

# Desert Heritage Writing Contest

## The Past

In 1985, a group of teachers in the Barstow area—Cliff Walker, John Stacy, Warren Priske, Richard Reeb, Ed Spear, and Bob Chamberlin- created the Desert Heritage Writing Contest. These teachers wanted to improve and honor the writing skills of students in the area. The contest included three genres: fiction, nonfiction, and poetry and three divisions: 5th and 6th grade, 7th and 8th grade, and high school. In 1989, the college division was included.

## The Present

The annual awards ceremony gives students public recognition. Award-winning student writers attend with family, friends, and often the instructors who inspired them. Each year, a booklet is produced which includes a list of all the winners and the entries of the third through grand prize winners.

The Desert Heritage Writing Contest has given out more than 2,000 awards to exceptional local student writers since its inception in 1985. This has only been possible with the assistance of sponsors like Barstow Community College, community clubs and organizations, businesses, educational groups, and individuals.

The contest costs about \$4,000 annually.

## The Future

The future of the Desert Heritage Writing Contest depends on student authors, their dedicated instructors, supportive family, and generous community donors.

For more information on participating in contest next year, visit [desertheritage.org](http://desertheritage.org).

Tax deductible donations can be made by check to Barstow College Foundation. For more information, contact Jennafer Worland, [jworland@barstow.edu](mailto:jworland@barstow.edu), (760) 252-2411 ext 7216.



# Judging

## Judges & Judging

The committee wishes to thank the people who judged entries for this year's contest:

Nathan Lindsay  
Christie Firtha  
Kyri Freeman  
Dale Jensen  
Dr. Reeb  
Jacob Lenerville

Vincent Lovato  
Renee Gurley  
Andrew Rehfeld  
Penny Shreve  
Alex Morita

Michael Smith  
Bryan Asdel  
Emily Garrison  
Jennafer Worland  
Kelly Parker

## The Judging Process

To ensure impartial judging, all judging is blind reading—judges do not know the author's name or information. Two judges score entries. Ties are determined by a third reader.

No judge is allowed to read a division in which they have taught within five years, to ensure the judges cannot know the student authors personally.

The winners listed in the next pages have been selected from nearly 1,000 entries. All winners are listed, but due to limited space, only the winning third place, second place, first place, and grand prize entries are printed in the booklet.

# Larry Cady Award for Writing Excellence

Each year the *Larry Cady Award for Writing Excellence* goes to the author of the best High School writing entry in the Desert Heritage Writing Contest. The High School entries in first place in Fiction, Nonfiction and Poetry are judged by committee and determined to see which entry best exemplifies the legacy of Larry Cady.

This award is given in honor of a man who loved language and teaching. Cady believed in using language for the good of mankind, from writing letters to teaching Sunday Confirmation class.

He was beloved and respected for his passion of language and teaching. He could communicate his love of literature with students of all ages; he made grammar easy to grasp; and he brought Shakespeare to life not only for the college-bound seniors, but for all students. Two generations of seniors were fortunate to have the unique Senior-English-with- Cady experience. He was the foundation of the English department at Barstow High School and later at Baker High School, where he was the English department.

Born in New Jersey in 1920, Larry Cady went to Susquehanna University, where he met his future wife, Dorothy. After he received his BA degree, he joined the army in 1942, serving in the 94th Signal Corps and receiving the Bronze Star for the crossing of the Rhine at Remagen, Germany.

When he retired, he participated with veterans' organizations, his church, the public library, and the Desert Heritage Writing Contest for eight years. He loved working with the Desert Heritage Writing Contest. "Awarding and encouraging good writing is one of the best projects in town," said Cady.

When Larry Cady passed away in February 1999, he not only left a family and many colleagues and friends who loved him, but he left thousands former students who are Larry Cady's legacy to excellence in writing and education.

In Larry Cady's honor, we present the *Larry Cady Award for Writing Excellence*.

# Founders' Award for Writing Excellence

At the 30<sup>th</sup> annual awards ceremony, the Desert Heritage Writing Contest committee announced a new award in honor of the founders of the writing contest. This award is to be given to the fifth and sixth grade grand prize winner.

The founders of the Desert Heritage Writing Contest were Cliff Walker, John Stacy, Ed Spear, Richard Reeb, Warren Priske, and Bob Chamberlin. This group was composed of college instructors, high school teachers and coaches, and the then Barstow College president.

For the first contest, Mary McCarthy an English instructor from Silver Valley High School was asked to help judge the entries. Though not technically a founder, her dedication to contest and authors kept her judging and helping the contest ever since.

What motivated the founders to start the contest was that they noticed student athletics was often honored at all levels of education, but too often writing did not receive the same appreciation. So they wanted to create a way to honor the writing skills of students in the area. The goal was to not only honor, but encourage improvement in writing.

Since the contest's inception the founders' vision has continued to grow and expand.

However, their original goal to grow and honor excellent writers in the community is still the mission of the contest.

In honor of this vision the 5th and 6th grade Grand prize winner receives the founder's excellence award in hopes of continuing to develop young student authors, with a love of writing and appreciation of quality writing.

We've come a long way since that first ceremony. In 1985, the first contest had 124 entries, the first place winners received Commodore 64 computers, and second-place received College dictionaries.

One thing that hasn't changed is our commitment to writing, the Barstow service area, and student authors.

To honor and continue the founders' vision, we present the *Founders Award for Writing Excellence*.



# Fifth Place

## 5th - 6th Grade

<b>Fiction</b>	The Gates Hotel	Landon Willbond Mr. Ferrara, Barstow Fine Arts
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	Jackie Robinson	Jacob Villegas Mr. Nelson, Helendale
<b>Poetry</b>	Sunny Day	Serenity Smith Mr. Carlson, Helendale

## 7 - 8th Grade

<b>Fiction</b>	The City of Dwarka	Nevaeh Barton Ms. Lada, Riverview
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## High School

<b>Fiction</b>	A Dog's Point of View	Aleece Fermeric Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	My Father's Death	Naomi Goodenow Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow
<b>Poetry</b>	The Shouting	Avery Porter Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow

# Fourth Place

## 5th - 6th Grade

<b>Fiction</b>	The Mark of the Demons	Jovel Blaine Mr. Dokie, Skyline North
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	The Simpsons	Nolan Kim Mr. Nelson, Helendale
<b>Poetry</b>	Poetry	Isabell Schnack Mr. Carmichael, Helendale

## 7 - 8th Grade

<b>Fiction</b>	Knighthood	Jacob Cummings Mrs. Rugg, Riverview
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	Do Schools Take Enough Measures For Bullying	Araceli Manzo Ms. Lada, Riverview
<b>Poetry</b>	Save Our Planet	Luisa Van Slyke Mrs. Byrd

## High School

<b>Fiction</b>	The Forest	Alexis Hazelbaker, Mrs. O'Neill, Barstow
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	Guilty Until Proven Innocent	Moran McDonald Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow
<b>Poetry</b>	Tired	Kayla Madden Mr. Pitassi, Barstow



# Third Place

## 5th - 6th Grade

<b>Fiction</b>	Dinosaurs vs Pirates Playing Football	Jacob Villegas Mr. Nelson, Helendale
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	Rosa Parks' Journey	Claire Coleman Mr. Nelson, Helendale
<b>Poetry</b>	Car Ride	Josephina Sanchez Mr. Carlson, Helendale

## 7 - 8th Grade

<b>Fiction</b>	The Stalker	Bode Harkness Ms. Lada, Riverview
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	Why Animal Testing Should be Illegal in the US	Danaka Pelayes Ms. Lada, Riverview
<b>Poetry</b>	Heart to Flower	Isabella Wimbs Mrs. Rugg, Riverview

## High School

<b>Fiction</b>	Four Little Words	Isabella Ortega Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	Good or Evil?	Arianna Rhodes Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow
<b>Poetry</b>	Paint Me	Justin Griego Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow

## College

<b>Non-Fiction</b>	Is Social Media a Reliable News Source?	Madison Yates Mrs. Shreve, Barstow
<b>Poetry</b>	Guilty Love	Prometheus Watson Mr. Rehfeld, Barstow

# Second Place

## 5th - 6th Grade

<b>Fiction</b>	Save the Turkey	Lima Arias Mrs. Ibarra, Helendale
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	My New House	Josephina Sanchez Mr. Nelson, Helendale
<b>Poetry</b>	Make a Wish	Hayleigh Cutting Mr. Carlson, Helendale

## 7 - 8th Grade

<b>Fiction</b>	The Switch	Sharon Clark Mrs. Rugg, Riverview
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	Helping Out the Homeless	Daniela Gonzalez Ms. Lada, Riverview
<b>Poetry</b>	Morte Nera	Valentina Cano Mrs. Talbot, Ft. Irwin

## High School

<b>Fiction</b>	The Stars	Avery Porter Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	The Civilizations That Strived For Greatness	Adelina Nava Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow
<b>Poetry</b>	The End	Elisabeth Paulsen Mrs. Tran, Silver Valley

## College

<b>Non-Fiction</b>	RE: A Letter from Birmingham Jail	Prometheus Watson Mr. Rehfeld, Barstow
<b>Poetry</b>	Mind's Universe	Martha Paredes Ms. Nylander, Barstow

# First Place

## 5th - 6th Grade

<b>Fiction</b>	The Unforgettable Unknown	Christian Solano Mrs. Ibarra, Helendale
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	The Effects of Video Games	Trenton Evans Mr. Nelson, Helendale
<b>Poetry</b>	Oceans	Laura Allison Mr. Nelson, Helendale

## 7 - 8th Grade

<b>Fiction</b>	Untitled	Marissa Meneses Ms. Lada, ACE
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	The Real Effects of Violent Video Games	Matteo Danczyk Mr. Lada, Riverview
<b>Poetry</b>	My Favorite Place	Kassidy Harper Ms. Lada, Riverview

## High School

<b>Fiction</b>	Timidity Before the Tides	Michael Riley Mrs. Tran, Silver Valley
<b>Non-Fiction</b>	To Fight the Good Fight	Madysen McDonald Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow
<b>Poetry</b>	Emery	Ashley Jhaneane Deblois Mrs. Glenn, Silver Valley

## College

<b>Non-Fiction</b>	Beatlemania	Nash Gonzalez Mr. Rehfeld, Barstow
<b>Poetry</b>	Sunny Winter Day	Yasamine Entesari Mr. Rehfeld, Barstow

# Grand Prize

## 5th - 6th Grade

**Poetry**

The Woods At Night

Kellen Plier  
Mr. Nelson, Helendale

## 7 - 8th Grade

**Fiction**

Artificial Laura

Sabrina Jacobson  
Mrs. Rugg, Riverview

## High School

**Non-Fiction**

The Nights That Stuck With Me

Jasmine Ortega  
Mrs. Gonzalez, Barstow High

## College

**Poetry**

Light

Martha Paredes  
Ms. Nylander, Barstow

## **Third Place Winners**



# 5th-6th Grade Fiction

## Dinosaurs vs Pirates Playing Football

By Jacob Villegas

It was one sunny day when a boat approached the shore ..... It was pirates ready to challenge the ferocious Dinosaurs. The Dinosaurs had the tallest dino of them all the Brontosaurus there quarterback actually a smart move by the dinosaurs that way the pirates can't sack the dino. There wide receivers the beast from the east there twins the velociraptors. The Argentinosaurus there defensive line made up of a lot of them the heaviest dino. There last player you all love him..... the tyrannosaurus rex the king of the dinosaur kingdom. That is the dinosaurs team now lets go and see the pirates team I heard they have a lot of good players.

The pirates team is made up of a lot of good players. There quarterback he is well known for his movies it is Jack Sparrow the dinos can't catch him he's too fast for them. There wide receivers there not twins but they work good together it is captain Finn and cannonball Nolan. The defensive line is the chef His name is Nash. The best player of them all Filip he known for all the plays he has made he is the best on this team and he will carry his team. Now thats all the best player from each team will come up for the coin toss. Filip will come up for the Pirates team and the tyrannosaurus rex will come up for the dinos team and we will see who wins. The coin toss went the dinos way and they get the ball first and all the teams are ready to play.

The game started and the dinos are running it down the field. The velociraptors have the ball juggling it so the pirates can't get the ball. The pirates are trying to take the ball and they do they jumped between the raptors and stole it. There taking it the other way full speed. They get tackled and there down at the 25. There quarterback Jack Sparrow out on the field with the rest of his team. Jack throws an amazing pass to Cannonball Nolan for an easy touchdown. There lineman are holding up good against the dinosaurs the chef Nash really working out there. The kicker Filip trying to make the field goal and he nails it to make the score 7-0. The dinos are trying to come back with a touchdown of their own. There quarterback is carrying their team right now running through defenders like there flies. They come back with a touchdown of their own to tie it up at 7-7. That is the end of the first quarter now let's get going to the second quarter.

The pirates have the ball right now with their quarterback throwing good passes. There is a fumble on the play and cannonball Nolan picking the ball up and running it down the field to get sacked on the 28. The defensive linemen holding up against the dinos with time at 5:45. The quarterback ran it in for another touchdown. The score is now 14-7 the dinos need to make a move if they want to win with time winding down. The dinos are using their secret weapon and they are having the quarterback run the ball. He's running through defenders to take it all the way and he trips at the 50 yard line. He decides to pass it to the velociraptor who then goes all the way for another touchdown. The score at the end of the 2 quarter is 14-14. The dinos are having a halftime talk their talking about how they could overpower the pirates. The pirates are talking about how they can take the lead and keep the lead. The dinos are trying to sabotage the pirates. There putting itch spray the pirates gear and when they put their gear on their going to be itching. The pirates catch the dinos in the act and they spray the itch spray all over them but now the pirates don't have gear to play. Their going to have to put the itch spray in the dinos gear so they'll have to play rough.

The third quarter starts and the pirates are mad at what the dinos did too there gear and now they're hitting hard and they won't hold back. The dinos aren't holding back either they want the lead. The pirates get sacked at the 43 yard line. There quarterback throws a long throw to Finn for a touchdown. The dinos aren't happy they are mad so they come down the

field and injure one of their players. The pirates don't have another player to substitute so are they going to have to forfeit. Wait they threw out the player that injured the player so the teams are even again to end the third quarter. The pirates are mad and they really want to hurt the dinos but they don't want to get thrown out and forfeit the game. The dinos are happy that there getting to the pirates and now they just have to win this game.

To start the fourth quarter the dinos have the ball the quarter is going to be cut down to 3 minutes. The dinos throw a monster throw to the velociraptors and they catch it they are now down at the 25 yard line. The time left on the clock is 1:17. The dinos end up getting the touchdown to make the score 21-14. The pirates are making it quick no huddles. They end up making a touchdown with 25 seconds left. The dinos throw it down the field and it gets intercepted with 10 seconds. There running down the field and the time is winding down 5..... 4.....3...2..1 they score! They win and they get the trophies. The MVP is Cannonball Nolan. And the dinos run away. The pirates sail away has winners. They may have got hurt but it was worth it to win against the dinos.



# 5th-6th Grade Non-Fiction

## Rosa Parks' Journey By Claire Coleman

Rosa Parks has a great history in the civil rights movement. She has inspired me to do so much, she is a great influence. In my opinion she has made such an impact on this country. Are you influenced by Rosa Park like I am? Maybe you will be after you read this!

Rosa Park contributed to the civil rights movement. She went through a lot of discrimination as she grew up. Rosa Parks was born on February 4, 1913 and died on October 24, 2005. Rosa Parks died from a natural cause and on top of that she started having dementia only a year before she died. Her medical past wasn't the best.

Rosa Parks was just as stubborn as a child like she was as an adult. Rosa Parks has had so many problems throughout her life she has dealt with so much discrimination her whole life. She still dealt with it when she was an elder from many. It went away over the years it became less and less of a thing but it still was a thing.

In 1955 Rosa Parks parks were on the Montgomery Bus Boycott. When suddenly she was told to give her seat up for a white passenger. She refused and sat there emotionless. Then the bus driver called the police to get her and remove her from the vehicle. After that she was sent to jail until further notice.

After a few times of Rosa Parks standing up for what is right finally more and more people started making a difference. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks both stood up to help the civil rights movement. It was a devastating day for many when he died. Rosa Parks made many changes as us humans. She was discriminated against a lot throughout her life but at the end of the day she was helping the young and old with life.

