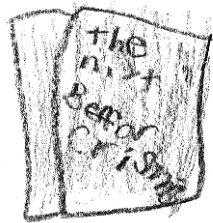


Connecticut Student Writers



Rachel
How to
Read a
Bookk.

1. You need
to use your
stradage.

2. If you
do you can
read the
author and
vastratr.

3. You
read the
title.

4. Then
you tron the
page

5. Then
you **READ!**

Rachel Flaherty, Grade 1, North Street School, Windsor Locks

Volume XVII, May 2005

Connecticut Student Writers

A publication sponsored by
the Connecticut Writing Project at Storrs
and the Aetna Endowment



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FOREWORD

Each year, a team of volunteer readers gathers to review the many submissions sent to *Connecticut Student Writers*. We never fail to find writing that surprises and moves us. The pieces published this year are no different. In the following pages, students from across the state write about themselves, their memories, their disappointments, and their dreams. They write to discover and understand, and they write to share their inner worlds.

Included here are the best of the nearly 1,000 entries received this year. The Connecticut Writing Project invites you to step into the lives of students to share their smiles and laughter, their grief and joy.

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Connecticut Student Writers

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My Family

This is a story about my family: my dad Markell, my mom Laurie, my brother Khalil, and my dog Theodore. My family is special because we like to play games together. We like to go to Walmart. This is my mom's favorite shopping place. I help my mom cook. We make chicken and rice. I walk my dog Theodore around the yard. My dad is funny. When he sings he makes me laugh. My brother and I like to play at the neighbors. I love my family.

Ice Cream

Ice Cream is my favorite treat
Yummy chocolate is so sweet
Jimmies are my favorite topping
I always eat it without stopping.

Unlikely Friends

A spider was spinning his web. When he was almost done, a turtle walked by.

Just then, the spider yelled, "Stop!"

The turtle stopped and looked behind him. "Who said that?"

"Me."

"Where are you?"

"Down here."

The turtle saw the spider.

"Hi. Who are you?"

"I am a spider and my name is Silk."

"Hi, Silk. My name is Hardtop."

"Hi, Hardtop."

The rest of the afternoon, Silk and Hardtop played together. When their time was almost up, Hardtop said, "Should we be friends, Silk?"

"Sure," said Silk.

Just then Silk's parents called, "Silk, it's time to finish your web, and after that it is dinner time."

"Bye, Hardtop," said Silk.

Just then, Hardtop's parents yelled, "Hardtop, time for dinner."

"Bye, Silk," said Hardtop.

From then on, the two friends played the rest of the afternoons and lived happily ever after.

Jaida

Davis

Kindergarten

Scotland

Elementary

School

Scotland

Jordyn

Gattuso

Kindergarten

Phillip Smith

Elementary

School

South Windsor

Eric

Guldan

Kindergarten

Bethlehem

Elementary

School

Bethlehem

**Jordyn
Mihok**
Kindergarten
Scotland
Elementary
School
Scotland

Wild Horses

This is a story about two wild horses, Spirit and Winny. Spirit looked like a stallion. He was white and brown with a black mane. Winny was a yellow horse with a white mane.

They both lived on a farm. One night the fence was broken, and the horses went free.

They saw a group of wild horses. They realized they were lost. They were lost for a long time and couldn't find their way back to the farm.

Soon their mom and dad came and found them.

**Emma
O'Connor**
Kindergarten
Scotland
Elementary
School
Scotland

My Tiger Cat

My cat's name is O'Malley. He is grey and black. O'Malley likes to eat a lot. Sometimes he sleeps with me on the floor. O'Malley likes to roll around in the dirt. O'Malley used to play with Duchess my other cat. I love my cat O'Malley.

**Christina
Sordi**
Kindergarten
Bethlehem
Elementary
School
Bethlehem

The PB&J Story

Once upon a time there was a girl and a boy that were hungry. Their mom served them a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

Like always, the peanut butter and jelly sandwich came alive. The girl and the boy asked PB&J, "Hey, where are we going today?" "You'll see," the PB&J said.

The PB&J with the girl and boy went up the rainbow and down the other side into a pumpkin patch.

The PB&J let the girl and boy take a pumpkin home. And then they went back up the rainbow and down the other side back home.

When their mom came in, she asked, "Where did you two get that big pumpkin?"

The boy and girl just looked at each other and laughed.

Mr. Morrissey's Christmas

One hot sunny day I saw a man all alone planting. "Mom, what is that man's name?" I asked. "Mr. Morrissey," she said. I thought that he looked awfully lonely. The next day I saw him with a lonely face on.

"Mom, do you think it would be a good idea if I brought my whole Brownie Troop to his house to sing Christmas carols?" I said. "Yes," said my Mom.

That night I lay in my bed and wrote a note to my Brownie leader. I thought of what I would say to the girls in my Brownie troop. I felt a little nervous inside. Would they even like my idea? Crumble, crumble. I kept making mistakes. "I'm out of ideas of what to write," I said. The only idea was: "I know a man that is very lonely, so I thought we could go to his house and sing Christmas carols!"

Finally, the day after school in a house, our Brownie leader said, "Does anybody have a caring idea?" I *slowly* raised my hand . . .

"We could go to a man's house that I know and sing Christmas carols to him," I said. "That's a GREAT idea!" My Brownie leader said. Soon the meeting was over, and I told my Mom that I told everybody my idea.

Then it was Christmas Eve!

Everybody was all ready. We got our Brownie suits on. We marched up to his door and knocked. He opened the door and . . .

He said, "What, am I arrested?" "No!" I said. I quietly went, "1,2,3 . . ." and we sang, "Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way, oh what fun it is to ride in a one horse open sleigh, hey!!"

"Have a JOLLY Christmas!!!" he said. At the end I felt proud of myself!

And that is my tale of Mr. Morrissey.

The End

Spent Money

Dedicated to my baby brother and my Mom

One time, a long time ago, all the people in Jamaica had a lot of money.

Then all of the people in Jamaica spent all of their money. I was the only one who had a lot of money. I had more money than my brother!

Four or six of the Jamaican people spent their money on a mansion.

Ten or fourteen of the Jamaican people spent their money on a job. Thirteen or six Jamaicans spent their money on a wife and child.

I spent all of my money on an education.

The End

**Nell
Carpenter**
Grade 1
Osborn Hill
Elementary
School
Fairfield

**Jordan
Davis**
Grade 1
J.P. Vincent
School
Bloomfield

**Molly
Fasano**
Grade 1
Melissa Jones
School
Guilford

I Love Sitting in Bed Tickling Your Ears Poppy

When I came over to sleep over at your house, in the morning I could come
in and tickle your ears.

You would laugh.

It was fun to tickle your ears Poppy.

And in the middle of the night you could come and check on me so I
would not be cold because you did not like kids to be cold in the night.

You wanted all your grandchildren to have blankets on so they would
not be cold.

I would never be cold when I came to sleep over at your house Poppy.

I liked to help Grammy give you your breakfast in the morning.

I would say to you “take one pill at a time Poppy.”

I know how fun it is to sing songs.

I even like to sing songs Poppy.

I liked to help Grammy do the laundry when you were sleeping Poppy.

I would remember to be quiet when you were sleeping.

I remember last year when you were in the hospital, I gave you my
blanket, and it helped you get better.

This year I gave you my blanket.

It helped for one day.

I will miss you Poppy.

I will miss the times when I came in the morning and tickled your ears.

I know you like bananas because they have no bones Poppy.

I know you like New York in June Poppy.

I know how much you loved me Poppy.

**Rachel
Flaherty**
Grade 1
North Street
School
Windsor Locks

How to Read a Book

1. You need to use your strategy.
2. If you do, you can read the author and illustrator.
3. You read the title.
4. Then you turn the page.
5. Then you read!

Halloween

It was Halloween. I was picking out my costume. It was Pocahontas.
My mom was a witch.
We stepped outside. We felt the cold air. And then . . .
We saw a boy ghost. He said, "Boo!" That didn't scare me.
We came to the first house. "Trick or treat," I said. The lady at the door had a tall black hat. She had fangs. The lady got candy.
I dumped the candy out when I got home. I ate one. It tasted good.
The night after Halloween, I laid in bed. It was spooky. I heard a thump, thump, thump, and then . . .
BOO! A ghost jumped out. I yelled!
It was only a dream.

A Pumpkin That Grew Big

Dedicated to the children in Room 5

One fall day I had a little pumpkin. Suddenly it turned big. It broke down my house.
I will call the repairman to fix my house. Then it will be fixed.
Then I will grow more pumpkins.

The End

Jackson's Mom

My friend Jackson's mom died from cancer.
He was very sad and he cried for days. He cried because it was his mom and he loved her a lot.
When Jackson came to school, he told our class that his mom died. He was so sad that he walked with his head down and he didn't smile.
As his friend I cheered him up. I played with him a lot. We played tag and Shark Attack. I know Jackson liked when I played with him because he smiled.
Sometimes Jackson still gets sad, but most of the time he laughs at my jokes and smiles.
I hope no more people die in Jackson's family but they might, and if they do I'll be there to cheer him up.

**Lydia
Hammond**
Grade 1
Osborn Hill
Elementary
School
Fairfield

**Elijah
Paige**
Grade 1
J.P. Vincent
School
Bloomfield

**Jared
Carlson**
Grade 2
John B. Sliney
School
Branford

**Daniel
Kogstad**
Grade 2
Coleytown
Elementary
School
Westport

Horrible News

The bus came to a big halt. I jumped out of the school bus. It's summer break! It was a bright, hot summer day. I kicked through the front door roaring as loud as a male lion, "HI MOM!" I screamed. "HI HONEY," my mom yelled. "I need to talk to you," my mom whispered. "Yes," I breathed." She looked worried as if I would be sad. "We're going to move to Connecticut," she sadly whispered. "But . . . but why?" I muttered with a little tear down my cheek. I was speechless after that. I held off my tears for a few minutes though. Then at the speed of light I ran up to my room bursting! Exploding in tears, I pushed my head in the bed screaming at the top of my lungs. I tore up my bed. I felt as sad as losing my parents. All the snot in my nose clogged up. All the tears in my eyes stung. I felt horrible. I tried thinking on the bright side, but it was no use. I was inhaling and exhaling so fast that I could barely breathe. My mom rushed up the stairs and sat down with me. She tried to calm me down. But it didn't work. She now calmed me down by saying, "shhh it is going to be all right" and patting me on the back. I then felt a little better. I thought to myself, it's paradise where I am now. I will think the people will be a lot different. I thought Connecticut will be a disaster. I wish I was a happy twinkling star, but unfortunately I'm miserable. Next I was a little bit better but still very sad. My heart was broken. "Now that I'm older and have more friends, it's a million times harder," I sadly thought. It will be a terrible thing that I have to do. It's like a horrible nightmare. I should be happy to have an opportunity to move. But I'm not. Last, I knew that I had to move. Well, I'm going to move and that's that. I went to my room and hoped that I'll love Connecticut and make new friends.

**Rachel
Irizarry**
Grade 2
Dr. Martin
Luther King Jr.
School
Hartford

The Scary Camping Trip

One morning I woke up and realized that today is the big camping trip! That morning we went to the woods. When we got to the woods, I could not believe my eyes: the woods looked so beautiful! I quickly rushed to help put up the tents. Later that day we went on a hike. We found an owl. That night we ate marshmallows. My mom told me to go to bed. So I went into my tent.

I really didn't go to bed. I was playing in my tent. Suddenly I started to hear strange noises. I saw creepy shadows. I got really scared, so I ran into my mom's tent. I told my mom I saw creepy shadows. She said, it is probably in your imagination.

Then we both heard EEK! EEK!! EEK!!! My mom and I went outside. We both saw a huge flying monster hanging from a tree.

We got my bat from my tent and crept up to the tree. I swung my bat really hard. The big flying monster flew away before I got the chance to hit it.

He flew into my mom's tent! We ran after him! We swung my bat many times. But instead of hitting the monster, we hit all of the things in the tent! The monster flew everywhere! We stayed up all night trying to hit the monster! We chased the monster out of the tent.

When we got outside, we saw that the monster was really a bat so we got to go hiking again. But right now I wanted to go to sleep! I thought to myself so all this time it was a bat! And I never got scared of monsters in the woods that don't exist again.

The End

Light Bulbs

Light bulbs
go off in our mind.
Light bulbs
nicknames for ideas.
Light bulbs.

**Nicole
Mason**
Grade 2
Guilford Lakes
Elementary
School
Guilford

Jump!

Zoom! First I raced to the uneven bars like a speeding bullet. I felt so excited my face was as red as an apple because I could not wait to do pullovers and stuff like that. I sat down on the blue mat. The blue mat wrinkled my leotard, the big lights beamed on me like little suns. I could see all the girls do their mess ups. What if I mess up like them? I thought, would I be able to do it perfectly? Oh my gosh! I want to be perfect but would I be? Or would I fail? In the mirror I could see myself. What if I mess up? What if all the girls laugh at me? Then the teacher announced that this is what you are going to do: "You're going to do a pullover, three casts, summersault and jump down."

Next as I walked to the bar, I felt scared; I closed my eyes. I was so nervous and I knew I could not do it. My skin quivered nervously. Jump! My hands gripped the bar really tightly. As I tumbled over the bar, I turned upside down and lifted my hips off the uneven bars. The bars were as tan as the beach sand. I talked in my head.

The voice in my head said, "Don't be scared. I know that you can do it." After I got off the bars, I sloped down on the blue mat, my eyes glued to the girl on the bar. Last, she did hers perfectly. I knew that mine was good, too, because I tried my best. I could not wait for my turn again. I wanted to do my next one perfectly.

As I waited patiently, I heard another voice in my head say, "Your routine will be perfect," and it was.

**Caroline
Shaffer**
Grade 2
Coleytown
Elementary
School
Westport

**Katherine
Stoll**
Grade 2
Roaring Brook
School
Avon

The Mystical Red Book

Far back in a cold but bright sunny forest where all the animals played was a little cabin. Inside lived a little girl named Stephanie (me). I woke up one snowy morning excited that it was almost Christmas. I rushed downstairs and noticed a shiny pink box. “Who is it for?” I wondered. Curious, I tiptoed toward the box to discover its owner.

I was about to turn away when I noticed a small tag. It said, “Dear Stephanie, I know you might think this is an odd gift, but open it up and you will be in a different land,” signed Unknown. My mouth was wide open. I opened the box and found that the gift really was quite odd. It was a dusty old red book.

I opened the book and saw pictures of the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower*. But in the blink of an eye I was suddenly wearing damp and dirty clothes. For a long time I could not speak. I listened closely to the sound of crashing waves and the captain screaming at people. It was hard to stand without stumbling or falling down.

Then it was time for dinner. The food tasted like rubber, even though it was a small biscuit. Walking upstairs to see where I was, the captain came right at me, screaming “What do you want?” I startled with fear and could not answer. He glared at me for a moment and then stormed away.

When I went to sleep, it was not like anything at my usual home. The ship rocked back and forth all day and night. There were no beds and I got very squished. I had to sleep on the hard, damp, and dirty floor. The food I received for supper was terribly cold because there were no stoves or ovens to heat it. I wore the same old, faded, raggedy, clothes for one whole week! I didn’t exactly mind about that or anything else except for the captain. With his scruffy red beard and cold eyes, he scared me more than anything else.

After that week, I did start to miss my REAL home, but how would I get home? The red book, I remembered! I searched all over the ship looking for the old, special book knowing that the book must have made the journey with me. After searching the boat almost ten times, I was still unable to find it. I asked the pilgrims if they had seen the book but had the same answer, “NO!” Then I searched the boat one last time and noticed a big door. It had the word “CAPTAIN” carved in it. I did know that he would get very upset if I went in. But it was the only place on the ship I had not searched. So I slowly twisted the hard brass knob. Squeek! Screech! The hinges echoed as I pushed the door open. I frantically started searching all over the room, and it was time to go to bed. But I was not aware because I was too focused on finding my red book.

Suddenly, the boat stopped moving and jolted me toward the bed just in time for me to find my book peaking out from between the mattresses. The book was still open to the same page I had left it. All of a sudden I heard the stomping of feet, and I knew it was the captain’s shiny black, leather boots. Quickly I closed my red book and scurried out the door with the book at my side.

My red book was now closed, and in a blink of an eye, I was back sleeping in my comfy bed. It was an interesting journey, but I've decided not to open my red book unless I really DO want to leave home!

White

White is the mother color of snow
As all Northern children know.
Clean and crisp
An angel's silent whisper.

Moon is white on a clear winter night.
And the candy-cane without its stripe.
Moths' wings,
Diamond rings.
And an angel dancing in the snow.

Marshmallows floating on a sea of chocolate,
A polar bear's fur,
Clouds of tissues,
Chalk, daisies
And the puff at the end of Santa's hat.

My Dumb Glasses

"Time for breakfast Molly!" shouted Mother.

Molly is my name. I am eight years old. I have to go to third grade. "I hate school," I said as I went downstairs to eat my breakfast.

"Molly, why are you so grouchy every morning?" asked Mother. "Yah, why?" said my little sister, Lauren.

Her favorite word is *why*. I turned to the stove. (I thought it was Lauren) I said, "Shut up," to the stove. Lauren giggled. I sat down to eat my cereal, but I was so tired that I shoved my face in the bowl instead. Too bad for me, because I missed the bowl and banged my head on the table.

"Ouch," I said.

Lauren said, "I didn't do it," right away because she usually does it.

"Oh look, there's the bus Molly," said Mother.

"I don't have to go to school, because mommy likes me better," said Lauren.

**Nicole
Dolby**
Grade 3
East School
New Canaan

**Lauren
Fusek**
Grade 3
East School
New Canaan

“No, Lauren, I am going to make you go to school. You’re just not old enough yet,” said Mother.

“Poop,” said Lauren. “School isn’t that bad,” said Mother.

“No, I mean I made a poopy,” said Lauren.

“Oh no,” said Mother

Well anyway, I was riding the bus. Then this kid got on. He was fat. I call him Fatty Fred.

“Hey Molly, you’re sitting in my seat, give me your lunch money,” said Fatty Fred.

“No!” I screamed in his face.

“Ok,” said Fatty Fred, “I’ll just have to do it myself.”

So, he picked me up and shook me until my lunch money dropped on the floor. Then he plopped me back in my seat.

I went to sit where my friend was sitting, but I didn’t see the seat, so I fell right on the floor. Everybody laughed. I was really embarrassed.

Finally, I arrived at school. I went up the stairs to my classroom. My teacher’s name is Mrs. Underpaid. Mrs. Underpaid said, “We have to take a test and if anybody talks, no recess for the rest of the year.” Everybody shut their mouths immediately. Mrs. Underpaid wrote some words on the boards to tell us what to do. I tried to read the words, but I couldn’t. I squinted my eyes. I looked this way, then that way, but I still couldn’t see the words.

I went to Mrs. Underpaid and said quietly, “I can’t see what you wrote on the board.” “That’s odd, do you have a headache?” said Mrs. Underpaid.

“No,” I said.

“Why don’t you go down to the nurse? She’ll see what’s wrong with you,” said Mrs. Underpaid.

I went down to Mrs. Makeyouwell’s office. That is the nurse’s name.

“Molly,” said Mrs. Makeyouwell, “you can only see the first two rows on the chart. “I am going to call your mom to have her schedule an appointment with the eye doctor,” said Mr. Makeyouwell.

“NOOOOO,” I said. “I hate that nurse,” I said, as I walked down to my classroom.

I told Mrs. Underpaid what had happened, and she was shocked. I asked her very politely, “Please, could you not take away recess for the rest of the year,” I asked.

“Of course not, you couldn’t see,” said Mrs. Underpaid. Then she took me over to my desk and told me what to do.

After that, I went home and tripped on the front porch and landed on my chin.

“Hello Molly, how was your day”? asked Mother.

“HORRIBLE!” I screamed.

“Molly, I scheduled an appointment with the eye doctor,” said Mother. “We have to go right now.”

“NOOOOO” I screamed.

“NOOOOOO,” Lauren said. Lauren kept saying “NO” the whole ride to the eye doctor, because she thinks the people that work there are evil.

We got to the eye doctor. The person that was examining my eyes was Mr. Eye.

“Hey, you have glasses. They look funny on you. Are you a clown?” said Lauren.

“Lauren, shush, it’s not polite,” said Mother.

“Come on in,” he said in a grouchy voice.

“Hmrrrrrr. It appears that you are nearsighted. You’re going to need to get glasses,” said Mr. Eye.

“NOOOOO,” I screamed.

“Ok, this is boring saying ‘NO’ and ‘NO’ all over again,” said Lauren.

“None of my friends have dumb glasses,” I said. Then I walked out the door and into the car.

“Molly,” said Mother in a tone of voice when they feel sorry for their child.

I locked the car doors so nobody could get in.

“Hey, look at Mr. Eye, he put his pencil in his glasses. Are you sure you’re not a clown?” asked Lauren. Mr. Eye didn’t answer.

“Answer my question,” demanded Lauren. Mother picked Lauren up and ran out of the room.

“You cannot tell people what they look like. Ok?” said Mother.

“Ok, but can I tell they look like clowns?” said Lauren.

“NO,” said Mother.

Lauren and Mother walked out and went up to the car and said, “The door is locked. Please open up.”

I pretended that I didn’t hear them.

Mother said, “I am going to punish you, if you don’t open the door.”

So, I let them in. Lauren and Mother did not talk almost the whole way to the eye glass store. Then Lauren said, “Mr. Eye put his pencil in his . . .”

“Shush, Lauren. I don’t think Molly would like to talk about glasses right now,” said Mother.

“Ok,” said Lauren.

We got to the store and went inside. “Hello, I am Ms. Low. “Can I help you?”

“Yes, Molly needs to be fitted with some glasses,” replied Mother.

“Come right here,” said Low. I tried almost all the pairs on, and then found the perfect one for me.

Ms. Low said, “Come by our store in two weeks and we’ll have your glasses ready for you.”

“Thank you so much,” said Mother.

“Mr. Low, those shoes look ugly on you,” said Lauren.

“I am a Ms. and I’m getting new shoes tomorrow,” said Ms. Low in a snotty voice.

“Oh,” said Lauren.

Mother took Lauren out of the room and said, “If you talk about how a person looks one more time, up to your room when we get home.”

We went back into the car, and Mother said, “Maybe you’ll get used to your new glasses.”

“No, I won’t, and I’ll look ugly in them,” I said. “Yes, you will,” said Lauren.

“Lauren, remember,” said Mother.

“Sorry,” said Lauren.

Finally, we got home and I went up to my room. Five days went by. Then, a week. Two more days went by.

“Time to pick up Molly’s new glasses,” said Lauren. Then, she started pointing at me and laughing. I squeezed Lauren’s finger.

“Mom can you pick up my glasses, and I’ll stay home,” I said.

“Well, ok. Only if you promise to take care of Lauren,” said Mother.

“I promise,” I said.

Then, Mother got into the car and drove away. The second she drove away Lauren started screaming and kicking for attention. I ran upstairs and went into my room. I also locked the door so Lauren could not get in.

Then, she started banging on the door really loudly. I turned on music and forgot about Lauren banging on the door. Then, I heard a car come into our driveway.

“Oh, great mom is home with my dumb glasses,” I said sarcastically. I opened my door and the door smacked Lauren on the floor. Then I ran downstairs.

“Guess what Molly, they changed the picture on your frames to be coconut trees on the beach,” said Mother.

“Oh, they look so wonderful,” I said.

“No fair. I want glasses too,” said Lauren. Then, Lauren got an idea. “Mom, I can’t see you on the couch,” said Lauren.

“Lauren, stop faking that you need glasses,” said Mother.

“How did you know I was faking?” said Lauren. Mother shook her head. Then, I tried my glasses on.

“Wow! I can see,” I said.

Lauren started crying, because she didn’t have glasses.

Mother went over to Lauren and said, “You don’t want glasses. Glasses are stinky.” Mother winked at me.

Lauren stopped crying and said, “You are right. I don’t want dumb glasses.” Then, the bus came. “Good-bye glasses head,” said Lauren.

I got on the bus and guess what, Fatty Fred didn’t bother me because he thought I was someone else.

“I’ll find you Molly even it if takes all day,” said Fatty Fred.

I got off the bus and into my classroom.

Everybody crowded around me saying, “I love your glasses” and “I want glasses.”

Then Mrs. Underpaid was handing out test scores. I looked at mine and it was 100. I put my hand over my forehead and said, “phew,” but my pencil fell in my glasses like a pencil holder.

“Cool, “Awesome” and “Wow,” everybody said.

You know, I like my dumb glasses after all!

Amy's Singing Voice

Bing! Bing! Bing! The bell rang, and there was a great rush to get to the try-out sign-up board.

"Amy!" her friend called out, "look at this! There's a sign-up sheet for chorus!"

Amy dashed over quickly. She found there was only one spot left on the chorus try-out sheet. She grabbed the pen and attacked the paper like a T-Rex lunging to snag a long-neck.

