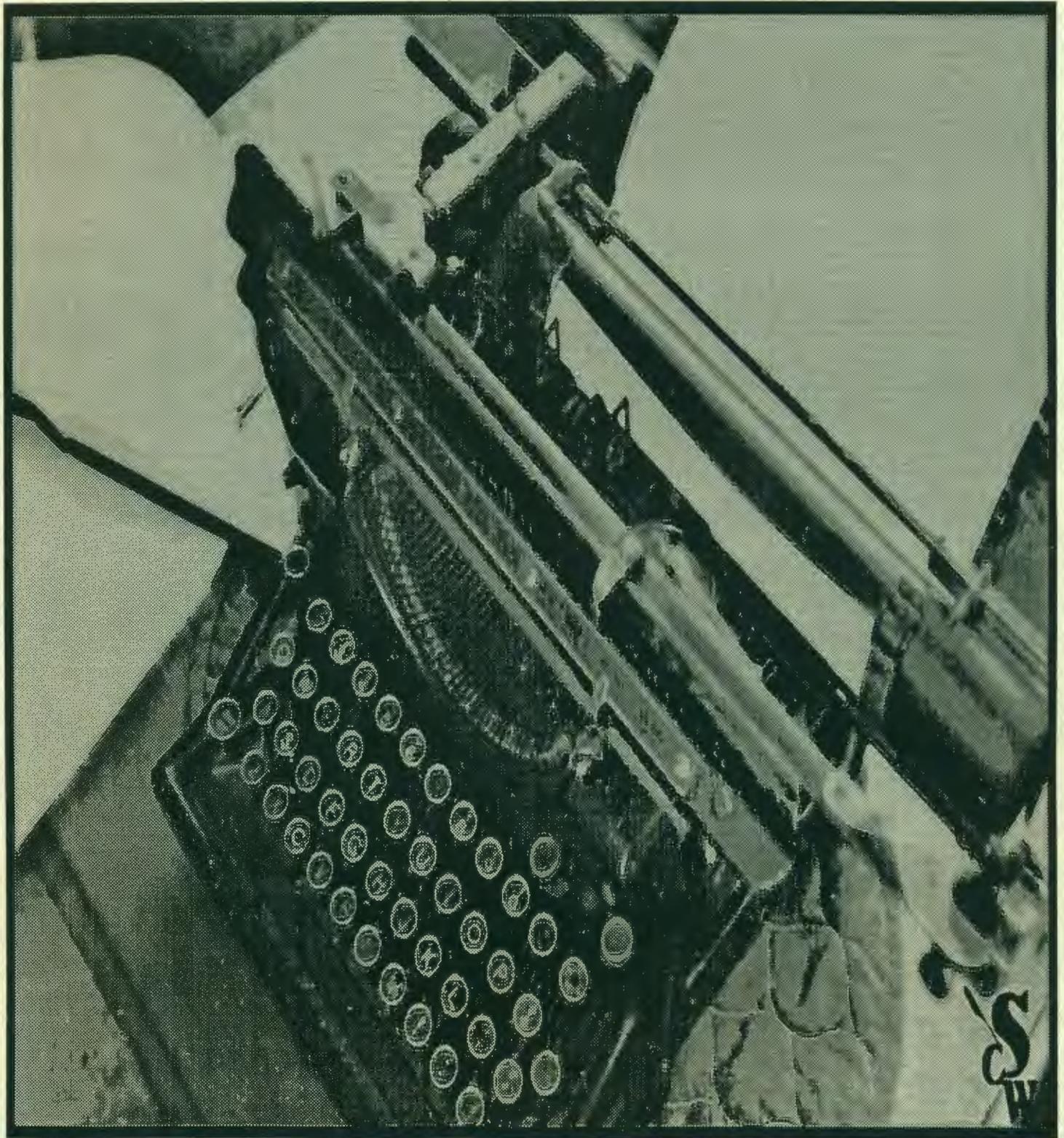


# CONNECTICUT STUDENT WRITERS

Volume VII May 1994



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## Introduction

The editors would like to dedicate the 1994 volume of *Connecticut Student Writers* to all of the people who make its publication possible. We salute the approximately twenty-six hundred students across the state whose submissions were not published or acknowledged in the magazine. Their participation is a testimony to the effectiveness of writing programs across the state. We also salute the parents, peers, and teachers who nurtured, conferred, edited, and encouraged these young writers. Their contributions can not be measured.

We would also like to recognize the Connecticut Writing Project and the Connecticut Reading Association for their financial support. In a time of increasingly tight budgets, these professional organizations have made celebrating our students a priority. In addition, a number of people have given freely of their time to make this publication possible. We thank poet and teacher, Margaret Gibson of the University of Connecticut, our featured speaker at the Recognition Program. We would especially like to thank the teachers who have given us a Saturday to read submissions. Many of these teachers have done so faithfully for the past six years. Their commitment and dedication is at the heart of this magazine.

All of those involved in this process from prewriting to publication have demonstrated a commitment to discovery, to learning, and to writing. We salute all of you with the publication of this year's *Connecticut Student Writers*.

Dora Glinn  
John Goekler  
Steven Sweet

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## Rainbow

A rainbow  
shines above  
the beautiful  
garden of flowers.

---

*Jennifer Trusz  
Kindergarten  
Eastbury Elementary  
Glastonbury*

## The Crayon House

Once upon a time there was a house called the crayon house. It had huge crayons sticking out of the upper story.

One day a painter came to paint the crayon house. "Why should I paint this house?" he said. "It's already *very* colorful!"

The people who lived in the crayon house decided to take the crayons down. They put them all in a big basket. They took them to the crayon factory, where they were melted down and made into hundreds and hundreds of regular crayons. A special truck was loaded up and brought the crayons to children who needed them. The children were very, very happy.

When the painter came back to the house, he saw that the crayons were gone. "*Now* this house could really use some color!" he said. He got out all of his paints and painted a beautiful rainbow on the house.

The people who lived in the house were very, very happy.

---

*Billy Hunt  
Kindergarten  
Squadron Line School  
Simsbury*

## The Story of Jacob and George

My name is Jacob. I am a hermit crab. I live at the seashore.

My friend George lives at the seashore, too. He is an anemone.

George and I help each other. George scares off the big fish. I help George get food.

Sometimes we have a problem. I grow too big for my shell. So, George and I have to look for a new shell. Some shells are much too big. Others are much too tiny for me. I know a shell is just right because I measure it with my front claw.

When I find a shell that is just right, I clean it out and move right in. Then, I help George move, too.

George and I are very happy together.

---

*David Plassmann  
Kindergarten  
Plainfield Memorial School  
Plainfield*



*Tyler Antrim  
Grade 1  
East Haddam Elementary  
East Haddam*

## My Apple Book

Apples grow on trees.  
Apples are good to eat.  
Apples are red.  
Apples have seeds.  
I like to eat apples.

---

*Nicole Purvis  
Grade 1  
Mary T. Murphy Elementary  
Branford*

## Snow

Smooth snow,  
no footprints.  
I want to jump in it.  
Happy, excited.  
Messed-up snow,  
my footprints.

---

*Jennifer Soerenson  
Grade 1  
Live Oaks School  
Milford*

## My Vacation

I went to my Aunt Gina's house in the summer. Gina has a husband. Her husband is named Dusty. Gina and Dusty have dogs. She has two dogs. One dog is a boy and the other dog is a girl. The boy dog is named B.J. and the girl dog is named Sammy. Sammy had puppies. There were three puppies. Two puppies are boys and the other puppy is a girl. The girl puppy is named Hershey and the boy puppies are named Astro and Comet.

We stayed there for five days. The first day we went to the fair and we went on the ferris wheel and in the mirrors. There were mirrors everywhere. Christina, my sister, bumped into a mirror and she got a headache.

The second day we went to the aquarium. It was not the Mystic Aquarium. I don't know what aquarium it was. We saw the dolphin show. One of the tricks the dolphin did was a dive. The dolphin splashed us. One girl got to touch a dolphin. When we were going home from the aquarium our tire got low. We had to wait a long time.

The third day and the fourth day I don't know what we did but the fifth day we went to the movies to see Free Willy.

My aunt lives in Delaware. They have a big house. My mom and dad had a TV in their room. The TV was black and white. Before we came to the house the dogs took a nap on our beds. We had stuffed animals in our room. One stuffed animal was a panda bear, the other one was a big bear and the other one was a clown. We got there in the middle of the night.

When it was time to go home we didn't want to go home but we had to go home.

---

## Winter

It makes me think of

white,  
like the bushes,  
full of snow.

It makes me think of

ice,  
icicles on the trees,  
ice-skating,  
and the  
cracking sound of  
breaking ice.

It makes me think of

the nice cold air  
on my face;  
the snowflakes  
feel good  
--on my face, too.

---

## The Strange Dinosaur

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there was a strange animal. He was a dinosaur. The strange part of him was his mouth. He had lots of boo-boos in his mouth. He got very cranky when he ate his favorite food, tomatoes. This is why he was called Cankersourous. Are you ever a Cankersourous?

---

## Night

It's dark. It's dark.  
That's when owls come out.  
Bright moon, bright moon  
O the black sky!  
The stars are as bright as the sun.

---

*Jennifer Rovetti*  
Grade 1  
North Stonington Elementary  
North Stonington

*Chesney McOmber*  
Grade 2  
William Buckingham Elementary  
Norwich

*Timothy Gilbert*  
Grade 2  
Putnam Elementary School  
Putnam

*Lisa Gomez*  
*Grade 2*  
*Natchaug Elementary*  
*Willimantic*

### Little Ballerina

Little ballerina, little ballerina  
Dancing on her toes  
Twirling to the music  
and throwing a rose.

Her dress twinkles in the light  
She smiles at the crowd  
As she pushes a curl out of her way  
She dances the play of Swan Lake  
They crown her as Queen of the Lake.

As her dance goes on,  
tired but not willing to quit  
She keeps on dancing  
as beautiful as can be  
helping the young ones-one through three.

She has a good attitude  
very happy when the time comes  
to take a bow  
and collect the roses  
that have fallen on the floor.

*Matthew Vaida*  
*Grade 2*  
*Crystal Lake Elementary*  
*Ellington*

---

### Guess What! Rosie Isn't Pregnant Anymore

Guess what? My cat, Rosie, isn't pregnant anymore! Her kittens were born on October 11, 1993. There were three of them - two girls and one boy. At first the kittens couldn't see, but after eight weeks their eyes opened and they could see.

When the kittens first came out of Rosie, one of the kittens just wouldn't stop nursing. Mom named him Beast because he was a pig. He kept sucking and sucking Rosie's milk and he didn't want to stop. I know we will get to keep Beast because Mom fell in love with him.

But we have to give the other two kittens away. We gave one kitten to a friend. Her name was Beauty and she was a calico cat. Mom named her Beauty because she was the prettiest kitten. We just found a home for Freckles, the other kitten. Mom named her Freckles because she had two black spots on her face that looked like freckles.

The kittens were very playful when they were first born and they are still very playful. They like to chase each other. Rosie, the mother cat, likes to chase them, too. The father cat, Patches, likes to fight with the kittens, but Beast bites



Patches on the nose and Patches runs away.

I like to play with the kittens. I have a special toy for the kittens and it's a stick with feathers taped to it. I wiggle the toy on the floor and the kittens chase the toy and jump on it. My brother and I make forts with blankets in the living room, and the kittens just love to play with the forts. They jump the roofs of the forts, and they run around inside the forts. It's so funny!

Once when one kitten, Freckles, was sitting on my lap, she did a whole back flip. My mom and I cracked up. The kittens love to sneak down cellar sometimes, but my mom doesn't like them to go down cellar because they are too small and they might get hurt.

The kittens like to sleep together and they like to sleep with me. They are very soft and I like to snuggle with them.

I'm glad I get to keep Beast, but I'm sure going to miss Freckles and Beauty! I hope they like their new homes.

---

## The Voyage of the Pilgrims

### *Leaving England*

Three-hundred-seventy-four years ago the Pilgrims were getting ready to go to America. They were leaving because of the King of England. He made them go to his church. If they didn't, he would either put them in the dungeon or kill them. The supplies they brought were pots, pans, biscuits, blankets, beer, rope, guns, gunpowder, seeds, grain, some small animals like chickens, cats, and dogs. Finally the day came to get on board the *Mayflower*. They were scared and excited.

