I'll always visit my father. It's not like he'll hate me."

Ashley's dad moved out that day. Usually she came home frowning, but today she gave her mom a big hug. Smiling, she said, "When am I visiting Dad?" Her mom said, in a surprised voice, "This weekend...and what has gotten into you?"

"Oh, nothing," Ashley answered.

That night her dad called. She cheerfully got on the phone.

The next day, Ashley found school to be wonderful. She brought in her homework and wasn't late. That afternoon she went to see Lisa. When she got there, Lisa was talking to

her dad on the phone. After Lisa hung up the phone, they walked into Lisa's room and talked. They were best friends forever.

Christine Johnston
Jack Jackter Elementary School
Grade 5

Captives

Where the brilliance of the sun failed,
the wired and wooden cage stood.
Sharp beating of a million finches'
swift wings resounded in the air

Gideon walked among them
not to seize a dark feather
or crack a tiny skull,
but to observe the skill
just beyond the grasp

To soar across the evenings
of every season
to dive into the winds
of any weather.
This he craved
as his captives longed
for their freedom.

Gideon was blind though
to his transgression;
for as long as the birds
served a sentence in his cage,
he would be prisoner
bound to the earth.

Siobhan McCloskey
Bloomfield Senior Public High School
Grade 12

The Prostitution Ring

Darting through the blue ceiling,
The coal striped buffy buzz
Hears the call of
Scarlet petals
And exotic fragrances.
To this source's lip
He dives
And pierces the exterior.
After an exchange of seed,
he rockets ahead,

Forgetting.

While a dark twinkling sheet
Enwraps bark
Neon blazes
Against brick
"Get it cheap
At The Flowerhouse."
Where Creatures
Plunder
Beautiful blossoms

Until

The moon travels west
As a drone
Destroys
A rival
His larkspur
Pollinated.
He bolts to an orchard
Which forces him
To penetrate
Its insides.

Shaken

He trickles away
But there will be
Other flowers
And
Other days.

Wesley Kirschner
Trumbull High School
Grade 12

Imaginative Possibilities

A piece of manila paper;
Lying silently next to blue.
The soft, pale colored paper
Is blank.
No writing.
No imagination.

A seagull spots a fish,
In the crinkled, blue, paper sea.
He swoops down
And fights for his dinner.
After times of struggle,
The seagull conveys the fish
onto the paper.
The wet fish jumps,
Struggling to get free.

No longer is the paper blank,
But now is a beautiful beach.
The beach was always there
As the crinkled blue sea,
And with an imagination,
They are no longer paper
But land and sea.

This is no ordinary sea.
This is the sea of the imagination
Where anything you imagine
Can be washed up in the tide.

The beach is very plain,
Small, with the finest, white, granulated sand.
The sand is very soft,
As soft as the fluffy clouds
Hovering above.

At this time,
The seagull has finished his meal.
He cleans himself off
And takes to the sky.
He flies around in circles,
Over the sea and the beach,
Greedy for more food.

A piece of manila paper;
Lying silently next to blue.
The land and sea,
of imagination.

Sara Levine
Madison Middle School
Grade 6

Forever in My Heart

death (deth) n. 1. the act or fact of dying; permanent ending of life

That is the dictionary's definition of death, but there is a lot more to it than that.

* * *

I remember the day my English teacher gave me this assignment. She was giving out different topics in this crackly voice she had. We called her the "Hag."

"Jenkins," she called. "Your topic is drugs. You'll have eight weeks before your oral presentation. I've arranged for a position for you at a drug rehabilitation center. You can do all of your research there."

I slid under my seat as she called my name.

"Johnson, your assignment is the fatal diseases of young children. Your oral presentation will take place on May 12. I've gotten you a job at the children's pediatrics ward at City Hospital. You'll begin your job Saturday morning, and this will be your main source of data. See me after class if you have any questions."

"Oh, great," I muttered. "She gives me the most depressing subject of all."

I really didn't need this job on the weekend, especially watching a bunch of little kids waste away. Ms. Sanderson was such a witch!

Wait, it gets even worse. As I trudged out of the classroom, I felt two hands close over my eyes.

"Guess who?" someone moaned. It was Bryan! He is the captain of the football team and the most gorgeous hunk you've ever seen. He's also my boyfriend.

"Bryan!" I cried as I wrapped my arms around him. "You're a sight for sore eyes" and I put on my saddest expression.

"Hey, I've got something to make you feel better," he whispered. "How 'bout a picnic Saturday morning, just the two of us?"

"Oh, no!" I groaned. "The Hag gave me a long-term English report and I have to do my research at City Hospital on Saturdays."

"Great," he said sarcastically.

"I'm so sorry! I'll make it up to you. I promise." I ran off to class, knowing Bryan was really upset. I knew if I didn't do something to make it up to him, he would drop me. I mean he could have any girl he wanted. Why waste his time on someone who didn't have any time for him? I had to think of something to keep his interest, fast!

* * *

I remember the first day of my job. I came downstairs dressed in a pair of faded jeans and one of Bryan's old football jerseys.

"Where do you think you're going dressed like that, young lady?" my mother called.

"I'm not taking any chances, Mom. What if a kid decides to throw up on me or somethin'?"

"Go upstairs and change right now. What if someone we know saw you? We have a reputation at that hospital, you know." That was just like my mother--always worried about her reputation.

When I came back downstairs, my father was in his study, listening to classical junk that all old people listen to. Don't ask me why.

"Bye, Dad," I called, giving him a kiss.

"Bye, honey. Don't be too late."

Just my luck, my car wouldn't start. It was a sweet sixteen birthday present from my parents, and I have to admit, it's pretty nice. I ended up taking the Porsche.