Rosa parks have had an impact on many by doing what is right. When I learned about Rosa Parks and her accomplishments for our country I got very inspired. She has inspired me my whole life to do the right thing when a problem comes around the corner. I always think about how she handles things. What I could do to make things better for others. As of what I have spoken about, did you know anything? I learned a lot from doing this biography. I enjoyed doing this historical non fiction story very much. I hope you enjoyed reading this and try and make a difference just like Rosa Parks?

# 5th-6th Grade Poetry

## Car Ride

By Josephina Sanchez

I stare out the window  
To see a blackwidow  
It climbed up my arm  
But it did me no harm  
I brushed it away  
To hope not to see it another day  
As i stared back out  
I couldn't believe I did that without doubt  
I seen the birds fly  
In the beautiful blue sky  
All the green trees  
Are swarmed by bees  
We passed the farm  
As I hired an alarm  
I popped up from my bed  
Then I touched my head  
I noticed it was a dream  
As I smiled with gleam

# 7th-8th Grade Fiction

## The Stalker

### By Bode Harkness

"I don't really like the cold, it kind of bothers me," Janice said. She really wanted to spend more time with my family because they have been on their phones and electronics.

"It's ok mom, it will be just fine and we can go sledding, maybe even snowball fights," said Jane.

"As long as I am allowed to bring my phone, because otherwise the trip would be so boring, Jackson said.

Geoff said, "It's ok honey, it will be nice trust me."

Janice doesn't like the cold, but the only cheap and available hotel she could find was in the Rocky Mountains.

"This week is going to be great guys, let's have some fun," she said in an inspirational way.

"Janice, honey, Have you seen my computer? I need it for work," Geoff called out.

Geoff was a tall man with little to none of facial hair, black hair, and had blue eyes. His wife with the blue eyes and blonde hair with a height of five feet and eleven inches. They had their first son together at the age of 23 and his name is Jackson. They also call him Jack. Jack looks almost the exact same as his dad. Then, last but not least there is Jane. She is the youngest of the family and she is six now, nine years younger than Jack. Jane is a mixture of both parents with brown hair and hazel brown eyes. Jane said that she loved it here in Nevada and that she did not want to go to Colorado because it was too cold up there. When Jane left to go to the backyard, so she didn't have to pack up, she had decided to go lie down on the trampoline. Later as she was in the backyard she found an ant hill. Jane caught a couple of the ants and even a spider in a container. Then, she put them in her bag to take to Colorado because she had thought there were no ants in Colorado because it was too cold for them.

Jack shouted, "Hey, what are you doing?"

"Uhhh, Nothing," Jane said quickly.

"Ok, whatever", Jack said.

Janice, Jane's mom, told her to pack her bags and she did, but when she grabbed the bag with the ants. Jane found out that the ants had escaped and when she was packing it they bit her and she dropped. Jane did not want to tell anyone about the ants because that would be very embarrassing for her. She left the suitcase on the driveway behind the car so no one knew about it. They had left for the Colorado mountains and no one had a clue about the bag that was left behind besides Jane. About an hour in, Jane had noticed a car that was very close to them as they were driving. An hour later the same care pulled in the same gas station. Jane wasn't thinking much of it, but she thought it looked like their neighbor back at home. Jane thought that there would be no reason for him to be out here. After two hours had passed it was night time so they decided to sleep at a hotel.

As they were going in, Jackson, or better known as Jack, said, "I forgot my phone in the car and I need it to talk to my friends."

"I said there would be no electronics on this trip!" said Janice.

"What if one of my friends were in trouble or maybe someone got hurt. I could use my phone to call the police or an ambulance if someone needed it." said Jack.

"Well, fine you can have your phones, but that's it," said Janice.

The whole family came out together to make sure they didn't forget anything too. Jane had seen the same car just pull up to that hotel and then ran back to the room.

"Mom, Dad, there was a car following us since we left and the same car just pulled up into the parking lot."

"It was probably just a coincidence, a lot of people stay here," said Geoff.

Jane's parents did listen to her story, but did not think anyone was following them and even if it was the same car it was probably just a big coincidence. By the next day, Jane didn't see the car any more and when they left for the highway she saw the car parked on the road. As soon as they pulled out and drove past the car that has been following, it also pulled out and started to follow them again.

"Mom, Look it's that car again!"shouted Jane. "It just started following us again."

"Hey Geoff, I think someone really is following us, Janice said.

"Then we should be on the lookout," said Geoff.

They had finally made it to the mountains of Colorado and they decided to go to a candy store for some sweets. When they got there the two kids got a bag of candy each and it held one-half of a pound. Then, since the parents of the family Geoff and Janice knew about the person stalking them, they were on the look out the whole time to make sure nothing happened to themselves or their kids.

"Hey guys, I think it would be best if we go ice skating next," said Janice.

The family, together, had voted and decided on going ice skating after they were done with the candy store. They had just finished up with the candy store and when they were on their way the ice skating rink they had seen the person get out of the car. "Dad, I think he is grabbing something," said Jack. As he was getting out of the car he had reached for something so they started to run to the ice skating rink. Once they made it to the rink, they looked back and saw that it was a suitcase and they all assumed that it had to be a weapon of some kind.

Earlier in the candy shop they had all agreed to go ice skating after the candy shop because it would most likely be crowded, so the stalker wouldn't be able to find them so easily. They went on the rink and five to ten minutes later they saw the man in his black coat watch them skate and it was as if the stalker knew exactly where they were at all times. They had thought that it would be best if they went low in the crowd so the man in the black coat would not see them that well. Then, as soon as he would lose sight of them they would quickly change their shoes and run for the car to make it to a hotel.

Later at the skating rink, they tried their plan, but the man had left to go wait for them at the checkout where they would pay for the skates, but they figured once they got away the ice skating rink owners would understand because of what position they were in. Because of that plan it gave them a head start, but they found out he was watching them the whole time and then he was in a full out sprint towards them.

They had all been happy this whole trip until after they left the hotel and then they had noticed that the same man was following them. They were done with dealing with that insane person following them, but they were too scared to concentrate on the escape plan. The plan was to drive aimlessly through the town that they were staying in, to throw off the stalker so that when they did leave, the man would not know where they went. As they ran for the car the man would just run faster and it was a race with the stalker 30 or 40 feet behind them.

"I think he is catching up to us," said Jane. They all got into the car and started the first phase of the plan, driving around all over town to shake the man off.

"Alright kids just stay low and make sure that no one is able to see in the car," said Geoff.

Janice had been driving because she is a better driver than Geoff. Since the stalker had seen Geoff driving maybe the man would be confused to see a different driver. They drove around for 15 minutes before they could leave because they wanted to make sure that the stalker would not be able to follow them to the new hotel. So, they started to drive towards the hotel ,but after driving around town, they wouldn't have enough gas to go anywhere after getting to the hotel.

"Honey, I don't think we are going to have enough gas to go anywhere from the hotel," Janice told Geoff.

"Ok, but we are going to have to do this very quickly."

They had to stop at a gas station to get gas and they knew that by doing this it would give a chance for the stalker to catch up to them, but they had no choice because they would need to drive places. Since they were on vacation, they thought bringing binoculars would be a good idea because maybe they could see some animals in the mountains. They used them to look for the stalker's car and ten minutes after arriving at the gas station they could see the car just a couple hundred feet away. As the car was creeping up, Jack was the only one to see it coming towards them.

"He is getting closer!"shouted Jack.

Since they saw the car, they quickly paid for the gas and drove over the speed limit because they were scared, but they made it right to the hotel going fast and they didn't even see the stalker the entire time. They made it to the hotel and they noticed it had a nice pool.

"This hotel is the best, I could live here for the rest of my life," said Jack.

They had a horrible day with the stalker, but it was worth it when they got to the hotel because it was so nice and relaxing that they slept for an hour as soon as they got there. After that time had passed they had a guest requesting to talk with them. As the family we're going down the elevator a lot of thoughts were going through their heads. Could possibly be the man in the coat chasing them around all day or maybe it was just a family member, there was only one way to find out.

"I just really hope it is grandma and not that lunatic, grandma is always nice," Jack said frightened.

They had finally made it to the lobby, but no family members were found. When they didn't have any family it got intense.

"Is that him?", Jack Whispered.

"I really hope not," said Jane.

There was a man waiting for them and when they saw him they froze for a minute and then they ran as hard as they could and ran and never stopped until they made it to their room but the man in the coat caught up to them before they made it to the room and stopped them so that they could talk. Janice had figured they would probably get killed.

"Don't hurt my kids, if you are going to hurt us just do it to me," she shouted.

The man said, "I have a briefcase for you."

Then, he said that he had been following them because they left a suitcase in the driveway. The man ended up being their neighbor and he thought that it might be something important that they had forgotten. His name was Gregory and he ended up staying with them because he was Geoff's coworker and was a great friend. They all had a fun vacation and had a great time at the hotel..

# 7th-8th Grade Non-Fiction

## Why Animal Testing Should be Illegal in the US

By Danaka Pelayes

Imagine being a poor, innocent animal that has hope. You have hope to be with your owner and to go out for a walk. Now imagine waking up on a testing table with hundreds of products on you wishing for things to go back the way they were before. That is how millions of animals feel on a daily basis because animal testing is legal in the U.S. According to PETA (an organization formed to stop animal abuse), about 100 million animals die a year due to animal testing. Animal testing should be banned in the U.S. because it is torturous, cause many deaths annually, and it is not accurate for humans.

Animal testing is torture for animals. Everything is legal when it comes to animal testing. According to Thought Catalog, animals are forced to inhale smoke. ("Jenn Ryan") The article also states that no matter how painful or torturous the experiment is nothing is prohibited. The government has other options and they know it. It is the twenty-first century and animal testing is still legal in the U.S. Animal testing must be banned so we can save innocent animals from death.

About 100 million animals die annually due to testing. Animal testing has provided medical advancements and knowledge that has helped us. However, there are alternatives to animal testing. The U.S. allows animals to be burned, shocked, poisoned, isolated, starved, hooked on drugs, and to be brain-damaged, according to Thought Catalog. ("Jenn Ryan") According to PETA, some of the tests people do on animals include "forcing mice and rats to inhale toxic fumes, force-feeding dogs pesticides, and applying corrosive chemicals into rabbits' sensitive eyes." ("PETA Animal testing: Animals Used for Experimentation") They also keep them in confined spaces. All of this can psychologically traumatize and kill innocent animals.

While testing can help with scientific knowledge, animal testing is not accurate for humans. Animals and humans do not have the same physiologies. Therefore, it cannot replicate human diseases. Animal testing may provide product safety but if it is not accurate then how is it supposed to be safe. According to All Creatures, "The use of animals as models for the development of human medications and disease almost always fails". ("Kelly Overton") Animal testing is responsible for many human deaths. Humans and animals have different immunities and systems. In the article Huff Post, there is a quote that states, "No two humans are alike in their physiology... If we cannot reliably extrapolate from one identical twin to another, how can we expect to extrapolate results from different species to humans?" ("Aysha Akhtar, M.D., M.H.P.") This is very true. Humans and animals are very different so how can we expect accurate results. Animal testing is dangerous for both humans and animals because it is not accurate.

Animal testing has its pros and cons. However, the cons outweigh the pros. Animal testing ends the lives of animals that have hope. There are many alternatives to animal testing that cost way less, are more accurate, and do not end lives. To stop animal testing, people could stop buying products that test on animals. Everyone can help save an animal's life and it is not that hard. Hopefully, someday the U.S. will make animal testing illegal and restore the hope of animals and humans.

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# 7th-8th Grade Poetry

## Heart to Flower

By Isabella Wimbs

My heart is like a flower  
Wilting slowly with the soft breeze of life  
As it loses its shine and "happiness"  
Being beaten down  
The consequences start with a simple pluck



# High School Fiction

## Four Little Words By Isabella Ortega

The boy stared down at the phone in his hand, the screen illuminating his face in the dark. His ears rang, and his eyes burned. It was as if the world around him didn't exist. New York, the city that never slept fell completely silent as he read those four words. Four little words. He couldn't believe that four little words had the ability to bring his whole world down around him. Four simple, meaningless words. There's been an accident.

★

As Miles Mayfield set foot in the St. Jude's Hospital of Manhattan his heart plummeted to his feet. He absolutely hated hospitals, they always felt so empty and impersonal. As if those who resided in them were merely test subjects to be operated on, rather than real people. He took a glance around the front lobby, hoping to find a familiar face amongst those around him. Finally, he spotted her, Miss Linda Anderson. The woman who had sent him that earth-shattering message in the first place.

"Ms. Anderson!", he called out to her as he made his way to where she was sitting. As soon as he got to her she pulled him into a comforting embrace. But the warmth of her hug did nothing to quell his rising anxiety. "Um... I got your message and it was really vague, but it obviously meant that something was wrong. So I rushed over here as quickly as I could, which really wasn't all that quick because you know how traffic in Manhattan is. But um-".

"Hey, sweetheart,". She pushed him back in order to see his face and for the first time since he had walked into the hospital he got a good look at Ms. Anderson. She had dried tear tracks on her face, and her usually neat hair was tangled and unkempt. She was taking it even harder than Miles was, but she was still consoling him. "You're rambling. I need you to calm down and take a deep breath,".

He took a deep breath, as she pushed one of his sweaty curls away from his forehead. He took notice of her hands still on his shoulders and gently shook them off. "I-I think I'm okay now. But that's not really important right now. I just wanna know if she's okay,".

The she in question was none other than Rose Anderson. Miles' girlfriend of two years. A girl with a smile that could light up any room she walked into and eyes that shone brighter than the stars. Miles absolutely adored her. She was the reason that both Miles and Ms. Anderson were so distraught.

Ms. Anderson sighed, "I'm actually not sure how she is, the doctor told me that Rose needed to go into emergency surgery, but that was hours ago. And I haven't heard anything since then,". She looked as if she was about to break down again, so Miles pulled her in for another hug. "I know that I'm the adult here, so I'm supposed to be comforting you, but I'm just so scared. That's my baby in there. And I have no idea if she's okay. I'm a horrible mother,". With that last remark she dissolved into sobs.

"It's okay for you to be upset," Miles told her softly. "Just because you're an adult doesn't mean that you have to be strong all the time. I'm scared too. But I'll be here for you, and I hope you'll be here for me. We will get through this together,".

Ms. Anderson stood up straight and wiped the tears off her face. "Thank you Miles. You're such a sweet boy. Rose is so very lucky to have you. And I promise I will be here for you whenever you need me,".

★

Two hours, that's how long Miles had been sitting with Ms. Anderson. Despite the comfort she had previously provided, with every second the deafening silence surrounding him grew louder and louder until he felt as if it would suffocate him. Finally, when he felt as if he couldn't breathe anymore, a doctor in blue scrubs walked into the large room and called out the name Miles had been hoping to hear for so long.

"Rose Anderson?".

Both Miles and Ms. Anderson jumped out of their seats. They rushed to the doctor as quickly as they could and immediately began to bombard him with questions.

“How is she?”.

“Is she okay?”.

“When can I see my daughter?”.

“Is she awake?”.

The doctor in the blue scrubs put a stop to their questioning by simply raising his hands in a ‘calm down’ gesture. He looked at Ms. Anderson apologetically and said to her “I’m sorry ma’am. But... she’s not doing well,”.

Suddenly Miles felt déjà vu. There were four more words that had the ability to bring his world down around him. After the doctor in the blue scrubs had said those four little words Miles felt everything.

The doctor in the blue scrubs lead Miles and Ms. Anderson to Rose’s room. She was on the fifth floor. The Intensive Care Unit. Just walking down that hallway sent chills down Miles spine. His brain began to twist horrific scenarios of just how bad Rose had to be to land in the ICU. The further they walked down the hallway, the faster Miles heart beat. He didn’t want to get to the room. He couldn’t bear to see Rose as anything other than full of life. When they reached her door he was downright terrified. His girl, his Rose was in there. But he didn’t want to see her. He didn’t want to. He didn’t want to. He didn’t want to.

He opened the door.