"There!" she shouted, "I got my name on paper!"

All of the sudden, there was a great silence through the whole school. Everybody looked at her for a long time. Finally, Amy said, "What?" She hurried out the door with her friend Kim.

The next day, everybody who signed up for chorus try-outs had to go to the gym at 9 o'clock in the morning. Right in front of Amy's eyes, with a sneer on her face and polka-dotted dress, was the music teacher, Miss Peep.

"Now, boys and girls, because you're all here at 9 A.M., you've all made it into chorus. I'm giving out sheets talking about a solo. If you're interested, please sign up and hand your sheets in tomorrow at precisely 9 o'clock. We will start to practice our songs now."

But Amy just had her mind studied and focused right on the solo. And all she heard out of Miss Peep was "Peep, peep, peep, peep!"

When the day was done, Amy couldn't wait to get home and tell her family about the solo. When she arrived home, she told her folks about it. In her room, she started to practice. In the beginning, she sounded like a mouse screeching in a dark, gloomy sewer. Amy knew she sounded bad, so she took a whiff of her favorite brown-sugar scented candle, to try to help her throat relax.

Before she knew it, from her tightly closed-up throat came a beautiful voice. As Amy sung, two birds flew into the window and landed on her finger, because she sounded exactly like a songbird chirping in the mid-morning. Amy went to bed that night bursting with excitement.

The next day . . . Amy knew it was the day to try out for the solo. She thought her voice would be beautiful, so she didn't take a good luck whiff of her candle. As she got to school, her belly twisted and turned with butterflies of joy.

Before she knew it, Amy was up next! As she cleared her throat, she noticed it was getting harder to talk . . . and harder . . . and harder . . . until finally, her voice wouldn't come out at all! Amy started to bite her fingernails. She couldn't tell what was going to happen. Finally, it was her turn.

"Oh, no!" Amy thought to herself. She felt as though she had to run away. All of the sudden, in an instant, she dashed off to the girls' bathroom. She went into one of the stalls and began to cry. Amy thought to herself, "How do I get into these messes?"

Before she knew it, right in front of the stall, and surprisingly, in the girls' bathroom, was a boy! Amy could tell it was a boy, because she looked underneath the closed door and saw camouflage, baggy pocket pants that no

Emily
Johnson
Grade 3
Mary Tisko
Elementary
School
Branford

girl would wear in her school. On his feet were a pair of weird, pea-green snow boots.

She heard him call out to her, “Don’t forget what’s important, Amy! You can get your voice back if you just believe in yourself.” Then, he quickly ran away. Amy heard his footsteps clump out the door.

She thought once more, and asked herself, “Is he right? Maybe I should just try to sing.”

In a few moments, Amy came blasting out of the stalls and into the music room. There, she found the music teacher looking for her. Miss Peep saw Amy, and she let out a breath of relief. Amy walked over slowly, but firmly, to Miss Peep.

As Amy heard the song begin, she took a great big breath and let it out. And in no time, it was a miracle! Amy sang like the gods preaching down to the people! She even sang more beautifully than she had last night!

Miss Peep was in shock. Her mouth was held open, her eyes almost popped out, and even her hair was standing up. At the end of Amy’s song, Miss Peep fluffed her dress, closed up her mouth and made her hair nice and smooth again.

“Eh-hem!” called Miss Peep, “The name of the person who has won the solo will have his or her name printed on the sign-up board tomorrow.” Amy went back to her class, hoping tomorrow she’d find her name on the sign-up sheet.

And so the next day came. Amy dressed her best, walked out her door, and hoped her name would be on the sign up board. As she walked into school, she closed her eyes, took a deep breath and turned to the sign-up sheet. And . . . pow! Zing! Suddenly, her eyes were tearing and her head was blasting out with fireworks!

For on that board, on that very same board, was her name: Amy A. Johnson! She turned around, hoping to find the mysterious boy from the bathroom behind her. But, zip! No one at all, except for Miss Peep, waiting to congratulate her.

“You did a fine job,” said Miss Peep.

“Thanks,” Amy said, in a disappointed voice.

After a few days, Amy forgot all about the strange, mysterious boy and became more and more excited about her solo. For the next two weeks, Amy was not studying at all. All she was doing was looking at the clock, waiting for the days to go by to reach the big day: the Chorus Concert.

Amy woke with a big yawn one morning, looked at her calendar, and realized it was the day of the Chorus Concert. As she dressed in her best dress for the show, Amy’s belly was once again fluttering with floating butterflies of joy.

As Amy took her place on stage that night, out in the crowd, she saw. . . Holy Cow! Alakazam! Boppidity-Boo! It was the mysterious boy! She could tell because he was wearing the same pants as the boy that she heard outside the stall, and those pea-green snowboots, too! Amy closed her eyes and listened for his voice.

Mixed in the crowd, but loud enough for Amy to hear, came the boy's voice. She felt like she could hear him say in her mind, "Believe in yourself, and you can do it." Amy was in shock that she finally had found the boy she had forgotten about. In the blink of an eye, the music started playing, and the chorus began to sing. After the chorus sung for a few minutes, it was Amy's solo time. She sung as if her life depended on it!

At the end of the song, Amy was scared. Nobody, not even the chorus, was clapping. Before she knew it, a little girl started to clap. Everybody else joined her, as if they had woken up from a dream of hearing an angel sing. Amy looked for the boy, but once again, strangely, he had disappeared.

From that day on, Amy never saw the boy again. But she became a famous singer. When she turned 29, she met a man who reminded her of the boy who helped her find her way. She asked him what his favorite clothes were when he was young.

"I liked to wear pea-green snowboots and camouflage pants. Why?" he asked.

"No reason," she answered back.

His name was Chad. Later on, they got married. As Amy got older, she decided to write a story about her experience, called, "Amy's Singing Voice."

The End

My Way

I wish I were a grown-up
It would be very nice
I'd put my feet up and be in paradise!
But no way! No siree, bob!
If I tried to climb taller I'd just get stuck in fog.

I'd try and try and try again
Until my legs were sore.
So I'd go home and yawn like a dinosaur!

I'll never be a grown-up
I'll have to wait some years.
Every time I think about it
My eyes flood with tears!
I want to be a lady someday
So I can do things MY WAY!

I WISH I WERE A GROWN-UP!

**Stephanie
Sponzo**
Grade 3
Tariffville
Elementary
School
Tariffville

**Marian
Blawie**
Grade 4
Hawley
Elementary
School
Newtown

Renewed

My pool creates a sanctuary of comfort for me
I love to swiftly dive into the water
Like a dolphin with its sleek, gray skin
I love when I dive into water
Bubbles,
Wetness
Surrounding me
Water floods into my think hair
Making me feel cool, refreshed
When I decide to get out of the cool, teal water
I rub the furry, terry cloth towel
All over
My dripping frame
And feel renewed.

**Marc
Canzanella**
Grade 4
Mary T.
Murphy
School
Branford

The Tireless Sea

In silence I stand and watch the tireless sea,
As its waves crash upon the shore,
Cascading its white and salty foam
Against the jagged cliffs below,

Then recurring into itself,
The tireless sea, into its endless depth
Secrets lie buried never to be revealed,

The tireless sea, so bewildering
It doesn't need or fear any man,
But gathers its beauty from within.

**Kiera
Cecchini**
Grade 4
Bowers
Elementary
School
Manchester

When My Dad Died

When my Dad died, it felt as if my heart was a big ship that sank. I was seven years old. It was a Saturday morning. My Mom and I were grocery shopping. My brother was at home. My Dad was in Norwich, helping a friend put down a tile floor. When my Mom and I got home, we pulled into the garage. I grabbed one grocery bag and opened the door to the cellar hallway and my Nana was there. I was surprised to see her. She said something very

quietly to my Mom. As I carried my bag up the stairs to the kitchen, I heard my Mom start crying.

When I opened the door at the top of the stairs, my Aunts Carolyn, Jane, and Erin were all there crying, too. I asked my Aunt Carolyn why, and she said “Your father died.” I thought she meant my Grandfather. We call him Pop. So I just walked quietly into the den and sat down on the couch, thinking my grandfather had died. I was sad, because my Pop was always so nice to us. My brother, Peter was already in the chair. Mom went down to her room crying. Pretty soon she called Peter in. Ten minutes went by. He came back and I saw a tear roll down his cheek. Then Mom called me into her room. I walked slowly down the hall, and when I got to the door I saw that all her makeup was blurred all over her face. She just said, “Daddy died, Honey. He had a heart attack.” I burst into tears and said, “I want him back.” She said, “He can’t come back, but it’s going to be okay.” I went back out to the den and my Mom stayed in her room. I was supposed to go to my friend Kayleigh’s birthday party that day. My Mom said to call and cancel, but my Aunt Erin said she would take me if I still wanted to go. I said I really did want to go, but everyone kept asking “Are you sure? Are you sure?” I said I did, so my Aunt Erin took me. I told Kayleigh about my Dad, but she didn’t believe me. My Aunt told her Mom it was true, so then she believed it. It felt like I couldn’t really believe it myself. It seemed like I was in a dream. But it really happened on January 18, 2003. My Dad was 41 years old.

I haven’t seen my Dad in almost two years and it seems more real now. But it still doesn’t feel right. I don’t think it ever will. I really love my Dad. He was really funny. He used to take me and my brother to 7-11 for candy every Friday after work. He called me his princess. He took us all on really fun vacations. In CCD class I learned that when people die, they get to eat at a big feast in Heaven, and people can eat anything they want. I think my Dad had Italian food. He died on the weekend of Dr. Martin Luther King Day, so maybe he ate dinner with Dr. King. I think my Dad’s father was there, too. He died the same way as my Dad, only he was 43. I really miss my Dad.

Affection

I don’t know how to call
it – even though I
really want to. It’s such
a strange feeling, a beautiful
mix of excitement, hope and pride.
I hope it will go on
forever, though it doesn’t show
outside.

**Sophia
Gantenbein**
Grade 4
Worthington
Hooker School
New Haven

**Edward
Meade**
Grade 4
Alred Hanmer
Elementary
School
Wethersfield

Ozark's Change

A long time ago, a mountain named Mt. Ozark sat in the middle of a desert. But this mountain was different than all the others. His job was to protect the small village that sat behind him from the big storms that happened from time to time.

He was a very courageous mountain. He gave water from his snow-capped peak when the village was in drought. He shaded the village in hot weather and let the villagers hike his steep, rough sides. Around him was good plantation soil that was a great source to grow crops so the villagers could make their living.

He was a very tall and straight mountain, shaped like a pyramid. Everyone loved him as much as he loved them. They couldn't be separated, or so they thought. Then one cold, windy day, one of those horrible storms came. It was a gigantic tornado that started kicking up dust and mud. It was fast, tall, and very powerful. Roaring through, the tornado wrecked the crops, tore down houses, and sent hikers flying off of his jagged sides. Just then the tornado did something the mountain truly despised. The tornado blew off his beloved snow capped peak!

The tornado was like a blizzard of dirt and dust swirling rapidly and crushing everything in its path. All the villagers, even the bravest, were frightened by its loud roars and massive size. Bending over, the mountain tried to protect the helpless village, but it was no use. The tornado was just too strong.

Just then, a colossal storm cloud filled the sky with black and grey. Big, wet raindrops poured down and caused a flood. The mountain had no choice. He either had to surrender to the massive and the enormous flood or let the village be destroyed. While deciding, the tornado was storming like a freight train and the flood was rushing in like rapids, both headed directly for the village.

"Sploosh! Crash! Boom!" The tornado and the flood simultaneously hit the village and caused massive destruction.

When the storm was over, the villagers packed up and left for the Rocky Mountains. They thought that more mountains would mean greater protection. Mt. Ozark was heartbroken.

While the storm had wrecked the village, Mother Nature had been up in the clouds, watching every move. She saw the tornado twist in and the flood rush through the village. She also saw Mt. Ozark fail when trying to protect the village, the moment when the storm stopped, and the villagers leave for the Rocky Mountains.

Mother Nature was a goddess. Her job was to create and control all nature, living or not. She always wore a dress covered with bits of nature such as a pine needle or a piece of animal fur. Her hair was black as a raven with waves like rolling hills.

She had seen how the storm had damaged the village and thought that it was the mountain's fault that it had been wrecked. Then she decided something; something that would put the mountain in a bad situation.

"Attention!" The chairman exclaimed. "This meeting has officially started! First, does anyone have any complaints?" Almost everyone raised their hands.

One by one the chairman called on the people attending the meeting. One of those people was Mother Nature.

“I couldn’t stand all the racket last night! No one went to sleep! I almost lost my job.” The Sandman complained in anger and rage. Then he fell back asleep. Everyone shared complaints and they all revolved around what had happened the previous night with the storm.

“With so many complaints, this meeting has come to a problem! Any ideas about how to solve it?” the chairman exclaimed in a firm tone. Everyone thought about the question for a long while.

“I have an idea!” shouted Mother Nature. This was very strange, because Mother Nature almost never yelled. “I think somehow we should punish the mountain because it was his job to protect the village! He did not do his job! For Pete’s sake, he should at least be deprived of his beauty as a punishment. He should be taught a lesson!” A long applause followed Mother Nature’s speech.

Then the chairman spoke. He only said one word. “How?” he asked in a low but firm voice. For the first time in the meeting there was a long pause.

“Well . . . um . . . maybe . . . I know! Call in thunder, Call in Rain! Call in Lightning! Call in Wind! Call in Cloud! Call in Storm! We will punish the mountain in pain!”

So Thunder, Rain, Storm, Cloud, Lightning, and Wind were called into the meeting to discuss their jobs. The jobs were simple. Rain would rain as hard as she could so the mountain couldn’t see. Storm and Cloud would help Rain. Lightning and Thunder would crash on him while wind would finish the mountain off by flattening his top.

So that night the storm came on. Storm, Cloud, and Rain all made it pour. “I can’t see!” cried Mt. Ozark. “Boom! Crash!” Thunder banged. He crashed over Mt. Ozark, cracking parts of the solid mountain. “Zap! Zap!” Lightning struck him repeatedly until the entire top of the mountain split into many pieces, leaving only the mountain’s base left. Slowly the peak crumbled to the ground. Finally Wind came with a huge gale of wind and flattened out the uneven mountain base which remained.

When the tragic storm blew over, the mountain had changed. His steep sides that were perfect for hiking were gone and so was his sharp peak. His top was as flat as a prairie and his sides were rough and steep. The once beautiful Mt. Ozark was a plateau.

And that is how the beautiful mountain named Mt. Ozark came to be the Ozark Plateau.

**Katherine
Rose Worthen**
Grade 4
Tootin' Hills
Elementary
School
West Simsbury

Where I'm From

Where I'm From . . .

I am from the shorties and the tall.

From the smell of the sweet honey to lavender
and the bears and wolves in my backyard.

From the last one in the waterfall down in the woods.

From weddings to the next thing you know,
you're sliding across the dance floor
having a good time.

I am from the Blue Moon Jazz,
to the Rolling stones, rock and roll.

From the crazies to the shys.

From the girly girls to the tomboys,

From the scaredycats all around.

I am from a place where you see the ocean deep
at the big beach. Where it doesn't matter what you have on,
a bathing suit or shorts, you still go in.

From the bonfire at Coast Guard Beach in Cape Cod.

From the story and saying, "You're hair looks like a rat's nest!"

I am from the hard times that will never pass in my mind, but will leave and
turn to dirt.

Like the souls from the family tree go up and away to heaven.

From the skips, to the jogging around the block.

I am from the boring days alone, to the exciting days
With your

Fun,

Crazy,

Just-like-you cousins.

From the pretending you are Indians, to your uncle being a real one.

From the plays of giving thanks at Thanksgiving in Virginia,
To high school graduation in Baltimore.

From great memories at our family's Golden Age of Trucking Museum.

From the special to the unique . . . *that's* Where I'm from.

Author's Midnight Stroll

Once upon a midnight dreary
T.A. Barron sat down next to Beverly Cleary
J.K. Rowling and the rest of the gang
Who all wrote books that entertained

Otis Spofford a troublemaker
Emily Bartlett a hallucinator
Merlin and Harry Potter, too
Have magic powers used to help more than a few

All of these authors stayed up in the night
Coming up with a book that they thought was just right

Full of suspense
And exciting events
That would pull the reader in
With poetry and heart
That could touch the soul within

This book some people say is a legend and a myth
But other readers say that to find this sort of gift
You must love to read and use your mind
And this treasured book
You . . .
Will . . .
Find.

**Nina
Barbero**
Grade 5
Tolland
Middle School
Tolland

**Isabelle
Harrison**
Grade 5
Westwoods
Upper
Elementary
School
Farmington

A Gift of Hope

Sunlight from China has just arrived
A cute smile with crooked teeth
A tiny little body with extra small feet
A shirt full of raspberry stain
We're so happy that she came
A wiggly dance move
A sparkle in her eye
But most of all my adorable cousin Hope
Sunlight from China has just arrived

How can someone so little put up with so much
Never having a mother to run to and touch
Strapped to her bed she must have been scared
Sometimes life is too much to bear

What images she sees dancing on the wall
A paper crane
Her first fall
A red ruby lantern
Shadows in the hall

Hope
A gift to the world
And to my family
The long journey across the world
Now settled in my heart
Hope, LeeWen, child of two worlds
Now made us one
Sunlight from China has just arrived.

**Anjali
Khetan**
Grade 5
Davenport
Ridge School
Stamford

It All Started With a Glow

I was well aware that there was something suspicious about the new kid in school, Arnold, "the foreign exchange student from Spain." For instance, sometimes he could speak full sentences, and then if you replied, he would stare back blank-eyed as though you were speaking Finnish or Chinese. Then when you went out to recess, he would surreptitiously sneak behind a tree and you would see a glow, a very peculiar glow. He would wait exactly five seconds, and then speak some alien-sounding language. It was like he was on Earth to spy on us and the glow was some sort of communication system between him and his parents or his boss or master. But of course I had to admit that it couldn't be so, yet some part of me insisted or wanted it to be so. There

still was the fact that he ate, worked, and even walked normally. Miss Donalow insisted that he was just a new kid from Spain and nothing more. She also said that I had a big imagination and that I should put it to paper instead of bugging teachers about it. So, I did.

I had thought long and hard about how I would prove that this guy was an alien. I ended up with a plan that wasn't first-class, but anything was worth a try. My plan was to follow the new kid home. I know it seems not that great without gadgets and all the cool things like the people in Mission Impossible. But, like I said, it was worth a try. So I followed him home.

He walked briskly, even through thorny rose bushes as though the thorns were feathers. Once in a while I would fall behind a bit and almost lose sight of him, and sometimes I got close enough to see the tiny twitches his ears made when he heard something. I told myself that I wasn't going to follow the next suspicious kid I met. I was annoyed that he walked through forests and nature trails that smelled repulsive. Finally, he stopped near the lake and looked around to see if anyone was watching. I dove behind a bush hoping that Arnold didn't see me. After ten seconds of heavy breathing and praying, I peeked out of the bush. He wasn't there. As I peered into the lake, I saw the ripples. I was so close to jumping into the lake just in case he was a fast swimmer, when it hit me. He could have just thrown a pebble into the lake because he knew someone was following him and walked down the nature trail. Or he could have actually jumped into the lake. Disappointed, I sat down one of the larger rocks around me to think.

Suddenly the ground beneath me began to shake. I heard soft buzzing (or I could have been my imagination), then there were cold winds, and, for some reason, the smell of peaches. I shut my eyes because the cold wind was sharp against my eyes. Suddenly, the fast shaking, the soft buzzing, the cold winds and, sadly, the smell of peaches vanished. Gradually I opened my eyes; I almost fell unconscious from what I saw. I blinked and rubbed my eyes. I saw the same glow that was around Arnold when he made a "call" except this time it took the shape of a house. The bright light was now warm and nice rather than weird and intimidating. Yet the feeling of danger hovered in the air. I didn't even know where I was or how far away from home I was.

I began to cry softly. Soon I heard footsteps. Arnold was standing right in front of me. He was shocked to see me in his backyard. When I looked around, I saw that I was sitting on a rock next to a swimming pool. There was a beautiful peach tree behind me and bees were buzzing all around them, trying to get to the juice of the peach. I decided to take the honest way out and explained all my suspicions to Arnold. He let out a hearty laugh and said that I had a very strange imagination. I looked around me and saw that the glow was nothing strange; it was just some very bright lights hung around the house. I asked Arnold what all the lights were for, and he explained that they had just celebrated Three Kings Day. It was a Spanish holiday just like our Christmas. Instead of stockings they leave their shoes and get loads of presents. I asked him if he could explain the weird glow behind the tree. He laughed again and said that it was just a very silly walkie-talkie which he got on Three Kings Day

and he was talking to his kid sister in second grade. It was the glow from that screen that I had seen. I felt so foolish and embarrassed. I quickly apologized to Arnold. He forgave me and said that he had not heard such a hilarious story in a long time. I quickly left his house and ran back home. I will never let my imagination run away with me like this again.

**Marissa
Mirecki**
Grade 5
Regional
Multicultural
Magnet School
New London

Leaving the River

A giant brown van
pulls away from a dirt driveway
burdened with five complaining, tanned kids
and treats from the Hershey's factory.

The cottage is empty,
save the toys, blankets, sleeping bags and pillows
strewn across the living room floor
and the kitchen trash
filled with watermelon rinds, candy wrappers,
Styrofoam plates and bread crusts
from a week of lunches and dinners.

The sink is filled
with bowls, spoons, soggy Apple Jacks
and the good ol' green cups with happy,
sad, sleepy and mad faces on them.

The bath is giving itself a final scrub,
cleaning off the last grains of sand
and drops of ice cream.

The drawers are rearranging
the haphazardly placed bottles of acrylic paint.

The wraparound deck
is wet with river water and watermelon juice,
scratchy with sand, cracker crumbs, candy wrappers
and wood chips from the playground
and sneakers and bike helmets!

The beach has potholes
and mounds of sand
from filled-in holes
once dug for clay, sand castles, ditches, ponds, bridges
and a sunken trail
where the kayak and paddle boat had come ashore.

In the water it seems that there are ripples
from splash fights long gone,
the echoes of laughter still in the air.
The low drone of a Sea Doo hangs in the air,
the laughter and screams all coming back,
as the spray hits long-gone children.
The motor boat sits,
its engine growing cold,
waiting for children who will not come,
for one last ride.
If you look carefully, under the dock,
you can just barely see a fat fish
which has taken a worm
and the only price it had to pay
was fear and a small cut on its side.

As the van drives past the yard,
you can see the grass springing up
sighing in relief
and shouting, "Free! Free! from dreadfully annoying balls
and stampeding sneakers and sandals all over the place!"
and with that, it starts combing its hair
unsticking massive amounts of just-cooked marshmallows and graham cracker
crumbs and chocolate pieces.

The children take one last look at the River,
getting smaller
and smaller against the setting sun,
sigh
and wish next year would come sooner.

The One Creepy Halloween

My friend and I were putting on make-up. We were both being witches for Halloween. "Mary, are you ready to go?"

"Yeah, let's go."

There was an old, old house made up of wood, and it was falling apart. We rang the doorbell. The doorbell sounded like a screaming woman being chased by a vampire.

"Hello," said a repulsive woman.

"Trick or treat?" we both asked.

"Come in."

"No thank you," I said heading down the creaky wooden steps.

"Make these children come in with the wind . . ."

"Woooooo, woooooo." And we got sucked in.

**Stephanie
Shepa**
Grade 5
Bethany
Community
School
Bethany

Amy
Tomasso
Grade 5
West Woods
Upper School
Farmington

We wished we had our coats because it was as cold as snow inside the house. I thought I was going to be sick when I saw that she had worms in her tea. I was going to take a bite of chocolate chip cookies but the chocolate chips were ants. I threw it into the air and it landed right in the witch's face.

The witch had an enormous nose and an old, hairy wart. I glanced around me and noticed a broom was covered in spider webs and there was a steaming cauldron. I was surprised to see her skin was as green as algae in my pool. I glanced at her jet-black hair and yellowish-green teeth with dead bug guts in them. Of course she had a pointy black hat, but do you know what her breath smelled like? Her hot breath smelled like rotten fish. Yuck! Her voice was high-pitched and squeaky.

As we looked around her messy house, which was messier than my closet, we noticed ripped curtains and chairs. As our teeth chattered we said, "We have to go."

"Nooooooo!!!" she screamed. Then she got so mad she put us in the dungeon. It had rats and mice, spiders and skeletons. It was so dusty. I heard somebody scream so loud and smelled blood. But she was so dumb she left the key in the door. We got out and had an idea. We turned up the thermostat and the witch melted down to a puddle of water. We were so excited we did a happy dance.

We were about to leave when I asked Mary Rose if we should get rid of the witch water and pour her down the drain. We were looking in the kitchen for a sponge.

Then I said, "That's the last cupboard."

Then Mary Rose said, "I found one!"