The stench of ammonia jumped at me, as I opened the hospital doors.

"Excuse me," I asked a lady at the main desk. "My name is Shana Jenkins. I'm supposed to be starting a job at the children's ward today."

"Go and see Dr. Bernard at the children's wing," she directed me.

"Shana Jenkins?" he inquired anxiously. I nodded. "My name is Dr. Bernard. You are desperately needed. We are a little short of help these days. But aren't we always? No one wants to watch little children dying."

His face clouded over as he said this. He was a very skinny man with large, dark circles under his eyes. When he walked, it looked like he was carrying the fate of the world on his shoulders.

Dr. Bernard took me on a tour of the hospital and explained to me what my job entailed. It was pretty simple. Change the beds, empty the bedpans, and try to do it all with a smile. Simple! I had never changed a bed before in my life, and I didn't even know what a bedpan was! I would soon find out.

The first few Saturdays of my job weren't very interesting. The kids were all right, but the work was tiring and it got pretty disgusting with those bedpans. I guess I complained a lot. But that was before I met Brent. Brent had blond hair and gorgeous, deep blue eyes. Oh, did I forget to mention? He's only eight years old.

* * *

I remember the first day I met Brent. He was a transfer from another hospital, so I had never seen him before. I was in a really bad mood because I had seen Bryan with another girl the day before. He denied the fact, but I knew our relationship wasn't going to last much longer.

When I came into Brent's room, he was playing with a Garfield stuffed animal and talking to himself.

"Would ya mind gettin' off the bed for a sec, so I can change the sheets?" I asked.

He obediently got off the bed.

"Hi, my name's Brent."

"Hi," I muttered.

"You look upset," he commented.

Right then, I broke down crying. I don't know if it was because of Bryan or because this strange, little kid was trying to be nice to me.

"Hey, why are you so sad?" he asked. "Nothing can be that bad." He gave me a big grin, and I noticed his two front teeth were missing.

"My life is falling apart," I wailed. Then, I got to thinking how crazy I was telling my life story to a little kid, so I got up to leave.

"Hey, don't go," he cried. "You're the first visitor I've had." He stopped to catch his breath. "I'm sure if you talk about it, you'll feel much better."

Was this kid for real? "Why are you here?" I asked.

"I've got AIDS. That's why I don't have a roommate. People think they'll catch it. They won't even let me go to school." The ten thousand freckles on his face seemed to drop. "My mother says I'm too much trouble at home, and since they won't let me go to school, she said I had to come here. I think she's scared of me."

I had the urge to leave, but then I remembered all I had been taught about AIDS not being transferred from normal day to day contact. I reached out my hand to his, but he abruptly cut me short.

"O.K. I suppose it's boy trouble, right?" He folded his arms across his chest. "I'm listening."

* * *

Brent did listen to me. He must have listened to me for hours because before I knew it, it was six o'clock and I hadn't finished the rest of my rooms!!

"Ya know," I said as I got up to leave, "You should be a shrink."

The smile he gave me after that compliment will live in my memory forever.

* * *

I saved Brent's room for last the next week, so I could have more time to talk to him.

"Hey, Sport, I brought you some M&M's to get rid of any depressing thoughts you have had during the week."

"Thanks a lot. M&M's are always the best medicine. Have a seat and let's pig out!" he shouted.

I sat down and we began to eat. There were a few minutes of silence as we digested the handful of M&M's we had shoveled down.

"Ya know, me and Bryan broke up."

"Good."

That wasn't the reaction I'd expected. Last week, Brent had listened to me and sympathized with my problem.

"What?" I sputtered angrily.

"Well, from what I heard," he continued, "Bryan was a real jerk. You deserve someone better, someone who won't try to rule your life. You're too good for that."

Brent was trying so hard to make his point that he was gasping for air. I noticed how frail he looked at that moment--how vulnerable. Then I started to get mad at everyone who had ever hurt him--the disease, his mother, the school officials. He was so sweet. Why would anyone want to hurt him?

"You're right," I said impulsively. "Maybe it's time for me to stand on my own two feet-- become a little more independent. I've had boyfriends most of my teenage life."

"And if you ever get lonely, I'm always here."

I reached out to give him a big bear hug. I wanted to hold him there forever--to protect him from the injustices of the world. But I knew that I couldn't.

* * *

I spent a lot of time with Brent. I took him to the movies, the zoo and to McDonald's a lot. That was his favorite place to eat for some strange reason. I became like a second mother to Brent, and the hospital director let me take him anywhere I wanted, as long as he was feeling well enough. Brent would always beg to go places, even when he was coughing so much it sent jolts down his whole body.

I remember the first time I suggested taking him to the zoo. "Oh, wow!" he screeched and started jumping up and down on the bed. "You wanna take me to the zoo? Can we see the bears, and the elephants, and the tigers, and..."

"Yes, yes, yes," I answered, trying to calm his excitement a little.

That day, I raced around after Brent, so nervous that I might lose him in the crowd of people. He didn't stop for a minute, racing from cage to cage. He had so much spunk for such a little boy.

The last things we visited were the turtles. They were Brent's favorite, although I didn't know why. He sat there staring into the glass thoughtfully. I glanced at him every once in a while, and he was thinking so hard that his whole face was scrunched up like a little prune.

"Whatcha thinkin' about?" I asked.

"About how lucky turtles are," he answered.

"Why is that?"

"They can live more than a hundred years, and I will probably only live one more. I'm gonna die and..."