### *On the Mayflower*

For sixty-six days the Pilgrims were on the *Mayflower*. The voyage was miserable. There wasn't much food and people were seasick. Two people died. One baby was born. His name was Oceanus Hopkins. Living "tween decks" made the Pilgrims feel like they were caged up. The food they ate was ship's biscuits, beer, salted fish, and salted beef. The ship was crowded, and it smelled awful. There was not much room to sleep. Some families made a small table. The parents slept on top, and the children slept on the bottom. If the children didn't get in the way they could play on the decks. Finally a sailor called, "Land Ho!" The Pilgrims were so excited. They ran up to the top of the deck to see ... America.

*Elisabeth Walker*  
Grade 2  
Poquetanuck School  
Preston

## *A New Land*

Finally the Pilgrims saw land, but before they got off the *Mayflower* they had to write some rules. These were called the *Mayflower Compact*. John Carver was elected to be governor. December 20 they got off the ship. The first winter was very hard. Fifty people died. They were happy when it was spring. There was an Indian named Squanto. He taught them to plant corn and how to trap animals, too. They stored plenty of food for the winter. Squanto helped make houses. The Pilgrims were happy in Plymouth.

*Lisa Mangini*  
Grade 3  
Prudence Crandall Elementary  
Enfield

---

## How the Wizard Got His Wand

Once upon a time there was a wizard. He had a tall pointy hat, a long purple robe, and a long white beard. He knew many magic spells. But he did not have a magic wand.

He did have a pet lizard and a black cat. He even had a pony. But he really needed and wanted a wand to help him with his magic spells.

One day, while trying to make a magic wand, some magic sprinkles fell on the pony. He was surprised to see that the pony had changed into a unicorn after ten minutes. The pony now had a long horn off the top of his head, and he had wings, too. The horn was a sparkling crystal, and his pet could now fly around the room. Next, the unicorn started talking, too. He thanked the wizard for turning him into such a beautiful unicorn.

The wizard was still sad. He still needed a wand. But the unicorn said that having a unicorn was better than a wand and that they could do anything a magic wand could do ... only better.

The wizard kept the unicorn locked up after that, so he could practice his magic spells. This made the unicorn very sad. Soon he escaped to try out his wings.

He met a little boy in the woods who was totally enchanted with the unicorn. They became fast, good friends. The unicorn took his friend flying all day. At the end of the day the boy went home, and the unicorn was alone and tired. He fell asleep.

In the meantime, the angry wizard was looking for his pet. He stumbled across the sleeping unicorn and put him in a cage.

The unicorn awoke and begged for freedom. The unicorn decided to make a deal with his master. He could give him his horn to use as a magic wand, even though it meant the unicorn would lose all his magic powers. He no longer would be able to fly or to talk. All he wanted was to be with the boy. He asked his master for his freedom in exchange.

The wizard agreed, and the crystal horn fell off into the wizard's hand. That is how the wizard got his wand. However ... the pony's wings vanished

and he couldn't speak any more. The wizard let him go because he was just a pony again. The wizard opened the cage.

When the pony stepped out, the magic wand seemed to come to life by itself. Sparks shot out of the end, and the horn and wings grew back on the pony. He was a unicorn again because of his great sacrifice and love for the boy.

He spoke his thank-yous and flew off to find his friend. He found the boy, and they spent the rest of their days together. And they all lived happily ever after.

---

## Icicles

Glimmering and shiny icicles  
Like clear popsicles  
Sparkling in the sunlight,  
Cold freezing limbs  
Hanging from my gutters  
Makes me shiver all over.

---

## My Vacations at Lake Champlain

Every summer my family and I go to Lake Champlain for our vacation. Lake Champlain is in Vermont and is the largest lake in New England. The place on the lake that we go to is called the North Hero House. It is in North Hero, Vermont which is named after a Revolutionary War hero, Ethan Allen.

North Hero is very pretty. It is surrounded by Lake Champlain and when you look across the lake you can see the beautiful, tall, green mountains of Vermont. I love to look out across the lake and see the sunlight glisten on the water.

My grandparents come with us, and I'm glad they do. My grandfather takes me fishing in his bass boat, and we catch lots of fish. One time I surprised my grandfather and caught a two pound bass! My grandmother doesn't like to fish, but she does like to swim. Mom and I swim with her and have lots of fun. The water where we swim is very clear, and we can see all the way down to the bottom. When you stand on the dock on a calm day and look into the water it looks like an aquarium. You can see many beautifully colored fish swimming among the lake weeds.

The people who run the North Hero House and the people who live in North Hero are very friendly. Also, some of the guests who come back every year have become our good friends. My grandfather says that the nicest thing

*Brian Kinsley*  
Grade 3  
Holland Hill Elementary  
Fairfield

*Katie Jo Beardsley*  
Grade 3  
Tootin' Hills School  
West Simsbury

about Lake Champlain is that nothing ever changes. I guess he should know because he has been going there since he was five years old.

There is a legend at Lake Champlain about the Lake Champlain Monster, who the local residents call Champs. One year while we were at the lake some people several miles away claimed to have spotted Champs. It was reported in all the local newspapers. Champs was described as having a long neck, a small head, a body with many humps, and little flippers. This story frightened my grandmother because we were swimming in the lake the day it was sighted, and she was afraid it would bite her. As a reminder of this event my grandfather bought me a stuffed animal that looks like Champs. My father bought me a book titled *The Lake Champlain Monster*. It was written by a North Hero Vermont resident and is now one of my favorite books. I like to read this book in the winter because it brings back many fond memories of Lake Champlain, and I start to look forward to our summer vacation at Lake Champlain.

Casey Bessette  
Grade 3  
Lisbon Central School  
Lisbon

---

## Cats

Cats come in all different ways,  
Some are house cats, some are strays.  
There are outside cats and junkyard cats,  
Cats with boots and cats with hats.  
They're black and striped and furry.  
They're meowie and purry.  
Some have short hair; some have lots.  
They play with yarn and sometimes socks.  
They have such little tiny paws.  
They have small claws and sharp toothed jaws.  
They pounce and jump and cuddle in your arms.  
They have such manners and lots of charms.  
They have pointy ears and little noses.  
They smell mysterious things like roses.  
Their whiskers are so long and thin.  
They're cute and little with small chins.  
They eat mice; they eat birds.  
They always want seconds and usually thirds.  
Their enemies are dogs and foxes,  
Wolves, bears, and even "oxes."  
They have yellow eyes and some have green.  
They're the cutest things I've ever seen.  
They're small and gentle and very kind,  
They're my favorite animal, and I don't think  
I'll change my mind.

---



## Who Kidnapped Carla Johnston?

*Sarah Brown  
Grade 4  
Center School  
East Hampton*

### *Chapter 1*

"I should have that part," Joan Peterson grumbled under her breath as Carla Johnston walked on stage.

"You're lucky you got a part. All Carla has to do is say her name and she could run the show. She's so rich and famous, and she doesn't have anything to do with her money. I'd be pretty happy with about half the amount of Carla's money. Of course, I'm stuck being a maid for Ms. Gertrude Turner. Every time she brings one of her rich, snobby friends over, I have to smile and do anything they please. While I'm doing that, I have to act like I love doing it. If I had some money, I could live my own life." Debbie Smith said.

"Well, I've got to go practice my part. - Oh, I could do just as good as Carla - probably better!" Joan said angrily as she walked to the stage to practice her part.

Later that day, all the actors and actresses were invited to Ms. Gertrude Turner's old house. Carla didn't live near the site of the play, which was the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam, Connecticut, so she was staying at Ms. Turner's house. She was up in her room changing when a muffled scream was heard. The sound of objects crashing to the floor followed. The entire cast and Ms. Turner rushed upstairs to see what was the trouble. When they got to Carla's room, no one was there. They searched the house calling her name. There was no trace of Carla!

### *Chapter 2*

Since they couldn't find Carla, Ms. Turner said shakily, "I think Carla's been kidnapped."

"How could the kidnapper get away?" asked a curious actor.

"I don't know, but one of us could have done it," Ms. Turner said looking around the room for someone to be missing.

"Who?" an actress asked.

"Maybe you!" she said as she ferociously pointed a finger at Debbie.

"Me?" Debbie asked, "Why me?"

"You always had an angry look on your face when you looked at Carla, and you always seemed jealous of her," answered Ms. Turner, "and you were away from us when we heard the scream."

"So was Joan," Debbie said desperately.

"Oh, yes! Joan! You were supposedly bringing your dishes to the kitchen for Debbie to clean, but you could have kidnapped Carla, tied her up, and joined us during the search for her." Ms. Turner accused, "You always wanted her part anyway!"

"What about you, Ms. Turner? You weren't in the room when we heard the scream, and you're fast at accusing people - maybe too fast," Debbie said.

"Yeah!" Joan agreed.

"Why would I kidnap her? What will I do without her in the play?" Ms. Turner said, and before anyone could reply she added, "Why are we sitting around wasting time? I'm going to call the police."

Detective Michael Sanders was sent and they told him who they thought did it.

He examined the room, but the whole group had picked up the items that had fallen on the floor and touched other objects, so there were no distinguishable fingerprints. He found scuffs on the floor, which were signs of a struggle, though.

The next day, the detective tapped on the walls and found that one section was hollow. He pulled things that might be levers and pushed things that might be buttons. He finally was rewarded when he moved a lever and a well-concealed door started to open. He crawled through the doorway and discovered a secret passage.

### *Chapter 3*

He crawled into the secret passage and followed it outside. Someone could have brought Carla somewhere and hidden her and still have enough time to go inside and join the group with their long hunt. Detective Sanders searched for a while and finally gave up.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth Jones, a well-known actress, made a visit to Ms. Turner's house. She said that she was sad about the horrible kidnapping and wished it hadn't happened. Then they got into a conversation about some of the plays Elizabeth had been in.

Just then, Detective Sanders walked in and sat down. They continued talking and the conversation changed.

"I was thinking, since Carla can't be in the play, maybe I could take her place, at least until she's found," Elizabeth said.

"What a wonderful idea!" Ms. Turner said. "I'll introduce you to the rest of the cast right away."

As they walked away to tell the others, Detective Sanders was piecing the facts together for a solution. Still in thought, the detective slowly walked joining the others in the lounge.

The cast was talking casually to Elizabeth, and they all seemed to like her. She was smiling and asking about the play. Then she started walking to the door as she said that she was going to get her luggage from her car. The detective stopped her and asked if the whole cast was present. Ms. Turner assured him that she hadn't left anyone out, so he began talking.

"Someone in this room kidnapped Carla Johnston," he stated.



## Chapter 4

"We called you here to find out who did it," an annoyed actor said.

"Why does Elizabeth have to stay?" a curious actress asked.

"Why, she is the kidnapper," the detective stated simply.

The group was astonished and insisted that Elizabeth couldn't have kidnapped Carla because she wasn't even in Connecticut at the time of the kidnapping.

"Let me explain," Detective Sanders said. "Elizabeth is really Carla Johnston."

"Yes," Carla admitted as she pulled off her wig.

Detective Sanders began to explain. He said, "Carla had discovered the secret passage earlier and decided to use it as a means of escape. She scuffed her shoes on the floor and knocked objects over. Then she crawled through the passage with her money and bought some clothes at nearby stores. She wore some of her new clothes and a wig she had brought and pretended to be Elizabeth Jones. She had been in some of the same plays as Elizabeth, so she knew that Elizabeth was in another play. The only thing that I don't understand is why you did it, Carla."

"I did it because people didn't really like me and I thought if I pretended to be someone else, people might give me a chance. Then I would tell everyone who I really was. Then, maybe they would see that I could be nice and forgive me." Carla answered.

An actress said, "We forgive you."

As the group split up and Detective Sanders started to leave, he heard a muffled scream and objects falling on the floor in Ms. Turner's room.

"Maybe there's a secret passage in her room, too," Detective Sanders mumbled.