We both cleaned up the witch water and poured it down the drain. We said, "Bye, bye witch!"

Then we went back to the good side of the neighborhood. My mother asked how my Halloween went. I said, "It's a long story . . ."

Breathing the Breath of Cruelty

Aunt Tressa pulled me quickly to the back of the bus, her eyes jumping back and forth, trying to find a seat. Many white folks were coming back from church that Sunday morning, so there wasn't much room for us. "Macie!" My aunt squeezed my hand as she caught me staring with wide eyes at a well dressed white woman. "Please, I really don' wanna tell you agin, but you never know what white people are gonna say when you stare at 'em." I lowered my eyes so that they were fixed on the floor.

Sunday mornings, my mother's sister always met up with us after services at the beautiful First Baptist Church down the way from our apartment. I always looked forward to seeing my aunt in her wide selection of Sunday hats. After the rest of my family walked home, I got to spend the afternoon with my favorite aunt. When our bellies started growling, Jemella's Diner (for blacks

ONLY!!!) had bacon and eggs to fill us. Afterwards, Aunt Tressa brought me to swing in the park, to look at finery beyond our hands in the windows of the closed shops, or to some other special place a'fore we went home.

Now, as we sat down towards the back of the bus, I fiddled my thumbs as Aunt Tressa told me a story about a princess named Errell and a pea. Suddenly, Aunt Tressa stopped talking about the princess. "Hun, come on," she said in a shaky voice as the bus jerked to a stop and a white man stared down at us with eyes that shone like fire. I jumped up, and Aunt and I moved closer to the back door. The bus started to move slowly, chugging along, and jerking to stops regularly. "Macie, traffic's so heavy, punkin, let's get off here'n walk. It's gotta be fastah."

The bus doors opened at the end of the curb, and Aunt Tressa and I got off. As I looked up from the cracked pavement, I nearly jumped back in fear, astonishment, and wonder. It seemed as if millions of people were crowding in the streets, blacks and whites. Many men and women held up signs with slogans like "Blacks must learn to stay OUT of OUR schools" and "Vote NO to blacks." People were fighting, pushing each other, punching. Cops were running, shouting, threatening, and sometimes even shooting in the air. Aunt Tressa gripped my hand even tighter, a terrified, yet brave look on her face. I glanced about at the whites hitting the blacks, and so many people crying, shaking their fists, lying face down on the pavement, anger hanging from the air like a cloud of dust. It was true pandemonium. I, Macie Kimball, the girl who vowed never to cry, cried there. It was truly impossible not to.

"Aunt Tressa." I wept. "Please, let's go."

"I'm tryin' hun, I'm tryin'. Just wait, and I'll get us out."

Still, Aunt Tressa's words didn't make me feel any better about the situation, and it was a long time before we had snaked our way out of the mob to the end of the street, where the park began, and a few whites were still protesting. I must have looked like a mess: tear-stained face, rumpled hair, my white knee socks crumpled at my ankles. Aunt Tressa led us to one of the park benches where we collapsed, our minds whirling, and our stomachs clenched to the point of making a being sick. I buried my head in Aunt's woolen sweater and just sobbed.

"Hun, hun, shhhhhh, don't cry Macie punkin," she said softly as she stroked my hair. When I had caught my breath, I asked, "What were those people doing?" My Aunt sat back and closed her eyes, pondering hard over the question. "Macie, listen closely. Those white folks think that we African Americans are bad and cursed just 'cause of our skin color. Don't you ever think that, hear? They think that making a fuss and hurtin' us is gonna kill us, but oh Lordie, just 'cause folks got ideas in their heads that we're gonna get gone don't mean that they're gonna succeed. We're proud to be who we are, and we're gonna fight for our rights, Macie-girl. Be strong, be brave, trust in yourself. You are who you are, and no one's gonna ruin that. Macie-hun, I'm sorry that you were here today, that you had to see those cruel people, so sorry. Don't let today ruin your life with bad thoughts about those people. It's only 1955, and though this battle over skin color is not over yet, we still have a long

**Allison
Benko**
Grade 6
Tomlinson
Middle School
Fairfield

time to fight for ourselves, and we will. Today, we didn't have the power to do anything, but someday, when you're older, I know that you can help. This may be hard Macie, but just forget about the bad things and get on with the good."

Aunt Tressa paused, took a deep breath, and then rose to her feet. "We're going home Macie. Come on."

Glass

When Michael Smith walked in to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to look at fine work, he had no idea what would happen.

Michael was 17 and valedictorian of his school. He had skipped the eighth grade and was a year younger than the others in his class. Not only was he smart, but he also *looked* smart with his prim button-down blue shirt and his curly brown hair. He looked extremely dignified.

Though he may have seemed the "nerd" of his school, he was actually quite popular. The girls went crazy over his almond-shaped, emerald-green eyes, and the jocks respected him for his brains. It didn't hurt that Michael consistently helped them stay on the team by tutoring them.

Though Michael was brilliant *and* popular, two traits few have, he wasn't all that happy. His life was the same each day—wake up, go to school, get an A+ on a quiz, come home, do homework, go to sleep. There was no spice in his life, something he desperately wanted. But what he wanted to do most was fall in love. He was sick and tired of girls liking him because he was handsome, not because they really liked him. He wanted to meet someone who would make his life perfect, someone who wouldn't care if he was good-looking or not—someone who loved him for being him.

Michael went slowly up the stairs to his favorite museum, panting, mostly because he had run all the way from his school, Meadow Lark Academy. He could hardly contain his excitement, for he heard a new, antique statue made by Donatello himself had been brought in yesterday, and the museum was staying open all night for the occasion. Michael smiled to the guard who was his close friend.

"Hey, Mike, the new statue's here, you must've heard about it," grunted the guard, "it's made out of *glass*, you ever here that? *Glass!*" Michael joined his friend in uncontrollable laughter. In all his years of going to museums, he had never heard of a statue made of glass.

"Personally," started Michael, faltering, for the idea of a glass statue still sounded crazy. "Personally, I would prefer if there were less people here today; I want to get to know the art, without having to go through crowds."

Michael got his wish, for scarcely any of the people his age were interested in art, and all the adults had come earlier. Suddenly, he felt a quiver up his spine—a pleasant one. He felt like Tony, just before he met Maria in *West Side Story*. Tony had felt that he knew that something amazing would happen

soon, but he didn't know what it would be. Michael, right then, felt the same way.

He passed the ancient works in awe, like he always did. DaVinci's *Mona Lisa* (on loan from the Louvre in Paris) gave him an encouraging smile saying, "Find her, now, go find her." *Starry Night* by Van Gogh winked to him as if to say, "I will control your meeting, I will help you." And then Michael saw what the paintings were talking about. He saw *her*. She was ravishing. She was phenomenal. She was miraculous. She was stupendous. She was gorgeous. She was magical.

Michael couldn't believe that only minutes before, he had been laughing at her. The idea of a glass statue then sounded ludicrous and absurd, but now . . . The lamp hovered above her as if to get a better look, and was catching the statue in every possible light, showing off the glinting, gleaming glass. She was the most marvelous creature on earth (if a statue can be called a creature) let alone the loveliest, most lush statue.

His wish was granted. He had fallen in love.

My Backyard

Have you ever stayed in a resort with a 24-hour buffet? Well, that is kind of like the ecosystem in my backyard. Actually you could call my backyard lots of things, a hotel, a restaurant, or an animal paradise. Although you don't notice it, there are lots of activities going on in the woods. Many kinds of animals live and eat in my yard and woods.

I sometimes consider my backyard a hotel for all kinds of animals. You can see holes in the ground about 1½ inches wide that have been used by snakes. My brother and I like to destroy the snake holes, but there was this one hole in the ground that went under the cement sidewalk, so we couldn't destroy it. So instead of trying to collapse it, we stuck sticks and leaves in the hole. That was one snake we didn't want checking back into our hotel! We have found hornets nests in the ground, too. Above ground, we have squirrels running around searching for food, mainly by our walnut tree. They live in the trees, jumping from one to the other. Chipmunks go in between the rocks of the stone walls. They are safe from predators there. Unfortunately for them, we have a cat named Zorro that loves to eat them when they come out from their hiding spot.

Of course animals need food to survive, and my backyard has a lot of food many animals need to live in their environment. For instance, hornets dig holes in apples that are falling onto the ground to drink the cider that they provide. In the wooded area of my yard, there are decaying trees. When you look closely at these decaying trees you notice many insects and termites holes in the wood. The trees provide a feast for these bugs. Near the apple tree and grassy area, I have seen a small family of deer scavenging for apples on the ground. In the same area I have seen rabbits munching away at the apple tree leaves and the green grass.

Lucas
Duncan
Grade 6
Pomfret
Community
School
Pomfret Center

Sage
Hahn
Grade 6
Colebrook
Consolidated
School
Colebrook

Things are always growing in my backyard. We have trees that have a narrow trunk about four inches wide, with leaves like palm trees, and a furry, pulpy blossom that's red. These trees hang over into our yard dropping branches and leaves, including seeds from the blossoms. The seeds sprout into new trees, and the cycle starts all over again. At one point our yard was getting smaller and smaller because of all these new "palm" trees. Other things grow in similar ways too. Bumble bees fly from flower to flower spreading pollen around. Squirrels are always dropping acorns and walnuts into our yard and woods. One time I was ambushed by a family of squirrels, but luckily the acorns just missed my head. Who knows, maybe one of those acorns ended up sprouting into a tree.

All of this combines together to make an ecosystem for many animals. They have plenty of places to live, lots of food to survive on, and they keep planting more seeds to make more trees for homes and food. My backyard is a lively place with the buzzing of bees, the slithering of snakes, and the scurrying of squirrels above. Above ground and below ground, life is everywhere.

The Mystery of the Disappearing Socks

"Mom where did you put my other sock?" I yelled pulling my head out of the dryer.

My socks had been disappearing since Sunday. I always lost a few socks here and there but never as much as this. Lately I had been walking around with two mismatched socks. So I, Stacy Brown, will find out who the sock stealing caper is. My plan is to put a load of all the smelly socks under my brother's bed in the washing machine tonight. I will then hide out in the laundry basket until the thief comes, following the putrid scent of my brother's socks.

After I had been tucked in I snuck downstairs to the laundry room. There, I dumped the bag of smelly socks I had collected in the wash. I turned on the machine and then slowly crept into the laundry basket. I waited for a minute, then another, and another. Finally after waiting for what seemed to be hours I heard the soft patter of feet on the bathroom floor. I slowly peeked out of the laundry basket and saw the strangest creature ever. I saw a sock as large as me! This sock had a face, arms, and two legs with about 100 feet on each one!

"Socks," it hissed excitedly.

It opened the dryer door and pulled out about ten socks.

"At this rate I will have enough socks for all my feet by June!"

The creature was just about to get away when I jumped out of my hiding place and yelled, "Stop, Thief!"

The creature jumped around, looked at me for a second and then sat down crying.

"What's the matter?" I asked him starting to feel sorry.

“I have 300 feet,” he blubbered. “I need a sock for each one but nobody will sell a sock to a sock!”

“I’m sorry,” I said putting my arm around his shoulder. “You know,” I said. “These are my brother’s socks; you can take as many as you need.”

“Really?” asked the sock. “I need 98 more.”

“Sure,” I said with a shrug. “Just as long as you stop stealing socks after this.”

“Okay,” said the creature. “You have my word.”

So he ran off with 98 of my brother’s socks. I skipped up to bed, happy that from now on I would have two matching socks. I went to sleep happy and content.

I was perfectly perfect in the morning until I heard my brother shout, “Hey Stacy, do you know where all my socks went?”

I groaned and then smiled mischievously and yelled to him, “I don’t have the slightest idea.”

The End

P.S. Hi, I’m the giant sock and I wanted to let you know that thanks to Stacy I have 300 well covered feet! But now I need shoes . . .

Gentle Giants

Humongus, towering trees
Like skyscrapers over everybody.
If you listen carefully, you can hear
Their hearts beating
Ba-doom, Ba-doom, Ba-doom.

Skewering the sky these gentle giants
With their luminous, dark green-colored needles
And writhing chestnut tinted branches.

Other trees color the horizon
With their yellows, reds, and flagrant oranges,
Making the sky like a patched quilt with the
Alternating pattern of trees.

Combined together, all these giants:
Their leaves twinkling in the sky like shooting stars;
Their branches silhouetted against the bright sun.

**Cole
Manley**
Grade 6
Bedford
Middle School
Westport

**Daniel
Massaro**
Grade 6
Emerson
Williams
School
Wethersfield

Hold it While you Can

Oh man, those nightly twirlies!
Being swung by my wrists,
around and around,
until I got nauseous.
Past the couch,
over the table,
by the clock,
and under the lamp.
But better than all
was the wind whipping in my ears,
and knowing that by letting go,
I would be taking the greatest risk of my life.

Then I grew up—
too heavy to be lifted,
too tall to be twirled.
Now I know . . .
hold on to your childhood.

**Jason
Ott**
Grade 6
Latimer Lane
School
Simsbury

Word-Wings

Word-Wings
Swooping high in the sky
Flying down low
And perching in the mind
Of a young poet
The bird pecks
At the young poet's mind
Until finally
The pencil touches the paper
And words flow across the page
Elegantly
Gracefully
And then it takes off
High into the sky
And flaps
Its graceful
Word-Wings.

Giving Up

Her hair swayed in the wind
As her eyes gazed across
The rippling sapphire sea
So dark and
Full of mysteries

The ball of light
That once lit the sky
Is falling
Down with her
She is struggling
To live
But what life does she have?

It is calling to her,
Beckoning her to come
It whispers
Nothing is left for her
It says
What she had was taken
By life

She wanted to
Jump into that
Pool of mysteries
That called to her
The light had gone
Darkness was choking her
She was letting go

Up into the sky she looked
Before leaving
The life she had
A glittering of stars
Were sprinkled across
The heavens

God was smiling
Down at her
Giving her
A reason to live

Victoria
Chung
Grade 7
Western
Middle School
Greenwich

So she
Turned away from
The end
And
Started toward
The beginning.

**Vivian
DiSesa**
Grade 7
Western
Middle School
Greenwich

Santa Claus is Coming to Town

Mellie McLean chewed the end of her pencil frowning. It was December 23, the last day of school before Christmas break, and she was sitting in science. The teacher droned on oblivious to the fact that all eighteen of his students' eyes had glazed over, and the minds had drifted back to what would be under their Christmas tree. Mellie, too, was thinking of presents. She wanted to know so badly what she would get, she had looked for presents for ages it seemed like, but there was no sign of them. She had checked in all the closets, under all the beds, in the attic, in the basement, and in the laundry room. She was so doubtful that her mom had even bought any that she was starting to think Santa really did drop them down her chimney. Mellie laughed out loud at this thought and her best friend Susie turned around with her eyebrows raised. Mellie blushed and shook her head. A seventh grade girl should have absolutely stopped believing in Santa, and Mellie was going to fully abide by that rule. She shook her head once more and bent back over her paper.

"What were you laughing about back there?" Susie asked Mellie as they made their way down to lunch.

Mellie just smiled and said, "Oh you know, last day."

"Yeah, I know I can't wait to get out of this place. I found all my presents last week, I got . . ." As Susie ranted on about her presents, Mellie frowned again. How did Susie find her presents and not Mellie? Mellie was the smarter one. Susie was so out of it all the time. How did Susie know where to look for presents and not Mellie?

"Where were yours?" Mellie finally asked.

"Attic, of course. Hey you didn't tell me what you got yet. You did find yours right?"

"Sure I did," Mellie said and quickly paid for her salad and walked out of the line.

"Mom, I'm home!" Mellie called out when she got home later.

"Hey Mellie, I am in the kitchen." Mellie plunked down her backpack, unzipped her coat and went in to talk her mom.

"Missed you," Mellie said kissing her on the cheek.

"You, too."

"So, Mom, what am I getting for Christmas this year?"

"What Santa brings you, of course."

"Honestly, Mom, I am so old for that one," Mellie exclaimed.

“Be careful what you say, Mellie, Santa is watching now more than ever.”

Mellie sighed and walked out of the kitchen and up to her room. She fell back onto her big bed, feeling very anxious indeed. Where possibly could her presents be? Her mom had to be joking about Santa. Santa is only the guy whose lap little kids sit on at Christmastime at the mall. He’s not really a magical man, flying around in a big red sleigh pulled by reindeer. These thoughts tired Mellie out so much that she rolled over and fell asleep.

A loud Beeeeeeeeeeep ripped Mellie’s eyelids open the next morning.

“What the heck? It’s vacation!” She said furiously to the clock before remembering that she was the one who forgot to turn it off last night. Mellie looked at herself realizing she was still in her jeans and sweater from school yesterday.

“Ah, dang it,” Mellie thought, as she remembered the three parties she had been invited to for the night before. She rolled out of bed feeling that this was going to be a horrible day until she remembered it was Christmas Eve. She quickly pulled off her old outfit and put on black stretch pants and a red turtleneck. She pulled a brush through her annoyingly thick curls and ran down to the kitchen.

“Morning, Mom,” Mellie smiled.

“Morning, sweet pea. You were certainly tired last night!” her mother exclaimed.

“Just resting up for tonight.”

“It’s very hard to catch Santa, Mellie. It’s a waste of energy to try.”

“Mom!” Mellie cried exasperated. Her mom really needed to get over Santa. Mellie was in seventh grade for heaven’s sake. She was certainly not going to lie on the couch in the living room with milk and cookies beside her waiting for the father of Christmas. She grabbed a piece of toast and went downstairs to the basement.

Maybe they’re in the suitcase, Mellie thought. Even if she had given up on Santa, she hadn’t given up on presents. Cramming the last bite of toast in her mouth, she unzipped a bag. Suddenly, a small glimmer of silver caught her eye. At last, she thought. She stuck her hand into the bag and closed her fingers around the small container. Pulling it out, her hopes died. It was an old Ban deodorant bottle from their last vacation to California.

“Come on,” Mellie cursed at the bottle. She was really getting ticked off now wondering where the heck were her presents! Mellie felt like crying; she had looked everywhere.

The day rolled by, Mellie—still not giving up—hunted around the house for her presents. Finally at 4: 30, her mom told her to get ready and dressed. Guests were coming at five. Mellie went up to her room and tugged off her black pants. Slipping into a little black shirt and brushing lint off her turtleneck, she decided to just enjoy herself for a while and forget about presents. She tried combing her curls down, but they were being their usual notorious selves. Mellie sighed after a few more tries and they went down to the hall. The first guest, their neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Ele and their four year old daughter Kate, had arrived.

“Oh, my, Mellie, look at how gorgeous you are!” Mrs. Ele cried. Mellie plastered a smile on her face and said, “Thanks. Kate is so adorable!” Mellie meant that. The little girl laughed and clapped her hands, her blonde head bobbing up and down. Mellie’s aunt, Jane, arrived next carrying a brightly wrapped present. Finally a present, Mellie thought. She kissed her aunt on the cheek, and Jane handed her the package. Mellie thanked her and then brought it up to her room. She couldn’t wait any longer; she tore off the paper. Inside was a hot pink Juicy jacket.

“Oh!” Mellie breathed. She loved it, and she finally had a present. Mellie quickly ran downstairs back to the party.

Finally, the night had passed and everyone had gone home. There were only nine hours left until Christmas morning. Mellie kissed her mom good night and went up to bed. She put on her flannels and pulled on socks. She climbed into bed and turned off the light. At around 1:00 Mellie woke up again. Her throat felt dry, so she decided to go downstairs and get a glass of water. Mellie turned on the light and her breath caught in her throat. Bent down underneath the Christmas tree was an . . . old man in a red suit!

“Santa,” Mellie gasped. She couldn’t help herself. The round old man stood up, a jolly look in his eyes.

“Well, hello there, Melanie,” he smiled.

“It can’t really, how could it be, you’re not real!”

“But yet here I am standing in front of you. And tell me Melanie, where were all your Christmas presents hidden this year?”

“Well, er, my mom hid them well.”

“No, my dear, they were in my workshop.”

“But how could Susie and the others find their’s then?” Mellie questioned.

“Ah, yes. I am afraid that their parents have indeed given up on me. They go out and buy their presents leaving me useless. Your mother, though, Melanie had faith in me. She showed true Christmas spirit. She tried to help you, Melanie, too. Listen, Melanie, you are in severe danger of losing me forever. I had planned to make tonight my last trip to this house. I felt I had lost you. I remember, Melanie, when you were a wee child. You would lie on the couch decked out in red and green pajamas waiting for me. I was careful then, coming when you were deep in your dreams of sugar plums. I waited for you tonight, to say good-bye.”

“Santa, wait. I want to believe. But it’s hard, with people saying you’re make-believe.”

“Melanie my dear, it was hard for your mother, too. She put so much faith in me, she didn’t buy a single present. She trusted me. It was indeed hard for her. She imagined your face on Christmas morning without a single present to be found. She believed in me, though.

“I am so sorry. I want to go back. I want to believe again Santa, please let me,” Mellie cried, tears coming now.

“Sh, you can Melanie, you can. You already have. See Melanie, I came back here tonight for my last time because you were beginning to believe again. You weren’t trying to, but you were. That’s why I came. You see Melanie, I

forgive, when people see their wrong-doings or show signs of believing. But when people disappear, they cannot go back.”

“Santa Claus, I am so sorry. I believe.” Santa’s face changed. He replaced his small smile with a grin. He said, “Melanie, I will see you next year.”

“Merry Christmas, Santa.”

“Merry Christmas, Melanie. God bless you, my dear.” And with a snap, Santa was gone. Mellie ran to the window and saw Santa’s sleigh soar up into the sky.

“Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!” His cheery voice rang out. Mellie smiled and went back upstairs to bed. She was back to believing. It was indeed, a very merry Christmas.

Adirondack Angling

I sat,
I waited,
I gazed.
Immense mountains protruded
from the opposite shoreline.
My stiff feet dangled off the dock,
into the chilly water,
creating ripples that
advanced into the
misty lake.
Today, I would catch “Sisyphus,”
Lake Algonquin’s legendary fish.

I began to become anxious
and clenched my pole
even tighter.
After half an hour,
doubts began to germinate
of my dream to catch “Sisyphus.”
Still,
I sat,
I waited,
I gazed.
The sun began to rise
over the jagged mountain peaks.
Day’s first light spilled
over the lake,
revealing a glassy surface.

**Patrick
Doolittle**
Grade 7
RHAM
Middle School
Hebron

I admired a family
of fluorescent-feathered fowl
in a far off cove, paddling
in a single-file order.
Just when I was ready
to give up, it happened.
The line began to unravel:
the crank spun wildly on the reel.
My face lit up like a candle.
I fumbled with my jerking pole
and struggled to hang on.
I was determined to catch
this famous fish.

I set the hook . . . *Yes*,
he was surely on.
My muscles tensed
as I peered into the water.
The moment was perfect.
The birds were chirping, the vast sky deep blue,
and the crisp morning air blew against my skin.
Then the mighty bass exploded from the water.
Its colossal body twisted through the air,
adding to the perfect moment.
My heart beat faster and faster.
Then, without warning, a tiny glittering piece of silver
slipped from the fish's mouth.
The hook fell out.
"Sisyphus" was lost.

**Unique
Hernandez**
Grade 7
Windham
Middle School
Willimantic

Never There . . .

Not even a phone call
I wasted half of my life trying
to get to know his name
Who is this man?
I have no idea.
They say he is my dad
I say otherwise.
Finally, I'm twelve
and he calls.
He wants me
to blow him a kiss
but instead

I blow him away.
Who is this strange man?
He sends me a picture
I rip it.
He expects me to write to him.
He sends me a postcard.
My mom tells me to write back.
He writes again
I won't write back . . .

The Day

We always knew this day would come, we just didn't know when. It happened on an early evening this past May. My family and I had just finished dinner. I was finishing my math, my sister was watching a television show, my brother was locked in his room, and the phone was ringing. My Dad walked over to the phone, picked it up, read the text that had just appeared on the screen of the phone, and answered it. My neighbors were on the other end of the line. When my Dad placed the phone gently back down onto the hook, he said that my next door neighbor Gail, from across the street would like to "stop by." That was when it all started, with that one phone call that changed it all.

Ten years before that phone call, my family moved from our house on Ridge Road, right across from Chester Elementary, to a new house on Hickory Hill Drive. Right after we moved here, one of our new neighbors from across the street immediately came over and greeted us. Later that year, my Mom had symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning; my Dad immediately grabbed the phone and called the fire department. "Hello, my wife has symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, could you come and check this out?"

"I'm sorry sir, we need to immediately evacuate the house. This needs to be investigated immediately," the firefighter swiftly replied. We had nowhere to go since it was 10:00 at night, and we couldn't wait outside because we didn't know how long it would take. Finding a place to stay when it is 10:00 at night is nearly impossible. Despite the time, our neighbors let us in. This was very fortunate, because my seven-year-old brother, and especially my six-month-old sister, and I, a two-year-old, would have lasted all but fifty-nine minutes out of the hour that we had to wait for the "lockdown" to be dispersed. They saved my Mom and Dad a boatload of trouble by graciously letting us in that cold winter night. When we finally got the results from the inspection, everything was in order. There never was a carbon monoxide leak that winter ten years ago, but even so, we were grateful that our new neighbors treated us that generously when we needed them.