He didn't get a chance to finish because I had scooped him up in a great big bear hug. At that time, it seemed like Brent and I were the only people in the entire world--kinda like no one else mattered. It seemed like we stood in the mass of people with our arms around each other for hours.

* * *

The most memorable day I've ever spent with Brent came on Thursday. We were just sitting in his room talking because the doctors said he was too weak to go outside. I could tell he was getting worse. He was in bed with the blankets pulled up to his neck, and all you could see was his scrawny, little face with the protruding cheekbones. His eyes were still the biggest, brightest blue you've ever seen.

"Ya know," I said through handfuls of M&M's, "everyone is saying that Bryan wants to get back together with me."

I stopped, looking for a reaction on his small face. He betrayed no emotion.

"Maybe I should give him a chance," I stuttered. "I mean we are perfect for each other--the captain of the football team and the captain of the cheerleading squad. It's a tradition in every school!" I yelled, exasperated. I was trying to justify myself to him, but his face remained as still as a stone. I looked at him pleadingly, but I didn't know what else to say.

After a long period of nervous silence, he spoke. His voice came out hoarse and scratchy, as if he were one hundred years old instead of just eight.

"You know how I feel, and I don't think I should butt in where I don't belong."

"You know I can't do anything without your advice," I pleaded.

He stared at me with a strange expression on his face. I guess he was thinking of what to say.

In one last desperate measure, I said, "My friends want me to do this, and they might not be friends with me anymore

if I don't."

Brent looked at me. Was it anger, compassion or impatience in his eyes? Which of these I didn't know. His eyes concealed any emotion that lurked in their depths. As I blindly looked into those eyes, I realized how stupid I had been. I could see the answer to my problem right in those eyes. And in that one short instant, I knew that behind those eyes was a little boy with a power very few achieved. It was the power of real, genuine love. Tears burned my eyes because I knew that when the body of this very fragile boy faded away, the soul of a superhuman being would be lost.

As I did in all crises I couldn't handle, I wrapped my arms around him.

* * *

"Remember, a good friend will live forever in your heart if you allow him to. Promise me you will." This was what Brent said to me when he wouldn't be around much longer.

I spent all my waking hours in that hospital room in the last few weeks of his life. I tried to learn all I could from him, to keep his spirit alive in me, as I had promised. My mother was starting to complain about all my time spent in the hospital.

* * *

I remember one night I came home for a few hours sleep, emotionally drained. More and more I was coming home like that. My mother was on my case the minute I stepped in the door.

"Bryan called again. Why don't you just forgive the poor boy and get back to a normal life? You spend way too much time at that hospital."

I was too tired to fight with her or even to listen to her until I heard Brent's name mentioned.

"That little boy Brent is half dead. Can't you understand that?" she wailed.

At that moment I came alive. "Can't YOU understand?" I yelled. "He's also half alive." I then stomped upstairs to the warm confines of my bed, only to wake a few hours later and go back to the hospital.

* * *

Brent died Tuesday, April 17. I held his hand as the last breath of life was going out of him. He was struggling so hard to breathe. I wanted to take all the air around me that I was so easily inhaling and force it down his throat, yelling, "Breathe, breathe!"

"Don't be afraid," I whispered. I suppose I was saying that more for my benefit than his. He looked like a tiny soldier doing battle as his body rose and fell in convulsions.

He squeezed my hand in the last second of his life with all the strength he had left. In that second, I felt all the joy, love and compassion fade out of him, but it didn't disappear. Instead, I felt it seep into my skin. It seemed to hold a magical key to unlock my heart and let it overflow.

I knew he was dead then because his eyes lost their mysterious depths and became placid, unmoving. I did not sob until the attendants came to take his body. It was then they closed his eyes. I cried because I knew they would never open again.

* * *

My whole family went to the funeral. It was then that I had my first glimpse of Brent's mother because she had never been in to see him in all the days I was there. She wore a shapeless, black dress, and a child clasped her hand. The child looked to be about four years old.

I didn't pray that Brent would go to heaven because I already felt his presence above me. Instead, I prayed for his mother. I prayed for her because I knew she never realized what real love was. I prayed for the forlorn girl by her side, that she might have inherited her brother's spirit. I stayed long after the funeral was over to pray for them and to talk to Brent. I knew he could hear me.

As I got up to leave, I noticed a small figure walking toward me with a single rose in her tiny hand. She kneeled and gently laid the rose next to Brent's grave, and as she lifted her head, a shiver passed through my body. Her eyes were the same blue as his and contained the same sparkle of intensity. I gathered her in my arms as I had done so many times before with her brother.

* * *

It was then that I came home to pour my thoughts out on paper. I sat, chewing on the end of my pencil and looking in the general direction of Brent's grave. I turned my eyes upward as I realized that was not where I would find him at

all. My heart was flooded in warmth as I looked up. The sky was the same intense blue of his eyes. He was watching me. I started to write.

* * *

death (deth) n. 1. the act or fact of dying; permanent ending of life

That is the dictionary's definition for death, but there's a lot more to it than that.

Jennifer Murray
Timothy Edwards Middle School
Grade 8

Without You

The time passed so quickly
that I didn't even notice
you were gone...

When there were no more calls
or secret meetings
I knew it was soon to be over.

Yet your light shone through
and led me...

Because now I see
you clearly.

Qismet Virgo
Thomas T. Quirk Middle School
Grade 8

It Was Almost A Year Without Santa

Once, one year Santa said, "My love, I do not feel good. Besides, Donner is a baby and she cannot fly yet. She is only one year old. Besides, I'm sick with bronchitis."

"But dear you should be getting ready for Christmas," said Mrs. Claus.