---

### When a Star Starts to Sparkle

When a star starts to sparkle  
In the night sky,  
The owls hoot and the bats blend  
In with the sky.

When a star starts to sparkle,  
The sun goes to sleep.  
When a star starts to sparkle,  
The moon shines bright.

When dawn starts to creep,  
And the stars go to sleep,  
The sun squeezes into the sky.

---

*Ryan Hanrahan*  
Grade 4  
Mary T. Murphy Elementary  
Branford

*Nell Taylor*  
*Grade 4*  
*Greenwich Academy*  
*Greenwich*

## Darkness

Darkness swallows you  
up like a hole in the sea.

Darkness has no expression.  
It's blank.

Darkness is a blanket that  
covers you in your sleep.  
And sometimes you never wake up.

Darkness has things in it  
that you can't see. But in  
your sleep they come out and haunt you.

Darkness is the loneliest thing in the  
world and no one can comfort  
you because you're in Darkness...

Darkness...

Darkness...

Darkness...

Darkness...

Darkness...

Darkness ...

---

*Larsson Youngberg*  
*Grade 4*  
*Worthington Hooker School*  
*New Haven*

## Smokestack

here you stand tall  
and fearless  
sentry of the hills  
around you  
spilling rainless  
clouds into the sky  
day & night.

---

## Winter, When the Snow Queen Rules

She breathes upon the land,  
Chilling every being, every soul.  
She paints the sky an icy, silver blue,  
And scatters tiny freezing crystals from her glistening basket.  
The snowflakes  
Falling, dancing, whirling,  
Free to join in their winter song.  
The new baby pink of spring quickly dies under her  
Unmerciful rule.  
The whole earth sleeps.

It is the time when the Snow Queen rules.

---

## Blank

I have a writer's block filling my head.  
Until I think it will explode.  
I've drawn a blank which often happens.  
Blanks are easy to draw.  
Coming involuntarily,  
Shapeless, colorless blobs of nothing...  
Gently floating through my head.

These voids of nothingness are independent,  
Coming and going as they please.  
Blocking out all sensible thoughts and  
Keeping the ridiculous in.

Making my thoughts all silly and jumbled,  
Just as alcohol or drugs would.  
I must have forgotten,  
Once again...  
To get the nondrowsy formula of thought.

---

*Julie Rubin-Cadrain*  
Grade 5  
Edward W. Morley Elementary  
School  
West Hartford

*Gail Fuller*  
Grade 5  
Ridgebury Elementary  
Ridgefield

*Lisa Kennedy*  
Grade 5  
Branford Intermediate School  
Branford

## Seed Flowers

Underground,  
listening to the world above,  
waiting to rise  
and stand tall,  
rooted,  
but dancing in the wind.

---

*Michael Langdon-Phillips*  
Grade 5  
Jefferson Elementary  
Norwalk

## Stranded

Stranded in my life,  
There is no way of escape.  
How I wish there was.

---

*Nicholas Fahey*  
Grade 5  
The Writers' Den  
Simsbury

## It's Hard to Be Cool

When I was in kindergarten I was the coolest kid in the class. All I had to do was say, "Will you be my friend?" and be nice, and then most people liked me. It was easy to be liked. There was never any negative stuff. Nobody made fun of anybody.

All that slowly changed as I got older. In first grade to be neat and cool you had to be good at soccer. And I was not as good as some others.

In second grade I had a pair of socks that had tic-tac-toe designs on them. I thought they were really neat. But one day in winter when I was taking my boots off, one of the girls said, "Those socks are stupid." I had always been nice and had never planned on getting into a fight, so I just said, "No, they aren't." I felt really down, because nobody had ever said anything like that to me before.

In third grade I found out that you should wear white socks and scrunch them down. I was at the bottom of the pit in third grade because I had hardly any friends by that time. My best friend was in the other third grade class. To top it all, I had the meanest teacher in the school.

At the end of third grade I played in Little League. I thought I was pretty good. I still think I am. One day when my team played against another Little League team, I found myself playing against a boy in my class. I was pitching. Usually I was good. But then I had some bad luck. I pitch sidearm. That boy snapped at me, "You pitch sidearm. You stink." That really put me down because baseball was my favorite sport, and I considered myself good at it.

Last year, in fourth grade, I wanted to be nice to the "cool" kids in class because everybody liked them, and I wanted to be on the right side of them.



They were good at soccer, and some of them were kind of funny. They didn't try their hardest in class. The coolest one did not do well at all in his academic work. It was no longer cool to be nice to the teacher and do everything she asked you to do.

When it came time to choose our seats in class I was usually out of the room at MEP, a class for math enrichment. And it seems as if I got stuck sitting next to the person who was my worst enemy.

One of the worst things was that I usually got all the answers right in class. If I missed one, some of the "cool" kids would say in a mean way, "Oh my gosh, Nick got one wrong." I began to wonder if I should always try my best and get the answers right. I was one of the kids who got thumbs down and was left out of the "cool" group.

This year, however, in fifth grade, things are a little better. When the year began I was sitting next to Jordan, the coolest kid in the class. We kind of became friends because I was the only boy sitting near him. But then the teacher asked me to move because one of the girls needed to sit closer to the chalkboard. Now I sit next to John, who is cool, but not super cool. We'd become half-friends. Some days he liked me, and some days he hated me. Now we've become REAL friends because we've worked together in a big science unit on electricity. We're the best group. We get the work done fast and we work well together. So things are a little better this year.

I think this whole thing about being cool will even out over time. One of the coolest kids, Mike, doesn't pick friends by how cool they are. Maybe the cool kids are changing. Maybe they're calming down and being nicer. Maybe they're learning that it's better to make friends by being nice. I certainly hope so. It's about time.

---

## Dad and I

When I was a baby, my dad used to hold me with his warm hands and his face so nice and smooth. He would sing to me with his soft voice and would always say, "I will never hurt you, no matter what happens to us." He would always make me fall asleep, and he would put me down so softly that I would think I was still in his arms. When I got a little older, my father and I would go to the South to visit relatives and go to church. That was so warm and nice. I would go on stage and sing with my dad, and it made me feel I was important. It feels really good to be up there with him because I really love my daddy.

*Knyisha Clinton  
Grade 5  
Putnam Elementary  
Putnam*

David Anthony Fulco  
Grade 6  
Putnam Elementary  
Putnam

## The Final Sunset

They walked together hand in hand along the quiet beach. The white sand had been hot all day long, but at last, with the help of the evening air, the sands cooled down. The tide washed over their feet, and the rhythmic sound of the waves crashing on the beach set the tone for the night.

The sun retreated behind the western horizon. It was as if Mother Earth were pulling her child back to her. As the sun set lower in the sky, the final rays reflected off the waves like the brilliance of a watermelon sky. The oranges and reds shown brightly in the distance, making the young couple wish that the colors along the horizon would stay that way forever.

They sat down on the beach, and they listened to the waves pounding along the shoreline. The couple's eyes were fastened on the waves that swept toward them. The tops of the waves were foaming white, and in some areas it looked as if the waves were made from tiny, shiny, mother-of-pearl rocks.

Getting up from the beach, the couple brushed the sand off their tanned legs. They held hands once more and retraced their steps from where they had come. Their footprints criss-crossed the original steps coming from the opposite direction.

Arriving at the parking lot, the man opened the convertible's car door as his lady companion sat in the leather bucket seat. Closing the passenger door, the man walked to the opposite side of the car, opened the door, slid into the driver's seat, fastened his seatbelt, and put the keys into the ignition. He placed the car into reverse and backed carefully from the parking space.

A blazing flash of white light suddenly filled the sky. Just over the western horizon, a dark mushroom cloud took form. As the cloud grew in size, it covered the brilliant pinks, blues and violets of the water color sky. From every direction, for miles around, the beautiful sunset was blocked from all human sight. It was 6:30 P.M., June 2, 2000. It was the exact time of the dropping of the final nuclear bomb.

Karla Runquist  
Grade 6  
Kent Center School  
Kent

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## Morning

The rays of the golden sun  
Skipped down the dirt lane,  
Around the apple orchards,  
And through the woods it came.  
It ran across the yard,  
Over sparkling pools of dew,  
All to shine through your window,  
And to awaken you.

---



## A Player Reborn

*Eric Kontur  
Grade 6  
R.D. Seymour School  
East Granby*

John Stevens sat near the lower portion of the stands, cheering loudly and enthusiastically for his school basketball team, the "Springfield Shooters." It was a great game. They were in the second half. The score was 64 to 63 in favor of the "Rockford Rockets" the opposing team. There were ten seconds left in the game. The Shooters had the ball. They inbounded the ball to their star point guard, Jay Kirkman. Jay dribbled past the full court press of the Rockets and put up a fifteen footer "swish" as the buzzer went off. The crowd went wild and the game was over!

As the bleachers emptied, John sat alone, awaiting his opportunity to exit. His grin began to fade as he remembered his active participation on the team. His mother came in and greeted him with a smile. John carefully released the brake on his wheelchair, and his mother helped him out to the waiting van.

During the twenty minute ride home, John thought back to his own days of glory as one of the most promising point guards on the team. Until the accident - the drunk hit and run driver bouncing wildly onto the curb as John walked home from basketball practice one evening - John thought he might continue to pursue a promising career in the sport. Now the doctors held only a very remote hope that he would ever walk again, let alone jump and shoot baskets.

Often John wondered why he even went to the games and practices, since it sometimes made him feel bitter and sad. Yet, he couldn't give up that last tie with the game.

The next week, as John sat watching the Shooters practice, a ball suddenly plopped in his lap. He turned, startled, and saw a smiling young man, sitting in a wheelchair much like his. He wheeled over and shook hands.

"Hi, John," said the newcomer, "my name is Hal Winston. I understand you're quite a player yourself. Want to shoot a few down in the far court?"

*"Was, you mean," said John, looking bitterly at his legs.*

*Hal suddenly raced his chair down to the far court and began shooting baskets. John looked on in amazement and slowly followed.*

"How on earth did you learn to do that?" John asked,

"Lots and lots of practice." Hal laughed, "You see, I was much like you, but I just couldn't give up the game. There are other kids like you, John. They could sure use your skill learning to improve their game. We have a team down at the YMCA."

John looked at Hal uncertainly, "I could never learn to move this thing that fast," he said in a quiet voice.

"Won't know until you try!" Hal tossed John the ball. "Come on, let's see some of that old style!"

John tried turning his chair, but lost the ball almost as soon as he moved. Tears of frustration appeared in his eyes, but he refused to give up. He turned

again, dribbling. He shot at the basket, but the ball bounced off the rim. Hal threw it to him. John dribbled again and scored!

Hal pounded him on the back. "You see, it's not impossible," he said grinning. "Want to come round Saturday and watch the kids play?"

John agreed, but he secretly wondered how exciting a game played in wheelchairs could really be. On Saturday, he arrived just after the game started. He couldn't believe his eyes! What these kids lacked in skill they made up for in sheer determination and effort! John was soon as interested as if it were his own team.

Hal came by and introduced him to the kids at half time. Many of them had heard about him from the local school news and were excited to meet him. John promised to stick around and work with them after the game.

Most of the kids could maneuver better than John, but his skill was greater. Soon he was learning from them, old hands at wheelchair maneuvers, as well as teaching them. For the first time in many months, John felt his old enthusiasm returning. He saw that even if he did not regain the use of his legs, he could put his talent to worthwhile use.

As John waited for the van to take him home, he flexed his sore arms, and laughed out loud happily to himself. It was the beginning of a long and happy relationship!

*Rachel Satter*  
*Grade 6*  
*Ponus Ridge Middle School*  
*Norwalk*

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## Hanukkah Diary

November 20, 1993

Dear Diary,

Today in school our teacher asked our class how many of us celebrated Christmas. Out of twenty-two kids, twenty-one celebrated Christmas. I was the only one who didn't. I was so embarrassed. Mrs. Claff asked me what I celebrated. I told her I celebrated Hanukkah. Mrs. Claff just nodded. All the other kids looked at me as if to say, what is she talking about?