A few years after the carbon monoxide incident, when I was about seven years old, I wanted to make my own little tomato plant garden. I did not know how, and my Mom and Dad did not know too much about growing tomatoes. I

**Dominic
Melillo**
Grade 7
John Winthrop
Junior High
School
Deep River

needed assistance, and my next door neighbors had the knowledge of gardening to help me. They had a garden in which they grew all sorts of vegetables like lettuce, zucchini, cabbage, carrots, and *tomatoes*. They are both extremely adept at gardening, and they offered to help me grow my own little garden. First, they helped me pick out the perfect spot for growing vegetables like tomatoes. Once we cleared all the leaves and sticks out of a section of the long strip of grass that is right along the road leading up to my house, we got to work planting the seeds. Everyday after school and into the summer they would help me keep the plants fertile. They helped me increase my knowledge of gardening exponentially. Karl said, "You see those little sprouts growing out of that limb, you don't want them"

"Why not," I inquired?

"Because, they are not healthy for the plant," came his reply. I had no idea how to help keep the tomato plant stay straight up while growing so it doesn't bend, but my neighbors knew. "Ok, now put the stick right there, that's it, nice and easy. There, now pass me that rope please," he ordered.

"Here you go," I replied. I didn't even think about using long sticks or branches to help support the plants, but my neighbors have been gardening for years. When the tomatoes were ready, we shared them with my neighbors. They taught me many facts about gardening, and I appreciated it very much. But our neighbors help us out with more than just gardening.

Three years from the gardening, when I was in fifth grade, I had an invention to make for the Invention Convention science fair. I had all the supplies I needed to make my invention (The Trombone Transport) except for one thing. To make the base that my trombone was going to be standing on, I needed a piece of wood. My Dad managed to find some wood, but we needed a machine to cut out the part of the wood that was needed for the invention. My Dad got on the phone and called our neighbors while I gathered up the supplies. As my Dad put the phone down he stated, "Dom, you get all the stuff together, because we can go over." We met Karl outside on their yard and he beckoned for us to follow him. We entered his small workshop in his basement. The room smelled of sawdust that was drifting in the air, going nowhere in particular. As I gazed through the dust I could see a scroll saw with pieces of cut wood all around it. I handed Karl the piece of wood I was cutting and he got to work. First he placed it onto the machine and starting adjusting all of the levers and pulleys so they were in the right spot. He worked so fast and smoothly, making sure everything was in place for the cutting. Finally after all the preparations, he turned on the machine. The way he cut the wood made it seem the wood was just a piece of thin paper and the blade was his scissors. In no time at all he was about halfway done. Then came the part that I was least prepared for. "Here you go," he said. "I got it started for you. Now it's your turn."

I managed to squeeze out a few words. "But are you sure?" I asked. My Dad nudged me forward, and I started gulping down air. I put on the safety goggles and starting listening closely as Karl gave me instructions.

“First you . . . then you should make sure that . . . but don’t . . .” No matter how hard I listened I couldn’t get a hold of myself enough to hear it all. I got up to the machine, wanting to get this over with so it didn’t get dragged out. I turned on the machine and heard the whirring noise of the motor and blade. I slowly started pushing the wood forward with Karl’s hands guiding me along the line that I had marked on the wood. After I had gotten the hang of it, Karl let go and let me do it. That was a mistake. I was starting to feel confident when, all of a sudden, I released my hold on the wood just a minuscule amount, but any amount was enough. The instant that I released pressure on the wood, the blade started making the wood vibrate even more than it already was. The wood wanted to get out and it saw its chance. Full of fright, I tried to keep my hold on the wood, but it was thrashing around so much from the rage of the blade that it was almost ungraspable. Karl, sensing the danger, reached out and helped me settle the wood. After I gained control of the wood he guided me to the end of the cut. He finished the rest of the cutting while I was calming down. I had felt so weak compared to that blade. It had felt like the wood itself was alive and wanted to break free of my grasp. I would have most likely failed my project that year or have had to change my design if Karl had not let me use his scroll saw. He helped me succeed in completing my project and I am grateful.

The year before the Invention Convention my family bought a pop-up camper. My family was planning to go on a camping trip and we were going to stop in Northampton on our way to the grounds. We had gotten the hitch for the camper a couple of weeks before and it was the morning of the trip. My Dad was outside getting the camper attached to the van while everyone else was finishing packing. He was having trouble with the camper, so he called our neighbors to see if Karl could help. When Karl came over my Dad had been able to get the ball in the socket, but was unable to get it secured. He tried using a car jack to lift the camper up into the socket so it was more secure. When Karl and my Dad lifted the camper up trying to get it securely in the socket, it suddenly gave way. Since they were working on not level ground and the jack was meant for a car, it was bound to fall. The jack buckled and fell to the side, the camper shifting with it. My Dad’s hand got caught underneath the camper as it fell. His hand got crushed by the weight. Then Karl did something amazing. At about 75 years of age, Karl lifted the camper off my Dad’s hand. My Dad pulled his hand out of the way so Karl could put the camper back down. My Dad stepped into the house so he could yell, “Karl is taking me to the clinic. The camper fell on my hand and it’s crushed.” In the mean time Karl was getting his car so he could drive my Dad to the clinic. My Dad’s hand was fine; there wasn’t any nerve damage or broken bones, just a crushed hand. He said that the pain was excruciating and felt like someone dropped a huge block of concrete on his hand. It fully healed after about a month, but still bothered him for a little bit. If Karl wasn’t there, who knows what would have happened to my Dad’s hand?

I will never forget that summer like evening last May. After the phone call we all started waiting patiently for Gail to arrive. We had no idea that the

words she would speak would be so sad. A gentle tap on the door signaled her arrival, but we had already seen her walking up our driveway. We let her in knowing nothing about the horrors of what she was about to say. She said to my Mom, “Well, you told me to tell you before we ever put the sign up . . .” Recognition dawned on my Mom’s face but it didn’t stay there long, because it got wiped clean by the tears dripping down her face. “It’s true, we are selling the house,” said Gail. It was a sad moment; the silence was only broken by my Mom’s sobs as she hugged Gail. Ever since we moved to 7 Hickory Hill Drive we knew that they had been planning to move for sometime. We just didn’t know when. That “when” took 10 years of waiting until the time was right. They were moving away so they could be closer to family. I just couldn’t get over it, after all those years, why?

It has been almost five months since they put their house on the market, and they moved out on the first day of September. The family moving here wanted their kids to be able to go to the first day of school. Gail and Karl may be gone, but a part of them will still be here, always. I didn’t really want to accept the fact that new people were moving in, and the property seemed to be thinking the same thing. On the first day the family moved in is when it happened. This loud piercing screech seemed to be drifting through the air and it was getting closer. I knew that sound, the wail of a siren, an ambulance’s siren. One of the kids next door that just move in had met some of the creatures that he shared the property with, most significantly the bees. He had walked right into their nest, and the bees did not like that. He was stung eight times but managed to be OK. It seemed that the house and all the creatures around it wanted Gail and Karl to stay, and so did I.

**Erin
Rosenberger**
Grade 7
John F.
Kennedy
Middle School
Plantsville

How Pigs’ Tails Became Curly

Once upon a time in a small town called Pigville there lived a pig whose name was Harold. Harold lived with his mom, dad, three brothers, and five sisters. He was the oldest of the nine piglets. His siblings’ names were, from youngest to oldest: Pam, Patricia, Patrick, Penny, Phillip, Peter, Peg, and Porsche. There was a family business in which every member worked for at some time. The business was Gerber Electrical. All the Gerber pigs started working there when they were eight years old. They usually did business with pigs with in their neighborhood. The king occasionally called Gerber Electrical when he needed an electrician. Mr. Gerber would always do those jobs at the Pig Palace.

Mornings are always hectic at the Gerber household, but this morning it was more hectic than usual because it was the first day of school. Harold’s mother made her rounds of waking everyone up. Harold shared a room with his brothers Patrick, Peter, and Phillip. They are woken up after the girls who also share a room. Harold woke up at the sound of his sisters fighting over the first bowl of mush. He got up and changed for school. At breakfast he quietly ate his mush and toast while the rest of his family did the usual arguing and

talking about politics and business. His family was always loud but Harold seemed to be different. As he was brushing his teeth his sisters came in to brush their tails, a chore they do not enjoy doing because it takes so long. Pigs' tails are very strange. They collect lots of dirt so everyday they have to brush out the dirt. There is also something else that was different about their tails. They were straight. There was no curl that we know of today.

After breakfast is done the Gerbers head off for school. Harold always leads the way. It's a funny sight to see the Gerber pigs walking "tail in mouth."

In Pigville there is a three- room schoolhouse. Harold is in Room 3 with his brother and sisters, Peter, Peg, and Porsche.

Once inside Room 3 Harold leaves Peter, Peg and Porsche to their friends and he finds his buddies. "Hey Harold!" said his friend Paul. "Hey Paul, how was your summer?" asked Harold. Paul replied, "We went to the beach a lot and visited my cousins at the barn. Where did you go?" "We never can leave because of our business. No one wants to take over," said Harold. "Oh! That stinks!" "Hi Harold. Hi Paul. It's nice to see you again," said Harold's other friend, Pat. "Hey Pat" said Harold and Paul at the same time. Pat and Paul are Harold's only friends. They've known each other since kindergarten. In Pigville pigs only have to go to school until eighth grade. Harold, Pat and Paul are happy because it is their last year but are also a little sad because they all will be going their own ways. Harold is going to stay in Pigville to help his father with the business. Pat is going to a local law school so they will see each other on the weekends. Paul is going to college to be a teacher, but there is no school close by so he has to travel far away from Pigville.

"Please everyone quiet down! I need to make sure everyone is here." said Miss Pauline. Miss Pauline is the Room 3 teacher. "When I call your name you are to say **PRESENT** loud and clear. Patricia Gabb." "Present!" "Paul Gabb!" "Present" That was Harold's friend and his sister. "Pauline, Pamela, and Penelope Gappe!" "Present! Present! Present!" said Pauline, Pamela and Penelope. Those are the Gappe triplets. They are in Harold's grade. "Peg Irene Gerber." "Present!" "Peter Ivan Gerber." "Present!" "Porsche Isabella Gerber and Harold Oswald Gerber." "Present! Present!" For the rest of roll call Harold couldn't stop thinking about how his mother always put their middle names on the enrollment. He hated it! All his siblings didn't like it much either. They never seemed as upset as Harold. He never knew why, but he never tried to figure it out either.

The rest of the week went normally. All the Gerber's were happy on Friday because they liked weekends. Penny, Phillip, Peter, Peg, Porsche, and Harold have to work on the weekends.

On Saturday Harold's father got a phone call. It was someone outside of Pigville. They had an emergency with their electricity, so Mr. Gerber took his car out to that town. He left Harold in charge because he was the oldest. Mrs. Gerber didn't take part in Gerber Electrical. It was a normal day with many calls from neighbors.

Then the call came that changed everything. It was the King. He needed some electrical things done in the Pig Palace. Harold was so happy. He knew

since his father wasn't home, the job was his. He made an appointment with the King for 12:00 on Sunday. The King needed an electrical socket put in his living room. Harold was so happy to go into the Pig Palace. He also was very nervous. He didn't want to mess up in front of the King.

Sunday morning Harold made sure he had all the tools he needed. He set off at 11:30. The Pig Palace was only five minutes away, but he wanted to make sure he got there on time. The King was surprised to see Harold instead of Mr. Gerber knocking on his door. He knew Harold was a Gerber, so he allowed him to enter. The King took Harold to the living room where he was to do the work. It was the first time Harold was in the Palace, so he was amazed by the beauty. "Do you mind if I watch?" bellowed the King. "Nnnnoo" answered Harold nervously. The job wasn't complicated but Harold was a little shaky with the King watching over his shoulder. Right before Harold was putting the cover over the socket, he tripped over his toolbox and backed into the socket. You can only imagine what happened next. "Ahh, my tail!" squealed Harold. The King jumped to his feet. "Oh, my word," exclaimed the King. Harold was all right but his tail was different. It had a curl to it. "Let me have a look at your tail" said the King. "I like how curly it is." He liked it so much he decided to make his tail like Harold's. He took the painful shock and came out with a nice and curly tail. Harold finished his job and went home.

Harold's family noticed his tail right away. They liked it too. Later that day the King rang the bell that called for a meeting. He told all the pigs in Pigville that their tails had to be curly. Some of the pigs stuck their tails in an electrical socket but most curled them with a curling iron. By sundown every pig in Pigville had a curly tail.

On Monday the Gerber household was very happy. Since they changed their tails, they didn't collect dirt so they didn't have to brush out their tails. They liked their new look as did the rest of the pigs in Pigville. After awhile the pigs no longer had to use a curling iron, because their tails were just naturally curly.

**Emily
Duszlak**
Grade 8
Pomfret
Community
School
Pomfret

Journey

The twilight air is breathing
On its own,
The sky weeps with tears
As if it can cry.

The air is silent.
Nothing else can be heard
But the little drips of misty rain.

Filling my nose,
All I can smell is the fragrance of pine,

Along with the raindrops splashing against my outstretched arms.
The frosty mist is exhilarating.

Everything is beginning to feel rational to me now,
As if everything just fell into its place in the world.

I'm on this walk,
On the forlorn journey to everything's existence.
Nobody will ever be able to stall me, nor break me.
I am on this quest alone.
Isolated from everything and everyone.

The air is beginning to creep up,
Like it's walking with me.
Drowning me in its emptiness,
I begin to descend into the depths of nothingness.
I am alone, all alone on this journey.

Yellow Ribbon

The spatter of gunfire
Constant through the hot summer night
Hours of marching
Only to engage in a major battle

The thunder of artillery never halted
The coarse sand struck their faces
Like thousands of miniature bullets

Exhaustion
The troops nearly sank in the vast sand, a gravity well
The sand tugged at the soldiers' feet
Like a seven-foot marlin, pulling at a fisherman's line
Fighting the sand was a war in itself
Are there Yellow Ribbons waiting for me?

The tanks, dwarfing all units on the battlefield
Fired shell after shell
Piercing the eardrum
Like a bull's horn piercing the matador's heart

Charge!
Despite the armor the tanks offered
Despite the potency of the

**Evan
Feinberg**
Grade 8
Fairfield
Woods
Middle School
Fairfield

Artillery, air force, and armored vehicles,
The soldiers were ordered to charge at the enemy
Those brave men were willing
To risk for the country they loved
Will there be Yellow Ribbons if I return?

The resistance was small
But only one bullet was necessary to
Kill a brave American soldier
Shattering life
One life too many was lost

The charge, the advancement of the troops
The screams of those brave soldiers
Resonated to their loved ones at home
As miniature projectiles of death
Ripping through their bodies
Could be heard against
Thunderous explosions and rapid gunfire
Lives lost
And VALOR has a cost

What is bravery? What is courage?
When only half the country wears yellow ribbons?
“Support Our Troops”
Glimmering on the rear windshields, pinned on backpacks

We must measure our heroes
In the faces of those brave soldiers
Whether we support this war or not
That is the face of a different kind of hero.

**Quin
Goyer**
Grade 8
Western
Middle School
Greenwich

Buggin’ Out

Ever since I was little, I’ve always hated bugs. I find them simply disgusting. Their movement is so swift and unpredictable, and they are absolutely everywhere. You just can’t seem to escape from their presence. They are in our homes, our schools, our offices, and our parks. They have existed for billions of years, and they will always be with us. Their presence is inevitable.

Of course, I’m perfectly fine with ladybugs, moths, butterflies, and the like. I find those types quite cute. I even let them crawl and land on me. Even when they get annoying, all I do is playfully bat at them, and I never actually try to kill them.

The types of bugs I hate are wasps, bees, hornets, and yellow jackets. They are incredibly creepy. The look of anger on their faces, their speed, their stingers, their mandibles, the way they hang their legs; they all horrify me. The look of anger on their faces is further enhanced by their blank, emotionless, compound eyes. They are like miniscule, angry yellow jet fighters. They seem to swarm around my head, clipping my ears on every pass. They are so frightening to me that I have trouble even looking at pictures of them. It can get quite upsetting.

Part of the reason that I am so afraid of wasps is that I have Asperger's Syndrome. This makes me extra sensitive to all stimuli, and wasps are quite over stimulating. They buzz deafeningly as they speed past my ear, and they terrify me by flying straight at my face. I get extremely nervous as I try to keep track of where they are, as I have to turn around again and again to keep them in sight. I am completely overwhelmed by them. Also, my Asperger's causes me to panic whenever I see them, which makes them see me as giving in and provokes them to keep trying to scare me off.

Later on, my Asperger's causes me to dwell on it, and this leads me to try to learn about them. I force myself to read about them even as I cringe at the illustrations of them. But the more that I find out, the more afraid of them I become. I learn about how their stingers work and worry about the fact that they can sting repeatedly. I learn about their hive structure and worry about them settling in my yard. I learn about their social habits and realize that they can attack alone or in great numbers. I find out that they eat food waste and become afraid of them hiding in garbage cans. As I become more afraid of them, I try to calm my fears by learning, and the whole thing becomes a vicious cycle of terror.

They move so purposefully, so swiftly, as if they have a purpose that drives them until they either succeed or are destroyed. They *will* succeed, their joint mind assures them. They come out of nowhere, attack, and disappear as quickly as they came. They seem to know everything any wasp has ever known. They seem to attack me with particular ferocity, as if they see my fear and plan on using it to their advantage. Their horrible eyes seem to belie a great intelligence. How else could they create and run such amazingly complex societies? They are like life from another world, they are so alien.

No matter how much I try, I will always hate and fear these alien creatures. They are relentless, intelligent, and seemingly omniscient. They are horrifyingly different from humans, and I detest them more than anything else in the world. As long as I live, these creatures will evoke horror whenever I see them.

Alyssa
Miron
Grade 8
Western
Middle School
Greenwich

Princess Alyssa for a Night

Sometimes we think back to a time when life was a lot simpler and dreams were yet to be fulfilled. I will always remember one particular night that I spent with my sister, my father, and my dear and quite extraordinary grandfather when I was made to feel like the most special little girl in the world. Many years have passed and I'm now in my early teens, but I will always remember this one night as magical and out of the ordinary—when little girls are made to feel like princesses and time is frozen with images captured within the halo of a snow globe.

It was a cold dark night, and the wind was howling. The moon was hidden behind the ominous clouds, and, while the weather reports threatened rain, we were lucky that the large drops had not yet begun to fall. I didn't seem to mind, initially because it was Halloween and I was getting ready to go trick-or-treating with my sister, Jessica, my father, and my grandfather, affectionately known as Popop.

My mother had taken time to dress me in a beautiful blue gown, reminiscent of the dress worn by Cinderella in the wonderful Disney video that I watched over and over each night during those toddler years. Mama took care to put a little rouge on my face and pink lipstick on my lips. She put a bit of blue eye shadow on my eyelids and once she buttoned the back of my blue gown, the transformation was nearly complete. I was dressed to the nines, in a beautiful long gown with the tips of the clear crystal slippers in view under the hem of the dress.

My hair, still quite short as I was barely three years old, was pulled up in a small bun with Mama's best efforts, yet there were wisps of blond curls framing my small, cherubic face. The beautiful silver crown adorned the top of my head and I truly felt like a princess.

As I awaited my prince—my father—to lead me to the ball, I caught a glimpse of myself in my mother's long mirror in her dressing room. I was stunned. The image looking at me was quite stunning, and I could barely contain my excitement.

Daddy called from below, and I walked slowly down the stairs. I made sure that I didn't trip as the dress was so long and I was not used to the small heels on these glass slippers. When I entered the hall by the front door, my grandfather turned and gave me the widest grin imaginable. My father whistled. I imagined myself as Cinderella walking into the ballroom. Heads were turning. The many guests at the ball whispered, "ooh and ahh," charmed by the sight of this beautiful princess entering the room.

I don't quite remember what my sister wore, nor do I remember whether she remarked at how I looked. It didn't matter because the two special men in my life made me feel so special that time ceased to exist and I felt myself alone in the most magical world.

My mother put on my cape—well, it was really my long navy blue winter coat and I took hold of my Popop's hand and walked out to our chariot . . . well, actually we walked the neighborhood, ringing door bells and greeting the

neighbors and getting the most delicious candy treats that a three-year-old could want.

We didn't spend too much time outside because the weather got increasingly cold and nasty. My father and grandfather held these huge umbrellas over our heads to shield us from the wind and the misty rain that was beginning to fall. Perhaps we visited ten homes, maybe twenty. Maybe we were out for an hour. Maybe an hour and a half.

But, before I knew it, the clock began to strike 12:00 . . . and my carriage turned into a pumpkin. The horses turned into mice. And, I found myself without a crystal slipper. My dress turned into my nightgown and I turned to the most special prince in the world and said, "Popop, I code. I code, Popop." And, before I could count to ten, he whisked me up into his arms and said, "Beautiful Lissie. My beautiful granddaughter, come and let me take you home."

It's been many years since that cold, rainy night, but I will always remember it to be a most magical time. I was with the two men in my life who love me with all their hearts and who think of me as their princess. And, I am sure as I grow up and fall in love and eventually marry, I know that I will find my very own Prince Charming. But, until then, I will be warmed by this most precious memory of two men who made a very little girl feel like the most charmed princess in the world. And how very lucky I am to have experienced this unconditional love. Then . . . and now.

Summer Skies

I lie in the dew-soaked grass
and stare up at the gold-flecked sky.
As if—
someone took a giant brush and
EXPLODED
brilliance onto an endless canvas.
My campfire
reaches
 higher
 higher
licking the eternity
with golden tongues.
Grasping hands
with the stars
and
dancing
'til the break of day.

**Amelia
Parenteau**
Grade 8
Wheeler
Middle School
North
Stonington

Daniel
Sellon
Grade 8
Coleytown
Middle School
Westport

Easy Transition

The light that fills the room through my open windows stirs me from my sleep. I squint at my alarm as it flashes 7:00 in rays of green. I rustle my covers and crawl out of bed, my eyes weary, and it make me want to fall back onto the soft, clean sheets of my bed. Grogginess is now overtaking my body, and I fear that the morning will play out slowly.

Proceeding downstairs, I smell burnt bacon and scrambled eggs; the images on my breakfast plate appear in my mind as crumpled sunshine and tarnished leather. My mother turns to me and hands me the plate, barely showing any expression, as she always does. Only a half smile. I struggle to swallow the crisp and tasteless meal yet I sigh, for there is no satisfaction. I wave goodbye to my mother and walk out to the bus stop.

The weather is hazy and moisture begins to accumulate on my hand as I wait. The blue reflection of the city bus turning the corner blurs my vision before it abruptly stops; the doors swing open and I slide into the nearest seat. I can feel the vibration from under my chair as the bus slowly begins to move. There is a fume of old cigarettes that fills my nostrils; it makes me feel dizzy and tired. To pass the time I scan the other passengers. The seats on the bus are filled with mixed emotions ranging from a sense of relief to jollity, all the students waiting to begin the school day. Everyone looks to be happy except for me.

The bus stops at Centertown Middle School and we disembark; anxious and excited, the kids run in groups of five and six, laughing and having a good time. It is, after all, the last day of eighth grade, and I am very anxious and nervous myself. I have been chosen to give the valedictory speech to my class at the end of the day to encourage an easy transition to freshman year. People are smiling at me. It makes me feel better; it really is a wonder how a smile can make a person's day. The facial gestures that surround me are so vibrant that I feel their emotions become mine as well. I pull myself away from the crowd and continue on towards the front of the building. I am soon face to face with the school doors, and when my palm and the handle meet, I feel a cold, clammy sensation. I pull back and enter. After reaching my locker, it is only a matter of time before I feel a tap on my shoulder. I turn around to face my English teacher, Ms. Stevens; I focus on her lips, eyes and facial movements.

"Nick," she says, "I revised your speech, and I think your classmates are going to be impressed. You have a lot of talent, and I'm glad you're putting it to good use."

"The speech is good, but I'll freeze up on stage," I mumble as I scan the paper.

"Don't worry about it Nick, it will be fine. Once you get on stage the words will roll off your tongue. Trust me." I shrug, take my eyes off of her face, and quickly walk to homeroom.

The time is now 8:07 and I am noticeably late. When I open the door there is an immediate reaction and the room stares. I am used to being stared at; I haven't gone a day when a person hasn't stared at me. It's almost ritual for

some people, and today is no different. I take my seat and look down at my watch, waiting for 8:20 when homeroom will be all over. As soon as the minute hand hits twenty, I leave the room before anybody else.