"Rudolph will have to go to get medicine in the Antarctic circle far away," said Santa. Rudolph traveled for a week and still no medicine. He drank water from streams and rivers and ate the fruit off the trees. He landed only once in a while. Finally he saw the mountain of medicine. He landed and saw a unicorn. It said "You're Rudolph you are looking for a medicine for Santa."

"Please unicorn quickly tell me where I can find the medicine. Please quickly."

"It grows on the top of the mountain."

"On a top of the mountain?"

"Yes Rudolph on top of this mountain."

Soon he got the medicine and flew home and two hours before Christmas "Rudolph you have the achoo! the medicine."

"Yes I do Santa"

"Please give it to me Rudolph. I feel good enough to go out."

"Yea" said Rudolph.

"Elf--my coat. Thank you Jenny. HoHoHo. Jenny, Amanda, Tom please hitch up the reindeer. Jenny give Rudolph a sprig of holly berries. Ready?"

"Ready Santa."

"OK upup and away."

"Bye" said everyone.

Merry Christmas

Jenny Ogborne
Lewin Joel School
Grade 2

Winter's Beauty

I love looking out the window
And seeing the trees,
With icicles hanging from them,
As they glitter and glow,
As the gust of wind,
Blows the snow.

I watch with sparkling eyes,
As the snowbirds,
Fly in the glittering skies.

Oh! The beauty of winter to my eyes!
As the soft white cat,
Rubs against my legs,
As I sit by the fire,
As the cold still air,
Echoes through the house.

Betsy Phelan
Coventry Grammar School
Grade 3

The Sea

The sea is so awesome and wondrous,
Yet so mysterious and unknown.
This amazing world is filled
With an array of thousands of creatures of another
world.
Each different, but special.
Some shy, some fierce, some strong, and some
intelligent.
Still, with all the things we know of this magnificent
world,
It is very misunderstood.
Mankind will never totally understand this world,
But maybe that is how it was meant to be.

Charles Prevost
Charter Oak Elementary
Grade 5

The Story About a Butterfly

One day NATASHA drew a butterfly on a piece of paper. Then she cut it out. She went to sleep. The next day she went over to her table by the window. She picked it up and the butterfly came alive. She became friends with it. When somebody came over to her house the butterfly turned back into a piece of paper. She had to be alone for it to become a real butterfly again. They became friends for a long time. It was Natasha's secret forever.

Natasha Plaza
Coventry Grammar School
Grade 2

Death

Hurts
Brings up questions
"Why him?"
"Why did she leave?"
Disregarded until someone you know...
Dies
Draws tears and sniffles
Young children don't understand
"Will she be back?"
Worst around holidays
Brings sorrow
Longing to see them again
Friends and family help...
Sometimes
Miss them all your life
Scar on your heart forever
Death
Passes
Sometimes!

Craig Smith
Broadview Junior High School
Grade 7

Sam

It was the first day of school in Arizona. Everybody was excited, including Sam who wanted to learn as much as he could. The only problem was that Sam moved a little more slowly than other children and his hands were hard to hold steady; he had trouble holding small objects. Since his accident two years ago, it was hard for him to hold onto crayons, and so it was difficult for him to color in his coloring books. He could do pretty well with the large spaces but staying inside the lines was not so easy. And now that he was going to kindergarten, he would have to learn to write. How would he hold a pencil, he wondered. But Sam was not one to get discouraged easily, so he was excited, too.

When he got to the school, his mother gave him his crutches. He started to walk. When he walked about 20 steps, he started to get tired and his mother reassured him that it would only be a few more steps to get to his classroom where the other kindergarten students were already waiting. When he finally got there, his teacher said, "Hello, Sam. I'm Mrs. Jordan. We have been waiting for you."

Sam asked if he could sit in a chair because it was tiring for him to walk to the classroom. Mrs. Jordan got him a chair. All the children wanted to know what his accident was. Sam said, "When I was 3 years old, I fell off a counter and paralyzed my leg and hands but I am recovering and can do more things than I used to be able to do." The rest of the day went well.

After a couple of weeks they had a gym class. In gym, Sam had to sit and watch the other boys and girls have fun. At the end of that day he asked his mother if he had to go back to school. His mother asked him what was the matter and he told her that it made him sad to watch the other kids have fun in gym while he had to sit. His mother told him it would be all right because in two years, at the most, he would be all better. That made Sam happy because he had been paralyzed so long that sometimes he felt as if he had been born that way.

The next day a man came into the room. He went over to Sam and told him that three times a week he would play games with him. Sam asked him why he would play games with him, and he answered, "Because I want to be your friend." Then he said that they would start right away today. The first thing this man, who Sam learned was called Mr. Johnson, did, was get out a big board. Sam had seen other children playing with this board, and he had wanted to join them, but because you had to hold a little piece of wood in your hand and move it around the board, he had been too shy to join

in. Now, with Mr. Johnson beside him, he was afraid to show his fear. When Mr. Johnson asked him what piece he would like to use for his own, he looked over a bunch of odd-looking plastic shapes. Giggling just a little, he chose a car to drive around the board. This game was fun for Sam because he got to use a lot of play money and pretend to buy land and houses. He even had a hotel when Mr. Johnson said they had to quit for that day. Every day for a week Mr. Johnson came into the classroom and played with Sam. Once Sam tried to draw a picture. They went for short walks and they played more games. Sam was beginning to relax and he noticed that as his fears became smaller, he could actually do more things with his hands.