Your humiliated owner,  
Ann Ritz

November 21, 1993

Dear Diary,

Today at the end of the day Mrs. Claff told us that the other two fifth grade teachers were talking yesterday and planned a holiday concert that everyone was going to participate in. When she said we could leave, she asked me to stay for a minute. Gary Mesh, (who is the biggest tease in my class) said,



"Oooh, I bet you're in trouble! Give it to her rough Mrs. Claff." And he walked out laughing to pieces. "Am I in trouble?" I asked. She said, "No, I wanted to know if you would like to teach a group of kids a Jewish song and dance for our concert." I said I would.

Your happy possessor,  
Ann Ritz

November 22, 1993

Dear Diary,

Today we had our first rehearsal of our concert. When we got to the auditorium, Mrs. Claff explained what I was going to do. At first nobody said anything. I guess they were waiting for someone to speak. Then a girl from Mrs Rays's class said, "Could I be in the dance?" Before I knew it almost everybody wanted to be in the dance. The auditorium became a mass of yelling and screaming. All I could hear was, could I be in it? Mrs. Claff called for attention. All of the teachers will decide five people that behave well and they will be in the dance.

Your exuberant owner,  
Ann Ritz

November 23-29, 1993

Dear Diary,

All of these days have been hard work and practice. Every day now we practice for about one hour. Today, after we finished our Christmas songs, my teacher told us who would be in the special song and dance. "It was hard choosing who would be in it," she began. After another minute of her preparing us so we wouldn't be disappointed, she finally ran off the list of names. "Melissa Ralf and Judy Thorn from Mrs. Ray's class. Phil Wort and Mike Danly from Mrs. Apeman's class. And from my class, they are Jim Bramle, and of course, Ann Ritz. For the next couple of rehearsals, you children will go out with Ann and she will teach you a song and dance that is Jewish," said Mrs. Claff. So, we practiced for the hour. You want to know something diary, after a while we started to look pretty good! Oh, I forgot to tell you something, the song that we're dancing to is called *Hava Nagila*. The way we dance is we form a circle and we walk around putting different feet in the back every time we walk around.

Your worn out keeper,  
Ann Ritz

November 30 - Dec 2, 1993

We have been practicing *Hava Nagila* so much I can sing it and dance it in my sleep. Now we only practice half of the rehearsals because we know it so well.

Your worn out owner,  
Ann Ritz

December 6-7, 1993

Dear Diary,

Both of these days our principal, Mrs. Masoto, has been watching our show. Most of the time she stands in the back of the auditorium so she can be sure that everyone will hear us perfectly. At the end of our first run through she told us to sing louder and look out at the audience so they could hear us better. The next time we practiced the song we sounded a lot better. Oh, at the end of the rehearsal we showed everybody *Hava Nagila*. At first it was quiet when we were done, but then someone started clapping so everybody else did. It felt so good to hear them clap.

Your proud owner,  
Ann Ritz

December 8, 1993

Dear Diary,

Today was our last rehearsal. Tomorrow morning at ten o'clock we will be on those risers singing our little hearts out. Today we had some parents watch us because they had to go to work tomorrow. They really thought the concert was good and so do I. Everybody is so nervous. We know we are going to be good, but we're still nervous.

Your nervous owner,  
Ann Ritz

December 9, 1993

Dear Diary,

We did it! We looked and sounded great. Or that's what people say anyhow. My parents and Mrs. Claff are really proud of me. *Hava Nagila* was

a big hit. By the end of the song people were clapping to the music. All of the teachers had grins pasted to their faces.

Your happy owner,  
Ann Ritz

---

### Witches' Brew

Up ahead the sisters weird  
Two with warts and one with beard

Cause the china plates to crack  
O'er the bubbling cauldron black.

The deadly stew contains within  
Tooth of asp and camel chin

A pair of Blackfoot moccasins  
One pill of nitroglycerine

A custard pie and robber's loot  
A dirty hat and snakeskin boot

A piece of spotted panther flay  
And some brownish-black potter's clay

Half a poisoned dragon's liver  
And some water from a river

Hoof of goat and shell of snail  
And half a cup of ginger ale.

The witches eat their dinner stew  
While drinking Samuel Adams brew

One by one they fall down choking  
Killed themselves by their own cooking.

The message of this story's clear  
Don't serve witches' brew with beer.

---

*Emily Edenburn-MacQueen*  
Grade 7  
Timothy Edwards Middle School  
South Windsor

*Courtney Yuen*  
Grade 7  
King Philip Middle School  
West Hartford

## The World in a Book

I rose above my chair, my house,  
Above the lawn of grass.  
I saw the trees, the streets, the roofs.  
They grew so small, so fast.

I soared into the clouds, eyes wide,  
Atop the rushing wind.  
I spread my wings as the eagle does,  
When it unfurls its wings.

I peered over the mountaintop,  
And heard its stately song.  
The crevices made shadows dance;  
The sun painted the rock.

I saw the sun sink slowly down,  
In a radiant painted sky.  
The stars showed forth their glistening shades,  
In the dark luster of the night.

I rode a streaking comet by and  
Looked down upon my world.  
I saw galaxies rushing by,  
With a fire-like gleaming gold.

Then everything melted away,  
The earth beneath me shook.  
Once more I was inside my home,  
As I slowly closed my book.

*Rebecca Sherlock*  
Grade 7  
The Ethel Walker School  
Simsbury

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## Hot Chocolate

I always liked sledding over at the Mathews' house — everybody did. The Mathews had the steepest, longest, and widest hill in town. Yeah, there were other hills, but they were nothing like the Mathews'.

Their house was like nothing I'd ever seen — a big, four-story house settled on a huge hill. I couldn't figure out why, but I could see Mrs. Mathews everyday sitting in her old rocking chair on the second floor porch reading the same "People" magazine. She looked tired, and the lines on her face had grown deeper and longer since I had first met her. Aging can do that to a person, I

guess. But the way she always managed a smile on her old face that winter was a wonder.

Mr. Mathews, always in his pajamas, sat inside watching TV and drinking his beer. He bathed once a week and had the same eating habits as a pigeon. He'd peck at one thing until it had been completely devoured, then rotate his plate. Actually, the only way I could see him was by peeking through the dining room window on the west side of the house. He was shier than Mrs. Mathews and stayed away from us.

Mrs. Mathews, on the other hand, was a lot better with children. Every day my friends and I were out there, so was she, serving us hot chocolate and wearing her frayed woolen socks, sweat pants, and purple knitted vest.

There was something sad about that couple that made me sad, too. They didn't have a family or much contact with the world. I guess it was the way they seemed to care for and look after each other — the way they were so old and had experienced so much, yet they had so little.

Just about every kid in town knew the Mathews, and every kid loved them. We all adored Mrs. Mathews and her hot chocolate. It tasted terrific after a magnificent run down the hill and a long, long climb back up.

A couple of summers ago, Mr. Mathews died. His death shocked the whole neighborhood. We always thought Mrs. Mathews would be the first to go because she had been older. We were all sad, but Mrs. Mathews was especially sad. After the wake and the funeral, she was never the same. No more hot chocolate, no more smiles, and the old rocking chair, creaking its loneliness in the wind, had long since been abandoned. The only time I ever saw her again was when I peered through the dining room window. She was eating, watching TV, and wearing a tattered, faded nightgown.

Kids have long since stopped going there to sled or to see Mrs. Mathews. Thinking back on it now, I didn't go there for the hill or the hot chocolate. I went there for Mrs. Mathews.

---

## Life Goes On

Little did I know that when I woke up October 31, 1992 that it would be the saddest day of my life. My grandpa had been sick for a while. I can remember asking him to play baseball with me, but he had to turn me down because of the pains in his arms. Soon after that I found out that my grandpa had been sent to St. Raphael's Hospital. He was in the hospital for one week until one day when he was sent to hospice. The doctors then told my family and me that my grandpa had a very bad case of prostate cancer. It had spread throughout his body. We then found out that he had been taken to the hospital too late, so the doctors could not have stopped it.

Almost every day after school, my mother asked me to go see him. And every day I would refuse. My reasons may seem stupid, but I was afraid of what

*Breigh Garguilo*  
*Grade 7*  
*West Hills Middle Magnet School*  
*New Haven*



I would see. I was not used to seeing my strong, active grandpa in such a vulnerable position. But one day my mom made me go. The elevator ride up felt like eternity. My heart was pounding as we walked down the hall to his room. My aunt, dad and grandma were already there. My grandpa looked so pale and helpless. We talked a lot about school and different things happening in my life. Then it was time to go. I gave him a kiss good-bye. But I did not know that good-bye meant forever.

A few days later it was my birthday, October 26. It was great having my family over to celebrate my eleventh birthday. But it broke my heart that my grandfather could not be there.

A couple of days went by and I constantly thought about my grandpa. Everyday I would wake up petrified that this would be the day my grandpa would pass away.

Five days after my birthday I was awakened rather early by my mom. My mom and brother sat beside me on my bed. I knew something was wrong because they both had tears falling down their faces. And then they told me. It hit me like a bombshell. They told me that my grandpa had died. I have never felt my heart fall so fast before. The tears rushed endlessly down my cheeks and I felt like my whole world had shattered into tiny little pieces.

That Tuesday was his funeral. That whole day was so dark and dreary. The rain poured down as my family and I waited for the limos to take us to the church. I remember the day perfectly. It is frozen in my memory like a still black and white photograph. When the limos finally came and dropped us off at church, it was the beginning of what was to be a time of mixed emotions. It was my first "real" experience in church. I could not believe how beautiful a church could be. The stained glass windows were breathtaking. It was difficult for me to admire the beautiful things around me when my eyes were fixed on the casket holding my beloved grandfather. As I listened to the priest talk about him, my mind wandered to past times shared with him. I cried that day like I have never cried before. It was saddest day of my life. I love my grandfather very much. I will miss him. But the memories of times we shared together will never fade from my mind and will always be kept in a special place deep inside my heart.

*Brian Pirkey*  
*Grade 8*  
*Arthur H. Illing Middle School*  
*Manchester*

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## Creation

Darkness everywhere, save the minute  
points of light finding their way through  
the huge obscure region.

Unexpectedly, a cluster of spheres  
announce their arrival in a massive report that  
shakes the young galaxy.

Ever so slowly, they begin to alter  
and become nine globes orbiting a

truly awesome ball of flame.  
During a much later period of time,  
something extraordinary will occur  
on one of these curious little planets.  
Something frequently referred to as "life,"  
will come into existence.  
It will evolve, mature, and  
eventually turn into  
present day man.  
However, that is much farther down the road.  
Now, life will have to wait its turn.

---

### My Best Friend, My Brother

"Code blue!" Voices filled the hallways of Spring Memorial Hospital as a stretcher carrying sixteen-year-old, Brandon Berke was brought in. A deep gash on his forehead was bleeding profusely and in an instant, the usually quiet hospital had doctors and nurses rushing to the aid of the young patient. One doctor in particular, Dr. Janet Bragg, took charge of the situation at hand.

Dr. Bragg's voice could be heard above all others as she spoke to the EMT who had picked up Brandon.

"What happened?" The doctor gazed over at the young man with doctors and hospital aides hovering over him, frantically trying to prepare him for surgery.

"The kid's car was found upside down on the turnpike. We think that he was hit by a drunk driver. The kid's head went right through the windshield after he hit the guardrail and flipped the car over," the EMT explained.

"Was he trapped under the car?" Dr. Bragg asked. She began to panic. She felt that more than anything she had to save Brandon before he became just another statistic of the thousands killed by drunken drivers every year.

Sensing the doctor's anxiety, the EMT blurted out that Brandon had been trapped under the car for a half an hour or so.

Panic stricken, Dr. Bragg rushed to Brandon's side as he was wheeled down the hospital corridor into the operating room. Hours later he would emerge after getting forty-seven stitches and a blood transfusion.

That's an actual account of what happened on June 7, 1981, the day that my brother Brandon was taken to the hospital. The day that he came home was the happiest day of my life to date. However, sadness and devastation were soon to follow.

Two years later, my brother was diagnosed with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Doctors traced it back to the blood transfusion he received back in '81. My reaction made me feel guilty. For a while I tried to ignore Brandon, I didn't want to see him in any pain. I guess that I thought that the disease would

*Carrie Majer*  
*Grade 8*  
*Martin Kellogg Middle School*  
*Newington*

change him on the inside. It took me a while to realize that Brandon needed my support more now, that he had AIDS than ever before.