I move through the empty hallways following the same path I have every day, from class to class, a path engraved in my mind. At every step teachers are busy saying their goodbyes, and people hustle together to sign yearbooks. I look up to the clock and it is almost 2:00 P.M. I sit down in a corner preparing for what I fear will be the most mentally challenging event in my lifetime.

It is now last period and my palms are sweating. My heart is racing and I cannot stop the perspiration running down the side of my head. My classmates are now walking to the auditorium; I know that it is time for me to join them for this final gathering. I make my way to the backstage door of the auditorium. I grip the door handle, trying to control the trembling that resonates throughout my body; I close my eyes, pull open the door, and wait behind the curtain.

There is a brief period before my English teacher signals me to move to the middle of the stage. I take a deep breath and proceed onward until I am center stage. The faces of my peers are placid, but the room itself has a vibe of nervous energy. I take a moment, counting to five, and then breathe in. I pour my every emotion into my words. I begin to summarize my experiences through junior high, good and bad. My nervousness is starting to lift and I can talk freely now with nothing to bind me. Looking down at the faces of my classmates, I can see that they are hanging on my every word, and I feel a sense of appreciation. Then, as suddenly as it began, it is over. I see my peers begin to clap, feel the vibration of their stomping feet. I see people cheering, but the silence washes over me. For mine had always been a world without sound. I have always been afraid that having only four senses will be an impediment in accomplishing my goals. Now, after making it through this experience, I have proven to myself that my disability will not prevent me from living my life the way I want to. I am no longer nervous about the transition to high school; rather, I am excited for a new beginning, a greater challenge, and another chance to succeed.

Who's the Enemy?

October 1, 2004 Fallujah, Iraq

The thunder shook heaven and earth, and an unnatural lightning lit the sky. It was a storm the Iraqi people of Fallujah had experienced often, but the only raindrops that fell were those from the eyes of the innocent who lost loved ones. The anger from the victims mounted. They knew action needed to be taken in order to prevent such a loss from occurring again, but they weren't sure how to proceed. A leader was needed . . . soon.

**Alyssa
Ascare**
Grade 9
Simsbury
High School
Simsbury

September 29, 2004 Washington D.C. (two days earlier)

“Mr. President . . . The insurgents in Fallujah are gathering at a rate so fast, that if we don’t take action soon, we’ll never be able to gain control of that territory,” said Secretary of State, Karen Rice.

The government officials gathered in the Oval Office held their breath as they waited for a reply from the President.

“What will the number of casualties be if we let the Iraqis solve this?” asked President McGowan.

“The death toll of American soldiers will almost double, and all the efforts we have put into stopping the insurgents won’t have even mattered,” snapped the Attorney General. “Sir, it’s a clear and present danger, not only to the women and children in Iraq, but to America itself!”

The President tugged at his tie and took a deep breath. “All right, we’ll go in by air. Just be as discreet as you can.”

September 29, 2004 Baghdad, Iraq

American soldiers were a common sight along the streets. The war had taken its toll on the outskirts of Baghdad. It was difficult for Iraqis to travel and find employment. The people had suffered dramatic losses after the last bombing; the Sunni grouping did not help. They had made it habit to knock on every door, every day looking for Americans to execute.

It was about the time of year when it became unfeasible to dress according to the weather. Some days it was warm in the nineties, and other days it was in the fifties. The constant sandstorms made it difficult for some to breathe, and when the sun poked its head over the northern mountains, it was nearly impossible to see in that direction, even with the best of sunglasses.

A soldier, Sean Johanson, thought about the families in Iraq and about his family back home before his general’s voice came vibrating through his walkie-talkie. With beads of sweat racing down his neck and into his army apparel, he answered, “Yes, Sir?”

“Time to move your boys. We have Eagles coming in forty miles west of your current location. You’re needed for ground services. Be ready at the site by 15:00 standard time.”

“All right, Sir. Over and out.”

Sean took a deep breath. He knew that those kinds of missions often involved heartache and danger. The Iraqis blamed America for their losses, and they wanted revenge. It tore at his heart knowing there were young children his kids’ age that did not understand the war and that were victims of the government’s actions. From the past several years of his experience, he knew enough to be over-prepared and to expect the unexpected. But somehow, there was always something or someone he knew he would remember forever.

September 29, 2004 Fallujah, Iraq

Off in the distance, fourteen-year-old Falah Latif Hadi heard a low roar. The noise grew louder and louder, until he saw it. It came closer until it was about a mile away. Then there was a flash from the side of the plane. He did not know

what was floating down. A silver object sped toward the ground. Within seconds, he remembered what his father had told him before he passed away, “Beware of the beauty of the silver bullet.”

Falah turned and began to run, trying to scream to warn the others, but his fear paralyzed his thoughts. Pressure from an explosion forced him to the ground while he was trying to run to a nearby ditch. The sand particles that were blown into the air pounded against his body as the heat from the explosion wrapped around him like a blanket. Falah tilted his head up to look for his family members, his mother and sister. His stomach began to turn, tying itself into knots; the smell of flaming flesh and the sight of his friends and neighbors in pain was unbearable.

The stores he had visited every day during his childhood were demolished, his home burned to the ground. Everything and everyone he loved, gone.

Then just over the horizon, the outlines of American tanks were visible. Falah, now an orphan of war, didn't want to have to deal with *them* again.

“Sir, we're approaching the site,” Sean stated, his heart in his throat. These kinds of situations were never easy.

“All right, be cautious and be on the lookout. We want our boys to come home.”

“I'll do my best, Sir.”

The southern part of Fallujah stood in pieces. Children were looking for their parents and parents for their children.

Sean stepped out of the tank along with his comrades. Suddenly, gunfire began and bullets flew. The Sunni rebels were attacking.

Sean yelled, “Take shelter! Take shelter!”

He began to run, firing his gun while the bullets whizzed by. He dove behind a beat-up house while a car-bomb went off in the distance. He was re-loading his gun when he heard a young teenager crying out for his mother. Sean grabbed the boy by his arm, and slung him over his shoulder. The soldier ran into the house and gently put Falah down, while asking if he was okay. Falah answered by saying he had no idea where his family was, reluctant to give any other information to the American.

“I can help you,” Sean whispered in a soothing tone. “Just tell me what your family looks like. I can help.”

Several hours later, the gunfire subsided. Falah and the soldier stepped out of the house, surveying the damage. Falah fell to his knees and began speaking in incomprehensible Arabic as he choked on tears.

Sean held the boy and signaled for one of his buddies. Sean took Falah back to the soldiers' station in Baghdad after murmuring to his comrade.

October 2, 2004 Baghdad, Iraq

Falah cried till he could shed no tears. His body shook and his face was pale. He hadn't eaten in hours, but food could not satisfy his hunger. There was something else inside him that no one would expect.

Later that morning, Sean, carrying breakfast, walked towards the middle of

the cafeteria where Falah sat. About to sit, he asked Falah how he felt, but as soon as he sat down, the teenager jumped up and yelled:

“Do you Americans really think it’s worth killing civilians, good people like my father, just to disable areas you think might contain weapons of mass destruction? The only weapons of mass destruction are you! You don’t understand what it’s like to live in a place where you don’t even know if it’s safe to walk to school. You say you want to help us, but you’re only here for the last of our money. You just want power. I hate all of you! You kill us and think you’re the mightiest of all nations. You think you’re safe, but look what happened on 9/11. We were able to attack you on your own soil! You think you’re smart with all your technology, but just look how successful we’ve been.”

Falah paused for a brief moment as he regained his breath. He looked at the Americans before him through eyes tinted red by the anger welling up inside.

“You soldiers want to be heroes, but you don’t want to go through the pain. You think you are making the world a better place and that your allies are your friends. Well guess what. The only people that love America are Americans. If you don’t learn this soon, you will be destroyed. I am invincible, you American. I have the protection of Allah. I am the Caliph. Be prepared to say good-bye to the life and country that you love so . . .

Holding a detonator in his hand, Falah opened his coat and displayed a bomb. Sean had to make a decision. He wanted to finish the mission to go home to his family, but he couldn’t risk the safety of all the others. He had to devise a plan.

Then, the sound of a bomb shook the Earth. His body was consumed in the fire caused by the explosion.

It was the last thing he ever saw.

* * *

October 5, 2004 Washington D.C.

“Here, Sean, let me take your bags. You must be tired, that was quite a long flight. I’m sure your wife and kids will be glad to see you.”

“I’m sure they’ll be glad to see me. I just wish I could see them. I don’t know how they’re going to react when they find I’m blind.”

Even though Sean lost his sight, he gained vision from the words of a young teen that had lost his family and the life he knew.

**Andrea
Bonarrigo**
Grade 9
William Hall
High School
West Hartford

Falling

Burning Inside,

Can’t find a way out,

Eyes swell with fear and sorrow.

Ice cold water douses my soul—

No way to stop it.

Getting harder to breathe,

Struggling to keep the fire alive,
Look into your eyes and
Drown in failure—
Wasn't able to meet your
Expectations.

Falling deeper into those grey-blue pools,
Trying hard to overcome—the anger and
Fear spilling out of my body
Draining the liquid that
Extinguished
My will to fight.

Only one thing keeps me up—
The need to try and please.
To fix the wrong
I am certain I made.
One last attempt to hold on

To you—
My idol,
My mentor,
My savior.

One last look and you turn,
So I shall wait to redeem
My soul.
To dominate and conquer,
Until you turn to me once more.
All for that look
In your eyes

That look that says—
I am proud.
To know I am worthy of
Those words.
I will fight.
Until there is nothing left to burn
Inside my body, my life.
I will drain my soul
For you.

**Anna E.
Cordón**
Grade 9
Arts at the
Capitol Theater
Willimantic

Absence of Vanity

Where do you reside
except in the shadow
you no longer cast
over the tiles, lit by the glare
of fluorescent lights?

In the palest glimpse
around a nonexistent corner,
your vanity smothers your dreams. In the memory
of yesterday's desires
the sweetness of the pain
becomes a phantom.

The specter of your gaze,
reflected by the spotlight
that has broken me, and you
are far from center stage.
The tuxedo has worn off
from your intoxicating pride,
sitting in a store window
gathering dust, once your
fifteen minutes
are ended.

Where do you reside,
but in the need for feeling
and in words no longer
echoing, long gone?
Your beauty is thwarted—
you are no martyr.

**Greyson
Gregory**
Grade 9
Branford
High School
Branford

Genocide in Sudan

The crisis in the Sudan regarding the genocide of thousands of people in the Darfur region is a situation that requires immediate U.S. intervention. Similar to the Rwanda genocide, until recently the Sudan genocide has been ignored and allowed to fester. As the most powerful nation in the world, the U.S. has taken to heart its international obligation and social responsibility and on September 9, 2004, Colin Powell told the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "genocide has been committed in Darfur." This is only a start

in preventing further catastrophe and an important step in leading the world to recognize the Sudan crisis, but the U.S. must do more. The U.S. government should do everything in its power, excluding military force, to impose sanctions on the Sudanese government, to influence member nations to contribute to the relief efforts, to encourage peace talks and hold those responsible for war crimes. If these steps are taken, hopefully the Sudan genocide can be impeded and other humanitarian crisis prevented.

As the U.S. is aware, this crisis is taking place in Sudan, in northeast Africa, just south of Egypt, and is the latest complication of a war that has been going on for years. Furthermore, it is taking place in Darfur, which is northwest Sudan. This predicament is being fueled by a nomadic Arab group called the Janjaweed who are attempting to destroy non-Arab blacks of Darfur whom they consider inferior. This is clearly stated in the Junior Scholastic article, "Sudan's Ugly Struggle." The war began with a dispute over fertile farmland that is in high demand by all people living in the Sudan. According to the article "How to Save the World," the Sudan is overpopulated with only seven percent of its land supporting agriculture. Because the farmland is in high demand, the Janjaweed waged war on the non-Arab black Darfurians that have occupied this land. Additionally, the unrest is fueled by oil rich Darfur which the Sudanese government is interested in. Because the Janjaweed are strongly supported by the Sudanese government, they have been successful in targeting three specific ethnic African groups called the Fur, the Massalit, and the Zaghawa. These ethnic groups make up hundreds of villages and tribes that the Janjaweed obliterated. Burning villages, stealing livestock, committing murder, and raping women are atrocities committed and supported by the government. The Janjaweed have succeeded in killing over 50,000 and forced over 1.5 million out of their homes as stated by author Simon Robinson in an article of Time. He also writes that fewer than forty percent of Darfurians have adequate sanitation and over half do not have sufficient amount of food. As we know, this genocide by starvation and murder cannot be ignored. The U.S. and the world must interfere to stop the genocide.

The United States needs to fulfill its legal obligation to stop genocide and punish those who carry out this horrendous crime; this was clearly stated in the U.N.'s convention for the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide. To fulfill its obligation, the U.S. should continue to encourage peace talks between the Sudanese government and the non-Arab blacks of Darfur with the help of the African Union. To persuade peace talks, you must lead the U.S. to institute trade embargos which would obstruct the Sudan and its capital Khartoum from outside support. The U.S. could consult with the surrounding countries: Chad, Libya, Egypt and Ethiopia to secure the borders and seaports of Sudan to help ensure that needed aid could then be safely distributed to the victims. We should declare your intention to prosecute named individuals for their war crimes unless humanitarian access to Darfur is immediately opened as suggested in the *Washington Post* article "As Genocide Unfolds." Confronted by diplomatic and commercial consequences, the Sudanese government might promote peace talks and stop supporting the Janjaweed. Of

course, this can be more easily done by encouraging the United Nations to get involved. We must reiterate to the U.N. that the crisis in Sudan is genocide and that they, themselves, stated during the convention of prevention and genocide that they need to respond to all instances of genocide. All members of the U.N. have a responsibility to stop genocide and should be united, even those countries that have oil interests in the Sudan. Reinforce the U.S. position by reminding the nations that whole cultures are at stake, including theirs, if they ignore the crisis. Remind the U.N. that we must reflect on how genocide affects the world by remembering past genocides.

The Sudan genocide has many stories of men, women and children being victimized just as the Armenian genocide survivors were during the Armenian genocide. The Armenian genocide survivor accounts refer to horrible realities that are also occurring in Sudan. The international community including the U.S. responded to the Armenian genocide by condemning it. Even major world powers advised Turkish leaders that they would be held responsible for crimes against humanity, but a strong action was not taken and in the end a half million Armenians died. We have learned that is what happens when strong measures are not taken against genocide. Some of the atrocities similar to both genocides are women being raped, children losing their families, and parents losing their children, displacement of millions of people from their homes, people being brutally treated and forced to live with dirt poor conditions. In the Sudan, based on these conditions, thousands more will die within a few months which is why the U.S. as well as the world has a responsibility to take act immediately.

The genocide in the Sudan is also similar to the Holocaust which took place in 1942 and is also portrayed in the book Night by Elie Wiesel. Many Darfurians in the Sudan are being forced out of their homes just as the Jews were during the holocaust and just as the main character, Elie, was in Night. Many non-Arab blacks in Darfur are also forced to live in horrendous conditions with almost no fresh water, there is only one faucet per 30,000 people. As stated in the article "Sudan's Deadly Struggle," Hanna, a 13-year-old refugee, witnessed her village being burned and her neighbors being killed as the attackers destroyed everything. As she states, "as soon as I step outside this camp, I know I may be killed." The Jews during the Holocaust lived in terrible living conditions as well. The character Elie conveys these conditions when he explains, "There was no water, no blankets, less soup and bread. At night we slept almost naked, and it was below thirty degrees." The Jews were forced to work to the point of exhaustion. They were forced to run 40 miles to different extermination camps with little rest, and as Elie explains, "Under our feet were men crushed, trampled underfoot, dying." Worst of all they were subject to extermination by gas chamber if the S.S. of Nazi Germany felt that they were not capable of working. The Darfurians are experiencing rape, kidnapping, displacement, starvation and burning of villages. Just as the Jews were persecuted by the Nazis because of their ethnicity, the Darfurians are being persecuted by the Sudanese Government because of their ethnicity. The Sudanese government is guilty of ethnic cleansing, just as the Nazis were.

Even though the U.S. ended the Nazi genocide with WWII, military action in the Sudan may not be the best approach.

Although we should do everything in its power to end the Sudan genocide, we should not take military action for important reasons. As the country knows, we have committed our troops to Iraq, Afghanistan and now recently to Southeast Asia and the entire area that was affected by a tsunami. We simply cannot afford to send military troops to help the victims of the genocide. Also, if we imposed military might on an Islamic State, there would be an outcry by other Arab Muslims around the world against the U.S., and this would have a great negative effect to peace in the Sudan. Even though military action is not plausible, we have a responsibility to stop the genocide.

We not only have an international obligation because of our wealth and power, but have a social responsibility to stop genocides before they start. But in the horrible instance that they do occur, we must intervene. Intervention benefits the world because it stops the cruelty, aids the victims, and prevents it from spreading into other regions of the world. By taking an international stand against genocide in the Sudan, the U.S. is telling the world that governments and groups within a country will not be allowed to treat its citizens in an inhumane way. As Raphael Lemkin, the Polish-born Holocaust survivor wrote, "It takes centuries and sometimes thousands of years to create a natural culture, but genocide can destroy a culture instantly, like fire can destroy a building in an hour." I have learned that the U.S. should take seriously its obligation to help people around the world to feel safe about their religion and ethnicity because ethnic groups who feel secure aid peace in their countries. As for the Sudan, the crisis is already out of control, which is why this country and the world must get involved.

I realize that many Presidents in the past have avoided using the word genocide since it creates a social obligation for the U.S. to get involved, but that trend must end. Genocide is the worst humanitarian crisis the world could experience since it changes the world we know today. We must learn from its past experiences and realize that it's important to stop genocide where it occurs. That is why I commend you for speaking out about the ongoing "genocide" in Darfur, Sudan, but we must do more. We must take the steps to prevent further devastation by imposing sanctions on the Sudanese government while influencing member nations to contribute to the relief efforts, encourage peace talks and pressure those committing the crime of genocide that they will be held responsible. We must call upon the resources of all our social and legal institutions to not only protect the Sudanese people but our civilization.

Campfire

We huddle together on the sodden wooden bleachers,
each straining for a glance of the action before us.
The hum of the forest fills the silent air,

**Anne
Rosenblum**
Grade 9
William Hall
High School
West Hartford

mixing with the drone of mosquitoes and the
restless rustle of campers waiting anxiously.
As the sun's aura fades, darkness descends upon the group
rapidly, drawing us closer together,
wrapping us in its August evening humidity.
I am part of this family, and I too
watch expectantly as a lucky counselor is honored.
The young woman rises from her space on the bench,
humbly acknowledging the applause as she approaches the ring of stones
that is the focus of the entire camp.
She lights a pile of birch logs in several places
and we hold our collective breath as if we were underwater.
Small marigold hued flames slowly lick the dry wood.
The campers, the counselors, the woods, the lake—we sigh together.
I squeeze the hands that hold my own,
those belonging to my closest friends.
Friends that I would trust with my life,
friends I know I can rely on like a lifeline.
People that I see for only two weeks a year.
My heart swells with joy and sorrow
as I join in the pulsing murmur,
a rhythmic, united chant,
“Burn, fire, burn.”
Two weeks, the happiest two weeks of my year are once again coming to an
end.
Now the flames climb higher,
engulfing the heap in color and light and
I feel my soul rising with the sparks, soaring and weaving among the flying
embers.
Another wave of emotion courses through my body as
my enormous family sings together.
With each passing moment we spend encircling the warmth of the fire,
our bond grows tighter, an unbreakable bond that can withstand the test of
miles.
Tears pool in my eyes when the thought of our separation crosses my mind
once again.
Sliding down my glowing cheeks noiselessly
as I tilt my head to rest it upon a shoulder I know will always be there to
support me.
My feelings pour down,
premature heart-wrenching longing
melting into sweet, loving happiness and
mingling with the slightest yearn for the familiarity of my home.
Now we are standing, hand in hand.
The sorrow in my spirit dries up,
carried away by a silvery plume of smoke.

Slowly, the ring dissipates silently into the shadows;
exhausted children stumble towards their cabins for the last time that year.
We leave behind us a glowing, powerful flame,
while we take home our dearest friendships,
aching hearts,
and another summer we will never forget.

The Rain

The rain started to fall in Southern Vietnam.

“Chu-Hou!” his mother shouted.

Chu-Hou sprinted into his fishing village, trying to dodge the rain. He abruptly stopped in front of his hut and a fountain of mud shot into the air.

“Yes, Mama?” her son responded.

“It’s your brother. I’m afraid he was playing in the river again during this rainy weather. I could have sworn I told him not to. Why didn’t he listen to me again? He has four leeches this time! Four!” his mother said in disbelief. “But it gets worse.” Her voice began to taper off a bit to a quiet whisper so his brother, Shin-Choo, wouldn’t be awakened. “I’m afraid he might have malaria.” Rain soaked Chu-Hou collapsed into a chair near the door. He peered into his brother’s room. His brother was silently sleeping in his bed as if nothing were wrong.

“He started having chills earlier this morning, just after you left to go fishing,” she explained. “Then his temperature just shot up, just like your fath—” She abruptly stopped speaking. “You know what I mean.” Chu-Hou did know what his mother meant.

He remembered two years ago when he was twelve years old, his father let him drive their fishing boat for the first time. Chu-Hou was doing great until the rains came, and he lost control of the boat, and it went wayward into rapids. His father abruptly pushed him away, so he could try to steer the boat to safety. Suddenly, the boat hit a rock, and his father flew overboard into the brown waters below. “HELP!” Chu-Hou cried at the top of his lungs. “HELP!” A nearby fishermen heard the distress and rushed to the scene. He then saw a man in the water and dove in to retrieve him. The rescuer, now completely soaked to the skin, dragged his unconscious father out of the water. The men helped bring his father back to the village. He knocked on the door of the hut and his mother opened the it. As soon as she saw her husband, she immediately started to spew out tears.

“He’s still alive!” The rescuer stated, trying to comfort the woman. At that moment his father regained consciousness as he was placed into his bed where he started to moan with violent shakes and shivers. The mother then quickly threw a stack of blankets on her husband. Then she put her nimble hands on his wet forehead.

**Andrew
Taylor**
Grade 9
Simsbury
High School
Simsbury

“He’s got a bad fever.” Chu-Hou cried himself to sleep that night. He couldn’t believe what he had done. When he awoke in the morning, his father was dead.

His mother shook him, and Chu-Hou snapped back into the present. “Yes mother,” he said. “I know.”

“I need you to travel to the next village to get medicine for your brother. You need to leave now!” At that moment they heard a tremendous thunder boom overhead. Chu-Hou raced outside to see what it was.

“Another American plane,” he shouted. “This is the fourth plane today,” he thought. “Something must be happening.”

“Chu-Hou! Stop dreaming and hurry! Your brother’s life depends on you.” His mother walked outside and handed him a pack. “You know where to go.” He knew the closest village was a two day’s walk south. It would only take him less than a day or so on a boat, but he had never been on a boat since that day two years before. His mother walked back inside their hut and shut the door.

Chu-Hou began his trek south along the riverbank. He looked into the brown tinted water and saw his reflection, rippling in the river. He then heard some crackling in the distance up ahead. “Must be an animal,” he thought. Another plane roared above him, heading north. As he was walking he saw something move along the horizon. He squinted and saw little green men. “American soldiers!” Chu-Hou couldn’t believe his eyes. He had seen the American planes, but never real American men. There was a rumor in his village that Americans were giant white people with green clothes. “How odd,” Chu-Hou always thought when he heard this.

Nightfall would be on him shortly, so he decided to make camp. He chose a dry spot in the forest so if it rained again, he wouldn’t get wet. He strolled into the forest and was quickly surrounded by thick green foliage. Water was still dripping from the end of leaves from the day’s earlier showers. Chu-Hou sent up a blanket on the forest floor and sank into it. “Good night,” he said to himself. He then drifted into a peaceful slumber, with dreams of his day tomorrow.

Chu-Hou was awakened with a huge “BANG!” coming near the river. He heard gunshots crackling through the crisp morning air. “Americans are here . . .” he thought. The sun was just coming up, and he was met with a glare from the orange and red glowing sky as he looked toward the river. He saw green men running back and forth, some firing gunshots, others dragging what he assumed to be wounded men. He glanced north and saw what the Americans were fighting. He saw fellow Vietnamese people dressed in yellow and red uniforms. Northerners he realized. He was well aware how cruel and cold they were to the Southerners, his people. However, he didn’t know how they could have gotten here. Just last week, a little Southern Vietnamese army raced through his village recruiting men. One of them had told him that they would face the North and that everyone south would be safe. “What had happened? Did they lose? Were they captured? What about my village? My mother? My brother?” These thoughts raced through his head.