✱

Miles was moving in slow motion. Or maybe he wasn’t moving at all. He couldn’t really tell. It was as if all of his senses were focused on her. His beautiful Rose. She looked so small in that bed with all of the machines surrounding her. Her brown hair was spread around her head, but it didn’t shine the way it normally did, instead it was dull. There were dark bruises on her face and he could see the edge of a bandage peeking out from under her hospital gown.

Distantly he could hear the doctor in the blue scrubs talking to Ms. Anderson, “Her lung collapsed due to the impact of the other car, so she’ll be using a ventilator until she’s able to breathe on her own...”. He trailed off. Or maybe Miles just stopped listening. He wasn’t sure.

Miles absentmindedly grabbed Rose’s hand. Whenever Miles held Rose’s hands they were warm and soft, but not this time. This time they felt cold and rough. Her nail polish was chipped and she was missing the promise ring he had given her on their anniversary.

Where’s her ring?”, he whispered to himself.

The doctor in the blue scrubs turned towards him. “What did you say son?”, he asked him gently.

“Her ring,” Miles said a little louder, not taking his eyes off her hands. “Where is it?”.

The doctor in the blue scrubs simply shrugged his shoulders, “I didn’t see a ring on her, but you’re welcome to check the bag with her belongings,”. He handed Miles a small plastic bag.

There wasn’t much inside the bag, only a ratty pair of Converse, a hair tie and a card. It wasn’t even really a card. Just a folded piece of construction paper with a few words written on it. It didn’t seem all that special until Miles read what was written. There were four words on the card. Four little words in Rose’s loopy scrawl. Four little words that could once again make the earth stop spinning. I love you Miles.

Miles felt as if he’d been hit by a brick. It was as if the reality of the situation had just slapped him in the face. Suddenly he was all too aware of everything around him. The ventilator was too loud. Rose’s hands were too cold. The fluorescent lights were too bright. Everything felt wrong. But Miles couldn’t just break down, not with adults in the room. Not with Rose in the room. When his facade cracked it would happen in private. So he squeezed Rose’s hand a little tighter and tried to breathe a little slower. And if a silent tear ran down his face, no one knew but Miles.

✱

Things went on like that for days. Ms. Anderson constantly tried to get Miles to leave the room but he refused. Every day he woke up in the chair holding Rose’s hand and fell asleep holding her hand. He never spoke to her, he just sat next to her, holding her hand and wishing the circumstances were different.

The doctor in the blue scrubs came in to check on Rose daily. He was constantly taking her vitals to make sure that she remained stable. Miles hadn't really been all that worried about her getting worse until she had a seizure.

It was a week after the initial crash when it happened. Miles had been sitting in the same chair as usual when he felt Rose's fingers twitch. He had been excited. This meant that she was waking up, right? No, it didn't. This actually meant something much worse. Something that was quick to turn his excitement into fear.

Miles had never seen anyone have a seizure before, but it was one of the scariest moments of his life. It was something he wished he would never have to witness again. When Rose first began to shake Miles froze. She was already in an awful situation and now this had to happen to her. Miles didn't think it was fair. He felt that he should be the one in the hospital bed, not Rose. But he couldn't do anything about what had happened previously or what he had witnessed. He was frozen, both literally and figuratively.

Ms. Anderson had been the one to hit the call button. And she had been the one to start sobbing when the doctor in the blue scrubs ran into the room with two other nurses to try and stabilize Rose. Miles had done nothing but sit there and hold Rose's shaking hand in his.

Ms. Anderson had been the one to grab Miles by his shoulders and pull him from Rose's room when the doctor in the blue scrubs declared that they needed space. Miles had remained frozen.

On the inside Miles was terrified and he felt all too much, but on the outside no one could tell if he felt anything at all. He simply remained frozen. The most important thing that had ever happened to him was going on and he couldn't even do anything about it. Once again he was numb to reality. He would probably stay numb until more life-ending words were delivered to him.

Unfortunately, Miles was right. He had sat on the floor listening to Ms. Anderson cry until the doctor in the blue scrubs walked out. The man looked sad, like he had come to deliver heartbreaking news. He talked to Ms. Anderson for a while, but Miles wasn't processing any of it. Until he did. And even when he did he only heard four words. Four more words that made the ground crumble beneath him. Four more words that destroyed him, "I'm sorry, she's gone,".

\*

There's been an accident.

She's not doing well.

I love you Miles.

I'm sorry, she's gone.

Miles sat in that hallway for a long time. He thought about how it was possible for four little words to completely destroy someone's life. It didn't seem fair, but then again life isn't fair.

Miles was alone now. No one was around. There were no adults and no Rose. Now that he was alone he could ponder the four words that had brought his world down around him. Now that he was alone he could let down his facade. Now that he was alone Miles could finally cry.

# High School Non-Fiction

## Good or Evil?

By Arianna Rhodes

Have you ever wondered why humans are so cruel? Have you ever thought of what is going through a serial killer's mind when they commit their crime? I'm pretty sure that once in your lifetime you told yourself that you wished someone's death or "I wish they would die". I also know that you've judged someone by their looks or their clothes. The reasons why people think things like this and do stuff like this is because humans are inherently evil. In a Brain-scan study Conducted by Princeton University showed that humans dehumanize other social groups. Depending on this study the pictures would activate two parts of the brain. One of the parts of the brain is called the Prefrontal Cortex. This part of the brain is known to be associated with thinking of other people or yourself. Another part of the brain that was activated during the study was the limbic system hypothalamus. This part of the brain is associated with the emotion disgust.

The students were shown a picture of heroes, famous athletes, and businessmen all activated the prefrontal cortex of the brain. When the students were shown pictures of the homeless or drug addicts it did not activate the prefrontal cortex. Instead of activating the prefrontal cortex it activated the Limbic system. Researchers think that this is because some social groups are dehumanized. They tested another group and like the previous group the pictures of the homeless and drug addicts failed to activate the prefrontal cortex. What activated the the prefrontal cortex were pictures of money and the participants said that it made them think of wealthy people. One of the researchers said "If replicated and extended, this kind of evidence could begin to help explain the all-too-human ability to commit atrocities such as hate crimes, prisoner abuse, and genocide against people who are dehumanized".

Another experiment was done on kids as young as 24 months old. In this experiment they were studying the reactions of children in unequal and equal triadic situations also known as Schadenfreude. The researchers said that even though all of the situations had the same amount of gains The children showed a greater happier expression following the disturbance of the unequal situation compared to the equal situation. Researchers think that Schadenfreude originally evolved as a response between rivals. Schadenfreude can also be related to jealousy or envy. One of the situations that they put the children through was with their a mother. There was equal and unequal parts of the situation. The equal part of the situation was that the mother was reading a book aloud while the two children played with toys. She was then signaled to accidentally spill water on the book. The unequal part of the situation was that she placed one of the children on her lap and and embraced them. She then started to read aloud to the child, she was then again signaled to spill water on the book. The experiment proved that the child that was not on her lap had high levels of schadenfreude and jealousy.

Another reason why i think that humans are inherently evil is because we blame victims to justify why bad thing happen. People that believe in the Just-World Phenomenon believe that the world is fair. People that believe in Just-World Phenomenon also believe that the world is just and people get what they deserve. The Just-World theory presupposes that when people fall victim to misfortune or bad luck others try and find ways to justify why they are in that situation. Some people have a tendency to look for someone or something to blame for their unfortunate events. A lot of the time people use the other person's behavior as a reason to justify their bad luck. In an experiment done by Melvin J. Lerner and Carolyn H. Simmons they learned more about this. They used 72 undergraduate participants. The participants didn't know that they were observing and being used for an experiment. They were observing a peer (victim) in this experiment performing in a paired-associate learning task. When the victim

would make a mistake they would receive severe and painful electric shocks. After the 72 participants observed the first session they rejected and devalued the suffering victim when they thought that they would have to watch another session. The researchers say that this is because they cannot alter the suffering victim's fate. The researchers also said that "These results offer support for the hypothesis that rejection and devaluation of a suffering victim are primarily based on the observer's need to believe in a just world".

With this information I think that this proves that humans are inherently evil. Humans do things such as dehumanize other people. Some people get pleasure by seeing other people suffer or have a bad day. Although some people do good things they will always still do bad things. Humans will always constantly judge people and make assumptions about someone.

# High School Poetry

## Paint Me

By Justin Griego

When the sun falls into the sea,  
And the moon just rises higher;  
Then the world will cease to be,  
Enveloped in consuming fire.  
Forever gone is history,  
Replaced instead by the pyre  
That has gained immortality,  
And has become a terrible liar.  
It says, "I'm good, can't you see?"  
When of chaos it'll never tire  
And through it's own insane decree  
Has destroyed the castle briar,  
Ruined the life of the chickadee,  
And made everything ever dire.  
Then, annoyed, I wake up to see  
That it was only that entire  
Inside-bedroom, next-to-me  
Ever-singing, awful choir.

# College Non-Fiction

## Is Social Media a Reliable News Source?

By Madison Yates

Social media, which is now more popular than ever before, majorly influences news, and its sources, across the globe. Considering how much people tend to be skeptical of information found on social media, it's important to know whether their sources can genuinely be trusted, therefore: Can they be? Deciphering between false bias and genuine, factual news is difficult in general, and adding social media platforms to the mix doesn't make it any easier. Often, "influencers", who tend to have a large, faithful social media following, are paid to advertise and promote certain opinions or ideas. Since many tend to trust these advertisers, it's extremely easy for false information to spread all over social media, making news and other sources found on it more difficult to trust. Alongside this, information can become misconstrued by individuals of all types, not solely famous influencers. Friends, family members, even complete strangers can not only alter your perspective, but also influence your opinion and thoughts on any give subject.

Since the majority of social media users cannot decipher between a credible source or an unreliable source, they rarely doubt how honest information is, regardless of its source. Real news is commonly drowned out by something more appealing to the public, typically being gossip, rumors, or made up stories. If a specific source of the information does not seem trustworthy, users should, but rarely, disregard anything of the sort. Individuals grasp onto one idea, especially if they agree with it, and will accept that as the truth and interpret it that way without any credibility. According to an article titled, "Social Media Trust, Credibility, and Reputation Management", researchers found correlations between the credibility of not only the message, but also, of the messenger, as previously mentioned. "Communication researchers traditionally measure media trust by considering source and message credibility. The idea that poor performers would be "poisoning the wells" for the rest of us on one social media platform, much less across all, would seem conceptually flawed. As billionaire Warren Buffett likes to tell student visitors, trust is a matter of reputation — individual and company — built over long periods of time." Alongside this, another famous study determined a generalized statistic that judges trust in influential figures and the information presented itself: "The huge PR firm Edelman's 2013 Trust Barometer also finds a skeptical public, with less than one fifth of global respondents believing government and business leaders "will tell the truth when confronted with a difficult issue." To put it simply, if the public lacks confidence in the reliability of well-known leaders and famous government officials, the amount of trust in an independent, unknown source can be expected to be a small fraction of that.

The freedom of social media creates the perfect environment for personal bias to entangle with facts. Users can, and typically do, share reliable information, but also tend to include an opinion or subjective idea that can manipulate the truth and create a prejudice on the topic that will likely be mistaken as factual. A study found on pewresearch.org, in an article titled "How Social Media is Reshaping News", conducted multiple studies that helped researchers pinpoint the number of users that share news along with their own bias. The statistics are presented formally as follows: "Half of social network site users have shared news stories, images or videos, and nearly as many (46%) have discussed a news issue or event. In addition to sharing news on social media, a small number are also covering the news themselves, by posting photos or videos of news events. Pew Research found that in 2014, 14% of social media users posted their own photos of news events to a social networking site, while 12% had posted

videos.” Therefore, it’s reasonable to assume that the constant cycle of sharing, reposting, and responding with bias to news on social media can influence the public’s general perspective on the information. Altering a headline, changing a name, or even excluding one specific detail when sharing news stories publicly can result in a huge misunderstanding, considering that information spreads like wildfire on social media platforms.

Journalists, who are specially trained to report true, reliable news, are rarely recognizable on social media, which contributes to why fake news is so easily believed without any kind of hesitation or doubt. On the internet in general, individuals can conveniently pose as a professional without any genuine credibility and share stories that supports their beliefs or bias instead of the truth. In an article titled, “Can We Trust Social Media as a News Source?”, Lauren Askew discusses a few issues that touch on the subject at hand. She goes on to say, “Some journalists misused their power, but many journalists became journalists to be able to report the facts and share reliable news. Most people who shared what was happening on social media never stopped to check the facts. The truth grew ever increasingly subjective.” To continue, many journalists fail to spread real news stories when social media is dominated by a popular topic. The overwhelming amount of bias makes it even more difficult for reporters and journalists to get widespread coverage on important headlines. From the same article as previously mentioned, Lauren Askew briefly uses an analogy to portray how quickly things are shared in a short period of time, and also discusses why people potentially react to news in a certain way: “People tend to trust what they read in the news, because low and behold, it’s the news, which is written by trained journalists... People read it and believed it. ...The same sensationalism that makes gossip go from one neighbor to the next, until the whole village knows, made fake news travel the world in a matter of minutes.” False information and fake stories will grow and thrive on social media, especially if a source and its credibility are not adequate.

On a lighter note, there are some benefits to fast moving news reaching large groups of people. Some extremely urgent and important events have been quickly brought to the public's attention, and people were helped due to this. Again, in the same article used prior, Lauren Askew talks about a tragic event that was able to gain prevalence on social media and get genuine help as soon as possible. She goes on to say, “A more recent event, the Las Vegas shootings, was also first reported on social media. No doubt, people warning of a shooting as soon as it happens is great as it allows for people to take the action needed, such as not entering Las Vegas/leaving their homes in Las Vegas, providing blood to hospitals, etc. And in the aftermath, social media also acted as a great tool to help raise funds for victims.” When properly utilized, social media can bring awareness to topics that need the most attention. Unfortunately, gossip, bias, and opinions will always be highly influential on social media, no matter how credible information or its source turns out to be.



# College Poetry

## Guilty Love

### By Prometheus Watson

I do not feel guilt in my love

For you

Are the one I adore

The one whose arms I dream of whose touch I yearn.

My love in you should be considered holy and pure but in this waking nightmare I walk it is seen as grotesque and twisted.

I a monster, claws digging into skin of those I know not, my ire burning in my eyes

And all the same I gaze at you with the warmth of the sun, a warmth others see as the devil's rage.

The snake of religious zeal wrapped its body around my limbs,

Its eyes looking into mine own and grinning wide, fangs pointed and sharp, its tongue lashing out, "look at how disgusting you are." it said. "Look at your love and see how twisted it is."

It twisted tighter.

"Twisted like I."

I do not feel guilt in my love,

Welcoming the image of your warm embrace.

I should not feel guilt in my love,

I should not feel sorrow in my heart whenever I refer to you as my friend and nothing more to those I know have a condition to their own love in me.

I see those who do not have that snake lodged in their throat,

The one that spits venom,

That revels in the putrid and foul stench of the lie that is purity,

It hisses in my mouth,

I hiss when I see them.

Oh how they do not even have to think of whether or not they feel guilt in their love, how absolutely and wondrously they take their love for granted.

I think of when I will be able to hold your hand, when I will be able to kiss you, and I feel the snake rise up in me.

"Look at how disgusting you are." it reminds.

I do not feel guilt in my love.