For a while Brandon lived the life of your average person. He graduated from college and even went on to graduate school. I spent more time with him in those last six years than I had the previous eleven.

The fateful day came on December 27 of this past year. Christmas had always been Brandon's favorite time of year. After he had been experiencing a great deal of pain, he was taken to the hospital that was becoming all too familiar.

For weeks Brandon was confined to his hospital room. The first time that I went to visit him, the room was dark and the shades were drawn. The room was all but empty. Brandon lay helpless in his bed. His face had turned a ghostly white. For a while I sat on the edge of the bed while he slept.

At 11:18 p.m., a day after I had visited him, he was pronounced dead. He had a remarkable story of triumph, courage, and devotion, and now he was dead. The strongest person that I had ever met had let an incurable disease claim his life. The disease that had already claimed the lives of thousands had claimed the life of my best friend, my brother.

*Oana Marian*

*Grade 8*

*Gordon C. Smith Junior High*

*Oakville*

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## Grampa

Three days ago, Grampa was sleeping.  
Momma says that he's worn out,  
But late at night, I hear her weeping.  
Don't know what it's all about.

Outside, the leaves, they have all fallen  
They make a blanket on the ground.  
I'd like to play, "Grampa!" I'm callin'.  
But this time he's not around.

When will he wake?" I ask my momma.  
"When will he take me to the sea?"  
"When will we sit down by the river?"  
But she doesn't answer me.

There were times we were together.  
Just me and Grampa, all alone.  
Days we've shared are forever.  
But now, Grampa isn't home.



He went for a walk, I guess.  
Woke up when I wasn't there.  
Just took a path into the woods.  
Maybe he's lost, alone somewhere.

"Where's Grampa?" I ask again.  
"Momma, tell me where he's gone."  
I dream about him now and then,  
But then I wake up, and it's dawn.

Momma never tells me why  
I don't see Grampa anymore.  
She thinks that I don't hear her cry  
As she did the nights before.

Then one night, while I was sleeping  
I thought I heard somebody say  
"The reason why your Momma's weeping  
Is 'cause your Grampa's gone away."

But it said Grampa's everywhere.  
He's all around, his love is deep.  
Grampa's watching over me  
During the day and while I sleep.

Three years ago, Grampa was sleeping —  
Momma said that he was worn out.  
But at night I heard her weeping.  
Now I know what life's about.

---

### Visions of Him

I seat myself upon a rock,  
overlooking miles of untamed land.  
My knees are pulled snugly to my chest.  
A light breeze tickles my senses  
as the sunlight beats down upon my head.  
The faint roar of the ocean's water crashing against the rocks  
echoes in my mind.

I sit there peacefully;  
enjoying the view and breathing the fresh air.

*Kristy Wing  
Grade 8  
Timothy Edwards Middle School  
South Windsor*

Soon thoughts of him begin to cloud my mind.  
The velvet softness of his skin,  
when it brushes up against mine.  
The blue color of his eyes  
when he's aroused.  
The shape of his lips  
wanting to be kissed.  
The smile that appears on his face  
when my arms embrace his body.  
His soft voice echoes in my mind.  
His fluffy blond hair  
blows in the wind.

As I sit there a little longer,  
that vision of him  
puts a dazed smile on my face.  
I realize how wonderful he is  
so caring, trustworthy, and loving.

Climbing down from my high perch,  
I am filled with an abundance of carefree love  
not only for the beauty of my natural surroundings.  
But for that one special person  
who makes my happiness possible.

Him.

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*Virginia Foreman*  
Grade 8  
Hillcrest Middle School  
Trumbull

## Best Friends Do Cry

### *Cast of Characters*

**Amy Saunders:** Ten years old, very plain, has a best friend from whom she is being moved because of her father's job.

**Lisa Davidson:** Amy's best friend, plain also, very dramatic, is also very upset that her best friend is moving.

**Mother:** Mrs. Saunders, a very intelligent woman, does not want to move, feels sorry for her daughter.

**Father:** Mr. Saunders, whose job is transferring him to another state, is very uncompassionate, does not understand why his family is not happy.

Mrs. Weiss: A wise old woman who lives across from Lisa, a good friend of Lisa and Amy, to whom they go for advice.

Patrick: Lisa's older brother, very nice to his sister, feels sorry for the girls, offers to help them.

### Act 1. Scene 1

*It is Tuesday night, and the Saunders family has just finished eating dinner. Outside the snow is coming down hard, for it is mid-December in Massachusetts and it looks as if there just might be a white Christmas. Amy's father, Mr. Saunders stands and clears his throat to make an announcement to his family.*

Father: Guys, I have an announcement to make. I have been working on this for a long time now, and I am happy to say that my boss has decided to give me a promotion.

Mother: Why, honey, that's excellent! This is a wonderful Christmas gift, even though Christmas is three weeks away.

Amy: Daddy, I'm so glad! I didn't even know that you were working on a promotion.

*Even though Amy sounds sincere, in her mind she was only thinking of the rise in the number of presents she would get. She is happy. And then her father interrupts her to say something else.*

Father: I am glad you guys are happy. When you're happy, I'm happy. But I am afraid you might not be happy about this.

*He pauses, and focuses on his hands.*

Father: Well, my company's branch is very small, compared to some others. My promotion causes me to transfer to another branch, a larger one in New York.

*Mr. Saunders looks up to see the reaction on his family's face.*

Mother: New York?

Amy: Wait. I don't get what you're saying. Are you going to commute or something? Isn't New York hours away?

Father: Amy, honey, I'm saying we have to move to New York.

*Amy looks at him.*

Amy: Move? Are you serious? Dad, we can't! What about Lisa?

*Everyone is silent. Amy thinks she is going cry. Mrs. Saunders sits there looking shocked. After a short pause, Amy says,*

Amy: Well, at least it won't be for a while. When? Next year this time?

*Amy and her mom focus on Mr. Saunders.*

Father: I wish, sweetheart, but no. We're leaving on December 30th. But it's a real nice place, you'll have a huge yard, apple trees—

Amy: Dad! December 30th? That's right after Christmas. Before New Year's! We can't go then! I don't want a big yard, or dumb trees! I want to stay here!

*Mr. Saunders tries but fails in trying to let Amy see the good side. Amy knows that she is acting babyish for a ten year old, but she whines and runs to her room any way. At the table, Mrs. Saunders looks at her husband.*

Mother: Four weeks honey? That's all you give us? Four weeks to pack and leave the home we've lived in for 15 years? And Amy? She and her "never-break-up-until-we-die" best friend? (She pauses.) She's crushed, and so am I. You never took any of that into consideration, did you, honey?

*Mr. Saunders is left speechless as his wife retreats to their bedroom. He sits down at the table and sips his coffee.*

## Act 1. Scene 2

Lisa: What's the matter, Amy? You're not being ... HAPPY! *This is said with a lot of energy.*

*It is the Friday of that dreadful week, and Amy and her best friend, Lisa are having a sleep over. They are at Amy's house.*

Amy: Nothings wrong. I'm just a little tired.

Lisa: Tired? With Christmas coming up? Oh. That reminds me. Mrs. Weiss is offering us a job to shovel her snow for the winter for five dollars each, each time. And she wants us to decorate for her son's New Year's Eve

party, and next month she wants us to help her with her winter cleaning, and—

Amy: Lisa, stop.

*Amy is very upset. She still hasn't told Lisa that she is moving, because she can't bring herself to, not because Lisa wouldn't understand - she was Amy's best friend, she HAD to - but because if she told Lisa it would make it real.*

Lisa: Amy, are you sure nothing's the matter? You're not sounding too good. You and I both love old Mrs. Weiss. She's our best friend next to each other!

Amy: Lisa, it's not that. See, I have something to tell you—

*At that moment, a knock is heard at the door, and it opens. Mr. Saunders sticks his head in and says,*

Father: Why, hello, Lisa. How are you this evening?

Lisa: Oh, I'm doing pretty well. How are you?

*Mr. Saunders is surprised.*

Father: Excellent. I'm so glad that you are taking the fact that we have to move so well. I appreciate you acting like a young woman when my very own daughter doesn't.

Lisa: What? You're moving?

*Mr. Saunders looks from Amy to Lisa, then back again. He realizes what he has done, and his eyes widen. Amy, who has been silent, speaks.*

Amy: Daddy, get out! You always ruin everything! Go away!

Father: Amy, don't you dare —

*But he stops and lowers his head. He excuses himself. Lisa turns to Amy with narrowed eyes and repeats herself.*

Lisa: Tell me. Are you moving?

Amy: I was going to tell you, just now, really, but my dad —

Lisa: When? Where?

Amy: December 30th. We're moving to upstate New York.

Lisa: What? That's right before New Years. To New York! Why didn't you tell me? Amy, you can't move. You're my best friend!

*Lisa begins crying, and so does Amy. Like best friends, they spent the night crying together. Amy and Lisa are devastated.*

### Act 1. Scene 3

*It is the day before Christmas Eve, and Amy and Lisa are shoveling for old Mrs. Weiss. They had been spending a lot of time together and packing for Amy. This is the first time they had seen Mrs. Weiss for weeks.*

Mrs. Weiss: Come in here, girls

*She calls them from the window and when they go in, they find Mrs. Weiss with her table filled with at least fifty letters.*

Lisa: Wow, Mrs. Weiss! What's all this?

Mrs. Weiss: Why, dear, these are all my letters. All written by the same person, my best friend for thirty years.

*Amy and Lisa look at each other and widen their eyes.*

Mrs. Weiss: See, girls, I was speaking to your mom, Amy, and she told me that you were moving, and you girls were upset. But I wanted to show you that there is no reason you can't write letters, or communicate regularly without being neighbors.

Amy: Well, I love writing letters, but that's a lot of writing. I'd want to write Lisa and get a letter from her every day!

*Lisa agrees.*

Lisa: Yea!

Mrs. Weiss: Well, letters aren't the only form of communication. You can make tapes, home videos, and even call each other once in a while. You can still visit, just not as much.

*She pauses.*

Mrs. Weiss: Girls it's really not the end of the world. Around your age, when I was a girl, my best friend and I parted just like you two are doing now. We felt just like you two are feeling, devastated, like it was the end of the world. But we found that letters are just as okay, and we are still best friends.

Amy: Thank you Mrs. Weiss.

Lisa: Yea, thank you.

*They hug Mrs. Weiss, thanking her for her advice. They shovel her driveway extra cleanly.*

#### Act 1. Scene 4

*It is Christmas Day. As was expected, the snow is coming down hard. The Saunders' are eating a silent breakfast. Even though Amy and Lisa had kind of solved their problem, there is still tension in the air. Amy and her mother still cannot forgive Mr. Saunders. Once again, he clears his throat to make an announcement.*

Father: Guys, I know that you are mad at me. I know I've been insensitive and uncaring, but I'm sorry. I just assumed my family would offer some support or at least feel a little bit of happiness and pride —

*Mrs. Saunders cuts him off.*

Mother: Honey, it's not that we aren't proud of you, but —

Amy: Daddy, you accepted the job, and you bought the house, without even telling us, and you didn't care how it would make us feel. You just barged in on Lisa and me, not even thinking or considering I had not told her yet. Daddy, sometimes I think you just don't care, about the things you say, or even about me.

*The look on his only little girl's face makes Mr. Saunders' face melt.*

Father: That's not true. You know I love you, honey. You and your mother. That's why I took the job and bought the new house. I thought it would be better for my family.

*It is the first time that Mr. Saunders had offered his family a reason or a justification for what he had done. Amy thinks about it, and the more she does, the more she understands. Even Mrs. Saunders, who was an intelligent woman,*

*had not thought of the new home and new job as a blessing. They had thought that Mr. Saunders was only doing it for himself.*

*Mr. Saunders is wringing his hands and his eyes are pleading. Mrs. Saunders speaks quietly.*

Mother: I'm sorry dear.

Amy: I'm sorry, too, daddy.

Father: No. I'm sorry. I should always think before I speak. I was only trying to help, but I hope you can look past this and enjoy your new home and my new position.