One day Mr. Johnson said to Sam that they were going for a little longer walk. They went to the front door of the school and to Mr. Johnson's office. Then they went back to Sam's classroom. That would have been a very short walk for kids like you and me, but for Sam it was a long walk--the longest he had taken without his crutches. And although he had a lot of good things happen in kindergarten, nothing was more exciting to Sam than this walk in the hall. By the end of the term, he was walking every day at least a few feet without his crutches.

Finally, it was time for summer vacation. Sam was a little longer to get out of kindergarten. But the summer went fast for Sam because he played with the new friends he had made at school.

The first day of school, he saw Mr. Johnson waiting for him on the front steps. He was there to help Sam because the first grade classroom was farther down the hall than the kindergarten classroom. He helped Sam the first couple of days, but then one day he wasn't there. Sam panicked when he thought of walking down that hall alone, but he had to get to class. He could not be late. What would he do? He wanted to cry, but he was afraid someone might see him, and so--without any choice--he slowly began to move his feet along the hall and before he knew it, he was in his room.

For several days, Sam did not see Mr. Johnson, and when he did come into the room, Sam would not speak to him. Mr. Johnson had let him down. He would not talk with him, but Mr. Johnson was so friendly and made such funny jokes that Sam found himself talking to him just a little. Then, finally, in a burst he said, "Mr. Johnson, where did you go? You didn't come to help me!"

Mr. Johnson told Sam that he could see that Sam had gotten down the hall just fine without him. As he said that, Sam could see that Mr. Johnson looked very proud, just like someone who has won a contest. Sam thought for a minute, and then he knew that Mr. Johnson had been helping

him after all; helping him the way his mother did sometimes, by not doing things for or with him but leaving him to do them on his own. Mr. Johnson said that they would only meet once a week, and Sam could tell him what had happened to him during the week. Sam felt a little sad but he looked around the room and realized that he was beginning to be like one of the other kids. He was ready for the world now!!!

Thomas Riggio
Buckley School
Grade 5

The Alien

She had never seen white human beings,
Lots of things she didn't have,
Only their bright colored eyes stared
Their lips couldn't pronounce her name correctly.

Sitting on the corner,
Eyes staring at the floor,
Eyes asking questions,
About this alien.

Her mind asking questions,
"Why am I sitting here alone?
There's no one else like me.
Am I that different?
I want to be home again."

Afraid of the strange human beings.
She just sat there quietly.

Bang Phinitsovanna
Broadview Jr. High School
Grade 7

Black Birds

Black birds soaring gracefully
Through the endless blue.

The icy wind - sharp as knives
Slashing at my cheeks.

The bare trees - grey as rain
Silhouetted the watery blue sky.

Something's gone.

Do you hear the quiet giggling of the brook?
Do you hear the constant gossiping of the birds?
Do you hear the chattering of the squirrel, peeping out of
its nook?
Do you hear the wind singing its song, without any words?

Do you see the daisies, dancing to the wind's song?
Do you see the emerald green grass, stirring after a good
night's sleep.

Let's enjoy our nature now, for it will leave before long,
And when the wind is here alone, it is sure to weep.

Birds soaring through the blue sky,
The crashing of a waterfall in the distance,
A snow white swan gracefully gliding on the pond.

All seen in a hazy blur,
Perhaps, through tearful eyes.

The hot sand burning like fire under my feet,
The roar of the waves in the distance,
The blue sea stretching to unknown lands.

Never to know,
What is beyond.

Seema Shah
Academy School
Grade 6

The Lone Sea Gull

A lone sea gull wheels high above the steeple in the cool, buffeting caresses of a dry October updraft. Spying a small school of baitfish just outside the breakwater, the old gull begins a long descent, wings fixed slightly bent, its downy head pointed directly into the twenty-knot gale that has blown all night.

For a moment the gull hovers a delicate six inches above the surface, holding its position despite the pitching waves about it, apparently picking a target. Unable to wait any longer for its meal, the gull breaks aerodynamic composure and crashes into the school, emerging a moment later and taking flight, in its beak a silverside, twitching futilely, its eyes bulging wide.

Mr. DiCiommo is intently watching this gull when he looks down and sees me walking across his backyard to the dock. I usually find him like this, alone, sitting in his boat at five thirty in the morning, waiting for me.

He extends his hand to me across the watery chasm between his boat and the dock that I stand on. With a very youthful stretch for such an old man, Mr. DiCiommo grasps my outstretched hand in one of his callused old mitts, and together, we pull the boat back to the dock. I clamber in, stiff from a sound fall sleep with the windows open, and the boat again drifts with the wind from the barnacle-flecked legs of the dock, but neither of us move to grab hold of them.

I am late, as usual, but Mr. DiCiommo is as glad to see me as he ever has been. "Airy," he pronounces my name with his untamed Portuguese accent, "I'm not going to be able to wait for you every morning you know."

With a violent yank, the old Japanese outboard clamped to the transom of his second-hand boat sputters into life. The boat lacks any modern amenities, like flotation tanks, oars, or even life jackets, but the motor and boat have yet to fail us. This fact is all the more amazing considering that Mr. DiCiommo salvaged the engine from a junk pile at the marina up the river, and the boat was purchased for ten dollars from a rental outfit just a mile downstream, before the railroad bridge. Mr. DiCiommo left the original turquoise paint on, seeing no need to paint over it, though the reason the rental company painted their boats this color was to make the sixteen foot wooden skiffs ugly enough to discourage their theft and to facilitate their identification from a distance.

We round the breakwater and turn left, towards Lord's Point in the east where the first of Mr. DiCiommo's thirty lobster pots lies deep beneath the froth, beside a submerged boulder. The rest of his pots are spread across the Sound, to Sarah's Ledge, off New London.