## **Second Place Winners**



# 5th-6th Fiction

## Save the Turkey

By Lima Arias

Dear Farmer Ibarra,

Please don't eat me. I do NOT taste very good and I have caused mischief around the farm. I have stolen the cow's typewriter and their hay. I have also eaten Mango the lizard (Definitely not a gummy mango). I think you should eat the chickens. The downside is that you won't get anymore eggs. BUT if you eat the chickens, you won't get anymore annoying clucks. Or, maybe you could eat the cows. They won't make anymore demands on their annoying typewriter that I'm definitely not using for this letter to you. Don't eat the pigs though. They're way too big and squeaky to eat. I have also eaten one of your student's shoes (Kayla's to be exact). I think you should become a vegetarian. Eating healthy foods will improve your metabolism. I think. I'm just a turkey. Still, please DO NOT eat me. You have eaten my friends and I have realized that I might be next for dinner. Spare me and I will reward you with seeds for your crop plantation. I know you need more seeds to sell. Never mind, please eat the pigs instead. I hear their squeals of excitement of the thought of me getting eaten for Thanksgiving with that yucky cranberry jelly and that disgusting mashed potato and corn. Yuck. I think you should also eat Ms. Duck. She doesn't really have a purpose on this farm. Actually, she makes the down feather beds so I guess she does have a purpose on the farm. Also, she leaves feathers everywhere so I guess that's why you should cook her. Just please don't eat me. You can eat the rest of my friends, or you can eat veggies instead. Yeah, just eat your veggies. I don't taste good because I ate sage leaves earlier and sage leaves are poisonous to everyone except those pygmy rabbits. They have very strong stomachs. Oh yeah, you can eat the pygmy rabbits. Wait, as I mentioned, they ate the sage leaves too. Eat Miss Bird's eggs! She has a lot of good protein in those eggs. Maybe you can cook Flair Flamingo. Her flexibility will help you get around the corn fields. Just eat Carrie the Carrot (yes, I have named the veggies too). Maybe even Bob the Broccoli and his cousin Crystal Cauliflower. I absolutely think you should eat Keith the Crab. I despise him and his cranky moods. Always snapping at you, right? Just don't eat me. Happy Turkey-less Thanksgiving!

From your food- I mean FRIEND,  
Turkey Lima

# 5th-6th Non-Fiction

## My New House

By Josephina Sanchez

When we were unpacking stuff into the new area, I decided to go for a walk in our new neighborhood. Our neighborhood was pretty small. There was a wood right by my house so I decided to go for a walk in the woods. I told my parents where I was going and then I ran past a couple houses down where the road ended then I ran towards the woods. Leaves and tree branches crushed under my feet as I walked deeper in the woods.

The weird thing was that as I kept walking to the woods, the trees got darker and the birds weren't singing. Then, I heard something almost like a girl screaming. My heart stopped and I felt my whole body go cold. Then I felt like someone was watching me. I turned around and started running back the way I came in.

As I was in the woods where it was green, I took a break from all the running I did. I sat down on the log to catch my breath so I could run back home. I closed my eyes to catch my breath until I heard leaves crunch and sticks break behind me like if someone was walking up from behind me. I got up as quick as I can towards where I came in. I didn't even want to look back at who it was or what they looked like.

I just ran and told him I got to the end of the woods. I didn't want to run home because I didn't want my parents asking why I was. Right where I was about to step on to the black rocky street, I noticed there was a creepy looking house on the street behind my house looks like the ruff was falling apart and the walls were deteriorating. I was pretty sure that house was abandoned. When i was walking up my driveway, my mom was outside taking out the last couple boxes left out of the moving the moving truck.

As i was walking into the garage my mom said "that was a quick walk in the woods Rachel" i said "yeah i was kinda boring so i decided to come back" "oh by the way me and your dad are gonna go get some groceries" mom said." oh okay." I walked inside to get some water as my parents were in the car pulling out of the driveway. I opened the cabinet reaching for a glass cup as I heard a soft knock at the door. I slowly looked towards the door to see if I could see who was there.

I heard another soft knock again. I walked towards the door to see through the peephole to see who was there. As my left eye pecked through the hole, I noticed nobody was there. I started to think if i was getting pranked by some little kids in the neighborhood. But then I remembered what happened in the forest.

I got really scared and waited in my room for my parents to come back from the store. While I was waiting for them to come home, I fell asleep and when I woke up they were in their room getting ready to go to sleep. I didn't know I was asleep for that long. When I tried to go back to sleep, I couldn't. It felt like someone was watching me throw my window by my bed.

All night I sat there laying in my bed trying to fall asleep. I tried my best not to look out the window to see if anyone was there. I closed my eyes trying the best to fall asleep but then I heard footsteps coming towards my room. I slowly turned my head towards the door and I saw

a tall dark figure standing there right in front of my door. I closed my eyes real quick then I opened my eyes and nothing was there.

After that happened I didn't realise I fell asleep until I woke up. I got up and walked to my parents room and i didnt see them. All I saw was a big mess in the room and before they went to bed their room wasn't a mess. I called for them inside then I went outside and called them but there were no respondes. The car and our moving truck were still there.

I walk right back inside to find my phone to call them. My phone was in my room on my bed so I went in my room and called my mom first. Right as I pressed the call, I heard a ringing noise coming from my parents room. I ran into their room to find her phone. It sounded like it was coming from the closet in their room.

As I was shaking, they slowly opened their closet door. My eyes widened, I went stiff, and my heart dropped. I just stood there staring at what I was staring at. Both of my parents laying there dead with a blanket over them with both of their phones on top of them with a note that says " your next." My heart stopped as I stood there doing nothing.

I picked up the note, and ran outside as fast as I could. I quickly opened the front door and went in the driveway. I stood there calling for help and then the note blew as my hand as fast as lightning. I ran into the middle of the street with my bear cold feet touching the road. I heard a weird nose that sounded like it was getting closer and closer to me every second but I didn't think anything about it because I just needed to get the note. My soft little hands began to reach for the note until I saw a bright light coming from the corner of my eye. I turned my head and the bumper of the car was coming right for me before I knew it, I got hit and all I saw was black.

# 5th-6th Poetry

## **Make a Wish**

**By Hayleigh Cutting**

When you get the chance make a wish  
Blow on dandelions  
Throw pennies into a fountain  
Sit on grass close your eyes and whisper to the stars  
But when you are done  
Make sure when you open your eyes you don't  
Sit there and wait for it to come true  
Open your eyes and go do the things that can help  
Make the wish come true



# 7th-8th Grade Fiction

## The Magician's Secret

By Jakoby Sorensen

It was just like any other day. Every day felt the same. Sitting down in seven classes each day. Watching the seconds on the clock go by. Rin was just any other goth. She had medium-length black hair with parts of the front dyed. Her body was very pale, almost like paper. She was very skinny and lanky. Rin wore t-shirts of her favorite bands and sometimes she just wore shirts covered in profanities. The rest of her was pretty bland. She wasn't very fun or nice either. Maybe that was why she had no friends. Well except for Pip.

Pip was the opposite of Rin. Instead of being tall and skinny, Pip was short and stubby. She had a very positive outlook on everything and always had a big smile. Pip was always genuine and good to talk to if you felt sad. Her aunt even owned a candy factory. Her hair was shoulder-length with a slight pink tone. Her skin is a nice tan. She loved to wear turtleneck sweaters and light jeans with her cute little boots. No one knows how they get along, but they never fought despite their differences. At least not until now.

After class, the principal was giving Rin another lecture about respect, but she didn't seem to care. Pip was outside of the room. She seemed very nervous about what was going on and she walked around in circles to help distract her. Then, the door opened and out came Rin.

"What did you do this time?" asked Pip, "Why are you always in trouble?"

"Geez calm down, it wasn't even that bad," Rin replied.

"Really? Then what did you do?" Pip asked as she crossed her arms.

"I threw a chair at one of the teachers. She deserved it. After all, she did give me an F. I hate all of the teachers here." said Rin.

"Are you kidding me? You made me wait out here for two hours, hearing you get lectured, having me worry about you, for that?" Pip asked frustrated. "It's not that hard to not assault another person. Why haven't you been suspended or expelled yet?"

"Oh about that..." said Rin with a nervous smile.

This made Pip even angrier. This was the maddest she has ever been. She grabbed Rin by her shirt and dragged her outside.

"How hard is it to actually behave for once? Do you know how many problems you're causing this school? Do you just not care?" she asked angrily.

"No not really," replied Rin, picking her nose.

"A-Are you serious? You can't be serious," said Pip with a nervous chuckle.

When Pip realized Rin was actually serious, she was shocked. She had always helped Rin with everything and seeing her not care the slightest really ticked her off.

“Do you know how hard it is to take care of you?” she said “Sometimes I wish you could take care of yourself,”

“Oh yeah, your life must be so hard having everyone like you and being annoyingly perfect!” said Rin angrily.

“W-What? What are you talking about?” asked Pip.

“Stop playing dumb! You literally have the most perfect life!” cried Rin. “You have no reason to complain. My life is way harder than yours,”

Pip was shocked by that statement. Her anger quickly turned into sorrow and she was silent. She froze for a minute.

“Listen,” she said, “You think my life is perfect? Try being me for once” then she walked away.

Rin didn’t know exactly what that meant, but she didn’t really care. After she saw Pip walk home, she decided to do the same. As soon as each of them got home they fell asleep immediately.

It was the next morning. Pip woke up a little later than usual though. She got out of bed and quickly felt that something was wrong. When she finally realized what had happened, she was shocked.

“What the-” Pip froze. As she glanced in the mirror, she realized that she was inside of Rin’s body. She looked around the room and she knew for sure that this was Rin’s room.

“What kind of dream is this?!” she shouted, but when she realized that this was a reality, she started to panic. Her heart started beating at a very fast rate. She didn’t feel so good.

“Ok calm down. I can fix this. I can do it.” she thought.

“So this means that Rin is in my body?” she thought to herself. Then suddenly she heard a knock on Rin’s door.

“Are you up Rin Rin?” said a very happy voice. It was Rin’s Mom.

“Yes Mrs- I mean mom,” said Pip nervously. She remembered going to Rin’s house to help her study for exams but her mom was always at work so she had never actually met her. She began changing into something she was comfortable with and started heading to school.

On the other hand, Rin handled this situation much more calmly than Pip. Sure she was surprised, but she knew that Pip would figure out how to fix it so she didn’t worry too much about it. Instead, she took advantage of this opportunity and made the most out of this experience. She was very positive and started talking to all of Pip’s friends.

Meanwhile, Pip was freaking out. She hurried to school and tried to find Rin as soon as possible. When she finally found her, she was with all of Pip’s friends. For some reason, Pip started to feel really uncomfortable around them so she waited for them to leave and pulled Rin into the bathroom.

“I finally got you!” said Pip. She was talking to Rin about different ways they could fix this, but Rin got angry.

“Actually, I think I want to stay in your body,” said Rin crossing her arms.

“B-But I need it,” Pip replied.

“Wow, isn’t that kinda selfish of you,” said Rin, “This is the one time I’m genuinely happy, and you’re just gonna take that away from me,”

Rin ran away before Pip could respond and she was gone before she knew it, but when Rin got home, it felt strange. She felt more tired than usual. Pip didn’t have parents so she lived alone. The house felt so empty and kinda sad. Rin looked around the house and saw several pictures of Pip and her family from long ago. She went back to Pip’s room and noticed some other things that seemed to surprise her. She found a book on her desk. It was pink and it didn’t seem to have a label. When Rin read it she knew exactly what it was. It was Pip’s journal. She flipped to a random page and started reading, feeling no guilt whatsoever.

It read, “ Day 32: Today at school I started talking to this new girl. She seems really sad so tomorrow I’ll bring her some candy. Everyone likes candy! Maybe I could find out her name too!”

“ Day 33: I just found out her name is Rin. Such a nice name. I gave her a bag full of candy from my aunt’s candy factory but I don’t think she liked it since she threw it in the trash. Maybe she doesn’t like chocolate.”

The rest of the journal was filled with similar stories like this. All of the stories of her and Rin. Rin was about to put the book down until she saw one specific page. It was different from the other pages. It seemed more serious

“Day 40: I’m starting to think Rin doesn’t like me. Am I doing something wrong? Are you supposed to act like this towards friends? Maybe I just haven’t been as good at talking to other people than when Mom and Dad were here. I’ve been thinking about them a lot lately and I wish I could ask them for advice.”

“Day 41: All of my other friends have stopped talking to me ever since I started hanging out with Rin. Every time I walk past them, I can hear them whispering and I think they’re talking about me. I’m sure it’s not anything bad though. Right?”

“Day 43: I think I should start losing some weight. My friend Alice told me that I was getting fat. It’s nice to see that she cares. I’ll start now!”

“Day 44: It’s way harder to lose weight than I thought. I was looking online and I heard that making yourself vomit could do wonders. I’ll try that tomorrow!

Rin skips a few more pages. Her heart starts beating rapidly.

“Day 101: I don’t feel so good. Why am I not happy? Rin has been getting in a lot of trouble lately and I hope she doesn’t get suspended or even expelled. It must be my fault. It’s all my fault.

“Day 102: I just got back from school and I guess Rin was in big trouble this time. She tried to hurt a teacher. What am I doing wrong? I feel like I’m the only one who cares. This was the first time I had yelled at anyone. I feel so weak. I can’t even control my emotions. I’m just so tired. I don’t feel like getting out of bed in the morning. I just want to sleep. Maybe forever.

Rin threw the book on the floor. She was shocked at what she had just read. The most positive person and friend she had ever met, felt so horrible.

“A-Am I a bad friend? She thought aloud. “No this can’t be true,”

She quickly started to run back to her house. Rin had to fix her mistake.

When she finally arrived, Rin knocked on the door. Facing her was Pip.

“What do you want?” she asked angrily.

“I want to fix this,” said Rin.

“So I’m guessing you realized that you were wrong?” Pip asked

“Yeah, I never realized how lonely you are,” She replied

Pip’s face went from annoyed to nervous. She was surprised by Rin’s statement.

“What do you mean? I’m not lonely,” she chuckled nervously. “I just think that I want to stay in your body,”

“Wait, what?” asked Rin. “You can’t,”

“What?” She asked.

“You can’t!” she cried. “ You can’t stay. You wouldn’t want to.”

This statement puzzled Pip. Rin’s tone was very serious.

“What do you mean?” Pip asked.

“Do you not remember?” Rin replied, “You go to the best school in the Country!”

“Yeah...?” Pip said confused. “I love this school,”

“Do you not get what I’m saying?” Rin replied in a serious tone. “That means your education will be ruined,”

Pip didn’t understand at first, but then she realized.

“Wait, are you serious?” she asked Rin.

“Yes, I’m sorry Pip,” Rin replied, “I guess you were right. I was bound to get expelled someday,”

Rin walked up to Pip and gave her a big hug. She started to cry but didn’t want Pip to see it. Pip started crying too and Rin noticed.

“I’ve been expelled from two other schools already so I doubt that any school would take me now, I’m so sorry,” said Rin.

“What are you gonna do now?” asked Pip.

“I dunno, but I guess we’ll see,” she replied.

They finally let go of the hug and realized that they were back to normal.

“But how?” Pip asked “How did we change back?”

“I guess the same reason we changed in the first place,” said Rin. “Magic,”

“That still doesn’t explain any of this but It’s the best we’re gonna get,” Pip chuckled. “So I guess that means you're leaving. Right?”

“Yeah I guess, but it feels so weird saying it aloud,” she said. “I honestly don’t know what’ll happen,”

“Well if you do end up leaving we could still keep in touch. Right?” asked Pip.

“Of course. You’re like my only friend dude,” replied Rin. “So this is goodbye?”

“Well, goodbye sounds kinda sad. How about see you next time?” Pip said.

“Ok, see you next time Pip. I don’t know when, but I know It’ll happen.” said Rin.

That was the end of Pip and Rin. Or is it?

# 7th-8th Grade Non-Fiction

## Helping Out the Homeless

By Daniela Gonzalez

Imagine not having anywhere to go. You sleep on the side of the road, on a bench, which you call your bed. Everyday you beg people for money hoping that someone will want to help. That is the life of a homeless person has to live and the government does nothing about it. The government should provide homes for the homeless because the streets are a dangerous place to live in, the weather can be bad, and homeless shelters aren't open to everyone.

The streets are a dangerous place to live in. According to Wikipedia, "In July, 2014, 3 boys were arrested and charged with beating to death two homeless men with bricks and a metal pole in Albuquerque." No one deserves to go through this. NCH found that in San Bernardino 155 homeless people were killed by non-homeless people in just a year. It's really sad that besides not having a home these people still have to go through stuff like this.

The weather can be bad on some days. According to NHCHC (National Healthcare for the Homeless Council), "At least 700 homeless people die every year from being out in the cold." If we can't stand being out in the cold for a few hours, think of these poor people that are out there all day everyday. According to Scott Keys, "Over the last year, 13 people died of hypothermia and in 2018, 6 deaths were reported due to hyperthermia." Unfortunately they have to withstand horrible weather conditions.