Suddenly a bombshell whizzed over his head, crashing into the trees behind him, snapping branches in half like a twig. “Why are they shooting at me?” he pondered. Americans started running past him, some screaming at him in a different language that he couldn’t understand. Not knowing what to do next, he started running too. As he started to sprint up a steep, muddy hill, he looked back, and all he could see was the green Americans with gunfire trailing right on their tails. His foot tripped on a rock, and he fell face forward into a pile of mud. As he was beginning to get back to his feet, an American picked him up by the collar and started to carry him up the hill. When they got to the top, the American carrying him lost his footing, and they both tumbled forwards down the other side of the hill. Chu-Hou banged his head on a rock, and then everything went dark.

Chu-Hou regained consciousness with a terrible ache in the back of his head. He put his hand behind his head and felt a bandage where the pain was. He opened his eyes and was staring up at the roof of a dark green tent. Chu-Hou staggered as he started to get up, but he was responded with the words of his own language.

“Sit back down!”

“Great,” he said to himself quietly. “I have been captured by the Northerners.” He then saw a man above him. Chu-Hou looked at the man. The man looked just like him, but was dressed like a green American.

“You are safe,” the man said trying to comfort Chu-Hou when he saw the fear dwelling in his eyes.

“Who are you and where am I?” Chu-Hou demanded to know.

“You are safe at an American base. I am a fellow Vietnamese, but the Americans have recruited me as a translator. You have a nice cut on your head there.” Chu-Hou put his hands onto the back of his head and felt the bandage again.

“I need to go right now.” Chu-Hou started to get up, but the man gently pushed him back down.

“You must rest.”

“I can’t rest. I must get back home to my brother with medicine. He has malaria.”

“If it is this important, I can give you the medicine you need, but you will have to go back by yourself. I can give you a map,” the man told Chu-Hou.

Ten minutes later, Chu-Hou was back on his feet with a pack full of medicine. He started walking along the same river that would take him home, and he realized it would only be less than a day’s walk. As he walked, he noticed how peaceful the river area was. He couldn’t wait to get back home and go fishing again.

Several hours later, Chu-Hou arrived at his fishing village. He was welcomed with smoke, flames, and charred huts. Chu-Hou raced to where his hut was, thinking only about his family, but nothing was there. He collapsed to his knees and picked up the ashes of his home. He started to weep and threw the ashes down at the ground in frustration. He heard a rumble in the sky and looked up. The rain started to fall in Southern Vietnam; the ashes were washed away.

Cara
Cherepon
Grade 10
Edwin O.
Smith
High School
Storrs

Nadezhda's Chocolate

The September air was crisp, with signs of yet another cold Russian winter. I rose slowly, facing another dreary day. The one sunshine of my life was at school already. She was so adult. She could always prepare for school on her own. My daughter Nadezhda had already adapted to an unimaginable burden for a child.

I dared to look in our cracked bathroom mirror. I felt as if a stranger was watching me. This stranger would mimic my every move, but it was not me. I knew all about this stranger's life, her family, her past. What made my reflection a stranger was its future: empty, with very little hope.

I touched my tender black eye, wincing. As I gazed into my other dark brown eye, I wondered where my youth had gone. I wondered where my life had gone. I wondered why I forgave the man who gave me that black eye. "Did he ever really love me?" I asked myself. I knew two things. He loved to drink, and he loved to get into trouble.

Nadezhda was his redemption. He loved her, maybe more than he loved me. He would come home with what little change he could stop himself from drinking away, and hide it in a jar. He would say:

"I will never touch this money. We will save it for Nadezhda, and her future." Although I begged him to let me spend the money on a coat for her in the freezing Russian winters, he refused. When Nadezhda got pneumonia, I stole some money from the jar, and bought her a proper coat. Vladimir came home that night, drunk, and found the coat. He went into a rage and started to hit me. That was the first time he ever hit me, and it came as a shock. The pain went deeper with every bruise, and my black eye was by far my biggest bruise.

I ate, and I got ready to leave the house. Just as I was securing the back door, I heard noises down the road getting louder. Sirens could be heard, shrieking like a woman who had lost something precious to her. I ran to the front of my house. The cold air stung my face. Chaos was erupting. People were running here and there. Cries could be heard as the dreadful news reached weary ears.

A neighbor of mine stopped at the sight of me. He looked into my lost face, as I looked back into his sorrowful eyes. He approached me quietly and asked:

"Have you not heard?"

"Heard what?"

"The school. The school has—has been—held under siege."

"The school? By whom? That's impossible!"

"Rebels. Our Beslan School is being held captive by Rebels."

I sank down onto my frost-ridden lawn. Thousands of thoughts raced through my mind, each one more horrid than the last. I had heard of these Rebels. They will do cruel things to innocent people. They had held an entire audience captive once, and are not afraid to sacrifice many lives besides their own.

"Dodya, Dodya, are you all right?" He asked gently, as I responded with a faint nod. "We need to go to the school. There is talk of getting some children out safely. There is no word of how many of these rebels there are. Come Dodya, pull yourself together."

I rose, and a feeling of faint warmth reached my stomach as I looked up into the grey sky. A hint of blue could be seen amidst the bleak clouds. Nadezhda needs me now, more than ever. She had always been there for me when Vladimir came home drunk. I ran back into the house, yanked on my thin coat, locked the door, and ran towards the school.

I had never thought about the distance between our house and the school. It was only about a mile, but with every step I took, it seemed farther and farther away. My legs wanted to fly to the school, but my lungs held me back. Finally, we got to the school gates. There were hundreds of anxious parents, all waiting for news of their children. No parent should ever have to wait for the news of his or her child's life. I stood there gasping for breath, trying to make sense of the hundred conversations going on at once. It seemed as if everyone was talking, but no one was listening. My chest gradually stopped hurting from the cold. My fingers could no longer feel the frigid air.

I was becoming numb to my surroundings. I tried to send thoughts of happiness to Nadezhda. I have not seen much happiness in my poverty-stricken country. We hold on to what little happiness we can get. I rummaged through my thoughts, searching for sunlight during a storm. The only happy thing I could think of was the candy shop in the town centre.

My mother had always spoiled me by giving me some change at the end of every week and sending me off to that old candy shop. My friends would buy licorice, or perhaps other sweets, but I would get the same thing every time: bittersweet chocolate. After I married Vladimir, my mother disowned me, and I had not had chocolate since. I wondered if she was right to warn me against him. I missed those birthdays with chocolate. I would tell Nadezhda a story every night about my youth. Her favorite stories involved chocolate. I would end each story with a promise. I promised her chocolate, I promised her the world. I wished she knew that if I could fulfill my promises I would have.

Reality struck my ears. A loud bomb exploded. The ground trembled, but not nearly as much as my heart. Parents started screaming, and shouting. A fireball rose into the air. Volunteers rushed by. Firefighters were scarce, and police were nowhere to be seen. Parents pushed past the gates, and each other. Some parents rushed in the school to help, others just stood in shock. Crying children could be heard in the distance, growing louder and louder. With each child's shriek or cry of agony, I could feel my heart break, but somehow it kept beating.

Then they emerged. One by one, bloody children came out on stretchers, or carried out by volunteers. My sore black eye was nothing in comparison to the pain inflicted upon these children. Some were covered in debris. Some were shrieking in horror, while others were shocked, like their parents, into silence.

I scurried around, trying to help. I went and retrieved water from a truck and supplied it to many children. The sky was getting darker, as I still searched for my Nadezhda. Then it came. The sound no parent wants to hear. The listing of children killed. I could feel drops of rain slowly fall down on me. Then I heard it. Nadezhda's name was called. It rang through my ears as the screams and cries around me ceased.

It felt as if I was no longer alive. Nothing inside me worked. My heart stopped beating, my lungs stopped wheezing, and my blood stopped flowing. I blinked; tears flowed out of me so much my eyes hurt. I looked around wildly through the injured children for one that looked like my own. The rain was falling heavy. I started calling:

“Nadezhda?! Nadezhda?!” No reply came, so I cried it louder. “Nadezhda! Nadezhda!” Louder I cried. Louder, louder, louder. My throat was throbbing from my screams. “Nadezhda! Nadezhda” I screamed until finally I collapsed from exhaustion. Thunder could be heard rolling in the distance.

A sliver of light started to shine. It made me feel warmer. As the light peeked through the clouds, I could feel my chest swelling. My body felt warmer and warmer. The light was becoming so bright that I had to squint my eyes. Then I heard it.

“Dodya! Dodya, where are you,” a faint voice shouted. Growing louder with each call. I found my voice and called back.

There were two voices now. “I’m here. I’m Dodya!”

“Dodya,” one was deep and strong.

“Dodya,” the other voice was soft and gentle. I raised my head.

“Nadezhda!” I cried.

“Mama!”

She came running quickly towards me. We embraced for eternity. Looking down at me was Vladimir. Sober. Apologetic. More importantly, there was my Nadezhda. They helped me up. I practically fell back down with happiness. Vladimir surprised me by picking me up and carrying me the entire way home. He stopped only once, to buy Nadezhda a bar of bittersweet chocolate. She shared it with me on our bright walk home.

**Molly
LaFlesh**
Grade 10
Rockville
High School
Vernon

Sour Apply Jolly Rancher

Hey, so I guess you look
Alright today.
Your hair’s not too screwed up,
Your eyeliner’s been applied evenly,
Your jeans fit you really well,
You have cute sneakers on.

I know you hope he agrees with me,
That you look good, and you have a
Beautiful smile,
And nice legs,
And that hoodie looks awfully
Inviting, and that lip gloss adds
Just the right touch.

You sit there thinking about
How perfect he is,
Not five feet away,
Sounding even more nervous
Than you feel,
And you're thinking how
You wish you could ask him
To go see *The Incredibles*
With DeDe and Justin and Heather and Diana and Sam,
Like a double date, plus three girls,
But you can't, and you won't,
And your good hair day
Is wasted,
And your beautiful smile
Is stained green from a
Sour apple Jolly Rancher.

Blind Strength

“Mommy! I need more water!” My mother would scramble out of bed, feeling her way down the dark stairway to get me a drink. I remember she was scared. She tried to make reason out of how sick and miserable I felt. I constantly needed something to drink. I went to bed crying for water and woke up begging for more. As a nurse, my mother had noticed some of the early signs but hoped her suspicions would be wrong. Instead, two weeks before my much-awaited first day of kindergarten, I was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes.

I spent three days in the hospital. Along with learning to read and tie my own shoes, I learned how to give myself shots and take blood sugar tests.

For a five-year-old, staying in a hospital is frightening. And it didn't help that I was under the care of a student intern to take my blood tests. “Shaela, do you want a butterfly?” he had asked in a sweet voice, winking at me while I considered. I was under the impression that I would be receiving a beautiful addition to my gloomy bedside. “Yes, please!” I replied. I was horrified! The “butterfly” was a deceiving name for a type of needle. To worsen the situation, he had to repeat the procedure multiple times in order to get it right. After the third trial and third failure, my mother demanded that I see someone more experienced. Living with diabetes was not off to a great start.

“Your diabetes makes me sick!” a classmate once said to me. That comment has been imprinted on my mind since the second grade. I went into the bathroom and cried at recess. I went home and cried in my room. When coming home upset became a ritual, my mother advised me, “Punch a pillow and yell all the horrible things about diabetes you can think of!” Although I made that a daily effort, my eight-year-old anger continued to escalate.

**Shaela
Mullaney**
Grade 10
Mercy
High School
Middletown

I had made up my mind. I wasn't going to do it anymore. I wasn't going to take needles if everyone else I knew didn't have to. I didn't want to live like this anymore. When I solemnly told my mother this, she sighed. She had secretly hoped it wouldn't come to this. It is one of the hardest things she ever had to do, but she knew I needed and deserved the truth. She placed me on her lap and calmly whispered in my ear, "Shaela, you either take your insulin and you live. Or you don't take your insulin and you die."

Often diabetes provides a challenge. I fainted from low blood sugar when I was in third grade. I fell on the stairs and blacked out. From then on, everyone kept a closer eye on me: teachers, nurses, and even the school janitors. When my classmates brought in cupcakes for their birthdays, I had to wipe the icing off mine with a napkin. If my class went on fieldtrip, the chaperone brought juice and crackers in case my blood sugar became too low. "You can never be too careful," my teachers said.

High school brought more freedom socially and more options for spending my time. The restrictions that came with diabetes hadn't changed along with my new lifestyle, but my attitude had. I was fed up. I was worn out. I secretly didn't take my insulin off and on. My friends, teachers, and even my parents were oblivious. I couldn't make my life easier, so I made it dangerous.

At one of my regular hospital check-ups, my world halted for what seemed like an hour. All my tests came back incredibly high. They were so horrific that my doctor thought there was an error. They were so horrendous that my mom couldn't speak. I was left in the hospital room, staring at my test results. "Dangerous" was the range I had put myself in. I had put myself in line for blindness and leg amputations by the time I was thirty.

I had hit an all time low in my life. The thrill of rebelling against what was right had been a huge mistake. In that cold hospital room, I decided I was going to turn my life around. I have continually received lower test results since. I am now in the stable range.

My parents have always been committed to making diabetes just one part of my life, not something that consumes it. It is more important for me to be identified as a teenage girl than as a diabetic. Diabetes is self-control. I prick my finger at least four times a day and give myself an insulin shot every time I eat—even if it's two crackers. There is no present cure for diabetes, but I have great hope for a future one.

I sometimes resent that I have diabetes. But I realize that God gives me the strength to overcome all obstacles. I have always had my life and health in my own hands. I will never use diabetes as a crutch or ask for sympathy. Diabetes has made me more responsible, independent, and aware. Diabetes is not one of my weaknesses; it is one of my strengths.

A Stone's Throw Away From Nowhere

Dancing on the streets that luminously tower above you, asking for another to stimulate your newfound glory, you write a story about the time you broke the peace treaty thrice, but wouldn't inform anyone.

Upon the battle lines you make them quiver in their shoes, and take not into account the gasoline driven superpower you hope to gain—don't let it strain you into thinking dawn is coming all too soon. It's not. It's a (bloody) stone's throw away from nowhere, and you can't help but realize the celestial calling, your new craze, on the pavement lying.

But the dawn-treader came at noon to take you to the bridge—
Of the moon, at the doorway of the stars, between here, there, and now.

Now it hurts to look yourself in the face, and the inquisition pains you with memories of black death and opium haze.

Offer the praises and pay your dues, but the lustrous dues are more important than the drab praises, and the rituals oh-so-droll. The rib-vaulted ceilings can't hold up your hypocrisy.

Who was it that suggested our tyranny, from today and into tomorrow? Why did they make the mistake of exclusion and the inclusion of exclusion well-honoured?

Take it somewhere else—
Make someone else feel ashamed.
Be true and stand up tall
And remove from us the blame.

A rather valid point was missed about two thirds of the way back, a mile away from your psychedelic reunion with some man who's swatting flies. He and Tam Lin are running around seducing little girls, taking their coats among other things.

The apocalypse is now and the apogee of time is setting in upon us. We're all running around in animated-melee with the animals from the farm in turmoil.

One or another played poker and lost, and with the humans did they so. (Did they? No.)

The Grand Guardsman has been all the while watching you watching him, and mind you he took notes. So escape from the reality, renounce the actions and be free from the bonds holding you to this mortal world.

Harry
Tokarz
Grade 10
Hamden Hall
Country
Day School
Hamden

**Gretchen
Tucker**
Grade 10
Edwin O.
Smith
High School
Storrs

To Be Loved

He huddled, small and round, behind the dumpster. The metal was freezing and his clothes held little warmth for him. His denim jeans had a hole in one knee and the skin underneath was scraped. His shirt—red plaid—was short sleeved and thin; the sweatshirt covering his arms was zipped right up to his chin. It had been his seventh birthday present from his mom. He'd felt so cool, having a brand new black sweatshirt. He'd immediately started wearing it to school—even though it was too hot for sweatshirts. But now he was cold. The wind whipped at him, slicing past the protection of the metal barrier—the barrier that blocked out the world—the world that blocked out him.

He could remember the day that it had happened, nearly two months earlier. His mom, as she drove along in the car, had been talking to him, explaining why she couldn't keep him.

"I have to go," she'd said. "I'm sorry, but I have to go to Hollywood. I'm going to be famous. And when I'm rich, I'll come back for you. I'll have enough money to get that hideous tail removed. Then you won't have to suffer any more; then you can come back with me. We'll live happily in Hollywood, and nobody will know that you had a tail. Don't worry; I'm coming back. I promise." I promise, his mother had said. He'd tried to hold onto that, tried to believe her, but he knew it wouldn't happen. She wasn't coming back.

"Jeremy," she'd said, "I want you to know I love you." Then she'd left him on the side of the road, by the park. He remembered how'd he'd chased after the car, screaming, and crying, begging her to come back, hoping it was a bad joke, and knowing it wasn't. He'd run for a while, hoping she'd change her mind and come back. She didn't. When they'd lived together, she'd acted like she loved him—most of the time. Sometimes she was mean. She'd buy a candy bar, and not buy one for him. Or she'd get his favorite, Almond Hershey Kisses, and wouldn't share. She told him chocolate was bad for little kids, and even though he'd plead, she wouldn't give him any. A few times, he'd snuck candy when she was watching TV, that's how he'd come to revere Almond kisses. He liked to think that they had tails, just like him. He never told his mother about that though. He knew she'd just laugh. And he knew she couldn't possibly love him—if she did, she wouldn't have left. Tears sparkled in her eyes when she'd told him, and he'd wanted to believe her then. He'd kept trying since then, clinging to her words. Seeing the look on her face. But then again, she wanted to be an actress.

He remembered a time when he slept over his friend's house. Shawn's mom, when they were going to bed, had come in and said good-night to both of them. She'd said to Shawn: "I love you," and kissed him on the forehead. Jeremy had been confused. Why hadn't his mother ever said, I love you? He asked her when he went home the next day. She didn't have an answer, and from then on, she'd said it, but not meant it. She'd come into his room, pull the covers all the way up to his chin, kiss his cheek and say, "I love you," but it always seemed forced. Jeremy told himself it was all in his mind, that his mother

really did love him, more than he could imagine, but he didn't always believe himself.

The bell on the door tinkled, jolting Jeremy back to life. He scooted towards the back door, awaiting the slight flow of warm air coming from the gift shop. A man with an apron hurled the contents of a trash bin into the dumpster and a banana peel slipped over the side to land on Jeremy's sneakers. The man didn't notice. Jeremy was invisible. Or at least he felt that way. He longed to follow the young man back into the store, but the owner didn't want him in there. The first time he'd tried it the grouchy old man had told him not to come back. Jeremy usually had that effect on people; he unnerved them, almost always. The manager had been wary, nearly afraid, of the small boy. He didn't know that Jeremy slept behind his dumpster.

A memory came flooding back to him again. He and his mom had been at the park. She'd been walking along while Jeremy skipped on ahead of her, grinning from ear to ear. He'd been maybe five, and a lady had stopped them.

"Oh, what a handsome young man," she leaned down to look at him, but as he grinned up at her wrinkled face, she recoiled. Then with a strange glance towards his mother, the lady had walked off abruptly. Jeremy hadn't understood then, why the lady had left. But a few years later, he made a discovery. People were alarmed by his tail.

Jeremy didn't think it was that different. Or that bad. It was just a little brown tail, like a monkey's, that curled at the end. He had actually found it quite useful through the years. It was so much fun to swing from branch to branch on a tree, to feel the wind whipping through his shaggy hair. But others, they didn't understand. They saw his tail and were frightened; they didn't want their children to end up like that. But to him, and only to him, it was special. It was something that set him apart. That actually made him Jeremy. And it was fun.

He shivered again, as the wind tore through his thin clothes. A blanket of chills covered him, but instead of warmth, he felt only cold. His skin prickled and could see his breath when he exhaled. He rubbed his hands together inside his shirt. A tear dripped down his cheek; Jeremy expected it to freeze in place, to be a permanent symbol of his loneliness. It didn't. The droplet streaked down his skin leaving a clean path behind it, stark against his grimy skin. The wind's strength died down, and the small boy's shivers stopped.

But the harshness of the cold, so unexpected had scared Jeremy. He needed to find somewhere else to go. Somewhere warm. In his mind, he pictured a full bathtub, a sea of foamy bubbles with steam rising from the water. He thought back to the days when he lived in a house, with his mom, when a warm bath had been in his reach. When he'd dreaded bath time, like any other little kid, and now, ironically, there was nothing that he wanted more. Except, perhaps some warm soup. But most of all, he wanted someone to love him. He wanted his mother back. He missed her, but that feeling was mixed with resentment. He wished she hadn't left, and he hated her for doing it. For leaving him. His eyes tickled, they threatened to fill again, threatened to spill down over his cheeks, but he wouldn't let them. He was ten years old—too old to cry. He

blinked and the drops clung to his lashes, but they didn't fall. He shook his head, tried to clear his thoughts. He forced thoughts of his mom out of his mind and concentrated on not feeling sorry for himself. He didn't want anyone else's pity, why should he have his own?

Jeremy looked at his hands. They were normal. So was the rest of him. Except his tail. It was bizarre, he knew, but was it really that repulsive? Should it really have caused so many problems? And then he wondered, if I'd been born without it, would she have kept me? He didn't know. But as Jeremy thought about it, trying to make sense of his life, he knew deep inside, that it wouldn't have made a difference. Even if he was normal, she would have found an excuse. His mom had never quite loved him the way he knew other kids were loved. He saw the love in other places, and at others' houses, but more than that, he knew it in his heart. It was a heavy burden that had no logical backing, but it was there. And he knew it was right. And yet, despite all these unpromising circumstances, Jeremy had hope. Hope that someday, he would be loved.

**Adam
Wilder**
Grade 10
Edwin O.
Smith
High School
Storrs

Bittersweets

Once upon a time in a small suburban town
Where you always see smiles, and seldom see frowns
Lives a lovely young female who's known all around
And the name that they gave her is Ms. Hershey Brown

All the guys would say that Hershey was mighty fine
But she was much better, quite possibly divine
Her features and personality intertwined
Gave off a special aura that would make her shine

Peanut butter complexion with silky smooth skin
Shaped like a tear drop, stayed very healthy and thin
See her chocolate chip freckles whenever she grins
Her hair straighter than the strings of a violin

Lived on 5th Avenue, her singing you'd enjoy
Her voice was a Pot of Gold, bringing Mounds of joy
Symphony quality songs, brought about the boys
Begging for Kisses seemed to have the mood destroyed

Then there was a boy named Alfred, kind of a Nerd
Butterfingers in sports, books he rather preferred
Yet Alfred had a crush, as it seemed to occur
And it was on Hershey Brown, the swan of all birds

You may think them as a couple could seem absurd
But poetry gave him a unique way with words:

“To the one and only, Ms . . .

Hershey brown, healing hurting eyes with her heavenly appearance
Highly thought of by hooting homeboys hollering “Hey Hottie”
E Intelligence not intimidating but intrigues idolizing boys
R Imitators attempt to integrate her style, fail to interest
S Jealous chicks jabber about her jacket she jacked from jocks
H Jocular juvenile insults don’t jam or jumbled her even for a jiffy
E Kindness kindles my internal knight, a confident one, not crazy like Kane
Y Kisses from her better than winning keno, knockout non-kinky feeling
B Loathing living lonely and lonesome, looking for a lovely loving lady
R Liking Hershey’s lively character, sheds light on my load of darkness
O Maybe my medley of mind and manliness might make her marvel with me,
W More so bore her in my inability to manage muscular mass like football
men
Now as I nicely end this nuisance of a poem about my neighbor, just to confer
Needing to knock next door and show Hershey my nightly need for her”

Alfred could express himself through his words for days
But around Hershey he’d get tongue tied and amazed
He couldn’t mumble one word, never mind a phrase
He told himself to plan to find a better way

But it was a failure, Alfred’s quest for romance
He once again mumbled and ogled in a trance
His glasses fell off right when he had the best chance
Luckily enough, bending over split his pants

Hershey’s laughter reverberated through the halls
A “HAHA” would bounce off every single wall
So Alfred ran away with his confidence mauled
But he dropped something that was crunched up in a ball

When she picked up the paper, her elation ceased
The feeling she got was worse than being deceased
Cause on the sheet was the poem that Alfred wrote
And it made Hershey Brown’s heart begin to float

Now things have severely changed as one year has passed
Alfred switched schools and now he is having a blast
All the brainy girls love him with his sweet kind soul
And they talk about politics on late night strolls

Chad
Frisbie
Grade 11
Branford
High School
Branford

But Ms Hershey Brown got the poo end of the stick
She's old news to the boys, no longer the "hot chick"
All she ever needed was a shield of armor
To protect her from the vicious bite of karma . . .

The Smashing of the Bottle

Dreams are scary. Sometimes, amidst the confusion of a dream, Elijah would find a revelation of the more candid intentions of his mind. Dreamlike, the falling snow took serpentine form as it connected with the road ahead. The snow snakes climbed the truck and slithered across the windshield, serving only as a rude reminder of the bitter night. They were impulsive. They seemed too alive. But this was not a dream.