I watch Mr. DiCiommo lower his gaze for a moment, and he fumbles for something under the thwart. Pulling out a brown plastic bucket of the most mundane variety, he reaches into it and removes a white paper bag, its bottom transparent, saturated with grease from the doughnuts it holds.

Mr. DiCiommo is quite a ritualist. Every morning, he tends his pots, no matter what weather the day throws at him. Long ago I learned not to call him to ask whether or not he would be going out. "But it's pouring out," I'd say, my bedspread draped over my shivering frame, half-asleep.

His answer was always, "Airy, you know I'm going out. Come if you want to."

And though we voyage out in any weather, we have yet to be struck by lightning, drowned by a tidal wave, or even be stranded in a fog bank. Mr. DiCiommo's sense of direction is uncanny, compass-accurate. On the foggiest of mornings, without a landmark, he will steer a perfect course from buoy to buoy. The first warning I will have of an approaching pot are Mr. DiCiommo's quiet words, "Get ready, Airy, on your left." A moment later, the buoy will lightly graze the bow and slide down the side to my waiting hands.

And as certainly as Mr. DiCiommo will go out every morning, and as surely as no harm will befall us, he will pull a bag of greasy doughnuts, still hot, from his bucket, and offer them to me. Of the four doughnuts his wife makes every morning, two are plain and two are cinnamon, for my more worldly tastes.

The sun is probing the coming day with its first tentative rays, and alongside comes the first buoy of the day. Seizing it full of anticipation, I begin the first of the day's thirty long pulls, lifting the pot from the ocean floor, from the muck and weeds fathoms below to the scarred turquoise gunwale I brace my feet against. My good back is all that I can offer Mr. DiCiommo, and I'm sure that he gets along fine without it five days a week when I'm otherwise occupied with school. Though I've never asked, I think that he may finish quicker without me.

Earlier this year, when I slipped on the deck and tumbled overboard in a squall, Mr. DiCiommo pulled me from the sea one-handed, while he steered through the chop and trough with the other. Not wanting to go overboard again, I am mindful of the waves while pulling this morning's pot up.

However, as soon as I have the pot clear of the water, the winds noticeably diminish. The sun has just cleared the horizon and brought about a swift end to the gale, as if by its presence alone. Mr. DiCiommo helps me with the final heave, bringing the pot over the gunwhale and down onto the deck. The trap, choked with kelp, thrashes with life bent upon survival. These are simple creatures, their sorrowful lives only to eat, mate, and survive, awaiting the coming of the next tide. They could not know that they would be trapped, nor do they have the luxury of suspending their instincts to make an intelligent choice, to avoid the traps.

Mr. DiCiommo knows this also, but these simple creatures are his life, and their destinies are meted out with his firm, gloved hand that reveals, judges, and sentences. Even if these creatures hadn't the faintest inkling that a world existed above the mirrored ceiling of theirs, his hands were as reassuring as any could be, their warmth transcending worlds.

He expresses himself exquisitely through his hands, which more than make up for his poor English. With the same thumb and forefinger that crush life from a mud-blackened eel, he will pick up the smallest sheepshead minnow or delicate pencilfish he has inadvertently trapped, and gently send it back home, reviving it with a gentle nudge.

Lobsters, of course, if they are big enough, are kept to eat or to sell to the local fish market. I may get one or two if we have an exceptionally good day, but today has started rather unglamorously; a lowly conch and two short lobsters, one a cull. All go back overboard. I rebait the pot, and it, too, is over the side. We set out for the second pot.

We enter a fog coming up the Sound from the west. It does not phase Mr. DiCiommo in the least, and I dutifully, if not somewhat groggily, pull the next dozen pots without event. As usual, we are alone this morning. The commercial fishermen are all out of Stonington, so we don't see them, though sometimes we can hear the diesels humming all down the Sound. On a rare occasion, we come upon a recreational boater, anchored, waiting out a fog, too untrusting of radar, maps, and common sense to go on.

Five or six seasons ago, on a day much like this one, we came upon the archtypical recreational boaters, lost in an omniscient fogbank.

"Marty," came a voice, thick with the dread combination of heavy tobacco use and urban living, carried flawlessly on the fog, "where in hell do you keep caviar on this barge?"

Marty didn't reply. "Marty," cried a woman's voice, "I'm getting lonely in here!"

Marty finally saw fit to reply, his voice whining down from high above us, though we could not see him or his boat. "That was some stunt you pulled last night, Serge. Your 'Me-Tarzan-You-Jane' routine on the radar mast is why we're stuck in this fog, . . . and I don't think that Jane, I mean I don't think that Hermione appreciated it much either."

"That's right," said Serge's Jane, "I think I broke a nail when you swung me down onto the deck. It got jammed in the teak."

At this point, the three simultaneously heard the sputter of our trusty Japanese outboard. "Ahoy," cried Marty, "help us! We're lost!"

"I hope for your sake that this isn't the Staten Island Ferry, Martin," said Hermione.

Mr. DiCiommo steered us flawlessly towards the voices, and just like any other lobster-pot buoy, the sleek, white cabin-cruiser loomed from the fog, a plump figure in a Speedo bathing suit entwined about the top of its raked radar mast.

"Do you need any help?" I asked. Apparently, Marty couldn't yet see me, as his head swiveled around and around, trying to locate my voice.

"Where are we? Where are you?" he asked. Hermione and Serge came on deck and joined in his search.

"You're off Ender's Island, in the Mystic River."

"That's in Connecticut?"

"Right."

Suddenly, Hermione burst into life. Her arm shot up faster than a cocktail flag on a mizzenmast at five o'clock on a Friday afternoon in Newport. "I see him, I see a boat! Over there!"