Finally, homeless shelters aren't open to everyone. According to Soapboxie, "Some people are denied entry due to mental illness because workers think that they can be a danger to themselves and others." This isn't fair because homeless people with mental illnesses are the ones that are more in need of homes. Soapboxie also says, "Women can bring their preteen children but their teenage male children starting at the age of 13 are required to go to a male shelter." Aside from all the hard times families are separated.

Some people will argue that homeless people are addicts, they are lazy, and they chose life for themselves. Did you know that only 10 percent of homeless are addicts which leaves 90 percent that aren't addicts. Most homeless are people with mental illnesses so even if they wanted to they can not work. Lastly some people are homeless because of natural disasters or because their job did not pay great and they did not have enough for their house.

In conclusion, homeless people should be provided with homes from the government because the streets are a horrible place to live on, the weather can be awful, and homeless shelters aren't available for everyone. Homeless people have to go through a lot and it isn't fair. The government should really do something about it because these unlucky people suffer a lot.

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# 7th-8th Grade Poetry

## Morte Nera

By Valentina Cano

I can hear them crawling  
The motion of their bodies  
Making way into our town  
If you would please stop bawling  
Grab your mask and grab  
Your spices we are left to  
Our own devices those  
Bugs that bite left a scary sight  
Thank our doctors for their  
sacrifices curse the women  
Who had vices my mother is  
As cold as ice I never had  
Assumed it was the mice

# High School Fiction

## The Stars By Avery Porter

I used to practically worship the stars. The glimmer that tinged the sky seemed to hold a message of hope. Somewhere out there, way out there, there was a chance of someone being just like me. Someone who would stare out at the black sky with its minuscule polk-a-dots and just think.

It didn't matter how cold it was, I'd stay outside for as long as I could. I'd escape the aroma of strict chemicals and harsh antibacterial soap by sitting on top of my roof. For as long as I could remember, I had been good at climbing. I would straddle my windowsill, shivering in excitement, then pull myself up. The frigid shingles were always more welcoming than my warm bed or the arms of my parents. The roof had so much more to offer me.

I had never told my parents or any of my family that would visit me every so often. It was a secret that was mine to keep. My love affair with the sky. Whenever I told my parents that I wanted to be an astronomer, they would just sigh. How would they feel if they discovered that I spent most hours of the night upon the roof, which was untouched by their rigorous and unending cleaning routines? It started when I learned that everything on Earth was made from stardust. Including me. I don't remember if I learned it from the pages of a wrinkled book, a dim screen, or the monotone voice of my father. That day, which was so long ago and hidden in the back of my mind for safe-keeping, changed my life. I have never owned a telescope and I know now that I never will. I didn't need one though. I had eyes, large and bright eyes my grandma would say. Eyes that looked like amber and sparkled like my beloved stars.

Most of my family thinks that since I'm obsessed with the stars and their shine, that I'd also be in love with the planets. However, that has never been and never will be the case. Everyone tells you to aim for the stars, but planets are where normal things happen. Where coarse parents scrub their walls three times a day while their daughter grows dizzy with the overbearing scent of their work. Planets are where little girls find themselves face to face with needles as long as their fingers. Stars are where good people go when they die. The stars are the home of kind souls that are warmer than anyone I've ever met could be. The stars were my goal for my current life and the one that comes after death.

Though, thinking that makes me slightly guilty. My parents despise it when my mind goes anywhere near death or the afterlife or anything of that sort. I just find it so easy. The stars have always felt more like home than anything my hard-working and anxious mother and my stern and intelligent father could provide. Though, I could never tell them that. To them I was just existing in the little bubble that was our sterile house. I loved the constant visits from family and I was fine with always being in the presence of someone who was near tears simply because they were looking at me. They thought that I was a good child that went to bed as soon as I was told. That I didn't view a ceiling as a prison or a window as an invitation. They had always been very wrong about me and I never attempted to correct them. I saw no point. They wanted a certain type of daughter and I pretended to be exactly that. They didn't need to know that I was anything different or anything more.

Perhaps that was where I had made my mistake. If they knew who I was, who I really was under the abrasive scent of lemon and chemicals, maybe I would have had a bit more freedom. I would've grown up under the sky. Maybe they would've found a way to give me every star that there is to see. Maybe the roof wouldn't be so cold and the long nights wouldn't be so alone. Maybe that's why I didn't tell them. I didn't care how much the temperature dropped and I could never feel alone under the stars. I knew many stars by name. There is Sirius, Betelgeuse, Rigel, Fomalhaut, Vega, Canopus, Altair, Aldebaran, Arcturus, Deneb, Canis Majoris, and so many others. They were my friends. They were my comforters on the nights that I felt like crying, my supporters on the days I felt like giving up. I didn't need my parents or my mournful family that I will never be able to truly know when I had the sky. That's all I needed. Most days it is when our home star peeks over the squat houses that filled up my bland



neighborhood and nameless town that I retreated back to my room, to my cell. That's when people started using my name, but when I lost it. I have lived my life as a shadow, a drifting spirit, thirsty not for the sun, or grass, or human connection but for starlight.

It sounds like I'm being ridiculous. My parents love me in their odd way and they try to keep me safe from all of the extra things that could hurt me in unimaginable ways. It's not their fault that they haven't realized that they're truly just hurting me. I had a brief window of time to drink the sky and they never realized that I needed to take it. Nobody but me did. It's only when I think about that, in the light of day that creeps and trickles through my window, that I feel alone. When I know my stars are blotted out by an impenetrable shield of light. A shield that everyone else craves but I want to hide from. Is that a bad thing? Does that make me a bad person for not wanting the light that allows me to live for my fleeting amount of time? Should I honor it? Should I put on a happy face for it too?

A month ago I would've said no. A month ago I would've closed the curtains until my mother forced them open. I would ignore the day by shoving my nose into books about space and the stars. My entire life was for my stars, my little slices of freedom, the twinkling lights that told me that everything was going to be ok. It is currently night. I can feel it. My parents have gone to bed. My relatives have left. I am the only person awake in this house. It would be time for me to fling my window up and fall into the open arms of the galaxy. But the window is closed tonight. It was closed last night and it will be closed tomorrow and it will be closed forever more. The stars are no longer my home or my companions. Two weeks ago, on a day that should've been like any other, I woke up to an unforgiving vision of pure black. I screamed for the first time that morning in... I don't know how long. It was that day that I had discovered that my cancer had stolen my eyes and, in doing that, my sky.

# High School Non-Fiction

## The Civilizations That Strived For Greatness

By Adelina Nava

Three Civilizations, all whom strengthened their people to thrive in their way of life. Working hard to not only grow and advance with their time period, but to show their strength and power through their time of success as a whole. All fighting for their civilizations to stay alive and strong by adapting and creating new techniques to make living easier. Each had different skills which allowed them to conquer many things and enlarge their civilizations. This is how the Aztecs, Mayans, and Inca all strived for greatness!

The Mayan civilization, one that started in small agricultural communities and ended up growing into more than 40 cities with a population of 5,000 to 50,000 people. The Mayan's prospered for many centuries. "They studied the stars and developed sophisticated and accurate calendars." which for their time period was a huge achievement. The Mayan's didn't just stop there, they continued to advance by developing hieroglyphic writing which was used to record historical and religious events as well as have a mathematical system based on unit 20. There were also craftsmen and artists who did so much more as well. They produced fine goods made of cotton, feathers, clay, wood and even precious metals such as stones and other materials. The Mayan's were advanced for their time and worked hard through the struggle to become a strong and united civilization.

The Aztecs were a powerful and fighting Empire that was thriving to make their Empire the best it could be. In 1519 the Aztecs "covered about five square miles and had between 250 to 400 thousand inhabitants." Although the Aztecs built their city on a swamp, they were able to adapt to this type of living and continued to do other great things. They did things such as used calendars, have a mathematical system based on the number 20, and used picture writing to record political and religious history. "They wove cloth, made pottery, carved in stone and other materials, made musical instruments and elaborate costumes of feathers." The Aztecs were very powerful and successful for their time. This led them to be a powerful Empire.

The Inca Empire had Incan rulers for successive generations, these rulers worked to expand the Incan territory through war and conquest. "The Inca Empire stretched more than 2,000 miles along the west coast of South America and governed millions of people." There were well constructed roads as well as strong rope bridges. They also had a system in which runners carried 250 miles a day and a 1,250 mile journey in which this allows them to enable messages. There were craftsmen who made things such as pottery, jewelry, and weaving exquisite woolen cloth. The Inca also had good farmers and had a government like set up which is something other empires didn't really have. Although the Inca did not have a writing system they did have a system of knotted strings called quipu.

All three civilizations consisted of constant work and strength. As civilizations and Empires the Inca, Aztecs, and Mayan were able to be advanced and use their skills to help them come up with things such as calendars, systems and writing. These civilizations had some struggles such as the Aztecs built their city on a swamp, the Mayan who started off in small communities then ended up growing into more than 40 cities, and the Inca having to move their whole tribe from one place to another. The Inca, Aztecs, and Mayan were ones who persevered through the struggles and with that they were able to become advanced Empires and civilizations. small communities then ended up growing into more than 40 cities, and the Inca having to move their whole tribe from one place to another. The Inca, Aztecs, and Mayan were ones who persevered through the struggles and with that they were able to become advanced Empires and civilizations.

# High School Poetry

## The End

By Elisabeth Paulsen

When the sun falls into the sea,  
And the moon just rises higher;  
Then the world will cease to be,  
Enveloped in consuming fire.  
Forever gone is history,  
Replaced instead by the pyre  
That has gained immortality,  
And has become a terrible liar.  
It says, "I'm good, can't you see?"  
When of chaos it'll never tire  
And through it's own insane decree  
Has destroyed the castle briar,  
Ruined the life of the chickadee,  
And made everything ever dire.  
Then, annoyed, I wake up to see  
That it was only that entire  
Inside-bedroom, next-to-me  
Ever-singing, awful choir.

# College Non-Fiction

## RE: A Letter from Birmingham Jail

### By Prometheus Watson

Martin Luther King's Letter From Birmingham Jail is a letter to the clergymen who have so often told him to wait. He explains with an urgency how he is tired of waiting for another movement to take hold, for if not now then when? King gives off several examples of how and why he did what he did, of how and why he ended up in jail, of how and why he won't back down from the movement. He wanted them to know that he was right in his decision to protest, that the movement must go on despite what they say. The letter was an active criticism of the clergymen's beliefs and in a way an explanation for his passion. He's a trustworthy author due to his usage of quotes, his credentials, and his personal experiences with the civil rights movement. His usage of pathos and logos are prevalent in many different sections of the letter; pathos with his expression of disappointment in the priests not supporting the movement, logos with the differentiation of just and unjust laws.

King's ethos, or the ethics and credibility, of his letter is abundantly clear in the ways of his examples, his quoting, and his credentials. It's important to keep in mind why credibility is important, for without it we cannot hold King trustworthy. The way he writes his letter is to not only prove his point but to also explain with honest clarity what he means. He picks and chooses the sources of his quotes from well known people and things from the Bible to show that he knows what he's talking about. At the beginning of his letter he lists off why he's competent to his clergymen as to why they should listen.

I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty-five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. (King, 378)

This line shows that he has experience in fighting for Human Rights, which the Clergymen he's writing to may not have said experience. He explains in that section that he's there because of his connections to religious organizations, that he chose to go because he was invited to do so. He also explains in great depth his meaning in his writing, as far as quoting other credible people in civil rights that most everyone would recognize, such as St. Augustine's statement, "an unjust law is no law at all." and laying down a litany of quotes from people such as Amos, Paul, Martin Luther, John Bunyan, Abraham Lincoln, and Thomas Jefferson. King showing off his knowledge of previous human rights movements helps prove that he knows what he's talking about to the Clergymen he's criticizing in his letter.

Pathos is perhaps one of the most important pieces of Aristotle's theory. King utilizes his paper, tugging at people's hearts because without pathos he cannot move people to sympathize with the movement. He's told to wait. And he tries and tries but-- wait. He says he's tired of-- wait. Early on in the letter he expresses his disappointment and how his hopes had been demolished by the leaders of Birmingham. He says that the countless times he's been told to wait is frustrating. Wait for what? King states "We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jet-like speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, 'Wait'." (King, 381) The rest of the

paragraph he tells of the countless atrocities committed against them. Of mothers and fathers lynched, of brothers and sisters drowned with nary a consequence. Of how he must explain to his daughter why they, because of their skin color, cannot go to the amusement park. There is a deep sadness that comes with this section because of how intimate he is of this knowledge. With the words he uses it feels as if he was there for all of it, and we are given a glimpse of the destructiveness it causes. That it would take a child's innocence and morph it into anger at a people because of the mere thought that it's not fair. He explains how it haunts him day in and day out, his fears and impatience and how he has to walk on eggshells every single day for if he makes the wrong move he will be dehumanized. "Living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments." (King, 382)

King's usage of logos is plenty and make excellent points that really make you think. Logos is the usage of logic, according to Aristotle. One cannot simply have pathos and ethos as the main source of arguments, so logos is needed. In paragraph 16, 17, and 18 King explores the legality of what he's done. He covers what defines a just law, and why it's different from unjust laws. According to King the difference between the two is that Just laws are for the betterment of humanity, while unjust laws are harmful to one or more groups of people.

"An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal." (King, 383)

This is logical because it makes absolute sense. If King didn't explain what makes a law unjust then we would be blindly following what he says. He explains through common sense that if a group isn't willing to follow their own law it must mean there's something wrong with the law. The same goes for just laws, if a group in power is willing to follow their own law then it must be right.

King's usage of Aristotle's three appeals through his Letter from Birmingham Jail is clear and apparent as soon as the piece is broken down. His ethos is shown through several snippets with his qualifications. His pathos is shown through his personal experiences and the experiences from others. King's usage of logos is apparent when he discusses the morality and legality of just laws vs. unjust laws. His piece is justly seen as an incredible example of these appeals because of his extensive word usage, knowledge, and experiences that allowed him to articulate his retort to the Clergymen.

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# College Poetry

## Mind's Universe By Martha Paredes

My mind is like a universe  
It's vastness exceeds time's course  
Floating in its empty space  
Yet filled with the matter of my thoughts as they race

Though seemingly cannot control  
These thoughts suck me in like a wormhole  
Transmuting me into  
A being not adapted to

How can I decelerate my mind from traveling at the speed of light?  
Constantly running with no end in sight  
Through cataclysmic explosions  
Obstructing my view caused by nebulae erosions

But I will not fret  
For to run, my mind is set  
To reach new dimensions  
Through God's perfect direction

Guiding me through the galaxies  
That abide within the crevices  
Which leads me to the source  
The center of my mind's universe

# **First Place Winners**





# 5th-6th Grade Fiction

## The Unforgettable Unknown

By Christian Solano

"Kyle? Kyle? Kyle Bloom if you don't get down here right now I'll get you down here myself!" Mom yelled.

My name is Kyle Bloom. I have black hair, eyes as blue as the sky, and I am an introvert. "Coming!" I yelled.

I walked out of my messy room and down the stairs. It was 8:36 in the morning and we were having breakfast.