Amy: We will, dad. We both love you, too.

### Act 1. Scene 5

*It is Christmas evening, and Amy and Lisa are now in Lisa's home.*

Lisa: I'm glad you came. I hope you like the gift I got you.

Amy: I hope you like mine.

*They open the gifts at the same time and they find that they are identical; both are large boxes of stationery.*

Amy: So we can write each other.

Lisa: And Patrick says that if I want to call you sometimes he'll help me pay for it.

Patrick: Did I just hear my name?

Narrator: Patrick, Lisa's older brother enters the living room.

Lisa: We are just commending you for being a nice guy and wanting to help us.

Amy: Yea, thanks a lot.

Patrick: No problem. I know what its like to have your best friend move away.

*He leaves. What he says brings tears to their eyes, and they both begin to cry.*

Amy: (*sobbing*) It'll be okay. We've solved our problem. We still have five days, and I'll write you as soon as I get there. My dad said he'll get us a video camera, and I'll send you a tape as soon as I can.

*They still cry, but they have come to an understanding. You can still be best friends even though the long miles and wide hours separate you, because a good friendship is stronger than both those barriers put together.*

Amber Roberts  
Grade 9  
Simsbury High School  
Simsbury

## You Are My Sunshine

Amanda took a deep breath. Her hand shook as she slowly turned the knob. She cautiously poked her small head through the door. Her wandering eyes met the scarlet of the roses and the yellow of the daffodils that brightened the contrasting gray and white hospital walls. The aroma of fresh flowers replaced the odor of antiseptics. The steady rhythm of a heartbeat machine echoed in her ears. Outside the weather was dreary. Lightening bolts illuminated and danced in the dark sky. Rain fell furiously from heavy clouds. Finally her eyes reached the silent form lying lifeless in the hospital bed. Amanda quietly tiptoed across the hard floor to the bedside. There, she sat down on the edge of the white mattress. How sickly her mother looked. The golden blond hair that Amanda used to play with as a baby lay in uncombed tufts as a result of the chemotherapy. Her weak and motionless body betrayed the once vibrant figure. The ghostly ashen face sickened Amanda. Amanda ever so gently patted her mother's fragile head and whispered, "Are you awake, Mom? I'm here."

Amanda's mom slowly awakened. A faint voice returned, "Hi. I missed you."

"I missed you too, Mom. You rest now. Everything will be fine."

The frail woman closed her eyes and fell into a deep slumber. Amanda's thoughts began to drift. Her mother had been suffering from cancer for what seemed like an eternity. Unfortunately their time together was coming to an end. But even as her mother lay on her death bed, Amanda seldom left her side. Amanda remembered the time her mother dressed up as Santa Claus and whisked her daughter onto her lap. She quietly listened to Amanda's Christmas wishes. Amanda must have been a very good girl that year because she received all the toys she asked for. She remembered how they shared Thanksgiving together cooking turkeys and baking pies. She thought about all the times her mom kept a bedside vigil when Amanda was sick. And Amanda couldn't forget their song. Every night when Amanda was a little girl her mother sang "You Are My Sunshine." Fifteen years later it was still special to them. The two shared many happy memories. Everything was perfect until that dreadful day, the day Amanda's mother received news of her illness. Even then they drew closer together. Amanda remembered that day as clearly as if it had happened yesterday. Amanda had raced home from school to share her day with her mom.

"Mom! Mom, guess wha...", the exuberant girl stopped dead in her tracks. She had never seen her mother so distraught. "What happened? What's wrong?"

The startling words her mother spoke changed their lives forever.

"Honey, I don't know how to tell you this. Mommy has cancer."

The words pierced Amanda's heart. She felt as if someone had suddenly stolen her breath. She collapsed into her mother's arms and sobbed. Her tears could have flooded the emptiest of oceans. Amanda clung to her mother.

"Why? Why you? Why us? You don't deserve this." As Amanda tried to understand what had just happened, she was amazed at how healthy her mother seemed.

"Mandy, Sweetie, I am going to fight this with all my heart, but it is not going to be easy. I am going to need your help."

Amanda used her remaining time with her mother as if every moment were the last. She loved her mother so much she thought her heart would explode. She ached with the frustrating pain of helplessness. Unfortunately, the strong tie that bound them together was about to unwind.

An hour or so had passed when the patient started to stir. Amanda filled her mother's head with delightful stories of her happiest childhood memories. Uptight before she spoke to her mom, the sharing of stories calmed her nerves. Even though her mother was dazed, Amanda knew she was listening. Only she was able to penetrate the glossiness of her mother's sickly eyes and detect gleams of life. Amanda sensed the vibration of her mother's quiet but true understanding.

Suddenly, Amanda's mother began to say something. Amanda could hardly hear the weak voice. She leaned closer to her mother.

"I love ... Sweetie ..." the frail woman gasped. She desperately tried to talk to her caring daughter. After a moment she managed to communicate a few words. "My Sunshine, my Baby Girl, I would love to hear our special song. It would make me feel better."

Amanda's mother began to have a breathing spasm. The constant gasps for air suddenly ceased. Amanda crawled into the bed and cuddled up next to her mother. She stroked her mother's head and softly sang in her ear "You Are My Sunshine." She gently kissed each of her eyelids and realized those eyes had closed forever. Warm teardrops trickled down Amanda's cheeks. She rocked back and forth, embracing the lifeless form. Amanda said a silent prayer for her mother. As she looked out the window through her teary eyes, the rain stopped and the most beautiful, golden sun shone through.



## Puppy Love

Laura Casey

Grade 9

J.A. DePaolo Junior High School  
Southington

Mom never wanted a dog. "They are filthy creatures with terrible odors that stink up the entire house," she claimed. She stated a dog would ruin the furniture and leave hairs throughout our home. Mom once told me that if I really desired a dog, I'd have to get one when I moved out because there was no possibility of her ever taking one in.

For years my sister and I begged her and pleaded for her to consent to adopting a dog. Dad was all for it. He adored animals and would gladly have gotten us a pet. But the final decision was in Mom's hands, and it seemed as if there was no use trying. "You might as well give it up. You are not getting a dog."

All my life I'd longed for a dog. I dreamed of my loyal companion greeting me when I came home from school and accompanying me on walks around the park. I stopped every time I saw one of the beloved creatures and crooned over it. Each time I saw a star, the wish I made was for a dog. It was the only thing I'd ever truly wanted.

Both my parents could see how much I coveted a dog, but Dad was especially sympathetic. He'd owned three dogs as a child and often talked about his pets. One day, without notice, Dad came home from work cradling an eight-week-old Maltese puppy in his arms.

My sister and I dashed towards him. We embraced Dad and proceeded to sputter endlessly about how wonderful he was and how much we loved him. Dad's face was illuminated by a gigantic smile, and his bright blue eyes glittered with joy. He handed me the tiny white puppy. My sister and I forgot him and began doting upon this precious ball of fluff.

As we sat there cherishing our new little treasure, we could feel someone staring harshly at us. Slowly, timidly, we turned around. Mom stood erectly by the kitchen door, her arms crossed tensely and her big brown eyes flashing with anger. The second Dad noticed her, he knew he was in trouble.

"How could you do this without consulting me first?" Mom challenged. "You know how I feel about animals, Jim. I think this was a decision we should have made together."

Dad's face paled. He knew he had made an error in judgment. "I'm sorry, hon," Dad apologized. "I thought it would be a pleasant surprise. If I had known you would get this upset, I wouldn't have gotten her."

I pulled the little dog gently but firmly into my lap. My sister's tiny hand rested protectively on the puppy's back. We looked with trepidation at Mom, our eyes pleading for her consent. "Please, Mom," I begged, "don't take her away."

Mom is a caring person and she knew that now that we had our puppy she couldn't simply snatch her away from us. She walked over to where we sat cuddling our puppy and knelt beside us. She stroked the puppy's cottony white head a single time and then she spoke.



"Well, girls," she said, "this is a big responsibility. I expect you to walk her, clean up after her, and make sure she has food and water in her dish. If you are able to handle the responsibility, I suppose you can keep her."

For a brief moment my sister and I released our puppy. Our eyes gleamed in triumph. "Oh, thank you," we gasped releasing our breath. We gave Mom a tight hug.

So, unable to disappoint us, Mom accepted living with this dog. We named her Chelsey. She was full of energy and would greet the family with a short series of squeaky yaps. Mom may not have liked Chelsey, but Chelsey simply adored her. She followed Mom everywhere, slept at her feet, and always welcomed her with a happy wagging tail and a warm kiss.

Chelsey continued to grow on Mom and each day became more and more special to the rest of the family. She made the perfect friend and was always there to listen and to comfort us.

Chelsey is now Mom's best friend. I think her tender heart and faithfulness touched my mom. She sleeps on her pillow and my mom will seldom go away for a night unless Chelsey can come too. If we go out to eat, Mom will always make sure we have something to take home to Chelsey; she's even ordered her a steak. Mom loves her with all of her heart. To Mom, Chelsey is no longer a threat and burden, but a member of our family.

*Megan Myers*  
Grade 9  
East Lyme High School  
East Lyme

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### Killer Instinct

The small kitten  
Rubs against my leg.  
Her soft,  
    fluffy,  
        cuddly  
Body gracefully leaps to the tabletop.  
Her round,  
    gleaming,  
        turquoise  
Eyes dance above  
Her small,  
    velvety,  
        pink  
Nose making way for  
Her beautiful,  
    delicate,  
        hidden  
Mouth which opens revealing



Her shimmering,  
                    deadly,  
                            white  
Fangs.

---

### Solitude

I am alone  
In the worst of ways  
Surrounded by acquaintances  
Engulfed in crowds  
Thrusting myself into animated conversation  
Forcing a saccharine smile, words of interest  
Answering "Fine, thanks," when asked how I'm feeling  
Although it's a lie  
And even though I'm surrounded  
I'm drowning in solitude  
Overflowing with emptiness  
Masking pain with bitter-sweet politeness  
Yearning only for someone  
To listen  
Care  
But there is no one  
So I go on smiling  
Laughing  
To keep  
From crying.

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### You Get to Talk on the Actual Radio

*If you don't listen to radio talk shows, you should because it gives you a chance to reassure yourself that a great number of people are much stupider than you are. Here's how these shows go:*

Host: Hello! This is "You Get to Talk on the Actual Radio," the show where you make the difference. I'm your host, Wilbur Spankle, going under the radio name Frank Castle because it sounds better. Today we are discussing President Clinton's health plan. What do you think about it? Let's go to the phones and find out. Hello, you're on the air.

Caller: Hello? Frank?

*Anna Spinner  
Grade 9  
Wilbur Cross High School  
New Haven*

*Michael Pfiffner  
Grade 9  
Granby Memorial High School  
Granby*

Host: This is Frank Castle, go ahead.

Caller: Am I on the radio?

Host: Yes, you are, go ahead.

Caller: Go ahead and talk?

Host: Yes, go right ahead and talk.

Caller: I'm so nervous!

Host: Don't be nervous. Go ahead and talk. Right now. Just talk.

Caller: Well, I just wanted to tell you what happened to my husband. He was riding the lawn tractor, which we just got at Sears — can I say Sears? — well, let's just say it was a major department store, and believe me the tractor wasn't cheap, and he was driving it near the kitchen window, and all of a sudden he crashed right through the septic tank, and the firemen had to come and get him out, and I spent three hours going over the tractor with Lysol — can I say Lysol — and it doesn't smell what you would call attractive, not to mention my husband, and I think that they should make those septic tanks stronger, because lots of people have lawn tractors, and —

Host: I certainly hear what you're saying. What do you think of President Clinton's health plan?

Caller: President Clinton's what?

Host: His health plan.

Caller: Well we really haven't been too involved in it, because we live in the suburbs, which is why we got the lawn tractor, but I had no idea our septic tank —

Host: Thanks for your views. Let's see if anyone else has something to say about the President's health plan. Hello, you're on the air.

Caller: Hello? David?

Host: No, this is Frank Castle, and you're on "You Get to Talk on the Actual Radio." What's on your mind?