Marty's jaw dropped. "Jeez, kid, you're crazy to be out here in that sort of a boat in this fog, . . . and with your grandfather! You've got no radio, no back up engine, no anchor. Hey, thanks for the help, but you'd better get back in now."

"No problem," I said, as Mr. DiCiommo motored us down the length of the sixty foot pleasure cruiser towards our next buoy.

As we left Marty and his ship astern, fragments of sentences still drifted to my ears; ". . . Never put my faith in a little outboard . . . he's probably lost too . . . "

However, there are no pleasure cruisers to relieve this morning's monotony, and we go about our job efficiently and silently. An hour later, all of the pots have been checked and rebaited, the fog has burned off, and four lobsters fret around in the bucket. Mr. DiCiommo turns the boat around to return to the stilt-legged dock that has survived so many winters. "This one will be bad," he says, but I've never seen him shiver; he can always think about the milder months sure to follow.

Taking his usual bearing off the familiar white church steeple cresting the highest hill of his simple village, he steers us home, through the breakfast flocks of gulls, one by one snatching disbelieving silversides from the sun-warmed shallows above the shoals and reefs of the sound.

Edmund Starzec
Robert E. Fitch Sr. High
Grade 12

2

I noticed first her eyes: their depth, their shine
that I had never thought could be in one
for me to love and know. And she was mine.
You surely do remember how the sun,
against her hair so dark, could play and wind
up forming patterns such as those upon
our lake, the hidden place where, hands entwined,
the two of us would walk until the dawn.
She is gone now. And when she left a dove
was loosed from me. I saw it fly away
and not look back, and I heard song--song of
her voice. The dove went on, into the gray.

My heart had gone. Its place, still emptiness,
remembers love and life in happiness.

Jonathan Steckler
Darien High School
Grade 12

Forkaphobia

Potluck dinners have always put me on edge. Surprisingly, my apprehension of these events does not lie with the unknown substances suspended in the Jello salad. Nor am I afraid that Little Suzie may have felt it necessary to "test" her mother's gourmet dish by mischievously plunging her grubby five-year-old hand into the concoction thus infesting the entire casserole with all the germs that only a grubby five-year-old hand can possess. In fact, my concerns are not with the actual food at all. To me the offending element of these communal meals is the large green Tupperware serving spoon used to dish out the culinary delight.

Although most people don't realize it, there is something extremely intimate and personal about utensils, an intimacy which I do not wish to intrude upon. Unbeknownst to their owners, utensils experience nearly all the aspects of their owner's life. The very Tupperware spoon in question could have witnessed its owner's joy when used to mix the ingredients for Sis' wedding cake, or possibly her grief if the cake was to be brought to dear Aunt Sophie's funeral reception.

From a non-cooking viewpoint, that spoon could have been the one flung at hubby during a marital spat, or, it could even have been the one employed on Junior's bottom to teach Junior that it is NOT all right to swing kitty around by the tail. Now tell me, how can I be so callous as to even think of using that experienced green spoon, which has become so very intimate with its owner, to scoop out mini-franks and beans from a Crock Pot?

Even without bringing the utensil's personality into the predicament, I have, what I believe to be very understandable reasons for not being comfortable with other people's utensils. The justification for these reasons comes from the simple fact that I wash the dishes at home. Because I do the dishes at home, a mistrust of seeming cleanliness has been instilled in me. To the untrained eye, all washed utensils may appear to be clean, one could say immaculately, even. But after close scrutiny by a skilled, glick finder, such as myself, the truth comes out. I've seen those particles of dried-on shredded wheat that relentlessly cling to the contours of spoons even after they've been washed three times with industrial strength soap.

Yet, I can tolerate this unsanitary situation within the confines of my own home. I mean, we're all family; we share the same blood, relatives and address-- why not germs? It is outside of this safe haven that anxiety about meals sets in. There have been many occasions where, as much as I

might like to accept, I have found it necessary to refuse invitations to eat anything that requires the use of a utensil. Many a time I've had to choose between a host's hospitality and placing in my mouth something that was once placed in someone else's. Making the situation even more of a dilemma is the idea that who's to know it was a "someone"? It could very well have been a "something." Who's to know if the fork Gertrude is handing to me with a smile and a slice of laboriously made homemade upside-down cake is not the very same fork used to give her dog a sample of New Improved Kalkan? You can rest assured that anything once touching a dog's lips will never once touch mine. Thanks for the effort, Gertrude, but I just can't accept.

Even more terrifying utensil encounters are those which occur at institutional cafeterias. I always manage to find myself in the food line which contains the humongous piece of chocolate cake with my name written in flashing neon letters all over it. But alas! It is quite obvious that the primitive institution has not yet been exposed to the newfangled invention of throwaway plastic, since only mangled, previously used, "silver"ware forks are provided. Although not extremely enlightened on the goings-on of institutional kitchens, I am not naive enough to believe that every fork, knife and spoon is hand scrubbed by Mr. Clean himself. I am aware of the mass, so-called called "sanitizing," spray contraptions that the offending utensils are whisked through. Unfortunately, their thoroughness is not up to my standards, so my stomach must settle for the safe, prepackaged granola bar. There is absolutely no way that I will risk my health and my sanity by eating with a fork which Joe the school "scum," or the patient suffering from "highly contagious disease unknown" in room 103 salivated all over just yesterday.

I realize that there are some inconsistencies to my qualms, and that I may even be a bit prejudiced in some areas. Specifically, I recognize if I were to be constant in my repulsion of dinnerware, the mere thought of raising a glass to my lips or someone else's Corningware would send chills up and down my spine. Why the instruments that hold food are less offensive to me than those use to transport it I'll never know, although I'm sure that at least one psychiatrist somewhere does.