I was excited for today because I was going to stay at Uncle Larry's house. I ate my breakfast and grabbed my leather jacket and ran outside the door. "Jeff? Aren't you forgetting something," mom said while holding a brown football. I walked over to mother to grab the prized possession I had since was four. "Thanks," I said as I grabbed the very dirty ball. I ran over to the car and had my mother unlock the car door. I stepped in the back seat and waited for mom and dad to enter the car. Five minutes later and we were on the road. "We have to go to the gas station. It appears we are low on gas," dad said. As we stopped at the gas station, Mom handed me a 5 dollar bill. "You have 5 minutes to get whatever snack you want," mom said. "Thank you," I said while running into the store. I looked around the store until I found the "Sweets" aisle. This was a different store than were I go to since it was closer to my uncle's house. I grabbed a sour pack for 1.99 and a grape soda for 2.50. I left the store giving my mom the extra fifty cents. We drove again my uncle's house. As the car stopped at our destination, I ran to see a different house. "Hey! This isn't uncle Larry's house!" I yelled. "It's uncle David's house," mom said. My heart sank as I heard those words. I looked at the house and heard the door opening. "Hey bucko. How it going?" David said. "Hi uncle David," I mumbled. I walked into his brown house right passed the 37 year old guy. David then stared at me. "I want to show you something," David said. He pointed at his kitchen. As I looked at the pointed area, I saw a metallic figure wearing a red apron and a white chefs hat. "You made a robot!" I screamed. "No. I made three," He said. I stared at him in disbelief. "There is a chef bot, a cleaning bot, and a friend bot 2 who hangs out with me when the others are working," He said. As I looked around the house I saw the two other ones around me. "This is so cool!" I said. "Hey, you want to watch a movie?" He asked. I sat down and wondered what was happening. He's not acting like a grumpy jerk. He's acting like a cool dude. When we finished the movie, we thought it was pretty good. I went upstairs to see what my new room looked like. As I stepped inside the door, I was amazed with a burst of color. I looked around and saw the friendly robot 2. "Hello young sir. I am an artificial intelligence that helps people who feel lonely. Please insert your name by saying it while holding the button on my left shoulder," the animatronic said. I held down the button to say my name. "Kyle," I said.

I stared at the robot for five seconds. "Kyle. That is a fantastic name," it said. Then we started a conversation about school. "Is there any other robots than you three?" I asked. The robot then looked at me and walked out of my room without saying anything. I just sat on my bed and laid down. I had a hard time sleeping because I heard clanking and stomping but I assumed it was David playing with the friendly robot.

January 18 2004 Friday 7:36 am.

I woke up and headed downstairs. I looked at the kitchen and saw the robot serving fresh eggs and bacon. I sat at the stool close up to the table. It looked tasty. David was still in his room. As I went up the stairs I found a little latch like a trapdoor. I thought it was the electricity. Since he was watching TV I was going to prank him by turning off the power. I opened it up but didn't see an electrical fuse box, I saw a white room. I stepped inside. I

looked around and saw another robot. I look at it's chest and it said, "Friendly robot 1." I saw a counter with some batteries on them. I decided to put them in the robot. As I grabbed the batteries and accidentally dropped a wrench. I put them in the robot and waited." What are you doing? Get away from that animatronic!" David yelled. I got startled and looked back at the robot. I saw red glowing eyes staring at me. "You fool," Cleaning bot 1 said. He smacked me with his metal hand. I fell back. The robot stared at David with his creepy eyes. Without saying anything he sprinted towards the worried man and punched him in the gut. With both of us knocked down, he walked towards the chef and splashed a pot of boiling water on the chef. The robot grabbed a dull knife." Two of you will make it way more fun [ERROR] than killing 1 person. He ran over to the 37 year old and decided to grab his arm. He started hitting different places to make it more painful. I slowly tiptoed passed the raging robot. I grabbed the screwdriver inside the white room and ran toward the waste of bolts. I stabbed the robot thinking I saved my relative. "You, idiot. You [ERROR] IMBECILE," he said.

January 24 Thursday 4:47

"Okay that goes there and that goes here," David said. "All brand new," he said. As I stepped back, I saw all the robots fixed. All of them together. Uncle explained that the robot was the first robot that he made, so it had a ton of malfunctions. I looked back at the line of robots. "Where's Friendly robot 1?" I asked. "Right in front of you. You idiotic swine." I stared at Uncle but then it slowly faded away. "I knew an idiotic human would believe in a hologram," he said. I was never reprogrammed. Your uncle is trapped in the closet!" He yelled. The robot looked furious. He ran after me. Through the kitchen, the living room, until there was no where else to go. I was frozen, I couldn't move. I looked everywhere trying to find and answer. I saw the soda and ran towards it. I tried to reach for it but the animatronic pushed me onto the ground. He then went back to kitchen to grab a knife. I was still on the ground but managed to grab the soda on the kitchen counter. The robot came back then he stared a little bit. I tried to open the soda bottle. The robot then impaled the sharp knife into my leg. I opened the soda. "Haha. What's a soda bottle going to do? Haha," the robot laughed. I splashed the heartless robot. "What's [ERROR] wrong with you? [ERROR]" the robot said. I stared at the dying robot. And ran to the closet. I untied the poor man. We both stared at each other before we hugged.

THE END

# 5th-6th Grade Non-Fiction

## The Effects of Video Games

By Trenton Evans

So as you know by the subtitle my name is Trenton. And I am here to talk about video games and what some of them can do to your brain. So there is an M rated game called gta 5 now I don't play this but what I know is that it is a gangster game. I have heard about some people well shooting people because they think they are from the game. So this leads them to prison for 20 years. Their parents should not let them play GTA 5. Some people get like a wrist pain leading to surgery. They only get this because they are not resting their hands every once in awhile like I do when I get up for a snack or to use the bathroom. But not very body does that stuff they just sit and read a book every once and awhile. Some people will swear if a game has swear words. There are some good effects as well. These include improving social skills so when they are feeling lonely they can play multiplayer. But there are some people who play to hack,troll,annoy and offend. This is why multiplayer can also be bad but social skills improve and mute people swearing and being racist. Nobody needs to listen to swearing.

Some video games are creative games like Minecraft or spore are good for that creative skill. Every once and awhile ask your friends if they have a game you play if they say no then ask if they have steam and they can add you. Then see if they have any other games you did not ask them about. We all have what we like and that is fine i'm not saying parents delete your child's gta 5 game. All I'm trying to say is that there are many types of games out there other than what I have went over and the effects they have. If your child wants violence,social,creative and no swearing try roblox. Roblox is fun because it has many user created games. Remember i'm not telling to force you to delete or play these games because it's a free country. Just to let you know roblox will hashtag out anything it detects as bad.

The world of tech is amazing there are bad and good things they just all have one thing in common: they are video games. Thanks to tech we can talk to each other far away both at home. But what will the future be like we will never know. What will happen in 2000 years we don't know. Maybe the tech will end for a little or advance probably advance. But the effects of video games on the vr now it looks real like you are there. There was a console called the Nintendo red it was a vr set that the vision was all red but they were all recalled. For those of you who own a wii after the switch came out I have a switch and a wii. The wii is old but it is fun I remember having a gamecube when I was like 5 years old. Oh, what I remember is fun but what will the future hold we will never know. Ok back to the topic sorry about that I was just thinking of something more to write. Well the effects of video games can also lead to breaking stuff getting super mad. Ok let me tell you a story there was a teen who got call of duty or halo I can't remember. His mom said it was too violent and locked it away in a safe. He found the game and found a gun as well he shot his mom and dad. His dad lived but his mom was lost his dad now live trying to repair his relationship with his son. Do you see why tech can be a bad thing. At this point you are probably really sad and will want something happier. Sorry about that it was just a story I remember a youtuber talking about. I'm not sure if it was real or fake. Just here is another story there was a kid who played a video game for 24 hours straight and got really mad when his mom turned it off. These effects are caused by anger so do be careful when taking something away or turning something off. And you learned your lesson in the first story hide a video game away from a weapon. Other video game effects can lead a path to prison others can lead a path to creativity. You just never know what will happen, the possibilities are endless. Extensive time on video games like the kid who played 24 hours and

did not sleep they just lose it. I have never played 24 hours the most I have played is like 7 hours. Not much compared to this kid. More effects in valve not much sleep, violence in real life. There are many more I don't know about. I happen to have a lot of experience because when I get no homework I am free from work. So I go game with my buddies we just play and play. There are many effects dizziness can happen I think blindness can be because from too much games. I'm not sure but there is something you can also gain fear from playing games that are too scary for you.

If you need to be happy playing a funny game or watch meme's or just do whatever makes you happy. This should boost your happiness to a lot. Now I know some people don't know what meme's are but i'm not gonna explain. If you can't look up what meme's are then ask a friend. Hmmmmmmm don't you wonder why I keep drifting off topic I can't think of what to write about so I'm just gonna end it right now bye see you in my poem.

# 5th-6th Grade Poetry

## Oceans

By Laura Allison

Oceans were so beautiful back in the day.  
What happened are kids would say what it looked like when you were my age.  
What would we respond with it was pretty bad but not like it is today.  
Why don't you ask grandma what it looked like when she was your age  
Grandma would say it was so very beautiful in every way.  
No plastic trash in the oceans in my days  
Now what would kids say why can't oceans be like in grandamas days.  
Because people didn't litter unlike today.  
So why don't we take care of it like we used to my kid ask me every day  
I don't know sweetie I have to say.  
You will change the world some day.  
Just remember to recycle every can in any way.  
Because I love the world like you do in every single way.  
So let's make a change in it today.

# 7th-8th Grade Fiction

## Untitled

### By Marissa Meneses

The three young adults stood in the airport waiting to board. They had been planning this trip for years, and now they actually were going. Little did they know this would become one of the worst things to happen to them. The oldest of the three, Jawn started to get anxious and started lightly tapping a beat on Ronnie's backpack. Awsten and Ronnie, on the other hand, were overflowed with excitement they couldn't wait to escape the hardships of work and everyday life. While Jawn began to hold onto Ronnie's backpack, he noticed the boarding doors opened and people starting to pile through the doors. Awsten and Ronnie immediately took off towards the doors, Jawn stood back until a flight attendant looked at his obnoxious bright orange hair and winked assuring him that he would be okay.

The next afternoon the young men arrived in Sydney they immediately called an uber and went to the nearest four-star hotel. When they had ordered their room, Jawn and Awsten immediately claimed the beds leaving Ronnie to take the couch.

"You've got to be kidding me, of course, you would leave me with the couch. " Ronnie said  
a smirk grew on Jawn's face.

"You know your highness if it's such a problem just sleep with Awsten. " Jawn said winking as he threw a pillow at Ronnie. This started an all-out war pillow fight in which Awsten immediately joined. The pillow fight went on for 15 minutes until a bellhop knocked at the door asking them to quiet down. The young men all fell to the floor and lied there laughing, eventually going silent when Ronnie said,

"Truth or Dare Awsten?"

"Uh definitely dare dude!"

"I dare you to pay for all three of us to go cage diving, like shark cage diving, bro that would be a dope shot for our Instagrams! " Ronnie said putting on a childish pouty face hoping to convince him, Jawn eventually joining him.

Awsten was deeply afraid of sharks but he wasn't going to act weak in front of Jawn and especially Ronnie.

"Why not dude we'll go tomorrow, but it has to be under \$600 and I, I get to pick the music on the way over there ." Awsten spoke

Both Jawn and Ronnie groaned "Ugh fine," they said unison.

"But for the love of God, please don't play Blink -182, we've heard enough on the way over here!"

Awsten smirked at this and flopped on his bed, as Jawn went to his bed and Ronnie lie down on the couch falling asleep as soon as his head hit the pillow, Awsten began looking for tickets and found a lot most were over \$1000 but after 42 minutes of searching he found three tickets for \$589. The company looked a bit shady but he didn't mind, it was cheap, it was guaranteed to be fun. He purchased the tickets and he drifted off to sleep.

The next morning Awsten and Jawn woke up to Ronnie already ready for the day throwing a pillow at their faces and yelling

"Time to wake up Sleeping Beauties, we've got to go get breakfast, explore the world and annoy the people of this town!"

Awsten nor Jawn moved so Ronnie took matters into his own hands and started jumping on Awsten's bed and got close to his face and said

"Dude, get up, or I'll tell the bellhop you want his number plus you've got a horrible case of morning breath right now so you'd be doing everyone a favor."

Awsten got up groaning in annoyance and Ronnie got up to go annoy the orange-haired man, but Jawn was already up brushing his teeth. After they were all ready, they went to a cafe and wandered around a little bit exploring and Ronnie annoying people whenever he got the chance. After a few hours of exploring and visiting shops, they ordered a rental car. The entire car ride towards the dock, Awsten was having the time of his life singing Blink -182 at the top of his lungs just to annoy his friends. They had arrived at the building near the dock. They had to go through a few practice procedures and sign some waivers but after all the boring stuff they had gotten on their boat. They were assigned a captain and brought a few people that Jawn had invited to go with them.

When the boat came to a complete stop, Jawn and Ronnie stopped talking and took a look at the gorgeous view in front of them. Meanwhile, Awsten was anxiously running his hands through his short neon green hair looking below at the dark blue water while some lady who had too much to drink was complimenting him and telling him about her unrequited feelings for him. Awsten went towards the cage alongside his friends watching as Eric, the Captain of the boat began pouring bait for the sharks to come closer for the cage. After all the red water had cleared the boys were instructed to suit up and enter the cage, Ronnie taking a quick selfie with his friends and posting it.

When they were finally all in the cage they were admiring their views of everything they all looked at one another in disbelief and said in unison "Dude."

As they were in shock and in awe of the beauty in front of them, this moment was quickly ruined when they heard something above the cage creak and snap they then saw a rusty chain slowly fall downward in front of their eyes. They all looked at each other in fear and concern. When Ronnie was about to speak he saw the other people on the boat rushing to the edge screaming. Suddenly the cage started to fall to the bottom of the ocean at an insane pace sending the boys down with it screaming for their lives.

Two hours had passed before any of the college boys had woke up, the first to wake up was Awsten, he woke up groaning in pain he looked around not recognizing his dark surroundings or remembering what had happened. It took him a few minutes to remember what had happened and as soon as he started to regain memory of what happened he had started to hyperventilate until Ronnie had put a hand on his shoulder letting him know he wasn't alone. Jawn started to stir awake while Ronnie was comforting Awsten. Once Jawn was fully awake he immediately went for the top of the cage looking for an opening until he heard both Ronnie and Awsten scream in terror as a 13-foot Great white shark slammed itself into the cage trying to break it, this throwing Jawn back towards the bottom of the cage. The shark hit the cage repeatedly denting it in a few spots and terrorizing the three divers, the shark gave up after about 8 hits. Once the men were sure the shark was gone they immediately scrambled towards the top of the cage trying to open it. This went on for about 30 seconds before Awsten stopped and said "Wait, how are we even going to swim for the surface without being attacked? We would have to hurry and swim for the surface in an unreasonable amount of time! Won't that give us The Bends or something?"

"Awsten does it look like we have a better option right now? And if i remember from the procedure earlier, only one person has died from the bends, we'll be alright, I'm sure of it just calm down alright?" Ronnie said trying to calm Awsten down.

Jawn began to worry but didn't say anything because he didn't want to make Awsten anymore scared than he was. After a half-hour of contemplating the boys began to move towards the surface. As they swam for the surface men all heard some swishing and slamming below them, Jawn was never one for religion but he started to pray while swimming upward to whoever would listen and answer his prayers. Awsten and Ronnie were holding onto one another while swimming right next to Jawn hoping that they would all be okay. Ronnie came to a stop, stopping Awsten along with him Jawn eventually stopped swimming and looked at his friends wondering why they halted, but then he remembered that they would most likely get the bends if they continued to accelerate any faster. They all looked around at each other when they noticed the slamming from below stopped. Awsten and Ronnie looked behind them but

saw nothing. When they were turning around they heard a loud whooshing hurting their ears because it was so close. Everything was happening so fast. They saw a flash of grey and water bubbles, and heard a scream of pain and terror from Jawn, engulfing all three men in blood-red water.

The men had stood still in shock and terror and assumed their best friend was gone forever but after a few seconds of the bloody water clearing Jawn came out of it almost perfectly fine. His friends immediately swam towards him grabbing him by the shoulders and swam for the surface in a heartbeat. While they were swimming upward Awsten couldn't stop looking at Jawn's leg where he was bitten, he began to shed a tear just thinking about one of his best friends not making it. After about 19 minutes they had reached the surface of the water, they all immediately pulled into a group hug and almost breaking down into tears which was very unlikely of them.

They looked around for the boat that they had arrived in and luckily found it they all swam towards the boat, Ronnie pulling Jawn with him so he wouldn't put too much pain in his left leg. Once they had reached the boat a few girls had shrieked in relief and in fear when seeing Jawn's bitten leg. Eric and a few of his men had pulled Jawn aboard first, then Awsten and Ronnie. Once they were fully inside the boat Ronnie scooted towards Awsten and pulled him into an embrace and almost instantly started sobbing. Jawn was being cared for until the coast guard came with a few paramedics taking him and the two other men to make sure they were okay. Jawn was taken into the ER when they reached land and had gotten 15 stitches. While Jawn was inside of the ER, Awsten and Ronnie were treated for dehydration and were checked for the bends. Luckily only Ronnie had gotten them but he had already gone away but he still had severe pain in his arm for days.