Caller: What's on my mind is I'm trying to get a hold of David because I just found out that Denise —

Host: Excuse me, but this is a radio show, and there is no David here.

Caller: Well when he gets there you had better tell him that Denise found out what's been going on at the Michael Jackson Mansion. Someone sent her pictures of David, Loretta, Jake, and the chimps, and last I heard Denise was buying a gun, so he'd better —

Host: Okay, let's see if any of our other listeners have something to say about President Clinton's health plan. Hello, you're on the air.

Caller: Yeah, I'm calling about the lady with the septic tank. It just so happens I make septic tanks, and there is no way you could make one collapse with just a lawn tractor unless the guy riding it weighs about 6000 pounds. Why didn't you just ask her how much her husband weighs? I bet he's a real lard bucket. You see those guys out on their lawn tractors, flab hanging down to the ground, it makes you want to puke.

Host: Let's go to another caller. Hello, you're on the air.

Caller: Hello, I'd like to talk about the President's health plan.

Host: Thank God!

Caller: Well, it seems that people are being too quick to criticize the President's-  
*sound of lock being shot off with .357 magnum*

Caller: DENISE!

*more shots, screaming*

Host: Well, that's all the time we have, tune in tomorrow when we will discuss urban violence.

*\*click\**

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Charles Drimal  
Grade 10  
Brunswick School  
Greenwich

## Silent Snow, Secret Snow

*(A follow up to the short story,  
"Silent Snow, Secret Snow" by Conrad Aiken)*

He lay in bed  
eyes closed  
daydreaming  
thinking  
school? No,  
this is the land of perpetual snow  
snow soothingly and beautifully encroached and deepened  
beautiful varying dance of snow  
a transparent mirage  
the beauty was paralyzing  
a double life

In the irresistible new world lives ...  
the postman  
walking  
progressively nearer  
progressively louder  
the steps of the postman  
delicious progress  
the audible steps of the postman

An absurdly simple new world  
peculiarly beautiful  
almost palpable  
beyond all words  
all experiences  
all dreams  
yet the secret world must be preserved  
desirable to be revealed  
yet also desirable to be resolute  
something to be preciously concealed  
a trinket to be carried unmentioned in one's trouser pocket  
all this beautiful progress

And what has come over you, the postman?  
steps of the postman?  
progress of the postman?  
snow growing heavier each day  
muffling the world



hiding the ugly  
and deadening increasingly the steps of the postman  
they were softer  
they had a new secrecy about them  
they were muffled, indistinct  
while the rhythm was the same, it said a new thing  
it said peace  
it said remoteness  
it said cold  
it said sleep  
the inaudible steps of the postman.

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### Uncle David

My stomach convulses beneath my rib cage as I grip the bottom of my seat and secure my feet in front of me. We swerve through flooded back roads of southern Connecticut, going eighty miles per hour in my uncle's Supra. Uncle David turns toward me and raises an eyebrow. "You look nervous, Elonne." Diabetic hemorrhaging has robbed his eyes of the luster they once had, but they still sparkle with mischief. "I'm in control. A little weather won't bother us. Trust me. After all, I see all the cars and houses in double, how could I miss them?" he laughs, and the car hums a kind of baritone echo. I fail to see the humor in this and let out a low, pleading moan in the direction of the back seat where my cousin is calmly smiling, punching away at his Gameboy. I pray that my Uncle's old ears don't detect my fear; after all, his manhood is at issue here.

Uncle David takes his machismo very seriously. And somehow his sense of direction, his memory, and his daredevil driving are all he has left to prove the power that took the Saranac Lake Redskins all the way to State Finals back in '69. What started out as a brief errand for some firewood has turned into a quest for an obscure country store where my uncle remembers seeing bargain bundles of wood. That wood is his Holy Grail, and I know it; he won't go home without it.

"Five dollars for a few skinny twigs," he roars. "No way. I know where we can get a better buy." He runs his hand over the bowling ball head that years of insulin have plucked clean. I sigh, knowing my Uncle David, this wood could be anywhere from three dollars to twenty cents cheaper than the stuff we saw at Waldbaum's. I wonder how this scavenger hunt could have such power over him. The car skids around a wet curve, and Uncle David's bear paw hand grips the wheel. I suddenly realize that the space between his thumb and forefinger has shrunk, that the hand that once engulfed me in its center has shriveled; liver spots punctuate the veins that protrude from its arch. I find myself resisting the momentum of the speeding Supra, wondering if the

*Elonne Stockton  
Grade 10  
Choate-Rosemary Hall  
Wallingford*

accelerated aging process has prematurely atrophied his brain. Does this store with its mythic firewood exist at all? "Stop worrying, Elonne," he commands. "I learned to drive on roads like this, kid. Twenty-eight years ago. Papa needed some help on those long runs he made selling his toys up and down the Adirondack trails; I was maneuvering that truck around hairpin turns before my fourteenth birthday. You don't really think some anemic New England highway is going to challenge me, do you?"

The car shimmies as it hits a mud-hidden rut. I stare at my uncle's hunched shoulders, trying to find some way to ask him if he knows where the hell he's going, without arousing his wrath. Any doubtful words will only just send us deeper into the rainy landscape to prove his infallibility anyway. The intense eagerness in his bloodshot eyes assures me that whether or not this place exists, he'll find it. The tremors in his bony mitt shake the coffee cup he has gripped; globs of coffee - thickened with the sugar and heavy cream that he's been warned not to touch, but is unable to resist, spot his thick, greyed red beard. Wiping his mouth with his forearm, he reminds me of an aging Viking, and I can see his determination refortified. He will succeed.

Without so much as a turn-signal warning, the car veers suddenly, into an unpaved, dirt parking lot. We pull up in front of an old wooden farmhouse that has been renovated into a family store. Uncle David slowly, deliberately opens the car door and eases himself painfully out of his seat. He growls at us to stay put and inches his way to the brown door of the building, his straddling, labored walk wobbling ungracefully on feet that are numbed by their loss of circulation. Minutes later he returns to the car accompanied by a clerk toting several bundles of brittle wood. He is grinning, self-satisfied. There is renewed power in his hands as they set the car in motion once again.

We are now on our way home from our adventure. Uncle David watches the rain spill off his windshield, immersed in some distant thought. He never mentions how much he's saved today. I doubt he ever will.

*Cory-Ellen Nadel*  
*Grade 10*  
*Bloomfield High School*  
*Bloomfield*

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## Thunder, I Love You

Earlier today  
( 'bout 4:20),  
I fell asleep with the television on.  
    "Animaniacs" blared,  
        and I drowsed,  
'til the theme music for  
    "Batman: The Animated Series"  
        came on.  
I hate the Caped Crusader,  
    so I hoisted my tired  
        (of fighting the bigotry),



aching  
     (from the heart)  
 body  
     into my bedroom,  
 and crawled under my pale blue quilt.  
 I was exhausted,  
     but I couldn't sleep.  
     I was too busy thinking  
 'bout how my principal's a jerk,  
 'bout how I need a girlfriend.  
     I got so depressed,  
     I was about to cry,  
 when I felt a nose,  
 A small cat-nose  
     pushing against my back.  
 My cat-babe found her way  
     under the blue quilt,  
     over my fetus-curved body,  
     and into my arms.  
 With her wet, sandpaper tongue,  
     she washed away the tears not yet fallen.  
     Then she began to purr so loudly,  
         I remembered why I'd named her Thunder.  
 I matched my breathing to hers  
     (One breath of mine to two of hers),  
     And fell asleep  
         with my goddess in my arms.

---

## Grace

9:26 am

Spring settled into the pristine, well-cushioned chair next to his wife's stainless steel bed silently. It was the worst it had been, the doctor in the pastel blue shirt and wrinkled tie had told him this morning. She probably wouldn't ride out the day. Spring silently contemplated that and watched his sleeping wife and profoundly wished he was dead. It would be the longest almost-day of his life.

He had had a lot of bad days: when he was 17 his mother had blown out all the windows in her bedroom with Uncle Tom's .45 while screaming the Lord's Prayer. The police had come and strapped her to a stretcher and carried her out of the house, and Mrs. Bhagavali, that old Paki woman, had stood on her stoop and cried. And there was the day he got his first internship, with the Press, when the RUC had called to tell him that his little brother had been blown to bits in McGurk's pub. But this day was the worst.

*Tom Breen*  
*Grade 10*  
*Manchester High School*  
*Manchester*

He gazed into the bed at Madelyne and tried to remember when they had met. It had been in '68 at Burntollet Bridge. The Civil Rights march. A year later, they were married. He could vaguely recall all the times they had shared as he sat sipping his little paper cup full of bad hospital coffee and only tasting the paper. The time they had got their first flat, on old Cupar Street, how when his mother visited in the beginning she'd only eat dinner over the sink, how they'd had to use an old piano bench as a dinner table. That big old house out in the sticks of Roscommon, where Declan and Jack were born.

Spring was numb, but he thought about the kids at that moment. He had seen them both at their schools before driving to the hospital that day, telling them to go to the Daley's house after school because he was going to be with Maddie all day. He didn't say that they had seen their mother for the last time, although in his mind he could still see Jack and that other little kid in that sandbox, staring at him as he left, bewildered.

He was fixing his gaze on the thick, box-like plug that connected his dying wife's shiny, metal bed to the pastel wall; it was one of those little things that you notice when you're deep in thought with a crushing realization. Thick plugs, tiny perforations in ceilings, black scuff marks on linoleum, bright flowers on the table. What the hell were those flowers for, anyway? This was a room for the dead; they were cream pies and seltzer bottles at a funeral, laughter in a crypt.

So here he was, thinking about plugs and holes and feeling jealous of flowers when Maddie suddenly stirred and smiled up at him, radiant even in the slow wasteland of death. "Joe?"

"It's me, Maddie. It's Joe."

"Joe, shouldn't you be at work?"

"No. I'm here. I should be right here."

"I'm glad you're here, Joe."

"I'm glad you're here, too, Maddie."

Joe took her hand. He was by now used to this. She had been slipping in and out of consciousness all week, vainly trying to cling to life. They looked at each other and said nothing more, just smiled until Joe couldn't smile any more.

*6:17 pm*

Joe was feeling awful. The sun was still shining high in the bright May sky and he had had 13 cups of black coffee and paper. The kids would be at Bob Daley's right now, eating pizza from that new place that just opened, that Greek place. Christ, what would he tell them?

The nurse had just left after checking on him. There was no need to check on Maddie, the damn doctors had written her off weeks ago. She was just a name on an insurance check to them now. The nurse was young and cheerful and healthy and perfect and Joe hated her for it. Her name tag noisily declared "JennyLynn" like spit in Joe's eye. He supposed that it was a job requirement to be cheerful, but her manner was that of some jocular grave robber, perverting

the dignity and silence of the dead. He didn't want cheerful young nurses now; didn't want anything now. He heard Maddie stir. "Joe ..." her voice sounded so weak, an echo of the clarion tones he had heard at Burntollet Bridge, fifteen years ago. Joe hurriedly, fiercely, took her hand.

"I love you, Joe."

"I love you, too, Maddie."

"Joe ... I'm so hungry. I'd really like some lentil soup now."

"Lentil soup?" Joe, who hadn't cried the day the RUC had carted his crazy mother from the house, who hadn't cried the day his brother was splattered all over the Falls Road, was crying now, long and deep, like he had seen his father do the day Kennedy was shot.

"Lentil soup? Okay. Maddie, I love you."

"I love you, Joe. Hold onto me."

She died then, with Joe clutching her hand and trying and thinking about lentil soup and Kennedy and Burntollet Bridge just as JennyLynn came in with the doctor in the pastel blue shirt.

*6:45 pm*

Joe walked into the parking lot, striding towards the warm orange sunset of spring. He thought about the doctors and the kids and Maddie and he started to cry again, and he felt empty, hollow, dead inside. And as he stepped into Maddie's old brown Buick with the stick shift custom made for her, he finally knew exactly how his mother felt the day she sat on the bed and shot up the house, screaming the Lord's Prayer.