Elijah looked at his father, who drove the truck. There was a comfort in his eyes that Elijah could not tolerate for too long. His father was a reputable man in town. People often sought him out for advice. Elijah could not see why these people would so willingly entrust their problems into his father's hands. Looking down at his own hands, which he thought were small and ugly, Elijah wondered whether or not they were trustworthy.

A shadowy man loomed ahead through the snow and waved to Elijah's father. His father gave an affected smile and pressed the horn of the truck. The man faded away.

"Sad," said Elijah's father in a superior tone. "He'll never regain himself. Caught his wife with another man."

"Oh," said Elijah, uninterested. When it first started, he was always surprised that his father would release such private information. The meetings were meant to be confidential. In these situations, Elijah had learned to ignore his father purely for the sake of his father's clients.

"She left him a while ago," said his father. "He was devastated, of course, and soon after they found him passed out, half-dead on his kitchen floor. Overdosed on painkillers. Vicodin."

Elijah waited a moment to see if his father would say anything else. He didn't, so Elijah said, "Really. That's interesting."

"You know what else. He bought the pills from that faggot with the broken leg. Remember him?"

"Faintly," said Elijah. He tried hard not to remember, but the story remained vivid in his mind. A man was mugged and pushed into the street. His femur was crushed by a car. The man went to Elijah's father. His father's job was to restore the man's dignity. In one of the sessions the man confessed his homosexuality.

Elijah's father spoke with a smile, "That's another story. Anyway, ever since this guy tried to kill himself he's been coming in more often. I try, but it'll never work out for him. A lost cause. I can just tell." His father's eyes

gleamed with confidence. “Just like I could tell his wife was cheating from the get-go. I’m good like that.”

The roar of the truck ceased. They were home. The house was not nearly as extravagant as one would think it should be, considering Elijah’s father. People rarely stopped by.

“Hey, could you do me a favor?” asked Elijah’s father. He handed Elijah a paper bag. His father got out of the truck and winked as he said, “Carry this in. I’ve got two more in the back for me.” He exhaled. A ghost of cold air swirled around his face.

“Sure, dad,” said Elijah. He grabbed the bag of liquor bottles and rushed toward the door of the house. On his way, Elijah fought a mental struggle. He wanted nothing more than to fling the bag into the trees. In this one act he felt everything would be resolved. But as reality set in, Elijah realized any attempt to stop his father would lead to the same miserable end.

At the doorstep, Elijah noticed birds on the power line above him. There were seven crows. Farther along the power line, as if repelled by the crows, was a single dove. The birds watched Elijah from the power line. Troubled, he shut the door tight and took a seat on the sofa. A wave of weariness immediately carried him off into a dream. He was not awake when his father threw the door open, allowing a wintry gust to invade the silent house.

“Break them all!” screamed the black crow, perched atop Elijah’s right shoulder, talons cutting into his flesh. “Break them like you broke your mother long ago. Don’t you have any self-respect?” Elijah was still and unaffected. “Smash his bones in, so that the world will never know.” The bird hissed in his ear, snake-like and unearthly. Elijah remained still.

To his left side, he sensed a vacancy. The space, which was usually occupied by a white creature—a warmth he could so easily relate to his mother—, was just as reassuring, empty or full. To this space, Elijah clung, and he tried to ignore the black bird chewing at his ear.

“He’s at it again,” said the crow. “He’s at it, like always. Don’t you care?” The crow sank its talons deeper, but Elijah did not feel any pain. “Smash his skull. Make him bleed for his crimes—for what he’s done to you!” Elijah winced. “He’s drunk again, you little shit! He’s drunk again! And do you know why?” The bird crooked its head around to stare Elijah in the face. He avoided the black bird’s icy eyes that bore into his own. The bird lowered its voice and slowly said, “Your mother, you little shit.” Cawing, the crow recoiled, as if sickened by Elijah. “Do you remember where your mother is? Do you remember now?” questioned the crow. “Your father avenges your mother, or so he says. So, why don’t you give it a try? Or, better yet, avenge yourself!”

Elijah fought back his anger. Triumphant, he willed the bird away, and it was no more. But Elijah sensed another voice calling out his name. The man’s voice was rough, as if he had been screaming all night. Off to the side, magazines and knives fell with a cacophonous clash. Elijah heard a breaking bottle and woke up.

It was dawn. The air was frigid and stank of whisky. Elijah's stomach ached with hunger. Squirming on the couch, Elijah tried to place himself in the path of a sunbeam and closed his eyes once more.

"Where are you? You little shit!" his father yelled.

Elijah peeked out from behind the couch and saw his drunken father, a massive shadow against the morning light. As his father hurled himself forward, Elijah noticed the wooden bat in his hand.

"Where are you?" screamed his father.

This was the father Elijah knew. Somewhere, between the first shot of whisky and the smashing of the bottle when it was empty, Elijah's father shed all deception. He was no longer the illusion of a sympathetic man. Elijah's father managed to move closer to the sofa, rhythmically beating the wall with the bat, gradually increasing tempo until the bat broke through dry wall. Elijah remained unnoticed. He gathered the blanket and prepared an escape, eyeing the gap through the kitchen. But his stomach belched a loud gurgle that echoed throughout the room. Elijah's eyes connected with the eyes of his father.

He knew those eyes from childhood. Where had he seen them? Red snaking veins of hate and disgust. Monster eyes that breathed revenge. Deep black holes with no end. Staring at a picture. Yes, this was it. Tearing. Kneeling on the ground. A long time ago. Tears falling. Staring. Beautiful picture. Beautiful woman. Beautiful moment. Gone.

In a fit of rage, his father swung the bat, sending an innocent lamp into the wall. The image shattered, and Elijah scurried away.

"You killed her, you little shit!"

Again, his father swung the bat. It flew through cold air.

Words tumbling, his father screamed, "She g-gave you life, you shit. And you kill her? A baby. Not even cruh . . . crawling like the f-flicking piece of shit that you are!"

He struck the armrest of the sofa with such strength that the bat splintered. Elijah's father made a desperate lunge for the boy. The man tripped and hit the floor with a fleshy thud. Elijah, as usual, ran for the back door, into the wilderness to wait it out. He grabbed the box of cereal sitting on the counter and jammed his feet into boots a size too small. Then Elijah took one last confirming glance at his father. He was dormant on the floor.

The air outside was not as cold as the day before. The sunshine enveloped Elijah, who, blanket and cereal in hand, went to his usual spot deep in the wilderness. He settled himself in the nook of a boulder beneath the evergreens and began to eat. Then he heard a soothing sound, and moments later a white dove landed beside him. Elijah smiled and fed the dove a handful of cereal. A few more doves appeared. He fed them all. The white birds offered comfort with their angelic eyes, assuring him he would never be like his father. Gazing at the fresh evergreens above him, Elijah began to wonder what his mother was like.

Untitled

Hidden behind old sweaters that reeked of mothballs in the back of the deep dark closet of the two-bedroom rundown apartment, lay a young girl curled up in a ball slowly rocking back and forth, crying herself to sleep. For the third time this week it happened. She found herself lost in thought, entrapped by the overwhelming trepidation of what would be that night when he arrived. Thoughts of leaving often crossed her mind, but fear of him held her captive in his world, ever wondering. What does freedom taste like? How does happiness feel? What is it like to see clearly? What does life sound like? How does a fresh cut rose smell? Instead she knows not of these things. She tastes the bitterness of being under his control, feels the sorrow as it fills her heart, is blinded by the fake realism created in this place. She hears the screams of death creeping behind her as she slowly slips away, smells a wretched unknown stench that hangs thickly in the air.

While she lay there in the closet trembling in her sleep, the door creaked open. Footsteps slowly neared the closet door. The door to the closet slips open, scrunching up like an accordion. "Child, c'mon outa there nah," spoke an older woman with a slight southern drawl. She was a robust woman, and wise in her age. The girl obeyed and came out of the darkness into the light. Only to reveal a partially swollen left eye, puffy with some ooze seeping out of the corner. The bulbous tissue surrounding the eye was bruised, not quite black and blue, but more of a deep purplish color with a slightly odd texture. Her clothes lay draped over her body, completely tattered. The woman, strangely enough, did not appear at all in shock. "C'mon nah let's getchu washed up and fed right." Timidly the girl replied, "B-buh-but . . . The woman interrupted, "Nah child, dontchu fret none, ya know as well as I do, dat ol' boy is gone out da door early on ta get his needs fo t'night. Reckon he fixen ta do some mo'e of his hustling out on da streets. Ain't nuttin can be done fo' him." Again she choked out more words than she could swallow, "I-I-I," Once more she was cut off, "Hush nah, ya hea', get on down there an I'lls getcha cleaned on up."

She followed the woman down the narrow hallway, where pictures hung meticulously on the wall, not a one out of its own particular place. A left turn led to the bathroom, upon entering the room she shuttered as a single tear rolled down her cheek and fell to the floor. Both were so silent at this very moment that the teardrop seemed to have broken through the sullen atmosphere and echoed in the room, ringing furiously against the walls. The older woman gently held the girl. Knees weakening, she could have lost it at that moment, but instead gained composure with one deep breath.

With a damp, sudsy cloth the woman began to address the wound. She removed the girl's shirt only to reveal welts of various shapes and sizes displayed across her torso. Once exposed the woman also found a large, deep cut running across the girl's back. She proceeded to cautiously disinfect the cut, careful not to cause any more pain. The woman dipped the cloth into witch hazel and dabbed it on the open gash. The girl cringed as the anesthetic was

**Kayla
Goulette**
Grade 11
Killingly
High School
Danielson

applied to the sore. As her back tingled over in numbness, a harsh memory flooded her mind.

She was standing in the bathroom, so was he. He was intolerable; he chose to pick a fight. She hates it when he comes back like this. He cursed at her, yelled right in her face. Told her to get out of the bathroom, even though she was in there first, getting ready to get in the shower. The water ran in the background, somehow over his yelling this is what she heard. The strong scent of gin and tonic lingering in his breath made her stomach churn. Gradually, he got more violent, picking her up. Her body came crashing down into the tub. "Fine, get in da showa den!!" The hooks that fastened the shower curtains popped off one by one, she landed on the water faucet, which gauged along her back. She shrieked in pain. Water ran in the tub, blood trickled from the crack, sprinkling into the water, tie-dying the curtain. Her mortified cries rung down the drain pipes.

A chill ran down her spine. Maybe it was the cool compress on her back or perhaps what had just appeared in her mind so vividly. She gasped for breath. "Ya okay hunny, it'll be aight, jus calm yaself nah." She began to control her breathing. "Na getchaself ready fo breakfast. Got some ya favorite hot-n-ready on da stove," the woman said, hoping to lighten the mood a little. Her efforts remained futile; the girl was depressed and moped to the kitchen. She sat down and draped her head toward her plate. "Girl nah ya ain't hardly even touched those grits." With her fork she stirred the grits, taking a nibble every now and then, pulled off a piece of her biscuit, and crumbled her bacon into bits. The teapot shrieked; startled, she jumped and was again taken aback.

Late at night, shadows lurking. Slowly creeping behind as she frantically runs through the hall, stumbling with each step, pictures fall off the wall, she keeps looking back over her shoulder—never look back. Don't dwell on what's behind, recognize it, know of it, but don't dwell upon it. Too much time spent looking back instead of concentrating on what's ahead. She fell into the chair at the kitchen table. He caught up to her, found her struggling on the floor. He grabbed her by one arm, dragged her into the bedroom. From there she was thrown onto the bed. "Nooo!" she cried out. As he came toward her, she kicked him, right in the groin. He doubled over in pain, rolling to the floor. She rushed for the door; he reached out and took hold of her ankle. Now she, too, was on the floor, trying to break free like a fly caught by the wings, pinched between a giant's fingers. With renewed strength he rose to his feet, his arms now around her waist. Never did she once give up; she kicked, screamed, and wriggled in his arms. He slammed her into the wall. She could hear her bones crack, her heart throbbing in her chest. Looking to her left she could see a stain set in the rug. He stood above her. Reaching down, he yanked her up off the floor, his fingers dug into her skin. She was paralyzed, couldn't move, couldn't think, then she had a sudden outburst, "Mama D!!! Help! Help!" He jerked her back and forth, each time her head would bash into the wall. "shutcho mouf," he boomed in his deep husky voice. In came Mama D, the robust woman. "Now boy, ya bes' put that girl down, that wint no way ta be treatin her!" As he held her up against the wall he turned slightly to his

mother, "Mama you jus stay outa this befo 'ya getchaself hurtin too." Mama D knew of this, too, but she swallowed hard and marched right up to her son. Before she could act he swung around, letting the girl come falling to the ground, and punched his own mother. He then devoted his energy and aggression to the girl. He held her down on the bed. As she tried to push him off he raised his hand, curling it into a fist, knocked her out cold. Rain fell from the sky. Pitter-pattering on the roof drumming down the gutter. Engulfed in darkness, nothing left. There she lay on the bed, frozen in the night. The teapot's hoarse voice broke free. Her eyes popped open. She saw the night all around. Beside her lay him, the man who beats her, supposed to love her, but—no—he batters her. His words hurt her more than his fist could ever. She awakes not wanting to live another day, hoping one day she will be free of all this, and wondering, wondering what happened to her.

Casually she glanced at the clock, "May I be excused please, M'am?" The woman, too, then looked at the time, "Yes'm, I think ya oughta." And so she went solemnly down the hall. She saw the pictures perfectly placed in order as if nothing had ever happened, that's the way this world works, nothing ever happened, at least not to the average observer. No one else knows. But looking beyond, one may see that nothing is as it may appear.

As she walked into the bedroom, she stepped on shattered glass. The mirror that had broken during the fight. She looked at herself in the shards of glass. Her head screamed, "ugly what he does, it's just plain ugly. Look at this, look at you! HE's done this, him! His words, his hands. Leave him, leave this place, go now!" She walked out of the room into the bathroom, she knelt down and touched the curtain, which now hung seemingly perfectly in its place, but flipping one side to the other the abstruse droplets of blood which stained the curtain are visible and forever remain; nothing is perfect. Images flashed in her head, embedded, burned in her mind. Physically, she will heal; emotionally, mentally, she will not be the same.

She found Mama D in the kitchen. "I'm goin home. Ain't commin back dis time." She looked at Mama D. "I know child, I know." A stream of tears fell slowly down the girl's cheek, "I thought he loved me, I really did, but dat's jus not what love's about. An I was jus too afraid. I didn't know." "I know, hunny" Mama D said, embracing the girl one last time. "An I wantchu ta know dat I will always love you, even if he was too blind to see. An maybe someday he will change his ways and get himself outa all that. He needs a good girl like you ta set him straight." She jumped up into Mama D's arms. "I love you, too. An I'ma miss ya so much."

The girl walked out the door and out of their lives for good, head held high, a changed person. A single tear fell to the floor and all that was left in the woman's life was an empty abyss.

**Thea
Linnemeier**
Grade 11
Arts at the
Capitol Theater
Willimantic

Even a Fish

Even a fish in the sea,
with miles of water
wants to see the sky,
choke her as it might.

If I could taste the air,
feel it, touch it,
disembodied like a fish flying,
unrealistic—like a bird,
untouchable like the sky
stratified above me,
buffeted by winds,
my unattainable dreams.

Unfeasible like a fish with wings,
no desire to attain them,
ambition slips through
like saltwater between fins,
like wings through water.

The drag of my wings
holds me back,
foggy currents tow at my back.
I slouch and strain
and give up.

Why should I struggle?
Why bother now—
nothing matters; I'm not living yet—
I've not yet seen the sky.

**Áine
McCarthy**
Grade 11
Waterford
High School
Waterford

On the Brink of Something Beautiful

Everything inside me is waiting
To take _____ off
Like
I've gathered up all my goose feathers and I'm _____ Perched
On the brink of something beautiful.

I am understood only
By the stars
Who burn and yearn
To
 Fall
So we may wish beneath them.

I wish for wings
And receive whispers,
Beckoning,
From my radiant sisters
Inspiring the dreams
Before my dreams
Pulling me into
White, silent space
Where possibility dwells in the
Moonlight illuminating my bed sheet
Like a blank page
Like the open sky where
I dare
To fold my wings easily like a paper crane
And suddenly,
Forget to obey gravity
Forget all the endings I wrote in every story
And just begin and begin and Remember

Feathers falling from a blue heaven decorate my dreams
They surrender to the wind
Swirling down on the earth like snowflakes
Changing the color of the world
To birth it anew
Into the day

The world is fresh when I awake
The page has been turned
And my pen is poised for flight
A sound rising within me . . .
My whole soul sings
With every song that speaks of wings
And Everything inside me
Is underneath this suffocating ceiling
Staring through the skylight
Wondering
What am I doing here?

What am I waiting for?

Beth
Scorzato
Grade 11
Newington
High School
Newington

Selling Out

I didn't like her haircut.

It was the first thing I noticed when she walked into the coffee shop. It was too severe, too sleek: chin-length, straight cut, smooth, platinum-blonde. The last time I had seen her, it had been long, uneven, and wild, strands hanging in front of her face. There had been paintbrushes stuck into the back, leaving red and blue streaks in her otherwise naturally honey-blonde hair. She had just finished her latest work. She had called it *Freeing*. It was a self-portrait. She stood in the center, arms outspread, hair everywhere, eyes staring right into your soul, surrounded by all the good things in her life: her dog, her paints, her music. Me.

As she reached the front of the line she put her purse on the counter: big, black, leather, square, prosaic. She never used to carry a purse. The last time I had seen her, the oversized pockets of her paint-stained overalls had been bulging. From gum to paperclips, money to paint tubes, we had taken twenty minutes to empty all the things out of them that night, down to the last thumbtack. I doubted she even had pockets now. Wearing a form-fitted pinstripe skirt-suit, she no longer left anything to the imagination. She looked good no doubt, but then again, she always had. But somehow she seemed less alluring now. Less mysterious.

She ordered herself a coffee: hazelnut, two creams, no sugar, and a dash of cinnamon. At least that hadn't changed. Neither had her voice. Soft, thick, and smooth, it was the kind of voice that could soothe a rabid beast. The last time I had seen her we were sitting in the loft, the dark outside separate from our warm world in her bed. That same sultry voice was putting me to sleep as it sang along to Sinatra. I remembered smelling her. Her perfume was strongest, jasmine-sandalwood. But it was naturally mixed with hints of oil paint and brownies. I remembered the smell.

But vividly, I also remembered, too well, the painful new world that I awoke to the next morning: an empty loft, a quiet kitchen, and a note.

I'm putting my degree to work.

I'm going to work on Wall Street.

I can't be a Bohemian painter forever.

I don't see you supporting me in my decision.

I'm leaving you.

She'd never even asked me.

As she turned to go, she saw me sitting there, staring, in the most remote corner of the shop. Of course. Papers scattered all over the table, my laptop crowning the heap, I was the perfect picture of unappealing disorganization. With my faded, ripped jeans, old black tee, uncombed hair, and unshaven face, I was in direct contrast to her new, uppity Wall Street style. You'd never have guessed that just a year ago we had known each other intimately.

She smiled.

"I read your book," she said.

"I like your haircut," I lied.

I Just Realized (2004)

Oooohhh I'ma tell Mama, that's what my sista
said when she caught me doing things I
ain't have no business I
use to say yo yo get out my business I
use to say I
wish I
was the only child.
I
wish you would leave me alone I
wish there was a call for little sisters and you
were gone. Ha.
It's funny when your wish comes true
when you don't want it to.
It's funny when you regret
and the deed
is already done.
Being alone
for three years
ain't all that fun.
When I look back it wasn't all that.
S**t reminiscing I
thought I
was the best at what I
had, I
had a lil' sista
that love me to death.
She use to come home from Nathan Hale
and tell me about her day without wasting a breath,
she was my
#1 fan on the sideline win or lose she
always had my
back,
louder than my father screaming ALEX, ALEX,
never cutting me
any slack.
She was the moms while moms was overseas.
I'm lonely I
wish she was with me
Babygirl was my scapegoat when the world had
my throat, I
am irresponsible.
Everyone I
love I
lose.

Alex
Williams
Grade 11
Manchester
High School
Manchester

If I
could turn back time I
woulda left
with my sista because I
just realized how much I
miss her.
This fear I
feel being alone I
guess it's my
punishment for saying leave me
alone.
In my mind I'm
in the wilderness and my
heart
is paralyzed.
It's sad that I
always lose someone
even sadder that I
just realized.

**Lindsay
Carini**
Grade 12
Mercy
High School
Middletown

Grandpa's Chair

I remember the day it swallowed him
I had been confused, and angry, and young
I had predicted that it would eventually happen
The foreshadowing events were ominous
It was just a matter of time
The day was warm, and sunny
Too warm and sunny
The day it swallowed him

I had always hated it
The poly-blend fibers, and the wooden frame
Had stolen him from me
He could no longer remove himself from its clutches
to hug me in his arms
I cursed it under my breath

The beast and man began to fuse
Into a single, overwhelming entity
And it slowly sucked away his vitality
It was a lost battle
The wooden frame became his own skeleton,
and the fibers, his own skin

It disgusted me
The way it held on
It prospered as he withered
The rips were mended each time I returned
Each dilapidated arm replaced with pillows
Bungee cords holding the bed sheet in place
It was a regular trophy of Yankee ingenuity
I wished that he would escape
Give up and replace the old with the new
Yet he, like the beast, was holding on,
Refusing to admit defeat
When it was obvious and looming

Then he was amputated
And the beast remained
Yet without its captive
Like Chillingworth, it was no longer the leech
It became just a chair
Just wood
Just fibers
Just blankets and pillows
And I saw how ruined it truly was
How broken
And tired
And worn
And how empty it was . . .
and I sympathized
And forgave it.

Facing the Rain

I sat by myself in the booth and stared out through the stains and fingerprints on the window. My eyes followed the intricate patterns that the speeding raindrops formed on the glass, set against the dark grey sky and smeared spots of light emitting from street lamps and gas stations in the distance. The conversations of people around me and noises from the kitchen did not reach my ears. All I could hear was the rain beating on the tin roof of the tiny diner, rushing through the gutters and forming puddles on the uneven surface of the old cement parking lot, puddles that I planned on walking through when I left.

The burning cigarette in my hand was neglected, along with the cold coffee that I had not touched since mindlessly emptying five packets of sugar into the cup before remembering I hated sugar in my coffee. Having a cigarette was an old habit of mine for when I felt stressed or aggravated and couldn't find another way to relax.

**Melanie
Conway**
Grade 12
Newington
High School
Newington

It wasn't until I sensed a pair of eyes watching me that I noticed he was across the table from me. He sat hunched over in the booth with his elbows resting on the cold linoleum tabletop, rubbing his hands together. I didn't know how long he had been there, or whether he had tried catching my attention earlier. I looked at him: at the bags under his hazel eyes that I used to be able to read so well, at the stubble on his face that he had neglected to shave for the past few days, at the stoic expression of his mouth. His hair was wet from the rain and pointed in every direction, the same way it did when he ran his fingers through it when he was stressed.

I tried to remember the last time he called me "beautiful." Once I was the most beautiful person in the world to him, the only woman that could captivate his thoughts and evoke that smile that reached from the left corner of his lips and released his unforgettable laugh. The laugh that used to ring like music and fill me with energy and was always followed by his hand pulling my face closer to his, so that he could press his warm lips against my forehead and wrap his arms around my shoulders. It was only an echo now, and an embrace between us would be like one shared by two strangers meeting for the first time.

I tried to imagine how it was that two people who spent the past two and a half years of their lives loving each other now felt like strangers. My mind wandered to earlier that night, to what happened before I grabbed my keys off the kitchen counter and stormed out of the apartment we shared. I saw myself crying and throwing my arms around in a rage as he sat on the edge of our bed with his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands.

"Why don't you listen to me?" I screamed, while all he ever did was listen.

It was hard to see myself acting that way; my behavior was very out of character. I heard myself shouting about how he didn't appreciate me, or spend enough time with me, something of that sort. My voice was strained and unfamiliar.

"I don't know what else you want me to do," he pleaded with his innocent eyes, searching for some kind of resolution.

I tried to think about why I was complaining again, as I had been almost every night for the past few weeks.

In reality, he wasn't the reason for the change in our relationship. I was the one who was acting differently. Two weeks and three days ago, the problem began. I was walking home from the bookstore that was around the corner from our apartment, carrying the book of poetry that I had bought tucked in between my arm and torso above where my hand was resting in my coat pocket. As usual, the sidewalk was crowded with people moving in both directions. I would occasionally glance at someone walking by me, but most of the time he or she would be all in too much of a hurry to say hello or smile. Yet this day, there was one person that met my glance. It wasn't just any person. When I met his eyes, I recognized him immediately and a sickening feeling came over my body. I felt a familiar rush of heat, and the fear and helplessness that I felt six years ago when I looked into those eyes as I was being raped returned to me in an instant.