I recognize the fact that I am prejudiced to the extent that I feel secure dining with the utensils at Restaurant Chez Pierre, and cringe in fear at Rosie's All You Can Eat. I'm sure that it could

very well be true that Rosie's head dishwasher moonlights at Pierre's. But as long as no one minds, I'll play it safe and bring along my "Official Girl Scout Three-In-One Utensil Kit" the next time I head over to Rosie's.

Sarah Tarbox
R. E. Fitch Sr. High School
Grade 11

The Elk

Majestically standing
As a ruling king
Towering over its kingdom
The rolling trumpeting
Engulfs the mountains
The triumphant antlers
Like two small trees
Mounted on its head
Dominating the cascades

Karen Thickman
Academy School
Grade 6

The Nightmare

The silence of the night carried me into a dark hole. I stood still and listened carefully to a swishing wind I had never heard before. In the mist of clouds, I heard the words WE SHALL OVERCOME. Signs that said, "NO JIM CROW" were waving back and forth in my mind and voices all over were shouting, "FREEDOM NOW! FREEDOM NOW!"

All of a sudden, everything stopped. I sat up on my pillow which was flopped down on the edge of my bed. I looked at my hands. Sweat was dripping down the creases. My teddy bear's T-shirt was hanging off the end of his arms. In the hall, the blazing light was off. The screeching door in the other room made a shivering chill run up my spine.

The witching hour had begun.

Melissa Krodman
Hopewell Elementary School
Grade 3

Wise Sayings

When rain approaches, pine cones close their doors.

Flowers shield their faces by closing their petals so they won't get wet.

When butterflies feel that rain is coming, they go under the many green umbrellas of the trees.

The hands of high humidity curl your hair.

Victoria Patchen
Gainfield School
Grade 5

Maple Sugaring

Maple sugaring occurs at the end of February and almost all of March. Maple sugaring is when you go out and tap maple trees and collect the sap from the trees. It takes about forty gallons of sap to make one gallon of maple syrup. The temperature has to drop below 32 degrees fahrenheit at night and above freezing during the day.

We have about 400 taps in trees this year. We are expecting to make 150 gallons of syrup. The sap cannot be stored any longer than 48 hours. After we have enough sap to boil, we boil down the sap until it is the right density. Then we draw it off and we filter it. Then we package it.

One night we boiled the pan dry! We only found one leak, but in two hours we were back in business.

At the beginning of the season, we bought a new collecting tank for the back of the truck so we could collect with the truck.

In an average season, we use about 10 cords of wood. About every 10 minutes we have to stoke the stove.

The way my father learned how to make maple syrup was that he would tap the trees in his yard. My grandfather used to boil it down on a gas stove. Then, he moved up in life and got bigger and built a shed which had a dirt floor. Then we got a cement floor and a new evaporator. Now, we have a new evaporator which has a 2-1/2 ft. wide and 8 ft. long boiling surface. We found 20 leaks in the back pan and one leak in the front pan. The arch is 9 feet long and 2-1/2 feet wide. We painted the arch with high temperature paint, and then we painted the front with high temperature black paint. It isn't anything you'll make a living on, but it's a hobby; and my father pays me a little bit of money for the work I do.

Joseph Langer
Thompson Memorial School
Grade 3

Summer in the City

It's summer in the city.
 A blind man wails into a
 saxophone, trying to make
 a fast buck for his trait.
 A traffic jam clogs the city
 like logs in a river.
 A billion gleaming suns
 bounce off the metallic
 and glass canyons, a
 blinding sight to any
 passer-by. A game of
 stoop ball on 85th
 and Washington, a laugh, a
 cry, a game of jacks,
 echo through the city.
 A sudden cloud, a gentle
 rain, wash the metropolis
 like an avalanche of
bactine, cleansing the
 wounds of the time-worn
 town. A shot rings out,
 a man falls. The sax
 stops, the horns cease,
 and the children look
 up from their games and
 cry. It's summer in the city.

David Tyler
 John J. Cloonan Middle School
 Grade 8



THE EASTER BUNNY
 IS VERY SPECIAL

Easter Bunny, we shake hands.
 He brings eggs.
 Me and my friends
 are egg hunting.
 Even if it snows, he comes.
 Goodbye bunny. I love you.

Jennifer Hope
 Nathan Hale School
 Kindergarten

Teachers of Student Writers

Catherine D'Agostino
Ross J. Baiera
Shannon Barth
Beatrice Bennett
Cynthia Bethancourt
Carol Brennan
Susan Buonicenti
Gail Cooper
Susan Erzen
Cynthia Field
Stephanie L. Foristall
Joyce Frangiamore
Lynn Frink
Faye C. Gage
Judy Gardner
Jeanne Gleason
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Anne Jackel
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Patricia Kegler
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Beverly Powers
Mary Ellen Sias
Maribeth Skinner
Linda Stoddard
William Sullivan
Pat Trumbull
Linda Yanowicz

North Branford
New Britain
Trumbull
New Haven
Southbury
Trumbull
Enfield
Coventry
Greenwich
South Windsor
Coventry
Enfield
Groton
Darien
Glastonbury
Southbury
North Haven
Thompson
Enfield
Willimantic
North Windham
West Hartford
Hartford
Danbury
Darien
Enfield
Bloomfield
Stamford
Trumbull
Newington
Mystic
Waterbury
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Groton
South Norwalk
Clinton
Glastonbury
East Granby
Colchester
Trumbull
East Granby
Colchester