The three college boys had stayed in Sydney for the rest of their trip, staying away from the ocean and just staying on land. The men were all given a huge payment by the company so they wouldn't sue them for the accident, but they eventually did because they didn't want this to happen ever again.



# 7th-8th Grade Non-Fiction

## The Real Effects of Violent Video Games

By Matteo Danczyk

It is a common misconception that violent video games reduce a player's empathy levels and urges them to be more violent. Whether or not violence in video games affects people negatively has caused a large amount of controversy. Video games, whether peaceful or violent, have proven to relieve people's stress, boost their confidence, and give them a sense of accomplishment.

Gaming on a virtual platform can sometimes influence a player's emotions or thoughts in a positive way. For example, they could potentially calm someone down with anger issues, help fix depression, or even give them more confidence than they already had. Any video game, violent or peaceful, has proven to create confidence, happiness, and a feeling of accomplishment (Gaming well: Links between Video Games and Flourishing Mental Health, Sholes). Depending on what video game you are playing, they could even increase your hand-eye coordination. Video games have also found a solution for people who are overly shy or anti-social. In fact, aggression in video games has shown to neither decrease nor increase pro-social behaviors. These cherishable things that connect people to video games make them highly enjoyable to play.

Bullying, anxiety, or being antisocial can cause depression, stress, lack of confidence, lack of happiness, and a sense of imprisonment. Playing video games has proven to "contribute to emotional stability" and to reduce disturbances in emotions (Gaming well: Links between Video Games and Flourishing Mental Health, Sholes). Somebody could go home and be social without having to show their face, personal preferences, or even personal beliefs. This allows people to be able to make friends with another that is halfway across the world. The best part about this is that if the player does not like what the other is saying or is being bullied by them, that player can mute them and never have to hear them again. Therefore, video games have given almost all the power into the player's hands so their game can captivate people and make people happy by allowing them to play however they wish. This power can sometimes make a participant feel as if they have accomplished something (Gaming well: Links between Video Games and Flourishing Mental Health, Scholes). By doing this, the makers of these video games, usually violent games because you will find many more bullies there than on peaceful games, have found a way to make their games enjoyable, stress-relieving, captivating, and yet still easy to pull away from.

That does not mean that violent video games do not affect people at all. Violence in video games has proven to sometimes affect someone's mental health negatively, but the effects are very low (Finding Common Ground in Meta-Analysis "Wars" on Violent Video Games, Mathur). The violence in video games starts to become a problem when someone spends excessive amounts of time on a game or games (Gaming well: Links between Video Games and Flourishing Mental Health, Sholes). When spending a great deal of time on games, it starts to affect melatonin levels, or how long someone sleeps. It could also become addictive (Who is at Risk for Problematic Video Gaming? Risk Factors in Problematic Video Gaming in Clinically Referred Canadian Children and Adolescents, Lau), which would "arise withdrawal, preoccupation, loss of control, and interpersonal or intrapersonal conflicts (Gaming well: Links between Video Games and Flourishing Mental Health, Scholes). As well as causing a gamer to become anti-social. However, other scientist's tests have failed to support links between long play times and "negative psychosocial outcomes in non-addicted gamers"(Gaming well: Links between Video Games and Flourishing Mental Health, Scholes).

The effects of violence in video games have shown to not only have been helpful to some people but to also be mainly positive. They can act like a virtual universe that people use to get away from their problems in real life. They also have proven to affect its player's mental health based on what their playing times are on average and whether or not they are diagnosed with Gaming Disorder. People should manage their game time unless they want to be negatively affected by video games ranging from "The Sims" to "God of War II."

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# 7th-8th Grade Poetry

## **My Favorite Place** **By Cassidy Harper**

The trees were dancing in the wind.  
It was dark as the night sky.  
It was a junkyard,  
A graveyard.

Dull,  
uninteresting,  
drab,  
nothing.

It was empty,  
quiet,  
crowded with dirt and rocks.  
My favorite place.

# High School Fiction

## Timidity Before the Tides

By Michael Riley

It was June 5th, 1944. I laced my boots and exited my quarters quietly. Walking down the corridors of the USS Wisconsin, I turned right and saw the entrance of the debriefing room. Preparing myself for the rumors that had been spread upon deck, I emerged from the end of the hallway greeting my officers. I took a seat nearest to the projector silently waiting for confirmation on tomorrow's mission. Operation Overlord, the largest seaborne invasion planned in history. After about ten minutes past, Vice-Admiral Wilson entered, requiring us to stand from our seats and salute. He put us at ease and began to scan the room emitting a nonchalant attitude. He darted his eyes toward me and asked if I had a pen. I responded formally giving him my pen and he began to write down small dots along the map of France. As we were focused on the sound of him scribbling into the table he looked up, paused and asked: "How long..?" Baffled, we looked at each other and then back at him. He continued and asked, "How long will it take to get our men on shore without them being spotted?" Platoon Sergeant Smith shortly responded saying "About fourteen minutes, sir." "Good." The admiral said. As they continued to talk, I began to mentally check out, daydreaming about the possible occurrence of unfortunate events tomorrow. How many good men would die tomorrow? How many bodies would float up getting entangled within the barbed wire? Would I be one of them?

The briefing eventually ended and I exited the room more nervous than when I had previously entered. I walked down the hall muttering the names of my soldiers to myself. By the time I looked up I was in the cafeteria watching the privates eat dinner and chat as if they weren't going to be behind a rifle the next day. How could they be so utterly relaxed? Weren't they afraid to lay their lives down? Shaking my head, I awkwardly tried to relieve myself of such thoughts. I went into the line looking at what they were serving tonight. Spaghetti, mashed potatoes, green beans, and cornbread. I grabbed a glass of cola and found a seat next to the hallway. I sat alone enjoying this meal as if it were my last. A young man came and sat down next to me as I placed the slice of cornbread onto my tongue. He couldn't have been any older than twenty-one. He was built like a bodybuilder but shorter than the average male. The stubble on his face was oriented sloppily and was unkempt. He put his elbow on the table and wrapped his index finger and thumb around his chin as if he was about to ask me a question. He shrugged and began eating the same meal as I. Slurping wet noodles, he said "We're terrified sir. We don't know if we'll all be in this same room once the invasion has ended." He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and looked at me with contempt smeared across his face. I frowned and replied with "I fear that the Vice Admiral's scheme might have a handful of flaws." We continued to talk for another fifteen minutes about our roles in the execution of tomorrow's plan. He then tried to form a smile, left and by that time we were ordered to return to our quarters. I got up from my table, stretched, and walked out of the room exhausted from overthinking. I opened the door to my small dormitory and took off my uniform, boots, and socks exposing my undergarments and more skin than before. I grabbed the piece of paper off the desk left of my pillow. I began to write a letter to my wife saying "Dear Janice, Tomorrow will be the day of our invasion and hopefully the day we reclaim the french territories. I miss you, Martha, and William. I remember when we took Martha to the playground for the very first time. Her smile was unforgettable that evening. I miss the mornings where we could lay in bed with her and listen to her giggle. When I return we should let William play with the female dog across the street. I hope to see you soon dear. I love you forever and always." I put the picture of our beautiful family she gave me and the letter inside an envelope licked the brim and sealed it closed. I placed the parchment back on to the desk, turned off the light, and dozed off to my fear of tomorrow's battle.

# High School Non-Fiction

## To Fight the Good Fight

By Madysen McDonald

There is one thing that people are guaranteed in every famous movie, bestselling novel, and compelling video game: a fight between good and evil. This fight is constantly fought between humanity and its selfish mind. It is the human condition. A question which humanity has repeatedly asked itself: are people inherently good, or inherently evil? Human beings are inherently evil. The halos and horns above people's heads come from the things they do, the people around them, and the person inside of them. Everyone will enter the fight against their selfish minds, but most will never win. The inherent evilness of humanity is continuously reflected by people's actions and how they treat others, and very few are able to escape it.

Good and evil. It is hard to say that humanity will ever truly grasp the concept of these two very powerful words. These two words that are constantly used to describe humanity, the people they are, and the decisions they make. Evil refers to selfish choices, without any regard for anyone else. Good refers to the unselfish choices, doing things for someone else without personal gain. It is hard to describe every single individual as only one of these two words, but humanity overall (sadly) brings an easier task. In addition, the definition of inherent is: "existing in someone or something as a permanent and inseparable element, quality, or attribute." People are shoved into this fight against the evil in their own minds. It is simply the people who are willing to fight the good fight that truly come out of this war victorious. Altruism is a very rare find when looking at the human race.

People can be as different as fact and fiction, rhyme and reason. However, people are all born evil. People are all born into the evilness of humanity, therefore (however unfortunately) they are as evil as their predecessors from the day they are born. They are taught these things, this culture of evilness. In this day in time, it seems as if the inherent evilness of humanity is not being fought to be shaken, it is simply there, among all people. According to Harvard's Joshua Greene, "The core of morality is a suite of psychological capacities that enable us to get along in groups." Furthermore, according to Google Dictionary, morality refers to "principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior." The word morality strongly coincides with the question of humanity's categorization when it comes to good and evil. However much the selfish human mind refuses to believe it, a moral being is rarely found among the human race. It seems that, no matter how hard they try, people cannot seem to grasp that some of the things that they do are bad. Because of the way people are raised, the words good and evil can mean different things to different people. Despite this, people should be raised to be moral beings.

Hobbes vs. Rousseau was the first debate of its kind that was really aiming to answer this question for humanity. According to Thomas Hobbes, we are born evil and society shapes us into kind and caring beings. However, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's mind, human nature is essentially good, and it is when people come together that they corrupt themselves. Both Hobbes and Rousseau have a point. However, neither is right; People are all born evil, and they are even further corrupted by society.

In 2017, the total number of murders in California were 1,830. No matter what people's perception of the words good and evil are, any person with a hint of brain power understands that murder is never good. The decisions that people make every day work even further to prove the inherent evilness of humanity. Because of all the things that people do, every child is born inherently evil. Take the Holocaust, for example. No person in their right mind can think that killing around seventeen million people simply because they are different in religion or belief is a good thing to do. Hitler's idea of a "perfect race" is just another example of the

selfish mind taking over (and the inherent evilness of humans). Furthermore, people also use religion as an excuse for the evil things they do. Take terrorist attacks for example: on 9/11, the death toll was 2,996, and the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and the White House were all targeted to be hit with hijacked planes. When it is thought about, the reason that these people did these horrible things is because their religion told them to. Pushed by religion or not, these instances in history work further to prove the inherent evilness of humanity, and 9/11 is one example among many. There are various reasons for the evil things that people do, but that doesn't change the fact that they are evil.

The World Health Organization reported (in October 2002) that a person is murdered every sixty seconds. Furthermore, an estimated number of 520,000 people were murdered in 2000 around the world. However, the many good things that people do every day must be considered. People do not always intend to do the things they do. Human beings are inherently evil, but there are people who recognize this and try to fight back against the temptations of their inherently evil minds. These people are the exceptions, the people that choose to do the right thing, however unpopular it may be among the people around them. Sadly, however, only a small percentage of people are the exceptions (hence the use of the word). In addition, these people are not pure good, simply a noticeable amount less evil than others. Simply because humanity is inherently evil doesn't mean that there isn't any good in the world; it just means that there is more evil in the world than good (a lot more).

Many studies have been done to try and figure out what humanity is truly like (inherently). Some even believe that it is because of other people that humanity is as evil as it is. However, although it is true that people can be influenced by others, it is also true that every human being makes their choices for themselves. Even the exceptions which we see in the world every day must decide to continue to fight the temptations of their selfish minds (no one is perfect). This is reflected in the world every day. Simply the fact that a democracy (a government) is needed in the first place is proof that humans are inherently evil and cannot live in harmony with others without an official set of rules. It's been proven (with battles and world wars) what happens when there is no structure to a government. Although the government is not perfect, the world would be even more corrupt without it.

In conclusion, however sad it may be, human beings are inherently evil. This is shown by all of the evil things which people do every day as well as many instances in history. It is important to recognize this so that people can continue to become better people each day. The human mind automatically leans toward the evil thing to do, sometimes because it's easier, and other times because it seems to them like the right thing to do. Every child is born into the evil nature of their predecessors. Most of the population are people who don't believe they're bad or otherwise justify their bad behavior by comparing themselves to people who are perceived to be worse. However, some people give in too much to this naturally evil and selfish mind (think Holocaust and world wars). Unlike most movies that people watch, the fights within humanity usually end with evil conquering good. Hopefully in the future more people will rise against their own selfish minds. But this is a fight which a person must fight by themselves, so it will take an effort from everyone to truly make this world one where children are raised to fight the natural tendency for evil they are born with, living out mostly good lives. It seems that it is only the few exceptions that are truly willing to "fight the good fight."

# High School Poetry

**Emery**

**By Ashley Jhaneane Deblois**

Maybe it was the scent of the blistering summer. Maybe the distant percussion of your fingertips. Or maybe that mundane feeling that intoxicates the incessant murder of the sun that make me hate you. Black is all I ever saw. Barbed, but interchangeable. Promotes the destruction of us intertwined.

Strawberries. The flavor of sleeping in, but in tells of consequences. Small, sweet, delicate, temporary. Like you. Your blinding radiance snubbed the entirety of being, and I watched that radiance consume your limitless sky. The bright coils dormant within your lens, stolen. Have I become a suspect in your mystery, or was I the abrupt halt that betrothed you to neutrality? Your distant percussion in my head, the scent of an eternal summer, the conspiracies against the sun that induced the weeds to weep. Strawberries infect your kingdom's ruins as they crumble and slip through me. Like you.

# College Non-Fiction

## Beatlemania

By Nash Gonzalez

With their infectious smiles, non-conforming persona, and contagiously catchy music, the Beatles changed the world. The Beatles changed the world in a multitude of ways, some ways were easier for society in the sixties to conform to and others were much more controversial. On either platform, it was impossible for traditionalist to put a damper on the new flavors the Beatles were introducing to America. Despite the many controversies enflamed by the band, the Beatles stayed true to themselves and thus became an idol for society to express their individualism. The band effortlessly executed this by their over the top style, their rebel like attitude, and introducing America with a new twist to rock music that might just make the listener shout.

When the Beatles got on stage, they not only captured the audience's attention with their music, but also intelligently complimented it with a new type of flare of vibrant colors and style. According to an article from USA Today, "By late 1968, with Magical Mystery Tour and a couple of trips to India under their belts, The Beatles had become veritable poster boys for swinging '60s style: paisley tunics and Nehru jackets in Krishna-friendly colors like saffron" (Barker.). The absorption of culture from places as lively as India, gave the Beatles a unique color palate, which made the Beatles stand out both literally and figuratively. Another interesting detail the band uniformly presented was their iconic "moptops" (Junior) and eventually an overall shaggy long hair length, which went against the trends of the old fashioned and neatly trimmed style of that present time. John Lennon even asserted that the most revolutionary thing someone could do was to "stay in bed and grow out your hair" (Lennon).

The Beatles were not afraid to express their personalities as genuine even in front of a microphone and camera positioned in front of them off stage. As an example of their defiance displayed in naturally witty tone, one particular interview sheds light on their persona; a journalist writes:

The first question from the American press was, "Do you believe in lunacy?" "Yeah," answered one of the Beatles, "it's healthy." Another reporter asked, "Would you please sing something?" "No," replied another Beatle, "we need money first."

Still another reporter asked, "Do you hope to take anything home with you?" "Yeah," a Beatle replied, "Rockefeller Center." (Aronowitz).

This sort of behavior clashed against the conformity the elders of the '60s were trying to uphold. At the time, rock 'n' roll interpreted to many of the non-conforming elders as the Devil's music and they would have rather strived to sustain the music industries reputation as a respectable, safe, and as a classy industry. The controversies amongst the band reached new heights when John Lennon made the remark, "If I'd said, 'Television is more popular than Jesus,' I might have got away with it!" (Runtagh) in regards to their influence. The band's anti authority attitude broke new barriers to the way Americans reflected on conventional rules of daily life.