---

## A Culture of Convenience

Things take time. Is that so? Do you expect a society equipped with microwaves and one-hour photo labs to believe that? Sure, things do take time if you're into authenticity - if you like your butter churned and your cakes from scratch. But why would you? We have Betty Crocker, Uncle Ben, Chef Boyardee, and the Keebler Elves. Don't take it from me, just ask Roy Rogers, Wendy, or Arby. And if their responses don't satisfy you, let me refer you to a king by the name of Burger.

The entire consumer industry seems to cater to those "on the run." We have fast-food, express lunches, fax machines, and drive-through tellers. Speed is the mechanism of our society. We are spinning in a centrifuge of pace, with racing hearts, impatient minds, and scattered souls. Pulses race and eyes widen at the mention of phrases like, "guaranteed in less than five minutes," "speedy delivery," and "for your convenience." We're a people driven by deadlines, but irritated when we must stand in a line.

Think of how many times you hear someone say they will "grab something." The phrase itself gives the impression of an aggressive culture

*Noreen Nilan  
Grade 11  
Pomperaug High School  
Southbury*



with a warped conception of a "square meal." We have snack-packs, instants, ready-to-eats, just add waters, and minis. Slow-cooked is anything that isn't microwaved. The "hostess" with whom we are most familiar serves Twinkies and Ring-Dings at the check-out counter. "7-11" is no longer exclusively a mathematical expression. And old McDonald no longer has a farm, but now owns a fast-food chain.

A society accustomed to drive-through restaurants and next-day delivery is sure to be irritated by any disturbance of its efforts to conserve time. Living in a time-conscious society results in the demise of the thought process, often neglected for the sake of speed. "We don't know, We don't have time right now," as we bustle into the office, giant size 7-Eleven coffee in hand, and the powdered-sugar remnants of a jelly doughnut speckling our sleeve; we head straight for the fax machine for some stimulating conversation. Just as a square meal literally comes in a box, intellectual discussion is communicated by memo. We no longer have the time to ponder such questions as "Which originated first, the chicken or the egg?" And we don't particularly care, as long as our chicken is crispy-fried and the egg comes on a McMuffin.

*Uchenna Richards*  
*Grade 11*  
*Bloomfield High School*  
*Bloomfield*

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### Just Say Mercy And I'll Let Go

*Tell me* you appreciate my midnight calls,  
in my dark room,  
blinds shut,  
and muffled voices.

*Tell me* you appreciate my ditching church,  
and instead of worshipping God,  
climb into your rainy-day gray pickup truck  
and worship you.

When I cry,  
you take the wetness from my face,  
but  
*tell me.*

What do you do with your hand afterwards,  
moistened by my salty tears?

Do you simply  
wipe them on your dark blue  
Bugle Boys  
and pretend you never did it?

When I laugh,  
you laugh with me,  
but how do I know  
you're not laughing at me



for believing your lies,  
your lust,  
your love?  
When I'm angry,  
you absorb my frustrations,  
but *tell me*,  
in the back of your mind,  
do you secretly wish you were watching football,  
listening to music,  
or talking to her?  
How will I ever know?  
You picked me to play your games  
because you knew I didn't know the rules.  
*Tell me* you like my new hairstyle,  
it brings out my eyes *or something ...*  
*Tell me* you don't love me anymore  
so I can put an eviction notice  
on the door of the room you took in my heart  
and *kick you out*.  
You never paid the rent anyway.

---

### New Awakening

Temptation warms this frightened blood.  
Test the waters,  
blue and shallow,  
for now.  
My feet tingle,  
pulse points in this frigid pool  
of smiles and laughter  
frozen and surreal,  
resembling my dreams  
like mirrors reflecting  
in limpid ponds,  
too deep to show  
what lies  
at the bottom.  
Picasso's blue stillness —  
a silent echo  
of my vibrant song.  
The waves rushing,  
then calming.

*Rebecca Kaufman*  
Grade 11  
Brookfield High School  
Brookfield

Mingling with cerulean setting.  
How do your waters run?  
Prodigal eyes wander to the creek.  
What stares back?  
Eyes see the enigma,  
yearn to discern.  
Yellow to aqua — and I jump,  
rather fall,  
expectancies dance upon my brow.  
I breathe my naked air.  
My destination holds none for me.  
But I risk,  
and I tip  
to find reality  
in a river of imagination.  
Let this fall be my medium.

---

*Albert Kim*  
*Grade 11*  
*Glastonbury High School*  
*Glastonbury*

### The Taxi

It charged toward him, snarling through its jagged grille. He froze on the white crosswalk. Its horn barked at him. Water drooled off its metal chin. He saw its headlights glare at him — suddenly his eyes were flooded with whiteness ... he heard rain slapping against pavement, felt tall people shoving past him with shopping bags and briefcases ... tall people bustling by in wet raincoats, shadowy umbrellas held high ... footsteps sloshing everywhere ... looming above, dark steel skyscrapers, brilliant signs ... deep rumble underground, hot air blasted up through slick metal gratings ... stench of gasoline on wet asphalt ... squeaky hot dog cart rolling by ... loud voices passing overhead, jabbering ... steam hissing from manholes ... brakes screeching, sirens wailing ... cars tearing past, honking, radios blaring ... sheets of water thrown into the air ... wet tires a blur ... lights, red, green, white, flashing, whirling ... water falling ... colors spinning ... pinwheel ... DANGER ...

A hand clamped his and yanked him onto the sidewalk. The taxi roared by. It splashed gray water over his raincoat. His parents' scolding voices sounded far away as he watched it barrel down the street. Its rear lights glowered at him with a red gleam before it disappeared into the traffic.

---



Dennis A. Carlson

Ask not

Old Glory hangs limp against the battered gray sky;  
pelted on all sides by rain. Stars and Stripes cling  
together protruding only slightly from the weather worn  
pole.

what your country can do for you

There the three stand.  
Six haunted eyes staring blindly into hell.  
The rain brings them to life, matting their foreheads with  
sweat, rolling slowly down their cheeks, hanging in  
hesitating droplets on the tips of their chins.

but what you can do

The black granite face slowly emerges from the earth,  
reaches its peak, and then inevitably returns. 58,020  
scars hide its once unblemished complexion.  
My reflection draws me closer, draws me inward.  
Was it worth it, Bruce?  
Did it hurt much, Mark?  
Tell me the truth, Mr. Dennis A. Carlson.  
"Ashes, Ashes, we all fall down."

for your country.

Eighteen years old and scared as hell, Running...  
The plane from Dulles brings me back to life.  
I am not smiling.  
I am not crying.  
I realize my name could be Dennis A. Carlson.

---

*Edward Gannon*

*Grade 12*

*Coginchaug Regional High School*

*Durham*

*Catherine Cugell*  
Grade 12  
Daniel Hand High School  
Madison

### Real Bargain

She sat on the porch in her pajamas,  
With her feet dangling over the railing,  
So only her toes were caught out of the shadows.  
Billy Joel sang out of the window,  
And she belted along, tapping her  
Foot, and the steel guardrail  
Vibrated with the beat.  
In her left hand she held a bottle of  
Soap bubbles, the 49 cent variety,  
And with her right hand she dipped the  
Yellow plastic wand,  
And blew the film into spheres that caught the light of the moon.  
Dip and blow,  
Dip and blow,  
Dip and blow.  
The bubbles floated off  
Like momentary crystal balls,  
Catching up all her fear,  
Only to burst high up over someone else,  
Raining her emptiness down on him,  
So somewhere, someone could share her pain.  
Not bad for a quarter,  
Two dimes,  
And four pennies.

---

*Betsy Reynolds*  
Grade 12  
Ledyard High School  
Ledyard

### February Hates Me

In gray dim daylight of my room after school, where the clock  
ticked my headache, clothes strewn over the floor, I did  
not want even to stand up.

Or in the car on the way to work my hands wrapped round the  
wheel, strapped round the wheel, wondering casually if I  
might crash before the heat came up. And I shied away  
from sad radio songs.

Or in the morning, even before winter rays stung the paint  
peeled side of my house, wide-eyed in bed with hot toes  
and cold hands, pretending and wishing I were asleep, I  
waited for the alarm clock to sound.

Always and alone I thought of you. And of your hand returning to mine after shifting gears in the little blue car. Always and alone I waited for your hand to return to mine after we shifted gears. Where were you?

When I smiled. When I laughed. When summer sailing was good with an ocean salt breeze that blew across our hot sun-tinged cheeks. When weeping willows in a Westerly park hosted fireflies and families with wicker bread and butter baskets and gingham blankets, whispering to their children while Shakespeare unfolded on the green. That's where you were. That's where your hand returned to mine.

But February hates me and leaves me alone. In an empty house with cold drizzle drips off the gutters outside. Without even hunger to satisfy. At night my mother hugged my skin and bones. Over and over her hand held mine. Over and over I cried for yours that didn't.

February '93 had twenty-eight days. Only twenty-eight. And eventually, not an insignificant eventually, but after a long, grueling, and uncertain eventually, I looked for March with tunnel vision.

Recovering from February like a child who finally stands again in the surf, gasping and heaving, only to face the next crashing wave, your hand returning to mine, a February of twenty-nine days.

---

## Personal Essays

The golden armor of a lone paladin gleamed wickedly bright in the light of the setting sun. He stood poised to enter the domain of the most dreaded, the most terribly fearful beast ever to stalk the dark forests of his land. The villagers and peasants called it the "Personal Essay." Coal-gray smoke drifted in lazy wisps from the mouth of the cave in which the beast was said to dwell. The sun-bleached bones of those who had gone before the valiant knight lay scattered and broken among the rocks. Here and there a shattered and twisted piece of failed armor gleamed dully amongst the boulders. Despite the failures of his predecessors the knight was confident, almost cocky. He had talked to other warriors who had fought similar dread beasts and felt sure he knew all the stratagems and tricks that the monster was sure to use against him; "Write an

*Andrew McCormack*  
*Grade 12*  
*Loomis Chaffee School*  
*Windsor*



essay about an issue that has affected you personally using an A-B-C format, and oh, be creative." Yes, this knight had heard them all and standing there in front of the cave he felt ready to subdue the beast and bend it to his will.

Ceasing his speculations the knight strode boldly into the cavern to meet his destiny. Down, down into the earth he went, easily defeating obstacles such as bad ideas, lack of time, and the burnt-out husk of his brain that threatened to block his path. Having surpassed all other challenges, he stood before the final entrance to the lair of the monster. The stalwart knight had prepared himself well. He was armored with years of painful grammar lessons and a command of diction that had been hammered out at one of the greatest forges in his world. He wielded a sword made of what natural wit he could afford that had been honed to a razor's edge through three years of prep school English. Bracing himself for the final deciding confrontation he entered its lair.

The infamous beast was not impressive at first sight. It was actually deceptively small and had scales that radiated with a pale orange sheen. It was perched on top of a small hill made of the bones of its victims. Behind the beast lay a mountain of treasure. As the knight entered the cavern the wicked Essay slowly lifted its terrible head and smiled with a mouth full of gleaming, dagger-like teeth. With a flick of its tail and a flap of its wings it rose up into the air above him and said, "So another silly man has come to test me ... fool, you shall perish like all the others!" Bracing himself against the beast's onslaught, the brave paladin brandished his sword and cried out, "Do your worst vile fiend!" Chilling laughter from the Essay echoed off the walls of the cavern, and it glared at the knight with glowing yellow eyes and said, "**Write a gripping personal story,**" in a voice that would have made Lancelot soil his chain mail. Rocked by this unexpected blow the knight tried desperately to counter with a treasured experience but the beast knocked him aside like an annoying insect. Shaken but unfazed, our hero countered by attempting to connect to totally unrelated topics but the beast merely laughed as the knight's attacks failed to penetrate its scaly hide. In a flash of scales, teeth, and talons the beast swooped down upon him. Horribly wounded, the knight lay on the floor of the cave as the wicked fiend moved to finish him off. Facing almost certain death, the champion made one last ditch attack with a parody. Suddenly, the beast's eyes grew wide and it uttered a terrible cry then fell to the ground, stricken. Slowly, the wounded knight rose from the floor of the cavern and dragged himself over to the spot where the fallen Essay lay. Its eyes still glowed slightly and he couldn't tell if it was dead. Having no other option the knight waited to see if he was triumphant.

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## Honorable Mention

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