All of the years I spent trying to forget that night, all of the years I spent learning how to trust people, all of the years I spent feeling comfortable and peaceful with someone all disappeared when I exchanged that glance and my past resurfaced. My nights no longer consisted of serenely sleeping next to the person that created stability and hope in my life, but instead were torn by violent nightmares that kept me up worrying about being touched the wrong way. I was suddenly lost again, so I took it out on the one person that didn't deserve it or understand why.

I didn't know why I chose to make him suffer, not anymore than I knew why I put sugar in my coffee and lit a cigarette when I have been drinking my coffee black since I was eleven and quit smoking three months ago. I tried avoiding looking into his eyes, because I knew the glance we shared would be empty. I couldn't stand feeling empty any longer. I watched my hands fumble with the spoon lying on top of the napkin next to my cup of coffee. The nerves in my stomach grew, and a lump formed in the back of my throat. My tired eyes searched the ceiling and found a small dent set to the right of a dim light fixture that I focused on in order to stop the tears from emerging and soaking my cheeks. I would wait for the rain to do that, but first I needed to form the right words with my tongue and say what happened to me out loud for the first time in my life. We will go from there.

My Life As A Nice Girl

It has always been portrayed to me that life is a race. And in this race, the finish line would look somewhat like this: Right in first place would be the bad guys and the bad girls. They'd have tattoos and nose rings and they'd have big bottles of vodka in their hands—riding through the finish line on motorcycles and yelling at their parents. And in the back of this line would be the good guys and good girls. They'd be wearing sweater vests, and spraying a can of Lysol to distinguish the smell of Marlboros left by the heathens in the front of the pack. They'd cross the finish line and shake everyone's hand, waving to their parents and taking time to use a little hand sanitizer when they were done, because they know the germs that are out there.

I would be one of these nice girls. If you're a nice girl, you know it. Now . . . a nice girl is not to be mistaken for a good girl. A good girl gets good grades, and abides by all the rules, and is, ultimately, innocent. Anyone can tell you that I am not a good girl, but I am by far a nice girl. I can be spotted miles away—sitting and watching the football game while my guy friends devour buffalo wings and spill beer on themselves. (Don't worry, I try to cover up my yawns.) I get shoved in the spontaneous wrestling match between guys debating over which team will win the game, and I find a frozen bag of corn to place on the loser's now-elbowed eye. I sit with him in the kitchen while he mumbles some stupid football statistics that I will never understand, and agree with him when he repeatedly states that his team should have won.

**Kaitlyn
Fenner**
Grade 12
RHAM
High School
Hebron

I'm that girl at dinner with the two couples that drool on each other and the guy who will forever be a friend, but he needed a date. I sit there and listen to him talk about the "hotness" of the girl at the next table, and, when I go to the bathroom, I simply smile when he jokingly suggests that I write his number on a stall. When I come back and the girl at the next table is making eyes at him, I curse myself wishing that I had saved my bathroom trip for now so that I could go and throw up. I watch as these guys date or lust over each and every self-centered, trashy, insecure, flirtatious, and flighty girl they come into contact with. And then tell him how much better he is without her when she runs off with his best friend or the captain of the football team because, after all, he's only the water boy.

At times, I wonder how many tops or pairs of shoes I could have bought with the money that I have lent to these boys: the forty dollars to Brian when he was down and out, the twenty for Jason's gas that he promised he'd give back, the numerous bills from Christmas presents that I spent hours picking out, only to get a "Thanks babe" as it got tossed under his bed. I mean, if you were to ask your typical single guy, he would tell you that he would love to date a nice girl. However, when faced with such an opportunity, he will claim that "I love her . . . like a little sister," or "There are no such things as nice girls. They're all evil." These guys will then sit and continue to complain about how all girls are "manipulative" and "gossipy" and wonder why in the world they all go to the bathroom at the same time.

Maybe the only thing that keeps me sane, is the hope that one day things will change. That the girl with the least clothes won't always get the guy, and parading around in heels to appeal to a guy's testosterone-filled desires won't get you as far in life. One day a nice girl will not be cast aside, but she will be considered for that Saturday-night date and will be considered more than a friend and not just "one of the guys." But until that time, I propose a toast to my fellow nice girls. You know who you are, and I know that, you too, are sick of being treated as a doormat. You're sick of blind boys and the nasty, malicious females who seem to bless them with sight with their alluring ways. My advice to my fellow girls is: don't lose hope. Nice guys do exist and will someday realize that nice girls exist as well. Guys will one day open their eyes and zip up their pants and see what has been sitting on their living room couch for months. Fear not; your day will come. And perhaps your prince will, too.

**Vanessa
McBride**
Grade 12
James
Hillhouse
High School
New Haven

Battyman Fi Dead

It was a hot day on the island. The towns were quiet and calm. There was no way to escape the heat, not even a breeze to cool down the beach. Venders were on every block selling bag juices, kola champagnes, ice cold water, anything to satisfy a quenching thirst. Nettie, Marlon, and I sat in Muma's shaded veranda drinking bag juices with a portable radio sitting on a sill. While the music played in the background, we watched the kids play around the old

Rasta man's house with his three-legged dog. The radio show introduced the reggae request hour. Marlon turned up the volume:

***“Battyman¹ fi dead
nuh man nuh fi have another man in a him bed”***

It was Marlon's favorite song, but I never found it so entertaining. I would look at a whole mob of guys that would get rowdy the minute they heard this song or any of the hundreds played before. I joined them most of the time so that I wouldn't look strange. Soon afterwards, Muma called us in for dinner.

Everyone in town knew Ms. Arlene as Muma because she helped raise nearly every child in the town. Mothers brought their newborns to Muma for a blessing. She even helped my mother deliver me and named me Joel after her late son. When I was little, she would give me sweets whenever I came over to visit. She would say, “Only good boys and girls deserve Muma's sweets.” Since then I'd visit her everyday to keep her company. Tonight she cooked ackee and saltfish with fried dumplings—my favorite dish. She always made a good heaping meal for anyone who came over.

I looked around the room. Muma decorated her home with religious paintings and objects from corner to corner. By the table she has a plaque of Jesus kneeling by a rock looking up to a ray of light; the plaque reads “*Give us our daily bread.*” Another plaque by the couch was a picture of John baptizing Jesus in the Jordan River. At the bottom it reads, “*I'll be down by the river, waiting for the good Lord to pass my way.*” I stared at the plaque for awhile. That plaque has been there longer than I could remember, but for some odd reason, it caught my attention like it was the first time I had seen it. Jesus was barely covered with a small white cloth leaving His sun-kissed skin bare, glistened with sweat soaked with the Holy Waters. He looked passionately into the eyes of John the Baptist and grasped unto his robe. John held onto Jesus bare in his arms raising him from the waters. The image entranced me; I couldn't take my eyes off this piece of art that immaculately captures the passion of the Christ. Something about this image consoled me. I felt warm inside and at the same time a knot developed at the bottom of my stomach. The trance abruptly stopped by Muma's sharp voice:

“Joel, mi nah go send yu home wit no empty stomach. So come and eat while de plate still warm.”

“Yes, Muma.”

I sat down at the table, Marion sat next to me, and Nettie sat across from me fiddling with her braids. Muma set the table with old crystal glasses and woven placemats that she made herself. She placed the heaping dishes of ackee and saltfish before us. We bowed our heads, said grace, and ate. Halfway into the supper Marlon started ranting on about “Battyman Fi Dead.”

“Everywhere I go I hear, I just stop and dance,” said Marion.

“Why is that so, Marion—all the violence, why you like it so much?” asked Nettie. Marion shot back at her, “So what you support de chi chi man² dem. I

¹ A homosexual *Battyman fi dead*: “A homosexual must die.”

² *Chi Chi man*: “a homosexual.”

don't know about you, but a chi chi man mus dead. If I meet a fruit, me and de guys a give dem a coppa an lead.³ Bun dem right, Joel?"

I wasn't listening too much until I heard "bun dem."⁴ "Bun dem" set ablaze a gay, Burns him at the stakes. Burn on cavalry . . .

"Joel you deaf, me say "Bun dem," said Marion.

I snapped back to reality, "Oh yeah," I was hesitant "Bun dem."

Muma overheard us talking from the kitchen, "Bun who?"

"A chi chi man," said Marion

"Don't talk such twang before me table. Lawd a mercy, what is this world coming to. Sinners corrupt this God-fearing country and have no shame or repentance for their wickedness. Thank you Jesus for sparing these three children."

She touched my shoulder. It sent my heart racing followed by an uneasy feeling in my stomach. I hoped no one noticed the terror in my eyes. I quickly smiled at Muma to ease her. She walked back into the kitchen and we continued our supper.

Later on, I walked Nettie home while Marlon stayed to chat with Muma. The night was cool—a relief to the scorching day. A group of men drank Red Stripes at the country bar while playing dominoes. Further down the road only the moon lit the pitch-black countryside. We didn't say much. Nettie looked down at her old rugged sneakers and I looked up at the starlit sky. It nearly frightened me when she said something to break the silence. "I don't know why Marion like those songs so much. Whatever happened to artists like Bob Marley or Garnet Silk? All you hear today is 'Bun dem' and 'hang dem'—nothing about love and peace. Sometimes I wonder how Marlon and I ever got together. We have nothing in common." She paused, "how come we never got together Joel? We were friends since primary school. And you were there for me whenever I needed you. Honestly, I thought we were gonna be together forever."

I couldn't say anything. I wanted to be there for her, but I couldn't, it didn't feel right. "I don't know Nettie. I thought we were just friends. I didn't want to risk ruining our friendship if it didn't work out between us. When Marion asked you out, I thought that you were happy."

"Marlon is nice when he want to be. But you—you are so different from the other guys. You don't care for the violence . . . sometimes I think you sympathize for gays," said Nettie.

I felt my throat tighten up. "I don't care for the violence true, but I don't sympathize for gays. It's an abomination."

We fell silent again for the rest of the walk to Nettie's house. I hope I didn't offend her. I did like her but not the way she would want me to. I would glance over to look at her with her eyes fixated on the ground. I wanted to say something, but silence was smothering me. We approached the house. The porch light was the only glint of light that I could see through the distance.

³ *Coppa an lead*: "copper and lead bullet as if shooting."

⁴ *Bun dem*: "burn them."

Nettie's two dogs lay on the patio lazily not paying any attention to us coming towards them. We stopped at the foot of the steps. She looked at me and smiled, and then she leaned over and kissed me.

"Good night," she walked up and went inside.

I stood there for a while not really understanding what just happened.

"Good night." The words were almost silent coming out of my mouth. The walk seemed longer going home. I returned to Muma's and found out that Marion had already left. I was going to get my backpack and say goodnight to Muma, but she told me to stay. I sat down at the couch by the plaque and she sat across from me. She had a worried look on her face.

"Is everything all right Joel? You don't seem to be yourself today. In fact, you haven't been yourself in quite awhile. Is something troubling you?"

"No, Muma. I'm fine, just a little tired." I wasn't lying.

"Here take this in the morning, it's ginger root. Boil it and drink it while it hot. It make you feel a little better."

"Yes, Muma."

"Alright, g'wan go home it's late." She followed me to the door.

"Goodnight." I walked out, she smiled and close the door behind me.

I lived three houses from Muma but it felt like a whole mile. I got in, kissed Mama good night, and went to my room. I laid in bed looking up at the ceiling. It was hard getting to sleep that night. The crickets outside my window were louder than usual, the wind hissed at me, and all I could think of was Nettie kissing me. I couldn't figure it out: not why Nettie kissed me, but why I didn't kiss her back? Why can't I feel for Nettie what she feels for me? Why am I gay?

Gay. It was word I dreaded all my life; that and any other word similar. Pastor Roy preached about "indecent acts" that men and women practiced and how God will show no mercy when His wrath is unleashed. Unnatural lovers will perish and will be summoned into the bottomless pits of hell where the impurities of their flesh and lust-seeking souls will burn eternally. I couldn't play with the guys or hang out with girls because I was afraid of getting "too excited." That somehow God, who knows all things, would remember, and when I approach the Judgment, He will condemn me to hell for getting aroused during a game or raunchy football. So with that I stayed to myself, went to church, confessed my innocent sins praying that God would be merciful and allow me to enter the Gates of Heaven when the time comes.

My mind flashed back to Ryan—Ryan Porter. It was like I had seen him just now. I had a clear picture of him in my memory: smooth caramel skin, light brown curly hair than shined when a sun ray hit it, and deep hazel eyes. We knew we were alike—other than being the same age. He never asked me, and I never told him, but we knew. I was fourteen when it happened. He and his parents were going to leave for London. I felt awful; he was my only friend and I was going to lose him.

We walked to the old abandoned churchyard two days before he was to leave. He said, "I'm going to miss you." He looked over at me to see me in tears. He hugged me. We held each other close and we kissed. Together

we were in another realm with no beginning of time and no end. I didn't want to let go and it felt as though he didn't either. Two teenage boys were walking down and saw us.

One of them hit me in the back with a stone, and the other younger one ran to Ryan's folks to tell them what he saw. We looked at each other. I saw nothing but terror in his bright young eyes. His parents were a lot stricter than my mother. They once kicked his sister out of their home for having a child out of wedlock. We were too scared to go home, but we had no other choice. I walked him home on the way to mine. I looked over at him. His body was trembling. I wanted to hold him, but that's what got us in trouble in the first place. As we approached, I could see Mrs. Porter with an old cable wire in her hand waiting for her disobedient son to pay the consequences. Ryan stopped before approaching the steps. He look at me and forced himself to smile through his tears assuring me he would be fine—a bold lie. “Goodbye, Joel.”

I choked up. I felt a lump in my throat. I wanted to cry but I wanted to act as tough as he did.

Mrs. Porter didn't even wait for me to walk away before she grabbed him by the arms and whacked across the back. Strike after strike he yelped—a helpless creature beaten before all to see, humiliated. I stood there stiffly; I cringed at the sounds of his cries. I wanted to take him in my arms and run far off to a place only we knew. She rose up and wiped the sweat off her brow while my Ryan laid there defenseless, ashamed to look up at me. She noticed I was still there. She shouted, “Yu betta run go home b'woy for I give yu this!” I looked down at Ryan, but I didn't want to leave him. She raised the old wire. I jolted, turned around and ran as fast as I could, crying as I listened to his howls of anguish.

I ran and ran and ran. I ran from the pain of reality. I ran from God's wrath. I ran from myself, although I knew I couldn't escape any of these agonies. I collapsed before the front of my house sweat, coughing, and gasping for air. Dirt stuck to my wet cheeks. I lay there weeping, twisting, and turning. My back throbbed from the stone. My stomach ached when I thought of Ryan lying there; it made me vomit. I hear Mama run out. Apparently she heard about what happened by the time I reached home. She dropped down, lifted me up and held me in her arms. She screamed, “Why God!/? Why my son!” I must have passed out because the next thing I remember was waking up the next morning and Mama caressing my head, crying. She bathed me and placed into clean clothes. I rose up a bit, my back still tender. She looked at me.

“What did he do to you?”

“Nothing Mama, we just hugged.”

“It's all right you don't have to talk about it.”

Apparently the young boy told a far fetched story to Ryan's folks that he had raped me. He was the battyman and I was the helpless victim. The entire town heard the rumor. Some people that the town claimed were “citizens doing their job” reported it to the police. Ryan was going to be sent to trial on a charge of rape and buggery.

“No mom, it's not true!”

She wouldn't listen, "Shh, hush my child, you're safe now."

I knew what she was trying to do. She knew the truth; she was trying to protect me. I didn't care though, I wanted the world to know that what we felt was real—this was no indecent act.

As the days went on, Muma kept me home while people would visit. They kept Mama updated with the latest news. The Porters couldn't leave for London until the trial was over. A man came to visit Mama and told her that all she had to do was testify that saw me in pain after my incident with Ryan. They had enough evidence to convict him. The trial began three days later. The public prosecutor didn't allow me to testify, explaining to the court that I was "too traumatized by the event" to make a clear statement before the court. There were so many things brought before the judge to "prove" Ryan's crime: pictures of men collected from his room, semen found in his briefs he wore that day, even a note that Ryan was going to give me that was signed "Love, Ryan." The trial made me sick to my stomach. I would look over at the defendant's chair; Ryan sat there, eyes to the ground, defenseless. I felt as though he was ashamed of me: I disgraced him. He became a sacrifice for me. The trial lasted a week. That last day Ryan stood before the judge. He was found guilty on both counts and was sent to jail for seven years with "hard labour." Walking out, Ryan glimpsed up at me and smiled. He whispered "It's all right." It was the last I've seen of him before he was gone—for good.

Today would've been Ryan's release date, but it was too late for that. He was found dead a month ago in his cell. Guards said he has killed in an "unexpected" riot that broke out. He was beaten beyond recognition. No longer could I see his deep hazel eyes. His sweet caramel skin was now black and blue. They could even have a decent funeral. Mr. and Mrs. Porter didn't bother to return from London to see him. He was cremated three days after they found him. Mobs reveled during his cremation, chanting "BUN DEM!" I could hear the chanting from my window. I lay there in bed that day crying in agony; sickened by the lies and angered by the truth—a truth that only I knew through the only letter he wrote to me:

My Dear Joel,

I am awaiting the day to see you again. I was never ashamed of you and what we had. The days seem long, like time would rewind a couple of hours back just before I go to sleep at night just to torture me. But I have more to fear this time. It's a war in here. They have a special rape unit for people like you and me. I go there every three nights. It doesn't hurt anymore. I'm too strong to let them. They try everything to torture me, clean toilets with only my bare hands, water and soap. They even keep my cell open to see if other inmates can break the batty bwoy. But they never will. They can do anything they want; it will never take me away from you. Don't worry, my love, I will be strong enough for you and me. I'll see you soon.

*Love,
Ryan*

It was all too late for that. I rose up out of bed, went to my drawer and took out me revolver. I put in only two bullets—one coppa' and one lead. I left Ryan's note next to mine:

Dear Ryan,

I'll see you soon.

*Love,
Joel*

The End

Jennifer
O'Brien
Grade 12
RHAM
High School
Hebron

The Old Man, the Child, and the Country

An old man sits in the dirt
His wrinkled face like tanned leather
Contrasts pale blue eyes
That speak of a lifetime of starvation.
His skeleton figure, crippled and broken
Tells of malnutrition and disease.

A child bleeds in the street
Her lifeless body sprawled out on asphalt
Encompassed by a crimson pool
Gleaming in the midday sun.
She was slain by the guns of men
Who fight among themselves.

A country lies in smoking ruins
Held captive for the sake of democracy
But where is the mighty Lady Liberty now?
Soldiers come not as missionaries
But as scavengers, vultures, thieves.
They will surely strip the carcass of its prime meat.

This is here, this is now.
This is swirling and thrashing about us.
But, as if we are in the eye of the storm,
We remain untouched, unharmed.
It is oceans, continents, and bank accounts
That act as our fence, built up high.

But their presence has no existence
In your world of happier ever after.
Have you eyes?
Have you eyes?
Will you forever deny
The old man, the child, the country?

These faceless demons around me
Live in a world of self—
Of greed, of mass consumption, of wealth.
They know not of need—
Nor bloodshed, or stolen rights
But are preoccupied with glitter and glitz.

The face of the old man,
The child's spilled innocence,
The victims of democracy.
These are real—reach out
Your blind hand and grasp
The old man, the child, the country.

Honorable Mentions

Connor Fitzgerald	A. Ward Spaulding Elementary School
Cyndie Mercer	Arts at the Capitol Theater
Haris Durrani	Bedford Middle School
Jack Aldrich	Bedford Middle School
Rachel Bernstein Kaufman	Beecher Road School
Benjamin Meyers	Bethlehem Elementary School
Brandon Lynn	Bethlehem Elementary School
Erin Brick	Bethlehem Elementary School
Sudie James Simmons	Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Vocational High School
Christina Hwang	Burr Elementary School
Sarah Hindenach	Burr Elementary School
Kelsey Burns	Coleytown Middle School
Christina Wilson	Convent of the Sacred Heart
Kristin Uhmeyer	Convent of the Sacred Heart
Sylvia Khoury	Convent of the Sacred Heart
Emily Kirchner	Cooperative Arts & Humanities Magnet High School
Leara Jones	Cooperative Arts & Humanities Magnet High School
Michelle Hannon	East Hartford High School
Teresa Lan	East Lyme Middle School
Juliet Guynn	East School
Emma Willenborg	Edwin O. Smith High School
Stephanie Newman	Fairfield Woods Middle School
Jessica Watsky	Francis Walsh Intermediate School
Ellen Brown	Granby Memorial High School
Billy Mills	Greenwich Country Day School
Maddy Hammell	Haddam Killingworth Middle School
Brittany Nelson	J.P. Vincent School
Michaela Spinello	John B. Sliney School
Samantha Devito	John B. Sliney School
Bruce Barger	John F. Kennedy Middle School
Sarah Falcetti	John F. Kennedy Middle School
Brooke Cunningham	King Philip Middle School
Natalie Valentin	Latimer Lane School
Kyle Dennis	Lyman Memorial High School
Sarah Gardiner	Manchester High School
Joseph Petrosino	Mary T. Murphy School
Michael Walker	Masuk High School
Sara Haven	Masuk High School
Carolyn Duman	Melissa Jones Elementary School

Maura Fehon
Macy O'Hearn
Lacia Japp
Lauren Ciarci
Bridget Teevan
Adam Rigney
Zila Ake
Connor Hegarty
Olivia Morrison
Anna Lee Riccio
Cameron Nelson
Kathleen Moran
Carolyn Keating
Hannah Reynolds
Sarah Ullman
Chelsea Brimley
Julio Amaez
Ryan Melancon
Dayna Chinsky
Taylor Edwards
Jillian Kelly
Spencer Gartner
Daniel Williams
Olivia Barresi
Luis Rosario
Colin McQuaid
Maia Robinson
Alanna Barbosa

Memorial School
Lebanon Middle School
Mohegan Elementary School
Nathan Hale Ray Middle School
Newington High School
Niantic Center School
North Windham Elementary School
Old Greenwich Elementary School
Osborn Hill Elementary School
Osborn Hill School
Roaring Brook School
Sedgwick Middle School
Simsbury High School
Simsbury High School
Simsbury High School
Vernon Center Middle School
Vernon Center Middle School
Vogel-Wetmore School
Wapping Elementary School
Wapping Elementary School
Watertown High School
Westbrook High School
Western Middle School
Western Middle School
Windham Middle School
Witt Intermediate School
Worthington Hooker Elementary School
Worthington Hooker Middle School

Teachers of Published Authors

Becky Colarolpe	Alfred Hanmer Elementary School
Lisa C. Taylor	Arts at the Capitol Theater
Lynn Sakuma	Bedford Middle School
Katherine Els	Bethany Community School
Debra Meyers	Bethlehem Elementary School
Jennifer DeRagon	Bowers Elementary School
Christian Miller	Branford High School
Gina C. Lucibello	Branford High School
Amy Helminiak	Colebrook Consolidated School
Edward Wolf	Coleytown Elementary School
Paul Ferrante	Coleytown Middle School
Pamela Woodside	Davenport Ridge School
Shirley C. Littlejohn	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School
Jacqueline Abbott	East School
Beverly Coyle	East School
Patricia Baruzzi	Edwin O. Smith High School
Colleen A. Budaj	Emerson Williams School
Tina Rembish	Fairfield Woods Middle School
Cheryl Signore	Guilford Lakes Elementary School
Carolyn Kennedy-Graupner	Hamden Hall Country Day School
Anne Fries	Hawley Elementary School
Benjamin Nelken	James Hillhouse High School
Carol F. Spinello	John B. Sliney School
Christine Boulanger	John F. Kennedy Middle School
Jean Doyle	John Winthrop Junior High School
Elizabeth Zidel	J.P. Vincent School
Richard Martin	Killingly High School
Charlene Kilcomons	Latimer Lane School
Kelly Cecchini	Manchester High School
Nancy Ryan	Mary T. Murphy School
Theresa Baldino	Mary Tisko Elementary School
Gail Whitney	Melissa Jones School
Adrienne Lovell	Mercy High School
Christine E. Perkins-Hazuka	Newington High School
Rebecca Wicke	Osborn Hill Elementary School
Maggie Francis	Phillip Smith Elementary School
Cheryl Lehto	Pomfret Community School
Geraldine Teja	Pomfret Community School
Sally Myers	Regional Multicultural Magnet School
Victoria Nordlund	Rockville High School
Paula C. Brisson	Scotland Elementary School
Paula Robinson	Simsbury High School

Michele Murtari
Heidi Frey
Karen Klein
Mary Sue Hall
Kristin Taylor
Tara Vázquez
Jennifer Lindberg
Elizabeth Dronet
Carrie King
Kate Burgess
Jennifer Lanese
Pamela Flaherty
Kathleen Lembo

Tariffville Elementary School
Tolland Middle School
Tomlinson Middle School
Tootin' Hills Elementary School
Waterford High School
West Woods Upper Elementary School
Western Middle School
Western Middle School
Western Middle School
Wheeler Middle School
William Hall High School
Windham Middle School
Worthington Hooker School