When listening to the Beatles music, the atmosphere transfuses with each song that they played. At the play of a button, the listener's reality melts and is instead replaced by the themes painted by The Beatles. I dare to bet anyone with a soul to play songs such as Help!, She Loves You, or Twist and Shout and watch how the urge to dance immerses your psyche. The new sound The Beatles introduced was known as beat music, which gave inspiration to future rock artist. Sounds of the British beats were made apparent by their harmonic patterns, peculiar chord combinations, and melodic lines. The fact that the Beatles descended from Britain made it less of a surprise that the band had their own unique twist to popular music. Another interesting feat accomplished by this feat of diversity was how the youth identified with the music. It could be understood that The Beatles subtly gave permission to youth culture to be autonomous.

To this day, you can turn on your radio and can commonly find yourself listening to one of the Beatle's hits. If not from their songs, you can hear their distinct tones indirectly from other artist thanks to



their influence. Throughout the years The Beatle's hippie like fashion, rebel like persona and unique musical style has molded society in to what it is today. It is hard to imagine a world without them. Their impact on the world, controversial as it was, broke the barriers of conformity. The land of the free has evolved more and more, highly impacted by the British band of yesterday.

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# College Poetry

## Sunny Winter Day

By Yasamine Entesari

Out of the window the blue sky shines  
An enticing brightness against the terracotta rooftops.  
Such an elaborate lie.

Step into the bitterness and be awash with regret.  
There is no warmth in this sun.  
There is no love.  
There is nothing but the gentle breeze  
Nipping at the exposed skin  
Satiating a hunger for discomfort.

Where are my mittens for these dry cracked hands?  
Where is my hat for my tangling hair?  
Where is my scarf for my displayed neck?  
Where are your arms for my bared soul?

I drape my vulnerability in this thick cloak of pride  
Fastened with this pageant smile  
A shell to protect me from my own  
blistering cold heart.

I am the sunny winter day

# **Grand Prize Winners**



# 5th-6th Grade

## The Woods At Night

By Kellen Piler

The woods at night is a scary place  
Wolves may be near, you will never know

The trees swayed back and forth  
As the night goes on

The moon shining on the water  
It sees its own reflection

Most animals are asleep but the bats are not  
Flying through the air searching for their pray

The fireflies light up the bushes with their glow  
A gentle breeze rustles the leaves on the damp ground

The owls call out from high in the trees  
While the rabbits sleep quietly in their burrow

The night will end soon only a few more moments  
For the creatures sleeping to only wake

Stillness for now, the sun soon to rise  
The woods at night

# 7th-8th Grade

## Artificial Laura By Sabrina Jacobson

Laura desperately wanted to go to AST( Academy of Science and Technology). She figured that if she got there she could fit in and become a tech scientist, like her parents. Even though Laura Aldaine acts and looks like a normal human, she's not. Sixteen years ago, Laura's parents wanted a child so badly, but something happened and they were not able to have a child . So instead they built the first actual artificial human. Even though she wasn't human, her parents still treated her like one. Laura is very intelligent. She's also kind, but usually keeps to herself and doesn't have very many friends. Many people at her school know she is not human, and they don't think she belongs in an all human-school. But this is 2025, and things change. However, to everyone else, she is just a normal sixteen year old girl. She has sky blue eyes and long, straight brown hair. She wears gray sweats, a blue hoodie, and white headphones. She usually blends in with the crowd.

"Oh look! Here comes Robot-Girl!" a boy teases as he's walking towards Laura with two other boys. The boy has blonde hair, green eyes, is a few inches taller than Laura, and wearing a green school hoodie, and ripped, dark jeans.

She rolls her eyes. "What are you doing here, Mack?"

"I'm just walking to class like everyone else." Mack answers with a smirk.

"But maybe we shouldn't walk around here. We might get rusty!" the boys snicker and one of them shoves Laura onto the locker and they walk away. Laura's shoulders hit the locker with a hard crash. She groans in pain.

"I feel pain you know, and that really hurts!" She shouts, but when she looks, they are long gone. Laura runs into a computer lab. Then, she hears some people walking by.

"Even though she looks like us, we all know she doesn't belong." A boy said.

"We have to get her out of here." Mack replies.

"You mean expelled?" A girl asks.

"Or fully out of here. I want her to shut down. And I have an idea."

They walk off before Laura could hear the plan. Laura's eyes fill with tears. When Laura comes home she gets an unexpected surprise.

"Surprise!" Her mom and dad shout.

"The AST wants to have a meeting with you in front of the entire school tomorrow!" Her mom says.

"And you can show them the project you've been working on!" Dad shouts.

"And if they like it, you'll be accepted!"

"REALLY?! NO WAY!!" Laura screams. She runs upstairs into her room and pulls out a basket with a sleeping dog in it. The dog had a white collar that said 'BUDDY' and had a metal nose, and dark brown fur.

"Come on Buddy, time to see if you work."

She touched a button on a remote and Buddy woke up. He barked and licked her face. Laura Aldaine made the first artificial dog.

"Now, all we have to do is stop Mack."

The next day, Buddy and Laura went to school. They got called up to go to the meeting, and as Laura was walking down a hallway, Mack bumped into her.

"Watch where you're going Robot-girl!"

Mack grabbed something out of her backpack without her noticing and walked away.

The entire school went into the assembly room and in the front row were the AST scouts. Laura walks up to the stage and introduces Buddy, but when she tries to find the remote to turn him on, it isn't there. In the back row, Mack is holding the remote and smiling. All of a sudden Buddy wrecks the stage

and he says “She made me do this.” in a monotone voice. The lights go out. Everybody gasps and screams. When the lights go back on, the stage is wrecked, Buddy is gone, and only Laura is on the stage.

“She did this!” shouts a boy, pointing at Laura.

All of the students agree.

“What? But this wasn’t supposed to happen. I didn’t do anythi-”

“Laura Aldaine! Because of this little act you threw, your parents have given me permission to shut. You. DOWN.” The principal cried.

Everybody gasped. Laura, her eyes drowning in a sea of tears, ran off the stage and out of the assembly room. She was alone in a hallway and started looking for Buddy. In one of the classrooms, she saw Mack with her remote to control Buddy.

Not noticing Laura was there, Mack said, “My plan had worked. By stealing Robot-girl’s remote, I made her little robot dog cause destruction and blamed her. Now, she will shut down!” Mack smiled, and turned towards Laura’s direction. Laura moved away from the door before he could see her and walked away.

“Laura Aldaine, please come to the office,” the school intercom said. Laura walked to the office and there was Buddy shut down, the principal, the AST scouts, and her mom and dad.

“Laura, I thought you were better than this,” her mom said sadly.

“I am! I didn’t do anything!” Laura’s voice cracked and tears started to swell up in her eyes.

“I am going to let your parents do the “good-bye” of shutting you down,” the principal said.

“NO!” Laura yelled.

Laura’s parents walked toward her. “ We’re sorry Laura, but you violated the law.”

Her parents started crying and opened a hatch on the back of her neck. In the hatch was a big red off switch. Her mom’s finger headed closer and closer to the button. Laura’s gears in her eyes started to spin. Then, her right eye lit up and projected a video on the wall. It was a video of Mack explaining his plan. After the video was over, everybody was in total shock.

Later that day, the principal apologized, Laura got her remote back, Mack got expelled, and she did the meeting again without anyone sabotaging it. She showed the scouts Buddy and the remote. The scouts really liked him and accepted her. For the rest of her high school days, she excelled at AST, and she still stood out. But, everyone loved her for it. No one messed with her ever again. Don’t be afraid to change, and don’t harass someone if they are part of that change. And if someone doesn’t belong, that’s because they were born to stand out.

# High School

## The Nights That Stuck With Me

By Jasmine Ortega

I was always told from the beginning that my father was gone to help his mother get better in Durango, Mexico. My mom had told me that my grandmother was terribly sick, I was only 3 when he left, and didn't see him until 6 years later.

There were only four of us in a small house; my sister and I shared one small room and my brother shared a room with my mom. I remember living on a budget, but my mom and sister never failed to give us everything we needed. Every night my mother would work late, which meant my sister would stay with my brother in my mom's room and I slept alone. Each night I would always wake up, almost like an alarm, to the time my mom would get home. One specific night she didn't come home and I remember laying there in bed for her to come, until finally I got tired and fell asleep. It was already late at night, when I was woken up by someone shaking me, I remember looking up and seeing him. I thought it was all a dream, I saw his big bright brown eyes, and his big nose. He smiled at me and he told me "I'm home daughter."

For a few years, everything was amazing; we were getting along, everyone was happy. It wasn't until 2015 when I realized everything was going down hill. My father was always on the chubby side, loved to eat, and loved to drink, and in everyone's word, have a "good time". At the time, I didn't know what was going on, I didn't even realize my father was losing weight at one point.

It was around May, when I remember things really got out of control. Around that time we had moved into a new house to be closer to my elementary school. My sister had a room across the other side of the house, my brother and I on the opposite, and my parent's room right next to us. If I remember correctly, on Mother's Day we had all gone out, my mom, brother, father, and I, had all gone out to Victorville to go eat at a restaurant. We had gone through the old way to Victorville, and I remember him swerving back and forth and I didn't understand why. I remember being so scared for all of us; he was speeding multiple times on the other side of the road, and I remember him yelling at my mother, asking her if she still loved him. He yelled at her and said "Do you still love me, tell me you love me, or I'll crash this car." For some reason we didn't end up making it to the restaurant and we turned back, all I remembered was ending up at Food4Less. When we got there, there was an awkward silence. Everything was still, it felt like the whole world had stopped. Then my mother had said something that started an argument between them. She told us to get out of the car and for a moment, almost like a trance I had stayed in the car, and before my mom could get out of the car, my father pulled her hair back, causing her to fall back into the car. We all went home crying that day, to this day, I wish my nine year old self had done something. That was the last thing I remember happening until summer.

In July my sister got married to this wonderful man. He had gotten my brother and I, and of course her, through our darkest moments. After their marriage, it was time for him to leave again, as he was in the army, and my sister had stayed with us for a while until she felt that it was safe for us to be alone with my father. One hot summer day, my brother and I were told to go play outside. We had a big fluffy husky that we absolutely adored. We would place him on the trampoline and just loved him. While we were playing outside, I heard yelling. Quickly, I told my brother to come inside with me and stay by the door. While my brother was by the door, I went into the living room to see my sister on top of my dad's back. For a minute I stood there just listening to what they were telling each other. He had the phone in his hand and my sister was trying to get it out of his hand. That's when I realized he was trying to turn himself in, and my sister was trying to stop him. After standing there, my nine year old voice



yelled as loud as I could, and I said “STOP!”. I ran back to my brother, grabbed him, and went into the restroom, and locked the doors. I remember sitting there, crying my eyes out, and my brother not knowing at all what was going on. I barely knew what was going on. My sister and father were banging on the bathroom door, and all I could hear from them was “Open the door, we just want to talk”. It took two hours for me to finally open that door, to be able to trust my own family. From that point on I didn’t see my father the same. All I could think about, was why would he want to turn himself in?

My memories are all scattered everywhere, I don’t remember any specific order, but I do remember one morning. I woke up, and got ready to go somewhere, we were all in a rush to get out of the house, and for some reason my father wasn’t going with us. He pulled me aside before I walked out the door, and I was looking at the ground, he told me to look at him and I remember asking him, “Dad, what’s wrong, why are you crying?”. He looked at me with his big brown eyes, and said in Spanish, “Do you love me?”. My Spanish wasn’t very well, so in the heat of the moment, I told him no. He looked back at me, now sobbing and said, “You don’t love me anymore?” and I told him “Yes dad, I didn’t mean to say no, I’m sorry!”. That was something that will forever stick with me. I thought that, if I hadn’t said no it would’ve stopped what happened next.

When all of this was happening, I lost count of the days, I didn’t know when it was, what time was it, and how long it lasted. If I am correct, this was the final night my parents had argued, before our whole lives had changed forever. That night my brother and I were told to go to our rooms and don’t go out until they say we could. I told my mother that I would shower, and after that long shower, I got out changed, and I sat there on the floor, crying. My mother had walked in and asked what was wrong. At that moment I remember telling her exactly how I felt, scared and hopeless. I was hearing my uncle's voice in the background, I asked her “What’s tio doing here?”, she had said in a shaky voice, “Tio is just having a small talk with dad, everything's okay, I promise”. Later that night my uncle left, and everything seemed to be going well. Until I heard loud music playing, and I knew something was going to happen. I walked outside and went into the living room and hid there. I sat there until I heard my sister yelling. My father was trying to overdose. My sister again was on his back trying to get those pills out of his mouth, and my mom doing the same. I remember feeling completely lost, and confused. I was standing there watching everything unravel, at one point my father threw my sister onto the ground and she quickly ran into the bathroom and I followed. I followed her into the bathroom, and asked “Sister what are you going to do, make everything stop please”. She looked at me and told me “Listen, I’m calling 911, everything will be okay”. I told her not to, that they would take him back, and later that night they took him to the hospital to make sure he was okay.

Now, not all the time was it like this, hopeless and fearful. It was no secret to the family that I was “Daddy’s little girl”. I was always his favorite, he got me into soccer, pushed me through to continue running. He took me out to eat ice-cream, to create memories. We had our special thing where we would go to the living room, set up a fort and sleep there all night. He tried doing all the things he loved with me before he died, before he committed suicide. The few nights before he took me out to go ride bikes, to practice playing soccer. That night before I went over to the neighbors house and we went riding our bikes all night long. Eventually I told myself, “I’m a big girl, I don’t need training wheels”. So I asked him to take them off, and the next thing I knew I was on the ground with a scraped elbow. I ran back inside and told my father to help me, to make it better. He took me into the bathroom, wiped the blood off, cleaned it, and put a band-aid on it. He smiled at me and told me “I love you, never forget that”. To this day, I still have a scare on my left elbow, that moment... that moment of security I will remember forever.

That next morning, August 2, 2015, I woke up early; knowing something was off, I walked into my mom's room and went looking for my dad, only to find he wasn’t there. I walked into the kitchen and saw all of the cereal boxes were out, stacked perfectly from tallest to shortest, and his phone on the end of the table. While confused I walked into my room and looked outside the window, and noticed his car wasn’t there. I went rushing back into my

mom's room and woke her up, "Mom, where's dad? He left his phone here." Her go to answer was " He's probably at work and forgot his phone." So with that I went to my room and went back to sleep. I woke up again for the second time, and everyone was gone. I remember that my sister had told us to put our shoes on and that we're going to my grandparents. As we got into the car, I heard a loud cry, someone had yelled "NO!", my brother had asked who that was, and my sister replied to him saying it was the T.V. That day we ended up going to different relatives, until we had stayed with my aunt. That day we spent, getting spoiled and just swimming in the pool. It was finally time for us to go back home, and as we pulled into the driveway, I noticed that my aunt who lives three hours away was here. I was confused but happy because I hadn't seen them in a while at that time. We had all gotten inside, we went to the room, and they sat me down first. My aunt looked at me and told me "Your dads gone." I looked at her and said "Gone? He went back to work, what time is he getting home?" My mom looked at me and told me "No sweety, he's dead." At that moment I went completely blank. I lost my best friend, I lost my motivation for sports, everything I had was gone, and I didn't know why. I asked my mom "Why, what happened, where did you find him, why isn't he coming home?" My mother had no answers. It wasn't until now 4 years later from his death that I found out what he did, and to this day, my family still doesn't know that I know the truth.

# College

## Light

### By Martha Paredes

Into the dark wilderness I journey  
To reach my final destination  
Fearless and steady are my steps to liberation  
For my light is always beside me

My light is the reason I will not falter  
He is my strength and courage in all my trials  
In his power there's no question or denial  
His truth can/will never be altered

It is in my light that I trust to be on the road less travelled  
He is my guide and my protector  
The one true connector  
To the creator of this world in which I marveled

Now there's nothing marvelous about it  
The world I once knew  
No longer has skies of blue  
But grey hues from the smoke that rises from the burning pit

Therefore my light I will follow  
To the place he has prepared for me  
A place in where I will live happily  
In which there will be no tomorrow